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Compelex Orientalism: Soviet Kurdology and Kurdish Nation Building

Magister (MA) Thesis

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the establishment of modern nation states in the Middle East through the European colonial Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916, Kurds have been the largest stateless nation, numbering between 30 to 40 million. They are split up between Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran, where they were forbidden access to cultural and linguistic rights. About 152,717 Kurds occupied Soviet territories in the Caucasus and Russia, where they possessed the space to construct their identity within the limitations of the Soviet state, where they yet to receive much attention from researchers. The aim of this thesis is to contribute to this academic gap by examining the construction of Soviet-Kurdish identity in relation to works produced in the Soviet Kurdology departments, mainly in Yerevan and Leningrad. By reviewing the scholarship on Kurds from these Kurdology departments, I will analyze how Soviet Orientalists and Kurdologists represented, imagined, and understood Kurdish history and its national formation within Soviet territory, paying close attention to how this body of Oriental knowledge informed the Bolshevik nationality policy towards the Kurds. By doing so, I will show how Soviet authorities shaped the discourses and therefore the power relations with the Kurds, which were coming from both Moscow and Soviet Kurds. Through demonstrating the hybrid and complex nature of the Orientalism practiced by the Soviet Union through Kurdology, exploring the limitations of Orientalist Kurdish identity constructions, and addressing the nuanced and uniquely-situated freedoms Kurds possessed in their constructing identity within the Soviet Union, I ultimately argue that the Soviet Union utilized the Kurdology department as a way to construct and promote its own hegemonic discourse of what a Kurd is, or, more specifically, what a Kurd living within the borders of the Soviet Union is. These constructions of Soviet-Kurdish identity simultaneously created unique forms of expression, involving but not limited to secularization of the identity and centralization of Yezidis in Kurdish identity construction, essentialization of Kurdish identity and history, and proliferation of liberatory and anti-imperialist narrative in Soviet-Kurdish historiography.

This thesis is methodologically situated within and by Terry Martin's "Affirmative Action Empire", Mikhail Bakhtin's "heteroglossia", Michel Foucault's discourse of power, and Edward Said's "Orientalism", in order to interrogate the center-periphery relations in the Kurdology department between Soviet Kurdish academics and Moscow – the main question being, Under which political conditions, propaganda mechanisms, and freedoms did these Soviet Kurdologists operate? Further, this thesis is informed by the works of Alexeir Yurchak, critiques of area studies, and a critical analysis of the field of Kurdology.

This paper relies on Terry Martin's understanding of the Soviet Union's unique position as an "Affirmative Action Empire," which he argues is somewhat different from other forms of European empires of the time in that anti-imperialism and socialism stood at the core of state ideology. (Martin, 2001) As Martin describes, the USSR was an "Affirmative Action Empire" through the ways in which it proclaimed the national emancipation of the minorities, yet did not abolish the essentialist and imperial ideas of Eastern identities as proliferated by the previous Tsarist Empire (Martin, 2001). In contrast, Western imperialism was for the most part a one-sided affair in which the lines between the colonizer and the colonized were clear-cut.

Additionally, this paper is also influenced by the works of Bakhtin and Foucault. By combining the work of Bakhtin and Foucault, the latter of which argues that language and its associated power dynamics played an especially essential role in proliferation of discourses concerning identity construction, I aim to show how Bakhtin's concept of "heteroglossia" operates through discursive exchanges that represent power relations between the works produced by Soviet-Kurdish scholars in Kurdology departments, the Soviet state itself, and the audience to which it was intended in the construction of a Soviet-Kurdish identity.

In addition to relying on Martin, Bahkin, and Foucault, his thesis is also situated within the framework that Orientalism practiced in the Soviet Union by government officials and academics was rather different from Orientalism as seen and conceptualized in the West by Edward Said in his book "Orientalism." This is exemplified in the relations between the center in Moscow and its "Oriental" territories in Central Asia and the Caucasus. When the Bolsheviks conquered Central Asia and the Caucasus, they instituted the nationalities policy which allowed Central

Asian and Caucasian minorities to establish their own theater, literature, and schools. The intent of this policy stemmed from the Leninist belief in the nationalism of the oppressed, which stood in contrast to the nationalism of the bourgeoisie;therefore, Lenin advocated for the rights and self-determination of the "oppressed nations" in order to counter Russian chauvinism of the Tsarist Empire. This tactic would allow the fall of the Russian empire and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. However, as portrayed in the nationalities policy, essentialist ideas of race and ethnicity were still imposed. As Terry Martin discusses in his article "A State of Nations: Empire and Nation‐Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin,*"* the Bolsheviks used essentialist ideas of race and ethnic identity as promoted by Tsarist anthropologists and Orientalist for whom the division of humankind was split "into the arbitrary, essentialized, and hierarchical categories of east and west" (Suny and Martin 2001). As Martin further adds,

> The Bolsheviks' Marxist sociology led them to repudiate east and west as racial categories and to deny any long-term differences in the economic, social, or political capacities of all nationalities. However, the east/west dichotomy was nevertheless preserved as a cultural distinction (one that could at times contain much of the content of the old racial divide (Suny and Martin 2001, 67).

The Bolshevik nationalities policy was anti-imperialist in a sense that it granted non-Russian minorities within the Soviet borders national rights that were denied to them during the Tsarist period; however, imperial categories of ethnic and racial identities were still preserved – there was still the idea of the civilized "European" and a backwards "Oriental." The nationalities policy was implemented to advance those ethnic groups that were perceived as "backwards" on the Marxist scale to socialist modernity of the new Soviet state (Martin 2001). As Kevork Oskanian explains in his article"A Very Ambiguous Empire", the Soviet Union's "liminal position between East and West was reinforced through its ideological and socio-economic peculiarity. Marxism–Leninism was a product of the Western Enlightenment, while simultaneously providing an element of radical difference from the capitalist West" (Oskanian 2009, 35). As a result, the socialist ideology of the Soviet state contained hegemonic features found in Western imperialism despites its supposed anti-imperialist central tenent. Oskanian proposes that the examination of historical context under which the Soviet Union operated is significant in the understanding of the power play involved in the conception of Soviet form of

Orientalism, as these mechanisms sustained the Orientalist ethnic and racial categories of the Tsarist empire that subscribed to the dichotomy of Orient versus Occident, while also creating and applying new Marxist “anti-imperialist” national liberatory touch to it as described by Lenin in his work on the national question (Oskanian 2009, 28).

Additionally, this thesis relies on the works of Alexei Yurchak and his analysis of binaries in relation to the Soviet Union. Although this thesis explores the ways in which Soviet Kurdology departments created forms of Kurdish identity, it is not situated within a binary understanding of the power balance between the Soviet Union and Soviet Kurds. Historically, this dynamic was not entirely one sided -- Kurds were able to promote their culture, literature and even their political goals in the academic pieces they wrote for the Kurdology departments which is the primary argument to be tackled in this paper. In his book “Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation,” Yurchak argues that the analysis of the Soviet everyday life cannot be watered down to a black-and white binary; rather, one should question, “How Soviet people in fact interpreted the lived ideology and reality of socialism?” (Yurchak 2003, 485). Yurchak proposes replacing the binary conception of knowledge with a “conception of knowledge that is always-already partial, situated, and actively produced… that should be compatible with the view of discourse as situated activity and of the speaking/writing self as Bakhtin's "voice" that is never isolated or split but always dialogized”(Yurchak 2003, 485). In other words, the analysis of agency and its interplay with language and discourses of power must be applied in order to understand the power dynamics between the Soviet state and its citizens. This paper utilizes this theory in order to understand the nuanced realities of knowledge-power relations in the context of the Soviet Orient at the Kurdology department.

In addition to understanding this unique form of Soviet Orientalism, this paper is also situated within the historical critique of Area Studies, in which the area studies field, including Kurdology, must be examined in tandem with Orientalism due to the interrelated history the two possess which became especially evident during the geopolitics of the post-World War II era. Area Studies can be traced back to 18th century Europe as a field within which academics, under the tutelage of their colonial governments, ventured into colonized lands in Asia, Africa, and the Americas to conduct studies on their cultures, languages, and social organizations. Despite being an interdisciplinary field that encompasses themes and methodology from across academia, it is

important to note that the exploration of peoples and their lands within area studies cannot be described as neutral and is instead mediated through the power and intellectual considerations of colonial discourse. Rather than preserving neutrality and sociocultural sensitivity that would make their observations an invaluable addition to a more complex and global understanding of intercultural dynamics and communities around the world, the works produced by area studies scholars are, more often than not, tools for colonial governments to meet their goals of legitimizing the political and ideological domination of colonized peoples and their lands.

This paper also is based in the historical context of Kurdology, especially within the Soviet Union; the field is a unique case as it was not a widely studied discipline, and in some cases, a taboo topic -- there were Kurdology departments in Germany, France, Iraq, Turkey, and the Soviet Union. Kurdology paved an outlet to study the Kurdish identity, trace its historical origins, and publish literature and poetry; however, this was mostly done outside of the areas Kurds inhabited due to political repression of occupying powers. As a result, the Kurdish identity was mostly formed outside of their traditional homelands. In the Soviet case, where Kurdology has a long history, the Kurdology department was led mostly by Kurds, particularly Yazidis, from Armenia and Azerbaijan and was its own separate area studies department from the Soviet Iranology department. The Kurdish materials from Armenia are particularly fascinating, as hundreds of titles were published from the 1920s onwards, including when doing so in the rest of the Kurdophone regions was either severely restricted or harshly suppressed. At the same time, these materials act as a testament to the wholehearted approval of Soviet authorities for the use of Kurdish as a medium of spreading Soviet thought and authority, in addition to expanding Soviet cultural status.

This paper will begin with tracing the development of depictions of Kurdish identity within the South Caucasus and how it was utilized within the context of Bolshevik nationality policy, moving onto the development of Oriental and Kurdish area studies within the Soviet Union. Next, the formation of Kurdish studies will be explored and the extent of its applicability to Edward Said's Orientalism theory in tandem with Terry Martin's "Affirmative Action Empire." Then, I will address the debate surrounding Orientalism and its applicability to the Soviet context, looking into structural elements and institutional settings of Oriental studies in the Soviet Union as well as the transformations that took place in the department. This section will

also tackle the Soviet Union's position as an Affirmative Action Empire and its complex relationship with the nationality policy. A comparison will be implemented to explore how these hegemonic discourses disseminated and differed in two different metropoles of the empire, Leningrad and Yerevan, in order to expose the power play between a non-Russian versus a Russian city. While the first part of the paper lays the foundation for a discussion on the formation of Kurdish identity in Soviet Orientalist academia through an extensive literature review, the theory section will be introducing interdisciplinary theories and methodology I utilized for analysis, primarily Benedict Anderson's "Imagined Communities," Michel Foucault's archeological method, and Mikhail Bakhtin's heteroglossia, implemented to deconstruct the historiographical trends in studies of Kurds and its relation to nationality policy and nation building. Doing so will reveal the power plays that were active in the construction of Soviet identity between the Soviet state and Kurdish academics – which will simultaneously reveal the complexity of Soviet Orientalism, and ultimately illustrate the constructions of Kurdish identities within the Kurdology departments.

Chapter 2: Theory and Methods

Said's Orientalism and Martin's Affirmative Action Empire

For this paper, I relied on and was in discussion with Edward Said's concept of Orientalism within his work *Orientalism,* in which he directly questioned and challenged the standard conventions through which Euro-American scholars traditionally portrayed the Orient. One of the major themes running through Said's work is the distortion that power relations between the West and the Orient brings to scholarship; scholars of the powerful nations instinctively implemented hegemonic patterns of representation of the "Orient" as "inferior" and "backwards" in order to construct the Occident as "superior" and "progressive," this discourse then allows the establishment of Western imperial hegemony over the Orient. Said draws from Michel Foucault the idea that discourses in scholarly and popular thinking, in particular regarding European views of the Islamic world, are inextricably enmeshed in the exercise of power. However, on the subject of the relationship between power and knowledge production, Said asserts: "For if it is true that no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances" (Said, 11). In sum, Said

asserts that historiography is burdened by Western essentialism of the East, and that a historian's task is to acknowledge this and question and push against the ideas handed down within the profession. This is where he distances from Foucault, because Foucault believed that one cannot escape a discourse, but Said offers a solution. He encouraged historians to 1) be critical towards certain Western concepts and approaches 2) distance themselves from portraying history as tales of Great Empires/Men 3) shift their focus to the ordinary and subaltern. Said's works have exerted an immense influence on the study of Middle Eastern, and generally non-European history.

In order to specifically interrogate Soviet Orientalism, Terry Martin's theory of the Soviet Union as "The Affirmative Action Empire" must be examined. Terry Martin, in his piece *The Affirmative Action Empire*, argues that Soviet policies included a comprehensive program of promoting cadres from minority populations in order to modernize new Eastern Soviet republics on an economic, cultural, and political scale as they were perceived to be "backwards" on the Marxist scale According to Martin,

> The category of cultural backwardness was, like indigenousness, related to the Bolshevik decolonization project, since Tsarist colonial oppression was said to have greatly exacerbated cultural backwardness. However, unlike indigenousness, cultural backwardness was even more closely linked to the Bolshevik ideology of developmentalism." (Martin 2001).

Martin further goes on to incorporate Saidian analysis in his piece stating that the Bolsheviks may have repudiated East versus West categories to differentiate in the racial, economic, social, or political capacities between nationalities; however, they maintained the Orient versus Occident dichotomy as a cultural distinction. In other words, the Affirmative Action Empire preserved imperial categories, because they still implemented essentialist categories of minority populations in order to modernize the empire, and such divisions did influence policy implementation through korenizatsiia. Minority populations received certain privileges, such as new schools, language rights, and cultural rights on the basis of their placement on the "modernity scale" as perceived by the Bolsheviks. Modernization was done through economic

advancement, cultural advancement, and through secularization because religion was seen as an inhibitor to progress. It is also important to point out that representatives from minority populations were at the forefront of the modernization project; these representatives were often selected on the basis of "trust", i.e. gendered minorities such as women or ethnic minorities within certain groups, i.e. Yezidis instead of Muslim Kurds. In the case of Kurds, they were one of the many benefactors of the korenizatsiia policy as we will see in the works produced by Kurdologists, who were often of Yezidi backgrounds, where there is presence of Soviet censorship but also freedom in expressing ideas that Kurds were often forbidden to express in the Middle East. Said's and Martin's methodology will be implemented in order to interrogate the following questions: What was the role of these academics in the Kurdology department in nation building through the korenizatsiia policy? Which parts of Tsarist discourses on the Soviet Orient were maintained in the new Soviet state, and which were completely replaced?

Michel Foucault on the Formation of Discourse and Power

When discussing Said's work and theory on Orientalism, it is important to point out that he has been deeply influenced by Michel Foucault's ideas on the relationship between knowledge and power. In his essay *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault examines the fundamental link between power and knowledge through the ways sexuality has been interpreted, regulated and talked about, since the 19th century to the present. He asserts:

> "At issue, rather, is the type of power it brought to bear on the body and on sex. In point of fact, this power had neither the form of the law, nor the effects of the taboo. On the contrary, it acted by multiplication of singular sexualities" (Foucault and Hurley 1978, 47).

In other words, Foucault pointed out that the power applied to the body and sex did not have the form of the law, nor was its purpose to constrain sex. Rather, he argued that power must be understood as the multiplicity of force relations in the sphere in which they constitute their own organization. Thus, according to Foucault's theory, the phenomenon of sexuality should be understood as constructed through the exercise of power relations. He further infers that power

comes from different directions and is employed in a linked organization with individuals circulating between these links. That being said, in order to understand Foucault's conceptualization of power, one must look into how it acts upon the immediate social circle of an individual.

Another one of Foucault's main insights that can be critically incorporated into an exploration of area studies and Orientalism is that discourses reflect power relationships, as some groups in society have the ability to shape discourses and to in effect shape what is factual for that society. In his work *Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault further elaborates on the archeological method of discursive investigation which seeks to examine the emergence of the discourse, the conditions under which it came to be, how it was transformed and how it came to an end. Rather than existing in an absolute where history follows a single trajectory, discourse is developed on the level "in which history can give place to definite types of discourse, which have their own type of historicity, and which are related to a whole set of various historicities" (Foucault 1972, 165). Archeology is therefore defined as "an enquiry whose aim is to rediscover on what basis knowledge and theory became possible; within what space of order knowledge is constituted" (Foucault 1966, 23). Its' primary aim is to investigate the social and historical conditions for the emergence and existence of specific forms of knowledge through deconstructing layers of discourses which Foucault terms as "epistemes" or "the strategic apparatus which permits of separating out from among all the statements which are possible those that will be acceptable within a field of scientificity, and which it is possible to say are true or false… the episteme is the 'apparatus' which makes possible the separation, not of the true from the false, but of what may from what may not be characterized as scientific" (Foucault 1975, 197). In other words, it is a set of ideas that are acceptable within the discourse of a specific historical period. The shifts between these epistemes are characterized by discontinuities and ruptures that result in change; the relations between these various epistemes are materialized within a discursive positivity that is part of a "historical priori" or the paradigm of discursive practices at any given historical period that a thinker operated under.

A further Foucauldian concept which influenced my methodologies is the “archive.” The "archive" is a collection of objects and statements that reveal what was permitted at a specific historical period within the paradigms of social conditions as much as what was censored:

> The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity, nor do they disappear at the mercy of chance external accidents; but they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities; that which determines that they do not withdraw at the same pace in time, but shine, as it were, like stars, some that seem close to us shining brightly from afar off, while others that are in fact close to us are already growing pale (Foucault 1972, 45).

The discovery of the archive constitutes what Foucault calls “archaeology.” Foucault’s later work *Discipline and Punish* was meant to be a critique of his previous archeological method through his proposal of an alternative, yet similar, theory directly influenced by Nietzsche which he termed “genealogy”. In his previous theoretical framework, Foucault emphasizes the role of power, which often stemmed from multiple sources, in the production of knowledge. Likewise, power is central to geneology as it seeks to analyze discursive formations of historical periods through historical relations of power. It seeks to dissect what is deemed “false” and what is deemed as “true” in different historical periods through mechanisms of power. These notions of power are further developed in yet another crucial Foucauldian concept known as governmentality, which deals with “the technologies of domination of others and those of the self” (Foucault 1988, 19). The notion seeks to demonstrate the interconnections between power exercised towards individuals by institutions or a state and that which is exercised by individuals towards themselves. These processes in turn imply interaction between aspects of politics and human ethics. Implementing this methodology would allow us to unearth the question of center-periphery relations – under which political conditions did the Kurdology cadres operate? What was the role of national markers in the discourse of power in various centres and peripheries?

Mikhail Bakhtin's Dialogical Forms of Discourse

The theoretical framework of this thesis will be informed by the above-mentioned Foucauldian notions in order to trace the process of Kurdological knowledge production during the post-Stalinist historical era and explore how different state and non-state actors interacted through power relations in order to develop the final product. It is worth noting that language and its associated power dynamics played an especially essential role in the final construction of Kurdish identity. The dialogic nature of language and communication is rooted in discourse and power as humans define themselves in relation to the Other. In Mikhail Bakhtin's words:

> I cannot do without the other; I cannot become myself without the other; I must find myself in the other, finding the other in me (in mutual reflection and perception). Justification cannot be justification of oneself, confession cannot be confession of oneself. I receive my name from the other, and this name exists for the other (to name oneself is to engage in usurpation). Self-love is equally impossible" (Bakhtin in Todorov 1984, 96).

In other words, the formation of identities are relational and defined in interaction and in dialogue with the other. Bakhtin terms these encounters as "dialogisms" which according to him "any utterance, whether spoken or written, that people use in communication with each other is internally dialogic" (Bakhtin 1986 in Marchenkova 2005, 72). Similar to Foucault who speaks of the union between epistemes in constituting discursive practices, Bakhtin argues that monological and dialogical forces are historical forces in constant conflict which give rise to monological and dialogical forms of discourse. The dominant force at any particular moment is in dialogue and in struggle with a subordinate in order to maintain a dominant position. Dialogical struggle, therefore, is the basis of all forms of discourse, which positions history as an internal force that produces certain states of language -- monoglossia, polyphone, heteroglossia. His primary method is "Heteroglossia" which describes the plurality of varieties of voices, meanings and expressions that are dialogically interrelated and which produce a discourse in dialogue with each other. For Bakhtin, the modern novel is the authentic embodiment of

heteroglossia as it acknowledges the presence or the conflict between different characters, narrators, and the authors themselves. It recognizes the convergences and divergences that take place in dialogue in different social contexts that result in harmony or disharmony. Under the heteroglossic method, phrases and words hold particular significance as they may indicate particular emotions, gestures, or invitations to negotiate for the audience. Ultimately, the heteroglossic method allows to identify the multiple dialogues present within text and speech as well as their meanings and under what social contexts they arose, as well as the role they played in establishing a certain discourse within certain historical time periods. It also attributes equal amounts of attention to the different characters within a dialogue, rather than attributing dominance to one.

While the relationship between the world and the text in Bakhtin's work, as well as Said's, is marked by the shift in the value of language as a primary category for determining knowledge, the relationship between language and meaning in Bakhtin's work is not entirely symbolic.80 For Said, the text remains founded in the historical moments in which litera- ture is produced and read.81 For Bakhtin, literature generates exchanges between the speech acts of historically and materially constituted con- scious subjects. The tension between Foucauldian discourse and intertextuality accounts for Said's description of the Orient as both a real and imagined place. Bakhtin's dialogism instead describes these relations of power, not only as institutions that produce knowledge or a set of texts that generate a collective consciousness through repetition but through the sociopolitical function of language. Foucault's conception of discourse relies on a critical approach to the epistemological foundations of the culture, whereas Bakhtin understands discourse through the social life and creative power of the word. Indeed, this very notion of creativity is in part indebted to a line of German romantic thought, as well as the aforementioned German and Russian engagements with evolutionary biology.

Applicability of Foucault's and Bakhtin's Theories on the Formation of Soviet Kurdology

By combining the work of Bakhtin and Foucault, I aim to show how heteroglossia operates through discursive exchanges that represent power relations between the works produced by Soviet-Kurdish scholars in Kurdology departments, the Soviet state itself, and the audience to which it was intended in the construction of a Soviet-Kurdish identity. Furthermore, using

Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia as an organizing concept, the dialogues that take place within works written by Soviet-Kurdish scholars will be the main focus of analysis. Bakhtin's theoretical focus on the importance of language in construction of identities opens a door for a critical examination of how cultural productions that result from dialogue draw attention to the nation and nation-building, and how writings by these scholars engage with Soviet national discourses. That being said, instead of solely focusing on the influence of the Soviet state on the production of knowledge in Kurdology departments, the role of Kurdish academics in the construction of Kurdish identity and its direct relevance to Soviet foreign policy must also be taken into account. The experiences and knowledge produced by Kurdish academics in these departments must be presented in their own terms and categories rather than terms and categories external to their own worldview.

When discussing these notions, it is integral that one's outlook be informed by historicism, which employs that the first duty of a historian is to make an effort to imagine the past as lived by the historical subjects and to see the world as they saw it. Roxanne Euben applies Said's idea that discourses in scholarly and popular thinking, in particular regarding European views of the Islamic world, are inextricably enmeshed in the exercise of power, and argues that Western rationalist discourse dictates and manipulates the images of political phenomena through the filter of their own Eurocentric categories of knowledge. Therefore, "ultimately, rationalist interpretations must be understood to express Western conceptions of truth, political fears, and cultural unease as much as they describe what fundamentalism really is" (Euben 2001, 22). The alternative to Western rationalist approach to political thought, according to Euben, is a dialogic model that suggests "meaning and function are dialectically and mutually determinative." Drawing lessons from Martin Heidegger and Hans Georg Gadamer, this model of understanding involves an interpretative approach that "starts with the premise that language or "linguistically"—is the basic mode of human existence" (Euben 2001, 36). These scholars rely on Bakhtin's heteroglossia to put forward the concept of "radical tolerance" in the name of mutual recognition and understanding when in dialogue with another point of view, while at the same time asserting that these relationships between different groups do not require rejection of ideological criticism. Similarly, Euben does not argue that the dialogic model "invulnerable to distortions of power" (Euben 2001, 13), but she believes that it less susceptible to them than

explanatory models, such as the rationalist model, that readily dismiss non-Western ideas as "backwards" or "irrational" and therefore not worthy of any importance or analyses. As Gadamer puts it, one has to "be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own foremeanings" (Euben 2001, 37), which will thus allow us to see more than a reflection of our own preconceptions. This is reflected in the works of previous scholars, who have only focused on the ideological and political binaries between the Soviet Union and the United States or on the links between the West and its former colonies, and therefore, disregarded the interactions and exchanges of ideas between the Soviet periphery and the central government. Instead, they often fail to grant agency to people living in the Soviet Union by not assessing their ideas in their own terms and immediately dismissing them as Soviet pawns. Although Soviet scholars would be influenced by ideological stipulations imposed by the state, it cannot be understated that they also managed to advance their own interests.

Upon conducting this analysis, my primary purpose is to unearth the extent to which the Soviet Union censored Soviet Kurdologists and to which extent they were able to bypass such censorship and attain agency to express their own personal ambitions as Kurds that were prohibited to their kin in the Middle East. The following chapter will provide a brief literature review on Soviet Kurdish identity and Soviet Kurdology.

Methods

The primary sources that will be utilized for this research are the digital collection kept on the portal of the The National Armenian Library website and the Saint Petersburg Institute of Oriental Manuscripts website. The National Armenian Library collection contains multitudes of Armenian and Russian language articles that are written from the early Soviet period to the modern time, with the main area of interest on Armenian history. The Saint Petersburg Institute of Oriental Manuscripts contains Tsarist era, Soviet era, and modern era Russian documents ranging from ethnographic articles to fiction literature. The differences between the collections of these two areas will be explored; the Saint Petersburg collection primarily contains documents that have an ethnographic and folkloric theme, whereas the Armenian collection focuses more on political history. The specific collection that will be reviewed is the collection dedicated to

Kurdology (Kurdish studies), both at the Leningrad branch and the Yerevan branch. However, the entire collection will not be utilized for the purpose of this research paper. The selected primary works will be limited to Tatyana Aristova, Heciye Cindi, Jalile Jalil, Kanate Kurdoev, Arab Shamilov, S. Avanesov, R. Saakyan and N. Khalfin. The documents chosen are selected in relevance to the topic of study, which is the complexity of Soviet Orientalism in relation to Soviet-Kurdish nation building and Soviet Kurdology. The documents are flagged in relevance to the topic of study, date of publication, and detected for the listed keywords above. Any documents from the period of Bolshevik revolution to 1980s that contain discussion of Kurdish identity, national building, nationality policy, national history, ethnogenesis, foreign relations with Kurds in the Middle East, Middle Eastern Kurdish history, Soviet-Kurdish history, religion (Yezidism versus Islam), and ethnography will be examined – these include both academic pieces and fictional pieces, such as poetry and folklore. The time period selected will also reveal how the Kurdology department has evolved, as well as the changing political context under which Soviet Kurdologists were operating. Which time periods gave Soviet Kurdologists more freedom in their writing and in which they had less? Did the Orientalism practiced in the early Soviet Union differ from the Orientalism practiced in the late Soviet period, especially after Edward Said's prominent study on Western Orientalism was published in the 1970s? The information extracted lends itself to the Soviet perspectives on Kurdish identity at the given time. The selection will be as objective as possible, as complete objectivity is impossible. One cannot reflect long upon the question of veracity in historiography without coming to grips with the most important problem, that of objectivity. In their works, Charles A. Beard and Michel Foucault seek to find, analyze and understand the role of objectivity within research itself. In his work "Historical Relativism", Charles A. Beard challenged the possibility of total objectivity that was propagated by historians of his era. Instead, he argued that all history should be treated as theories as opposed to being absolute truth. Beard further believed that historians needed to consider their own biases when it came to reporting history, as he asserted "We do not acquire the colorless, neutral mind by declaring our intention to do so. Rather do we clarify the mind by admitting its cultural interests and patterns -- interests and patterns that will control, or intrude upon, the selection and organization of historical materials." Foucault further asserted that objective knowledge does not exist, because all knowledge exists within a discourse that is shaped by power. In order to be as objective as possible within the confines of objectivity as

Beard and Foucault highlighted, I will be selecting texts from two different geographical locations, from different time periods, and from both Russian and Kurdish Soviet Kurdologists. The next step is a process of analyzing each of these documents.

The articles that will be examined in this paper contribute information pertaining to the Kurdology sub-department of the Oriental Studies department of the Soviet Union in Armenia and Leningrad. The chosen texts represent the perception of Kurdish identity as espoused by the writers in the Kurdology departments and the extent of influence that the Soviet state had on these writings and vice versa. Some of these texts portray a similarity to Western Orientalism – despite the Soviet Union presenting itself as an "anti-colonial empire", Soviet Orientalism continues to utilize a binary and essentialist views and analysis of Soviet Orient's history which is revealed in the works of Kanate Kurdoev and Tatyana Aristova who continue to implement pre-Tsarist sources in their analysis of Kurdish history and ethnogenesis. Whereas at the time, other authors, such as Kanate Kurdoev, Tatyana Aristova, Jalile Jalil, Kanate Kurdoev, S. Avanesov, R. Saakyan and N. Khalfin, bypass Soviet censorship and gain an outlet where they are able to initiate a counter-discourse, expressing sympathy with the Kurdish calamities in postcolonial Middle East, supporting Kurdish national liberation movement, and being critical of those states' nationalist policies. Such privileges of expression did not exist for the Kurds living in the Middle East, where they were persecuted and silenced by nationalist governments and Western colonial powers. These texts are power-operated vehicles whereby Soviet Kurdish nation-building was expressed and national narratives were interrogated.

The power-relation is also mapped through comparing the articles produced at the Leningrad branch of Kurdology versus articles produced at the Yerevan branch of Kurdology. To refer back to Foucault and Bakhtin, it is necessary to examine the multi-faceted and dispersed nature of power, which has no center and comes from a multitude of sites. By mapping power, it will be possible to map the power of the Soviet state. Therefore, both the Yerevan and Leningrad articles are analyzed in this paper, because they reveal the differences of knowledge power measured by the geographical proximity to the center in Moscow. In this analysis, Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia fills the gap that Foucault's of power analysis misses, which is his emphasis on multitude of voices, in this case from the Kurdish and non-Kurdish academics at the Kurdology departments in Yerevan and Leningrad, that constitute the basis of formation of overall

Soviet-Kurdish identity. These are the prisms that will be used to analyze the material, ultimately answering the main question that is: What do works published by the Soviet Kurdology departments in Yerevan and Leningrad reveal about Orientalism, as defined by Edward Said, practiced by the Soviet Union?

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent travel restrictions, the primary sources selected in this paper were obtained through the National Library of Armenia and Saint Petersburg Institute of Oriental Manuscripts digital collections. Regrettably, the analysis of the Moscow section of the Kurdology department is not included in this paper due to travel restrictions and the unavailability of the documents in an online archive of the department. The initial plan was to travel to Armenia and Russia in the beginning of 2020 during my final second semester at the Jagiellonian University at Krakow, Poland, and visit the National Library of Armenia and Saint Petersburg Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, where bulk of Kurdology documents are held. Unfortunately, I was unable to do so due to travel restrictions placed across the world with the start of the pandemic. As a result, I had to restructure my entire thesis and therefore request three extensions.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

As discussed, this section will be situated in the theory of Said, Martin Foucault, Bakhtin and the various references from Benedict Anderson, Roxanne Euben, and Arthur McDowal in order to trace the Kurdish ethnogenesis in the Middle East and in the Soviet Caucasus, and also to contextualize the construction of Soviet-Kurdish identity within the overall construction of Kurdish identity elsewhere. This section will also discuss the Soviet Kurdish identity as constructed by the Soviet Kurdology department, followed by the unique and complex Orientalist mechanisms that were put in place in this department.

Kurdish ethnogenesis

In order to understand the construction of Kurdish identity in the Soviet Union and where it drew its inspirations, its ethnogenesis must be traced as it allows us to comprehend the influences on its modern construction. This section will also compare the different positions of Kurds occupied

in various states in order to explore and compare the different formations of Kurdish identity within the context of a given nation-state occupied, whether Iraq, Iran, Turkey or the Soviet Union. The purpose of this is to explore the power-play between Kurds and the states they occupied because ethnicity as it exists within a specific context reveals the dynamics of power and the social order of the state; identification is intimately connected to the political and social context of the national entity. These social orders are not stable through time and context, and even if subjects vehemently identify with a certain ethnicity, this identification is related to a self-imposed choice within an externally imposed context. The natures of identities are both relational and situated and the meanings that are assigned to identities are continuously contested on social and subjective levels due to the prevailing historical context. What it means to be Kurdish in Soviet Union differs from the meanings it is assigned in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria or France, and the meanings of Kurdishness will change and be transformed as soon as subjects identified as Kurds travel and migrate to other places with other histories and political circumstances, hierarchies, forms of subordination and domination. Another important aspect of identity, either individual or collective, is its dependency on "the other"; one's identity is constructed through differentiation from others.

In his work "Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism", Benedict Anderson traces the origins of nationalism. He emphasizes the "imaginary" aspect of nationalism in a sense that the connection between these people in a given "nation" is "imagined." The sentiments of national identity within the "imagined community" transmitted in the minds of members of a nation through discourse, primarily through narratives of national culture. While the nation may be imagined, it is no less legitimate than any other forms of identities. As Anderson puts it, "in fact, all communities larger than primordial face-to-face villages (and perhaps even these) an imagined" (Anderson 2016, 6). Therefore, it can be inferred from the history of ethnicity formation by Anderson, that modem national identity of Kurds has more been developed during the 20th century with the creation of nation states in the Middle East through the Sykes Picot and Treaty of Sevres which created an imagined sense of solidarity in struggle between Kurds against Western European colonialism and Arab/Iranian/Turkish occupation of their native lands (Al-Sahlawi 2013). However, what stands in contrast, that the construction of Kurdish identity in the Soviet Union was operated through the korenizatsiia

policy imposed by the Bolsheviks. The korenizatsiia policy was imposed on Yezidis and Kurdish Muslims to create them into a single unitary group, and discourses on what constituted Soviet Kurdish identity were transmitted through works produced in the Soviet Kurdology department.

Before dwelling into how Kurdish identity has developed within different national contexts, I will briefly contextualize the ethnogenesis of overall Kurdish identity. Kurds are an Iranian ethnic group who primarily speak a Western Iranian language which is further split between the Sorani Kurdish dialect spoken in Iraq and Iran and the Kurmanji Kurdish dialect primarily spoken in Turkey, Syria and parts of the South Caucasus (McDowall 2004, 9). Some Kurds speak Zaza, a completely different language that belongs to the Caspian Iranian language group. It is important to note that Sorani and Kurmanji are not mutually intelligible and the vocabulary of both dialects are influenced by the respective nation-states they occupy. Furthermore, while Sorani is written in the Perso-Arabic script, Kurmanji utilizes a Latin based writing system. According to Arthur McDowal, Kurds began to think and act as an ethnic community from 1918 onwards as they faced persecution, loss of land, deportations, which resulted in the formation of early nationalist movements as a response. As McDowall asserts

> ...any modern history of the Kurds must examine two inter-related questions: the struggle between the Kurdish people and the governments to which they are subject for control of the lands they inhabit and the struggle of the Kurds to move from being merely a people who happen to have the attributes commonly described as 'Kurdish' to being a coherent community with the essential characteristics of nationhood (McDowall 2004, 1).

For instance, in the case of Turkey, for most national groups inhabiting the Ottoman Empire, this sense of modern ethnic identity replaced the idea of Ottoman citizenship and “millet" which was the word used to describe membership in a religious community such as the Armenian millet and the Assyrian millet. The term millet was coined a new meaning after the collapse of the Ottoman and Qajar empires and with the establishment of two new modern nation states -- Turkey and Iran (McDowall 2004). While ethnic groups such as Turks and Arabs easily embraced their new national identities, especially in regions where they formed a coherent majority, Kurds were faced with the consequences of competing against these particular states all the while also

resisting the influence of Western colonial powers, which left them feeling like they were placed at the short end of the stick. Among the different factors that positioned the Kurds in this situation in the region included the fact that, like the Turks and Arabs, they were disadvantaged because they lacked a united civic culture, support from Western colonial powers and an established standard of literature and language (reference?).

With the establishment of the modern Republic of Turkey, the new identity proposed to replace the complex Ottoman identity systems was Turkishness, which was based on social conditioning and ideology rather than a coherent national identity with many previously non-Turkish identified groups being categorized under this umbrella (Atasoy 2011). Although the rise of this identity can be traced back to the Young Turks, it was constructed to its modern form under the new dominant Kemalist state (Atasoy 2011). It was also during this era that Turkishness transitioned from its panturkist origins in the hands of the Young Turks, encompassing the Turkic peoples and their unity to a more coherent Turkish nationalist identity that corresponds to the borders of the newly established Turkish republic. The construction of the modern Turkish identity was first established under the new dominant Kemalist state. Under the lead of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the new Turkish Republic stressed "Turkishness" by denying the existence of other non-Turkish nationalities, primarily the Kurds, the largest minority in Turkey. Consequently, with the Kemalist rule, the Kurdish question emerged along with the understanding that if Kurds were to become Turks, the Kurdish question would not exist (Keleş 2016). Methods of assimilation included a ban on speaking Kurdish in public and changing the names of Kurdish towns. On March 3 1924, a decree banned all Kurdish schools, organizations, and publications, as well as religious fraternities and madrasas, which were the last source of education for most Kurds (Kasier and Jongerden 2014, 86). In regards to language, a Turkish dictionary published by the Turkish Language Institution (Türk Dil Kurumu) in 1936 defined the word "Kurd" as: "Name given to a group or a member of this group of Turkish origin, many who have changed their language, speaking a broken form of Persian and lives in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran." Well into the 1980s, Kurds came to be officially referred to as "Mountain Turks", who had forgotten or were in denial of their "Turkishness" (Beşikçi 1970). Although distinct from Kemalist assimilationism, Kurds were subject to assimilationist policies in Iraq, where

Pan-Arabist political aspirations worked to eliminate Kurdish presence and history from the Arab majority country.

In contrast to their counterparts in the rest of Southwest Asia, the case of Kurds in the Caucasus was shaped with a strong and unifying sense of a "Caucasian Kurd" identity, which only began with the Bolshevik nationality policy that incorporated a new sense into what constituted the definition of a "Kurd", further implemented by the establishment of research institutions that further influenced the identity within other regions as well. The politicization of the modern Kurdish identity also began around this period as the Soviets began to have a vested interest in political events in West Asia, with the Kurds beginning to be viewed as important allies in both Iraq and Turkey. Therefore, a combination of Soviet foreign policy interests and the availability of research and nation-building resources placed Soviet Kurds in an influential standing compared to their counterparts in the region.

What stands in contrast, however, is the presence of cultural outlets for Kurds to build their identity in the Soviet Union, particularly through standardization of literature. The Soviet Union, through the nationalities policy, offered Kurds the opportunity to freely practice their culture and transmit that knowledge into literature published through the Kurdology department. Despite the limitation and censorship on the contents that Kurds were able to produce under the Soviet state, they were able to create an established standard of literature and language. This did not exist at the time in the Middle East (Ghazaryan 2021). According to Bakhtin, language materializes both personal and social identity -- literature allows the subject to be voiced and be able to voice one's identity; one the one hand, they are influenced and commanded by an authority languages, in this context, by the authority of the state, on the other hand, they can nonetheless exercise power over the authority by interrogating the central discourse by using the language they are mandated to speak (Bakhtin 1986).

Oriental Area Studies and Soviet Kurdology

With the rise of critical theory in academia in the 1980s, there has been discourse aimed at shifting away from the essentialist and deterministic foundation of area studies and regional

geography, with an attempt to be more reflexive towards how the field can play a role in maintaining colonial power structures on a global level, in what was envisioned by contemporary scholars to be the new age of the discipline, led by academics such as Paasi (1986) and Pudup (1988). Nevertheless, despite these attempts and changes to the overall discourse, area studies have remained fairly rooted in its traditionalist roots and unable to effectively retaliate that area studies is utilized to maintain western and postcolonialist narratives of the rest of the world and the "other" (Koch 2016). One such critic who has been challenging these power structures, especially within Oriental studies is Edward Said, a scholar of Palestinian descent who examined a large body of mainly French and English texts to understand how individual authors contributed to and were shaped by orientalist narratives which was in turn utilized by European colonial powers to further establish hegemony over colonized lands, justifying their presence and interventionist policies in the region. For instance, in his close analysis of English writings, Said demonstrates how English academic understandings of Egypt justified and reaffirmed English colonization of the country:

> The discoveries of Westerners about the manifest and modern Orient acquired a pressing urgency as Western territorial acquisition in the Orient increased. Thus what the scholarly Orientalist defined as the "essential" Orient was sometimes contradicted, but in many cases was confirmed, when the Orient became an actual administrative obligation. Certainly Cromer's theories about the Oriental—theories acquired from the traditional Orientalist archive —were vindicated plentifully as he ruled millions of Orientals in actual fact (Said 1978, 223).

In the hands of Cromer, this knowledge was effective as he believed he had put it to use in governing Egypt. Such essentialist and unquestioned narratives employed as an imperialist medium in the hands of western colonialists are consistent across Oriental and Area studies. As Said elaborates upon the effect of Orientalism as a discipline, he argues that over time, an academic consensus was formed over what constituted an "Orient" in Western consciousness with the "distillation of essential ideas" (Said 1978, 205) about the region raised to the status of moral neutrality and objective validity. As Said notes, "it was sufficient for the writer to use the

word Oriental for the reader to identify a specific body of information about the Orient" (Said 1978, 205).

Despite its prevalence in Orientalist academic circles, such discourses surrounding area studies were not solely unique to the study of the Middle East. Rather, these debates should also be understood within the context of the end of the Cold War and the West's shifting relationship with Eastern Europe. Like Orientalism, Eastern European studies was heavily influenced by and constructed through networks of knowledge production grounded outside of the region. During the Enlightenment, West Europeans understood this region as neither Orient nor Western, a place filled with contradictions whose coherence a European gaze could not recognize. This combination of Western proximity with the perceived position of inferiority shaped much of Eastern Europe's own colonial relations with its subjugated Orient in the Caucasus and Central Asia (Tlostanova 2008, 2). To illustrate, Russian Oriental studies, a discipline established during the Russian imperial era, was heavily influenced by German scholarship, which subsequently lay the foundation for its Soviet successor (Tolz 2008, 62). That being said, Soviet studies of its Oriental lands and regions that were inherited from the Tsarist empire were central to its nation building and nationality policy. Soviet Orientalists continued to implement the works of Russian Orientalists in their examinations and explorations of diverse nationalities that inhabited the Caucasus and Central Asia, and in turn, the works they produced were essential in consecutive Bolshevik nationality policies (Suny and Martin 2001) (Atkin 2020). Although Said excluded Russian and German colonial academic works in his study due to their differences in colonial administration to that of English and French scholars, Russian Oriental studies was deeply embedded in and influenced by its relation to its English and French counterparts in the sense that although they saw themselves as inferior to the West, that inferiority was tackled through establishing superiority over their own colonized peoples (Tolz 2008, 2-4) (Ahmad 2018) (Cronin 2015) (Volkov 2018). Said also insisted that Russia's case was different to that of Western Europe because Russia colonized regions that were in close proximity, however, in Chooni-Moore's critique, adjacency cannot be used as a benchmark for what is considered "colonization." As she explains, "...the distance between Tashkent and Moscow could be compared to that of London and Cairo; until the creation of Central Asian railroads under Russian colonial administration, the distance between the two cities was a difficult one." However, Said fairly argues that Russian and Soviet imperialism did not follow the Western

European model of imperialism, as previously mentioned, the Soviet Union as an Affirmative Action Empire holds a complex position in its colonial relationship to its Oriental territories which can be seen through the mechanics of its nationalities policy as related to Kurds.

Similar to critiqued usage of Area Studies in Western colonialist countries, Oriental Studies departments in the Soviet Union were utilized by the state in the construction of Soviet nationalities, with the works produced by Soviet Orientalists playing an integral role in the toolbox of policymakers in the Soviet State as well as its respective Soviet "Oriental" republics to construct new identities, cultural specificities, and histories that were preserved well after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Oriental Studies were also essential to the Bolsheviks in their goal to advance "Eastern nationalities" forward on the Marxist timeline. Bolsheviks viewed their policy as "anti-imperialist" as they viewed their project to be liberating Eastern Societies from their "backwardness" that was caused by the Tsarist Empire. Soviet Oriental studies fit into Said's definition only to a certain degree as many of the scholars working in the institutions were native Caucasian or Central Asian scholars (Cronin 2015). Additionally, Soviet Orientalist scholarship heavily influenced the state's foreign policies towards neighboring countries that bordered these states, the Soviet Union had a vested interest in being granted their own research centers. This resulted in Soviet republics such as Kazakhstan, Dagestan, and Tatarstan not having access to the same level of resources to establish their own research hubs while others like Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan were given the necessary autonomy to do so (Volkov 2018).

Although they did not have an established state, Soviet Kurds fit into this paradigm as their national identities and national history were constructed with the aid of the Bolshevik nationality policy that granted them an official written language, their own theater and schools (Shakarian 2017), and the imperial Kurdology department that continued to thrive under the Soviet Union as it aided the nationality policy itself. This was in part due to the integral role Kurds played in contemporary Southwest Asian politics through their demand of independence from countries such as Turkey and Iraq who were essentially becoming important Western allies in the region, which in turn made Kurds ideal allies to the Soviet Union (reference?). Their significance as an accessory to Soviet foreign policy is further evident in the works produced by the Soviet Kurdology department, many of which constructed Kurdish identity in relation to Kurds inhabiting Turkey, Iran, and Iraq. For instance, much has been written on the political situations

of the Kurdish question in Turkey and Iraq in the works of Armenian and Leningrad-based Kurdologists. Therefore, even though there is an extent to which Soviet Kurdologists fell under similar Orientalist tropes and issues echoed in the works of Western researchers such as Cromer whose works were utilized to justify foreign policy, their scholarship was distinct due to being led by individuals of Kurdish backgrounds and their allies, whose works lay the groundwork of Kurdish identity discourse (Landau 1975) both within the Soviet Union and beyond. The Kurdology department reveals the paradoxes of Soviet Orientalism and its complex mechanisms – for one, the Bolsheviks continued to incorporate essentialist views into the nationalities policies towards the Kurdish identity which the Kurdologists were required to adhere to; however, on another hand, Soviet Kurdologists were able to disrupt the Soviet propaganda project on the nationality policy by defying some of the Soviet cultural and behavior norms of the New Soviet person. This was possible to be achieved by contributing to the machinery and sacrificing some of their own interests for the sake of a socialist state; only by conforming to some of the state machinery, were they able to enter the public realm and express their personal interests and concerns. As Brigid O'Keeffe quotes Stephen Kotkin in her examination of the effects of the nationality policy towards the Roma, "historians cannot escape the reality that all Soviet citizens were required by the state to "participate as if one believed", and therefore, historical inquiry that does not take into account the influences of the Soviet subjects is unfair to the subjects in question (O'Keeffe 2020) (Kotkin 1995).

Analysis

The main section of this thesis will begin by discussing the complex form of Soviet Orientalism as detected in the selected works from the Kurdology department, followed by a discussion of differences between the Leningrad and Yerevan Kurdology departments which will reveal the complex power dynamics between center and periphery. The rest of the section will be compartmented into two parts: the first part will address some of the limitations that the Kurdology department was subject to to in regards to their identity construction in their works, while the second part will address some of the freedoms, or Kurdish resistances and interrogations of Soviet propaganda. The subsections will be summarized into main themes, such as secularization of identity in pursuit of a Soviet socialist identity, standardization of Kurdish language to create the new Soviet Kurdish identity, the separation of Kurdology from the

Iranology department, Kurdish identity liberation and its exposure to the Soviet audience, that were gathered from the Kurdology departments in Leningrad and Yerevan, which will further reveal the center-periphery relations between the two metropoles in Soviet Moscow and Soviet Armenia. The methods that will assist in interrogating power relations between the center and periphery will be Foucault discourse analysis. Bakhtin's heterroglossia will be utilized to assess the power dimension of the language used in these works. Ultimately, questioning Soviet Kurdish identity construction will reveal the complexity of Soviet Orientalism in the context of korenizatsiia.

Complex Orientalism

As discussed, Soviet Orientalism does not entirely fit the mold of Western Orientalism that Said analyzed in his prominent study, and one of the examples that capture this is the Kurdology department in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union, as assessed by Western academics, portrays it as monotonous and unworthy of further exploration into its complex social and political life (Lieven 1994). On one hand, the Soviet Union resembled its Western counterparts by legitimizing mission civilisatrice through its nationality policy that sought to modernize its Eastern territories on the Marxist timeline, on the other, the mission civilisatrice as espoused by the Soviet Union was unique in a sense that it promoted cultural and educational rights for Eastern populations, which were at the forefront of these Soviet projects. The Soviet Union, and particularly, the Kurdology department, provides a unique case study that reveals the complex relationship of power and domination between the Orient and Occident that does not entirely fit Said's evaluation of dichotomy between the Orient and the Occident as viewed through a Western imperial lense. Whereas many imperial Russian Orientologists appear to conform very neatly to Said's paradigm, the position of Soviet Kurdology is more complicated due its socialist state ideology, anti-Western imperialist stance, and its Affirmative Action nationality policy.

Leningrad versus Yerevan Kurdology Departments

Soviet Kurdologists interests were split into several trajectories. First, the main interest was the international relations with Kurds abroad, as well as the topic of the "Kurdish question", or in other words, Kurdish independence movements taking place abroad. The second topic of interest was ethnography, folklore, and language. The topic of the "Kurdish Question" was particularly

discussed in the Kurdology Departments located in Armenia, and the topic of Kurds in the Soviet Union was also particularly discussed in Armenia as well due to its large Kurdish demographic. Whereas in Leningrad, the topics of folklore, pre-modern history, and linguistics were the primary topics of investigation. This phenomenon could be explained through the proximity that Kurds had to Armenians in terms of national liberation and shared history, therefore, more flexibility was granted in the permitted written topics in the Armenian kurdology department. In contrast, in Leningrad, the topics of national liberation that were irrelevant to the Soviet project were more difficult to bypass.

The study of Kurdish liberation movements also became more prominent after the Stalinist period, where the Soviet Union gained more interest in the political events taking place in the Middle East as the United States started to meddle in the region (Hess 1974). The political events in the Middle East allowed Kurdologists, particularly in Armenia, to gain the freedom to write on the topic of the discrimination that their Kurdish counterparts were facing in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran. It gave them the power to influence Soviet foreign policy in the Middle East, in particular when it came to Kurds. The Soviet Union supported the Kurdish political figures in Iraq, such as Qassem and Barzani, and funded Kurdish students from Iraq to study in the Soviet Union (Smolansky 1967), some of whom became actively involved in the Kurdology department, such as Maruf Khaznadar (Leezenberg 2011, 14).

In contrast, the Leningrad branch of the Kurdology department mainly focused on the study of languages and ethnography of Kurds. However, the Leningrad branch had a huge influence in shaping the korenizatsiia policy in the early Soviet period, and therefore, many ideas of Kurds that the Soviet Union had derived from the Leningrad branch. Additionally, the Leningrad branch continued to implement pre-Soviet Tsarist resources in their work (Suny and Martin, 2001) (Martin 2001), therefore, the idea of Kurdish nationality continued to follow an essentialist view espoused by the Tsarist Orientalists. Their theoretical and empirical work was thus foundational to Soviet ideologies. This, however, took a shift with the post-Stalinist period as Soviet Kurds began to gain more contact with Middle Eastern Kurdish students arriving in Russia (Leezenberg 2011, 14).

The following analysis section will analyze both works from the Yerevan and Saint Petersburg department in order to assess the power play that was operating between the center, Russian majority versus periphery, Oriental minority, under the new Soviet regime. To what extent did the Soviet Union monitor topics covered? To what extent did the Kurdologists fight against the material and epistemological effects of supposedly true discourses under the Soviet Union? What were the hegemonic spatial differences between the Leningrad branch versus the Yerevan branch? The center and periphery relations and spatiality of power has been extensively studied in Foucault's work – according to Foucault, power relations are always changing, therefore, permitting both degree of autonomous activity and arbitrary repression, which sometimes fluctuate depending on location and time. Different regions acquired different amounts of power and autonomy, according to their location, ethic and economic demographics, and military or economic significance. Power within a spatial prism reveals its inherent instabilities and hegemonies. Said has also further acknowledged the importance of spatial power in the context of colonial center versus colonized periphery spatial relationship. Ultimately, the discourse of the center is shaped by the periphery, therefore, the Kurdology departments will expose the hegemonic comparison between the two with the Soviet center.

Kurdish Identity as controlled by the Soviet State

Kurdish in Form, Socialist in Content: Secularization of Identity

Korenizatsiia's main goal was to modernize what Bolsheviks perceived to be "backwards" minority groups, and one of the processes of this social modernizations involved secularization of identities, and in particular secularization of Muslim identities, whom were perceved to be a security threat due to the bordering Muslim countries (Wolf 1969). In the case of Kurds, Yezidis were placed at the center of identity construction, whereas most Kurdish Muslims were deported to the peripheries of Central Asia. However, Yezidi academics were also prohibited to perform any forms of identity expression in their works that goes outside of the limits of secular Soviet Marxism. Their conformance to this part of Soviet limitations would allow Kurds to receive some freedoms in return. In return for reproducing official Soviet ideas, minority groups were expected to receive perks and privileges in return for their conformity (Martin 2001) (Suny and

Martin 2001). As Zbigniew Wojnowski asserts in his paper on "Patriotism and the Soviet Empire: Ukraine Views the Socialist States of Eastern Europe, 1956-1985",

> Soviet subjects invested official slogans with a range of meanings, seeking thereby to obtain power: they sought "access to knowledge and language, which confer the ability to classify ideas, behaviours, and experiences and impose that classification, as norms, on others (Wojnowski 2011, 14).

This again reveals the ambiguous position of Soviet Orientalism through korenizatsiia policy's limitations and freedoms because the power dynamic is not compartmentalized between the Orient and the Occident – the Soviet Orient, in this Kurds, were able to access power-knowledge, however, they were some aspects of their identity that they had to complement to the Soviet state ideology, such as the secularization of Soviet identities. Secularist interpretations are prevalent in academic pieces published in Kurdology departments. Namely, the Islamic aspect of the Kurdish identity is largely ostracized and pre-Islamic elements are emphasized.

As mechanisms of power, the Soviet state sought to dictate the ideas and practices of individuals to sustain the appropriate socialist order, and one of these practices included strict secularism that matched the principles of the new socialist state. Religion, and in this particular case Islam, was seen as a backward religion that did not match the state's modernization project and inhibited the state from moving forward on the Marxist timeline (Kamper 2009). Islam is painted to be a "dangerous" and "archaic" in Western Orientalist discourse (Said 1978), as it is also the case in the Soviet Union that inherited Tsarist Orientalist works that painted Islam as an antithesis to progressive Christian civilization, and now Bolshevik civilization (Kamper 2009, 4). For the Bolsheviks, Islam was seem one of factors that may inhibit their progress, and therefore, received much attention in contrast to Christian counterparts. Muslim populations, including Kurds, were subject to extensive discursive control form the Soviet state in relation to practice and discussion of Islamic elements of their identity; Islam was seen as an antonym for modernity (Kamper 2009, 4). This discourse disseminated in the Kurdology department, where there was an absence of the Islamic aspect of Kurdish identity in historical and ethnographic works, instead folkloric pre-Islamic aspects are favored in addition to a new socialist interpretation of Kurdish identity formation. The centralization of Yezidis into the Soviet Kurdish identity formation,

instead of Muslim Kurds, was also part of the Soviet state's mechanisms to eradicate any influence on Islam on Kurds.

In his article "Soviet Orientalism and Subaltern Linguistics," Michiel Leezenberg discusses the folklorization of national cultures as part of an effort to create a diverse set of collective workers through the korenizatsiia policy. The efforts were initiated in 1929 in Armenia where a "a systematic alphabetization campaign was implemented among the Kurds of Soviet Armenia, for which a new alphabet was specifically created using the Latin script, and new Kurdish-language textbooks for adult education and elementary schools were published at an astonishing pace" (Leezenberg in Bod 2014, 107). However, the promotion of Kurdish literature came with a price -- earlier Kurdish literate traditions, many of which often contained Islamic elements, were largely discarded. Thus, as part of Kurdish nativization efforts by the Soviet state, local Islamic traditions of learning in the dresses were labeled "backwards" and pre-Soviet poetic traditions were "irrelevant" due to their "anti-revolutionary" and "bourgeois" language. Consequently, these traditions were replaced by news "proggressive" ones that were funded and monitored by the new socialist state (Leezenberg in Bod 2014, 107). Early Soviet studies of the Kurds clearly aimed at the creation of the Kurds as a distinct nation defined by its proper language and folkloric traditions that exclude religious and pre-Soviet elements. This in turn, resulted in assimilating Yezidis into the larger Kurdish ethnogenesis.

Nikolai Marr, a Russian Imperial Orientalist who is acclaimed for his academic and journalistic works on the Kurds, has had a strong influence on the essentialist constructions of the Soviet Kurdish national identity. His ideas fit in well with official policies and in the 1930s became an obligatory feature of scholarly work on Kurdish languag**e** and folklore carried out in Leningrad and Moscow (Leezenberg in Bod 2014). As a result, an essentialist interpretation of Kurdish history and culture was common in folkloric works produced by Soviet Kurdologists. This essentialism became exaggerated during the early Stalinist period with the death of Stalin and the return of Marr. Despite the later censorship of Marr's works during the Stalinist period due to Stalin's goal to eradicate what he considered "bourgeois academics", Marr's theory was influential on Stalin. Stalin seeked to eradicate smaller nations and assimilate them into larger nations such as the assimilation of Mingrelians and Svans into the Georgian identity. Therefore, the Yezidi assimilation into a larger Kurdish identity also became one of the targets of this

program. To achieve this, Stalin implemented Marr's theory as it proved highly compatible with Stalin's drive for the homogenisation of national languages as well as his claim to be building socialism in the USSR (Leezenberg in Bod 2014, 106). Marr rejected the search for original proto-languages and instead promoted the assimilation of all small languages into one dominant language -- his work viewed such issues largely as irrelevant (Leezenberg in Bod 2014, 106). This was attributed to the understanding that evolution itself was leading to the merging of various systems of languages into a single language, much unlike all those languages that had gone before, which was thought to be accompanied by the breakdown of the class structure of society under socialism. Overall, both theoretically and methodologically, Marr's thesis had been influential on classical Marxist-Leninist works, in particular the works of Stalin on the national question, one example being his book "The Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R." Joseph Stalin espoused Marr's essentialist theory in his work on national minorities: "Each nation all alike large and small has its own qualitative peculiarities which belong to it alone and which are not possessed by others, these peculiarities, in each nation, are deposited in the general treasure of world culture, enriching and supplementing it" (Stalin 1949) (Stalin 1952). The centrality of Marr's theory on language was a discursive promotion of the interests and agenda of the Soviet state in the nationality policy towards the Kurdish identity formation.

This essentialist, and yet also secular and socialist discourse on Kurdish identity, can be seen being implemented in the work of a well-known Kurdologist,Tatyana F. Aristova. Aristova published several books exploring the ethnogenesis of Kurds in Iran and Transcaucasia. She was a Russian Kurdologist mainly based in Moscow and Leningrad. In her work "Kurds of Transcaucasia", Aristova offers the history, origin, development, as well as the cultural and material conditions of the Kurds in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. Aristova's study can be split into three different categories: 1) Kurdish liberation movements in Iran and Turkey 2) ethnographic descriptions of different Kurdish sub-groups 3) comparison of progress between Soviet Kurds and Kurds living in West Asia or a comparative exploration of capitalist and socialist conditions of the countries Kurds occupy 4) material conditions of Kurds in Transcaucasia 6) gender and family dynamics 5) spiritual culture: folklore and literature (Aristova 1959). In sum, the author is aiming to display the change in the life and culture of the Soviet Kurds as a result of the Leninist-Stalinist national policy. She elaborates that the Kurdish

problem has been heavily understudied in academic circles in Southwest Asia despite their ancient origins (Aristova 1966, 15). She also emphasizes their historical grievances as they were never able to have a state of their own being split between Iran, Turkey, and Syria -- partially due to pan-Turkist and pan-Arabist strongholds as well as the interventions of Western imperialist powers in creating these borders (Aristova 1966, 15-24). Aristova further claims that it was only in the USSR that the Kurds have been able to freely practice their culture and speak their language with the assistance of the Marxist-Leninist government; for Aristova, with the help of the Soviet Union and its Marxist ideology, Kurdish academics were placed in leading positions in research on Kurdish history, language, politics and ethnography where they were able to equipped with "proggressive" ideas that they were able to implement in the Soviet political sphere (Aristova 1966) (Aristova 1959). Overall, the works strongly adheres to the propagandistic discourses of the Soviet state towards the socialist evolution of Kurdish identity in the Soviet Union by placing it in a contrast with the plight of the Kurds in the Middle East.

The introductory chapter gives a general historical overview of the Kurds, such as their linguistic and religious diversities as well as their unique anthropological characteristics. Regarding the religious aspect of Kurdish identity, Aristova points out that the religious differences between Kurdish Muslims and Yezidis have evaporated with Soviet tutelage, emphasizing that they only matter when discussing them ethnographically. Her chapter also aims to show that all the history of the Kurdish people is filled with struggle against Arab, Iranian and Western conquerors. She also points out the failure of these movements to achieve independence, tracing it to the bourgeois and feudal leadership of Kurdish feudal lords who also aligned with both Western imperial powers and their occupiers. Similar to what multiple other Soviet-Kurdish authors have already noted, Aristova concludes that it is only with Soviet support that Kurdish culture and language was able to survive and flourish. She continues to explicate that under the Soviet Union, the Kurdish economy attained unprecedented successes which was achieved through the establishment of collective farms among Kurdish peasants "which has subsequently brought them prosperity" (Aristova 1966, 20). Aristova concludes the chapter by stating that "the Great October Socialist Revolution has had a large impact on the rise of national liberation movements in Eastern countries, which includes the struggle of Kurds for basic human rights, against national inequality and imperialist oppression" (Aristova 1966, 30-31).

Aristova successfully gives an overview of Kurdish history with a variety of sources coming both from the Soviet Union and beyond, looking into Western and Southwest Asian sources as well. Nevertheless, the discussion of Islamic characteristics of pre-Soviet Kurdish culture is heavily excluded (Aristova 1966, 168-177). Islam is only mentioned in the context of Kurds challenging Islamic customs that are often portrayed as being patriarchal and discriminatory, which is a tactic that Soviet Orientalists have also utilized in an attempt to disconnect its other Muslim populations from the role of Islam from their pre-Soviet past. For instance, in his article "Towards a History of the Muslims' Soviet Union: A View from Central Asia", Paolo Sartory discusses the construction of the Muslim identity in Central Asia where the specific sect of the Hanafi Sunni school was favored for its quietist stance on the Soviet Union:

> "Hanafism is also explained as the doctrinal background which favored the quietist stance on the part of the Central Asian 'ulama' towards the Soviet state and led to the avoidance of violent confrontation. Evidently, the issue at stake is whether Muslim scholars regarded the Soviet Union as "an abode of Islam" (dar al-isläm), a place where Muslims can live peacefully, or if they saw it as a "territory of war" (dar al-harb), a place where the divine will is not observed" (Sartory 2010, 330).

In the Central Asian context, the genealogy of Soviet state's relationship with Islam did not follow a homogeneous trajectory and Soviet policies towards the regulation of Islam changed dramatically over time. In the first decades of Soviet rule, restrictive rules were violently imposed on the religious sphere in Central Asia and the Caucasus which can be observed in the disastrous deveiling campaign orchestrated by the Soviet state in the name of modernizing Central Asian and Muslim Caucasian societies (Kamp 2014). However, it was also in this period that the Soviet Union initiated its nationality policy which made "Muslimness" an intrinsic part of Central Asian and Caucasian Muslim identities -- the Muslim identity marker was transformed into a cultural marker that was utilized to distinguish indigenous Central Asian and Caucasians from the Slavic populations settled in the region. It was also during this period that the Soviet Union began to establish state-sanctioned mosques (Kamp 2014). Therefore, Soviet attitudes toward Islam slowly started shifting in the 1940s with the onset of war in 1941 -- the Soviet state had soon realized that Islam cannot be completely dismantled due to its long historic importance

to the local population, and instead, it can be manipulated as an important apparatus to maintain support from the region. This resulted in the state deciding to supervise its practice through bureaucratic means (Khalid 2014). Terry Martin summarizes the korenizatsiia policy towards Muslims in Central Asia as:

> *Korenizatsiia* was emphasized by the Soviet government during the period of NEP (1922-1928), and was meant to win the support of the various national groups within the Soviet Union by making Soviet rule "native" (*rodnaia*) and "intimate" (*blizkaia*). Part of this policy included giving religious freedom to Central Asian Muslims to gain their support for centralized Soviet rule, with the belief that Islam would eventually wither away or be destroyed through state action (Martin 1990 in Martin, 2017, 50)

For instance, it permitted the establishment of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan. SADUM was the source of Soviet regulation of Islamic religious observance that did not challenge the regime, but rather promoted an "acceptable" form of Islam that did not counterpose it against the interests of the Soviet system. According to Adeeb Khalid,

> The regime hoped that by allowing limited religious activity under bureaucratic oversight, it could prevent it from going completely underground and be able to monitor and control it. The authorities allowed SADUM to open a madrasa and organize higher theological education for a limited number of students" (Khalid 2014, 78).

Therefore, the Soviet state consequently pushed Islam into the private realm where it would be ultimately controlled by the Soviet state, rather than a clergy or the ulama, destroying the traditional transmission and production of Islamic knowledge (Khalid 2014, 520). The form of Islam that became permissable was state-sanction and therefore pro-Soviet, excluding aspects that may in any shape or form challenge the central government. A similar approach is applicable to how Soviet academics approached the Kurdish identity -- the Yezidi and Sufi aspects of Islam were upheld due to the history of Yezidis siding with the Soviet Union and the Russians in order to escape the persecution they have faced in predominantly Muslim empires such as the Ottoman Empire. However, unlike in the Central Asian case where the Muslim identity became upheld as

a cultural marker for the entire Central Asian population, it was Yezidism that was chosen as the identity marker for the Kurds despite the overwhelming majority of Soviet Kurds hailing from a Muslim background. The promotion of the Yezidi and pre-Islamic Zoroastrian aspects of Kurdish identity in Soviet works can be explained by Soviet Union's preference for "quietist" stances. It was a safer option to choose Yezidism and pre-Islamic elements over Islamic ones, therefore, the Islamic parts of Kurdish identity are often erased and rarely mentioned in Soviet works. As revealed in Tatyana Aristova's expert study of the Kurds, pre-Soviet Islamic roots of Kurdish identity are marginalized due to Yezidism becoming an alternative, as well as based on the fear of Islamic solidarity and the consequence that may arise if it may have been done otherwise due to the proximity to the Islamic North Caucasus. These expert works were also promoted and utilized in foreign policy and as Kurds from outside of the Soviet Union were exposed to these works, the more they ostracized Islam and embraced the Soviet secular version of the Kurdish identity.

Kurds themselves began to largely emphasize secular socialist aspects of their identity when analyzing their own history and their identity. Jalile, who was an ethnic Yezidi, discusses how Kurdish poets from abroad visited the Soviet Union and were deeply inspired by its progress and multiculturality which can be seen in the works of poets such as Cadres Jan, who had described their travel to the Soviet Union a "hajj" -- a religious term for Islamic pilgrimage to the holy Mecca. The poet manages to redefine and manipulate a religious term to convert into something secular and socialist by symbolizing the Soviet Union as a place of socialist, rather than religious, pilgrimage. This, in turn, again represents Kurds as a group that does not subscribe to Islamic beliefs nor were they part of the Islamic tradition, but rather as a secular group for whom the Soviet Union is a source of ideology and spirituality. Ideological apparatus of the state – not only conveys fabricated knowledge, but also disciplines students and shapes docile subjectivities. Furthermore, by manipulating ideology, power constructs norms and standards, and structures not only political actions but everyday practices, and while such construction and structuralisation can be manipulated by centralized power, it must go through complicated and diverse societal networks. Indeed, as Foucault noted, one important feature of modern power is that the increasing capacity of modern states to regulate subjects largely comes from self-regulation that subjects impose on themselves (Foucault, 1977a, 1977b). As mechanisms of

power, the Soviet state sought to dictate the ideas and practices of individuals to sustain the appropriate socialist order, and one of these practices included strict secularism that matched the principles of the new socialist state. However, these discourses also affected Kurdish subjects themselves, who started to perceive themselves in the secular prism that the Soviet propaganda pushed them to be.

Standardization of Kurdish Language

One of the attributes of the Soviet korenizatsiia policy was the standardization of languages across its Eastern European, Caucasian, and Central Asian territories – new alphabets and new writing systems were constructed specifically for the purpose of modernizing minority nations on the Marxist timeline. One of the people that were affected by the standardization was the Kurdish language. Extensive studies have been written by Soviet kurdologists, such as Kanate Kurdoev's Kurdish-Russian dictionary from 1960, Ķteba Zmane Kyrmançi, a reader for native Kurdish-speaking 4th year students from 1933 by Emine Evdal, a new reader for native Kurdish-speaking students in the 1960s published by Haciye Cindi, Kurdish-Russian dictionary from 1957 by Bakayev. The Kurdish language also went through different codifications throughout the Soviet period – before the Bolshevik revolution, Kurdish was written with Armenian letters, in Latin letters during the early Soviet period, and finally, switched to Cyrillic during the Stalinist period (Erdman 2017). Despite the standardization, and subsequently, the rise of Kurdish-language books in the Soviet Union, it did not resemble the existing Kurdish dialects and linguistic system in Turkey and Iraq. Therefore, much of the Kurdish work done was not in interaction with existing Kurdish literature and was systematized to match the ideological goals of the Soviet state, which is a unitary Soviet identity (Erdman 2017).

The standardization of Kurdish language that does not match the existing verbiage of the dialects spoken and written by Kurds in Turkey and Iraq further reveals the symbolic role of language in the state. Milroy and Milroy (1991) argue that "language itself is a natural, descriptive phenomenon that varies across space and time and cannot be fully standardized in reality" (45). In other words, standardization of a language does not exist in a vacuum and there are political forces that exist that construct this standardization – standardization is concerned with the

ideologies and political aspirations of the state. One of the ways that nations constitute themselves as independent and separate is through the establishment of a national language, and sometimes this is often aided by colonization and imperialism. In the history of Western Orientalism, one of the stark examples is the standardization of Urdu in Pakistan and Hindi in India, which are arguably the same language, but as a result of British colonization and subsequent partition of the two states, the two states began to construct and standardize the two as separate and distinct (Chakarborty 2016). The standardization of the two as separate languages was influenced by the rivalry fueled by British colonization. Furthermore, in Pakistan, Urdu became the national language and English remained the official language (Chakarborty 2016). The standardization and centralization of Urdu and Hindi as national languages resulted in the displacement of their many sub-dialects and the erasure of the existence of other languages in those two respective nation states. This is an inevitable effect of standardization – homogenization and displacement (Chakarborty 2016). In Bakhtinian terms, this can be explained as the "stratification" of languages varieties where languages are grouped in hegemonic categories depending on the social and ideological group they belong to.

The standardization of Kurdish in the Soviet Union underwent a similar process – Kurdish dialects, especially between Yezidi Kurds and Muslim Kurds, became displaced and barely any material exists on the topic. The Soviet Kurdish language also did not match the existing standardized versions of Kurdish that existed in Turkey and Iraq, and it was mainly influenced by socialist elements as seen above (Erdman 2017). The Islamic vocabulary of Kurdish language could also have been displaced due to the centrality of Yezidis in Kurdish identity construction. As Bakhtin further discusses in his concept of heteroglossia, language reveals the class position, ideologies, geographical location, etc of the speaker, and subsequently creates hierarchies based on these categorizations. The processes and discrepencies that were involved in the standardization of Kurdish therefore reveal the Orientalist methods of the Soviet Union in the creation of the Kurdish identity that was similar to its Western European colonial counterparts. The next section of this paper will address the complexity of Soviet Orientalism by revealing the changing power relations between the Moscow center and the Soviet Orient that do not entirely match Said's conception of Orient versus Occident binary.

Examples of Kurdology existing outside of Soviet Propaganda of Kurdish Identity

Kurdish identity as Separate from Iranian

Bakhtin defines the formation of identities as being inherently dialogic, that is it is formed in interaction with an "Other" and this is what primarily drives the strengthening of identities. In the case of Kurds, the other became Iranians and grouping of Iranian identities in the one, especially as seen in the context of the Kurdology versus Iranology department. In 1959, the Kurdology department was separated from the Iranology department (Iranian studies department). This could be explained through the political context of that time period – Abd al-Karim Qassem, a half Kurd himself, took the position of the Iraqi presidency and later, an important Soviet ally. The Iraqi Communist Party of that time was majority Kurdish, and the Soviet Union also sponsored scholarships for Iraqi Kurds to study in Moscow which exposed them to Soviet beliefs that they would later bring back to Iraq (Smolansky 1967) (Leezenberg 2011). During this period, Kurds were able to take advantage of the political turmoil in order to assert their own influence on the trajectory of the Soviet Union towards the Kurdish issue. One of the ways they were able to assert their influence was to promote their own beliefs of Kurdish identity and history into the works they have written. One example is the surge of academic pieces on the existence of Kurdish identity as separate from Iranian identity.

Nikolai Marr was an Orientalist who belonged to the Tsarist Era group of Orientalists whose theories of linguistic evolution were deeply essentialist and did not match the new socialist ideas of the new Soviet state. Despite this, Nikolai Marr's works remained used and cited by a new generation of Soviet Kurdologists in their study of the Kurdish ethnogenesis and language. One of the theories that Marr proposed was the non-Iranic origin of the Kurds, and instead claimed that Kurds have a Japhetite origin like the Georgians, Armenians and other Caucasian ethnic groups (Leezenberg 2015). As Kanate Kurdoev cites in his articles, Marr's theory has a left an imprint on later Soviet Kurdish historiography, one of Marr's students being well-known Armenian Kurdologist Joseph Orbeli (Kurdoev 1972). Orbeli later became the head of the Kurdish section of the Iranology department in Leningrad, which also included Kurdologists such as Jalile Jalil, K.R. Eyubi, I.A. Yusupova, and J.S. Musaelyan (Kurdoev 1972). It was also

Orbeli who proposed to separate the Kurdology department from the Iranology department – a proposal that received an approval from the Soviet state. From this separation in 1959, new publications regarding Kurdish language and ethnography began to emerge. The language of Soviet Armenian Kurds were explored for the first time, and local Kurds were able to participate in this research. Kurds from abroad, such as M. Khaznadar from Iraqi Kurdistan, were able to contribute to this research as well. The creation of a separate Kurdology department allowed, as Kurdoev writes, to address topics that were never addressed before, whether its uniqueness of the Kurdish language, different Kurdish dialects, and the Kurdish liberation movement. Kurdologists were able to bypass some of the Soviet propaganda depending on the political context of the period, and therefore were able to rupture the discourses on Kurds as proposed by the Soviet Union. This reveals the flexibility that Kurds had with the influence on their own department. Previous to the Soviet Union, Kurds were not participating in the Kurdology department. Once they were able to separate into a different department, they gained the power to promote their own ideas in these new departments.

The separatization of Kurds from Iranian identity is further emphasized by pointing out the inherently "socialist" and "feminist" characteristics, which according to the authors, stands in contrast to their Iranian "Other." This can be seen in the works of Aristova in which she traces the history of Kurds in Transcaucasia, by discussing their culture in the region in extensive detail. Kurdish presence in Armenia and Azerbaijan is explained through folkloric stories -- Aristova states that their presence was established with the expulsion of three brothers from Iran during the Russian-Iranian conflict; these brothers arrived from Iran to the Kelbajar in Azerbaijan from Armenia and earlier from Iran in the 20th century (Aristova 1966, 30-31). In the third chapter, Aristova attempts to portray Kurds as distinct from their neighbors both in Transcaucasia and Southwest Asia. For instance, Kurds are distinct not only by the language they speak and their religious background grounded in Allah-illahism and Yezidis, but also by their "natural" socialist tendencies as evidenced by their egalitarian cultural practices. The gender egalitarianism of the Kurds can be evidenced both in literature and in real life -- one example that Aristova uses is that in mixed collective farms, men and women of different nationalities worked together side by side (Aristova 1966). Another and last chapter, that focuses on the artistic culture of Kurds, further emphasizes the Kurdish influence on their neighbors. The author discusses the rich tradition of epic storytelling among Kurds, exploring the impact Kurdish

literature has had on its Arab, Assyrian and Persian neighbors. The feminist character of these epic stories is also pointed out -- in the epic poem “Zambilfrosh”, in which a Kurdish woman is painted as having strong qualities as she challenges the adat and shariat (Islamic law) by murdering her husband, who happens to be a local warlord, and running away with her true love Zambilfrosh (Aristova 1966, 190-191). There are mentions of multiple other epic folktales that speak against forced marriages. The author points out that this theme is common among folktales where Kurdish women are painted as the heroine and as someone who is ready to sacrifice her own life for the preservation of her family and her nationhood.

The purpose of such “Othering” has served a political purpose for bringing the Soviet state’s attention to the Kurds in their foreign policy making towards the Middle East. The Kurds were able to promote their own interests and assert their own power influence by conforming to the Soviet propaganda machine by incorporating socialist interpretations, but also by disrupting the propaganda machine and promoting their own interests, in this case, foreign policy aspirations and their own research department that did not exist elsewhere at the time. Through establishing a counter-discourse that rejects the closeness of Kurds to their Iranian and Middle Eastern counterparts, and instead emphasizes the uniqueness of the Kurdish identity that falls closer to the Soviet identity.

Kurdish Liberation Ideology and its exposure to Soviet Audience

Another important topic that the Soviet-Kurdologists were able to extensively include and analyze in their works is the history of national liberation movements of Kurds in the Middle East. This topic, at the time, remained largely censored in Iraq, Iran, and Turkey where Kurdish independent movements and their groups were portrayed to be “terrorist.” In the Soviet Union, Kurdologists gained the freedom to speak and write about the political aspirations of their Kurdish kin abroad by incorporating socialist elements. As previous explain by Yurchak, the participation of Soviet citizens into everyday life should not be constricted through the binary prism of “sincerity” versus “cynicism”, instead, a critical intervention must be applied as Soviet citizens adhered to certain Soviet state ideologies in order to gain the ability to express some of their own interests. The power here does not exist in the binary sense, but rather in a

multidimensional sense. As Bakhtin argued, it is significant to take into consideration the existence of multiple voices that contribute to the making of the singular discourse.

Before dwelling into the academic pieces written by Kurdolgists on the topic of national liberation, the political context of which these works were written must be shortly summarized. For Foucault, temporal logics of discursive regimes are significant in order to explore how discourse evolves and changes over time, especially under the influence of changing political context. The Soviet discourse on nationality policy has evolved over time as their foreign policy evolved. For example, Southwest Asia gained a significant importance in Soviet foreign policy after World War II with Stalin's involvement in regional disputes and separatist movements in Iran and Turkey, and therefore some of the limitations were mitigated (Al-Sahlawi 2013). This reveals the evolving position of Orientalist practices as the power influence on the central discourse of non-European colonial subjects transformed. In the case of Western colonialism, the power balance between the Orient and Occident remained unequal, whereas in the Soviet Union, the power balance was complex as non-European subjects were part of the state mechanism and, depending on the context, helped substantial power influence.

During the Stalinist and post-Stalinist period, the Kurdish issue gained substantial importance in Soviet foreign policy. Stalin supported breakaway regions in Iran, such as the Soviet-backed Kurdish republic of Mahabad as it demanded independence from then the Western-backed Iranian Republic of Reza Shah. The call for Kurdish independence in Iran was in response to the Iran crisis of 1946 that was initiated as a result of the Soviet and British occupation of Iran. While the UK, alongside the U.S., held control of the majority of the region, the Soviet Union declared support for the Azerbaijani People's Republic and subsequently the Mahabad Republic under the Iraqi-Kurdish supported KDP-I (Kurdish Democratic Republic of Iran) (Allain 2004, 27–28) (Meiselas 1997, 182). The Soviets aided and supported the secessionist movements in Iran by sending technical and military support -- at least 60 Kurds from the Mahabad Republic were sent to Soviet Azerbaijan for additional military training. The neighboring Soviet republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia therefore became strategic locations for the Soviet Union to access Mahabad, particularly through the Kurds who inhabited these regions (Lortz 2005, 27-29). On the other side of the border, the previous territorial disputes with Turkey were brought back to

Soviet agenda of foreign policy issues -- Stalin demanded the return of bases in the Turkish Straits, and the return of Kars and Ardahan, which had been under Russian imperial control since 1877-1878 (Mark 1997, 384-388). The simultaneous expansion of American military positions into the region undoubtedly contributed to the importance of the region for Soviet security and the Kremlin's geopolitical vision as well. The political context of the Soviet-West relations in the Middle East gave Kurds the freedom to address topics that they did not have the power to address before.

After the end of World War II and subsequent confrontation with the U.S during the Cold War, along with the decrease of Soviet influence over Southwest Asia, a new postwar demand for "policy-relevant" knowledge in Moscow arose, articulated through direct and often obsessive interference in many scientific fields by the Kremlin and the Academy of Sciences. The Leningrad Institute of Oriental Studies again came under criticism for its focus on irrelevant pre-modern scholarship. This lack of contemporary studies was criticized in a report of the presidium of the Academy of Sciences on July 1, 1950, which identified serious deficiencies in the field of Oriental Studies and called for a major reorganization of the Leningrad Institute of Oriental Studies and also of the Pacific Ocean Institute in Moscow. They were to be reorganized in a way that would "meet the imperatives before Soviet science for studying these countries and the experiences of the national-liberation movement in the East" (Kemper 2013, 25). This reorganization resulted in the increasing attention of scholarly monographs produced at the academic Oriental Institute in Moscow towards exposing Western aggression, the duplicity of Western imperialist doctrines and Marxist interpretation of Southwest Asia history (Kirasirova 2017, 26). This approach further contributed to the modern day anti-imperialist and Marxist nature of the Kurdish identity.

National boundaries and independence movements are strongly present in the historical narratives created in the works produced in the Kurdish studies department in Yerevan, whereas the Leningrad branch remained solely dedicated to folkloric works and became less influential. Kurds were significant players in the Soviet policy towards Southwest Asia as Kurdish independence movements began to arise after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. In their articles ``Regarding the Question of Problems of the East in Turkey" and "The Kurdish Question in Turkey: From the Beginning of the Kemalist Movement to the Lausanne Conference", A.A.

Rogushin and M.A Gisarov discuss the history and the roots of the Kurdish Question in Turkey. Rgosuhin begins by tracing the Kurdish issue to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent loss of its lands in Europe and Asia. During the post-collapse period, both the Armenian and Kurdish questions became emphasized as the new Turkish bourgeoisie was faced with the task of retaining what was left of the Ottoman Empire. The statesman of the new Turkish republic, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, put all the new effort into strengthening the position of the Turks within Kurdish and Armenian majority provinces -- as the author cites, the first Soviet ambassador to Turkey, S.I Aralov, pointed to Ataturk's peculiar understanding of the right of nations to self-determination; he wrote that “defending the right of the Turks to independence, K. Atatürk denies this right to the Armenians and Kurds" (Rogushin 1975, 45). Historical specificities of these events are continually mentioned throughout the articles, however, there is an emphasis on the involvement of foreign and Western imperial powers highlighted in Gisarov’s article -- the article speaks of Sevres treaty and the West’s betrayal of Kurds through this treaty. The Treaty of Sevres, developed by the representatives of the three Western powers -- England, Turkey and France, first provided the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish region within Turkey, which later turned into the possibility of an independent state entity according to Article 63 of the treaty (Gisarov 1975, 42). Gisarov recognizes the significance of the treaty for the possibility of Kurdish independence by citing Basil Nikitin:

> “Although the Sevres Treaty remained only on paper, it nevertheless marked a very important turn in the development of the Kurdish problem. For the first time in history, a diplomatic document addressed ... the issue of “local autonomy of the areas of continuous Kurdish settlement” (Gisarov 1975, 53).

However, the author notes the still ever present imperialist character of the Treaty of Sevres, explaining this assertion by pointing out that “the point was not that they wanted to grant independence to the Kurds, but in their desire to use the national aspirations of the Kurds for their annexation purposes" (Gisarov 1975, 69). The British, after having seized modern Iraqi Kurdistan, rejected to recognize the Iraqi Kurds’s right to independence and allied with the Kemalists as seen from the results of the Lausanne Conference where the Turks agreed to cede the Mosul Vilayet to England.

Gisarov further continues his papers by offering a Marxist interpretation of the failures of the Kurdish revolutionary movements: he notes the feudal tribal nature of Kurdish society and lack of national consolidation thereof. As Bolsheviks follow a Marxist interpretation of history, Gisarov considered the Kurds to not be at the needed level of maturity to reach a genuine revolution, which therefore hindered their unification in the liberation struggle (Gisarov 1975, 63-69). Class and societal differences in Kurdish society made the two groups, the bourgeois and the proletariat, align in two opposing different sides. Whereas the Kurdish "bourgeoisie" preferred to side with Turkish nationalists with the aim of achieving autonomy, the Kurdish "proletariat" promoted a genuine and independent Kurdish national liberation movement. According to Gisarov, the bourgeois intelligentsia was weak and isolated from the lower and working class population of Kurds, and therefore incapable of establishing a stable united movement that could successfully resist their Turkish and Western occupiers (Gisarov 1975, 63-69). The bourgeois leaders of the Kurdish movement were cut off from the majority of the Kurdish population, who were mainly farmers and agriculturalists, and therefore could not empathize nor incorporate their demands and struggles into their plan. Without the support of the masses, the movement had to surrender to imperialist powers and abandon their aspirations for national liberation. There was, however, a small stratum of proletariat Kurds who attempted to operate independently in the village of Kochkiri. The uprising in Kochkiri was largely prepared by members of the "Birth of Kurdistan" who were proletariat revolutionaries, but by that time the resistance movement had already disintegrated. Therefore, as Gisarov notes,the Kurds did not have a political organization capable of leading the uprising from a single leading center (Gisarov 1975, 63-69). As a result, the fate of the Kurdish movement was often in the hands of those who did not represent the majority, such as the bourgeois Kurds and Western powers. These groups settled for a diplomatic resolution, which for Gisarov, marginalized the Kurds and belittled their struggles by surrendering their cultural and land rights. Ultimately, Gisarov concludes by asserting that the failure of a genuine national liberation is traced back to the Lausanne conference, and the fact that ultimately the fate of the Kurdish people was decided behind their backs during these diplomatic talks between the Kemalists and the West.

Another article that offers a Marxist analysis of Kurdish independence movements is an analysis of a Kurdish periodical by Jalile Jalil. In his article, “Roja Kurd as a Source of Studying Kurdish and Public Political Thought,” Jalile Jalil analyzes a Kurdish journal that used to actively operate during the early months of the Young Turk movement as according to the author, “the era in which the breath of freedom and democracy pulsed in the country” (Jalil 1975 ,72). He further elaborates that the Kurdish intelligentsia, who were returning from Europe upon acquiring European education, played an especially influential role in the cultural production coming from the city during that era. Furthermore, through the Western scholarship attained put the Kurdish intelligentsia under the influence of bourgeois democratic ideology with a prevalence of ideas of progress and unity taking form as the main slogans of the movement.

While discussing the position taken up by the Kurdish intelligentsia in developing Kurdish identity during this time, Jalil makes sure to point out the lack of the presence of national organizations that would have helped advance the formation of a separate Kurdish nationality after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. In the fall of 1908, the society known as the “Kurd Taavun Wa Taraki Jamiati” (“Society of Kurdish Mutual Aid to Progress") was established through the efforts of Sheikh Abdul Qadir, the son of the famous leader of the Kurdish uprising of 1880 Sheikh Obeidullah, upon his return from long-term exile. (Jalil 1975, 72). The organization was very numerous and brought together people from various social strata and different political beliefs. It published a fifteen page article addressing "The program of the society of Kurdish mutual assistance and progress" which included the the following:

1) the opening of Kurdish schools in Kurdish areas;
2) the appointment of Kurds in the management of areas with Kurdish settlement and recognition in these areas of the Kurdish language as an official language;
3) the opening of universities in Kurdistan;
4) the publication of a political newspaper and magazine in Kurdish:
5) the administration of legal proceedings in the Kurdish language, with the appointment of judges from the Kurdish population;
6) the appointment of a permanent Kurdish representative in the Majlis;
7) the intensification of construction work in Kurdistan (Jalil 1975, 72-73).

Despite its bourgeois leadership and character, Jalil applauds the contribution of “Rozha Kurd" journal in the awakening of the cultural movement of Kurds in Turkey, where any utterance of the word Kurds still remained stigmatized and ostracized. For Jalil, “Rozha Kurd” “testified to the importance of ideological changes of Kurdish leaders, which were formed as a result of the influence of the Young Turkish revolution and European enlightenment” (Jalil 1975, 89). During this period, there was a rise of pan-Islamist movements, however, despite that, Rozha Kurd did not follow this ideological pathway. Therefore, for Jalil, “the journal has taken a central place in promoting the ideas of progress and national revival” (Jalil 1975, 89) in that it did not incorporate new Islamic ideals and remained true to their secular ideals. The ostracization of Islam, even in the case where it is resisting Western imperialism, is central to Soviet Kurdology as evidenced in this article by Jalil.

In his article “Reflection of the National Liberation Movement in Contemporary Foreign Kurdish Poetry”, Jalile Jalil discusses the theme of national liberation in contemporary Kurdish poetry in Iraq, Turkey and Iran. He emphasizes the recent interest of the Soviet Union in foreign Kurdish literature as present in works published across Tashkent, Yerevan, and Baku, which increased significantly with the replacement of Gafurov as the head of Oriental Studies department, culminating with the shift of the institutes focus from sociocultural aspects of history to a more politicized institution. Jalil praises Kurdish literature for its ability to convey to a wide range of readers “the fighting spirit of the Kurds as they stood against both their internal and external enemies in the name of achieving freedom and independence” (Jalil 1966, 65). The themes of struggles against enemies, independence, the beauty of Kurdistan and its working-class characters is continually emphasized in his poetry. According to Khazar, despite the courage and integrity of the Kurds, “the real masters of the country are the bourgeoisie who are slowing down their struggle and eventual liberation” (Jalil 1966, 65).

Jalil continues by bringing up the uprising of Kurds in Iran and Iraq in 1942-46 that was initiated with Soviet support. For Jalil, this was the most “bright page” of Kurdish national liberation movement as it “proved to the whole world once again that the Kurdish people are determined to fight for their rights” (Jalil 1966, 66). He praises the Soviet-backed Barzani clan which he claims to have given Kurds “the right to stand at the head of the newly erupted national liberation

movement of Kurds, directed against the dictatorial regime of Qasem (1960-1963 February), against Baathist reactionary rulers (February 1963-October 1963)" (Jalil 1966, 67).

Jalil further analyzes the socialist nature of Kurdish poetry in Iraqi, emphasizing its socialist and pro-Soviet elements. Kurdish poets and writers dedicated many poems to the Barzans and their leader, Molla Mustafa Barzani. During the years of the 17 July Revolution or what Jalil terms the "Black Reaction" (Jalil 1966, 67), a prominent public figure and talented poet Kadry Jan wrote his famous poem "Barzani", which became a kind of hymn for Kurdish youths and girls at the World Youth Festivals. This historic event saw a lot of inspiration among Kurdish poets. Among the poems dedicated to the national liberation struggle and its leader Barzani are Kamran's poem "Barzani", Abdul Kerim Rabati's "Letter to his elder brother MB", Behaua's "To the return of the dear Kurdish hero Molla Mustafa", and Kaka Shuach's "To the Hero Barzani" (Jalil 1966, 67). Furthermore, the Democratic Republic of Iran, a separatist Soviet-backed Kurdish socialist state, was also praised in these poems and the Soviet role in these events is highly emphasized. These works also feature a critique of bourgeois Kurds who have sold the Kurdish cause to foreign imperialists. The works of Khadzhar, Hardi, Bekas, Kani and others also condemn the criminal actions of Kurdish feudal lords who became accomplices of foreign enslavers. It was the working class in Iraq that initiated and attracted the attention of a number of progressive poets of Kurdistan (Jalil 1966, 68). For Jalil, these poets rightly noted the leading role that the young Kurdish working class, who firmly believed in its future.

The last Kurdish poet that Jalil discussed is Abdullah Goran who emphasizes the social and political activities in Kurdistan in his poetry. His works have been highly influenced by his visit to the Soviet Union in 1959, where he described the people as having what he called "real freedom" and the necessary solution to the national question (Jalil 1966, 68). Jalil asserts that it was in the Soviet Union where the poet wrote one of his best poems, in which he figuratively represents the "essence of imperialism and the exploitation of the peoples of colonial and semi-colonial countries" (Jalil 1966, 68). He further discusses that for these Kurds, it was the October Revolution that served as a point of inspiration as national liberation movements began to re-emerge in Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan; the October Revolution reminded them "of their heroic past as well as the famous people and heroes that were involved," (Jalil 1966, 72)

referring to the Soviet Yezidi and Kurdish who actively participated in the war. The power of the Soviet Union was frequently a source of excitement for Kurdish allies visiting the country. Cadres Jan was one of the first foreign Kurdish poets to visit the Soviet Union and was inspired by its progress that later influenced his views towards the liberation of Kurdistan. For him, visiting the Soviet Union was considered a form of "Hajj" (an Islamic word for pilgrimage). While outside of his homeland, Jan began to write the poem "I am going to Moscow," which he completed in the city in question (Jalil 1966, 74). According to Jalil, this poem is filled with a sense of genuine friendship and brotherhood:

> "How the soul is torn to the beloved in separation with all the passion,
> How the mother's hand is torn to the breast of the baby,
> How the pilgrim is eager to see his Hajj in reality, so I'm eager to go to Moscow" (Jalil 1966, 74)

For the poet, Moscow is his hajj — that is, as Jalil calls it, "a sacred place where many dream to visit" (Jalil 1966, 74).

Representatives of what Jalil coins, "Kurdish progressive literature", as influenced by the Soviet Union, consistently praise what they view as "the friendship of peoples, their brotherhood and unity" (Jalil 1966, 74) in their works. For Jalil, these works are outstanding because they promote the unification of Kurds across all nation-states, despite the borders, discriminative laws, and religious differences that separate them. It's not the Soviet Union that is utilizing a divide-and-rule approach when essentializing the Kurdish identity, rather it is Western countries that are guilty of "dividing" Kurds and creating enmity between them. The main theme running through these poems is struggle against all forms of imperialism and national unity as promoted by the Soviet Union. Ultimately, Jalil summarizes the efforts of these poets and authors towards the Kurdish national liberation movement in the following words:

> "The authors of these works are closely connected with the people. The progressive poets of Kurdistan are constantly looking for ways to make their poetry, art, an effective weapon in the struggle. The closeness of Kurdish poets to life is reflected in their

> language, which is understandable and accessible to every Kurd. Kurdish poets write in two main Kurdish dialects — Kurmanji and Sorani. Thus, the poetry of wrestling becomes available in all corners of Kurdistan. For a progressive poet, the concept of "art for the sake of art" is alien, he serves "art for the people. Therefore, the doors for the fulfillment of revolutionary and democratic ideas into Kurdish literature are wide open" (Jalil 1966, 74).

Therefore, Jalil argues that these Kurds were able to surpass national borders, that separate Kurds, by promoting a message of unity through socialism; whether one is Yezidi, Kurmanji or a Sorani speaker, these poets represent a stateless nation, who despite being separated by artificial boundaries, are able to come together for the sole and only reason -- eventual liberation.

Throughout these articles, Kurdish national liberation movements are characterized to have been of bourgeois character resulting in their failure. This article was published after the transition of Oriental Studies, with the pressure of Gafurov, to a political course. Therefore, much of its focus is the history of political movements that have happened in Southwest Asia and an emphasis is placed on the intervention of imperialist powers in these movements. The language in these articles serves to critique Western imperialism in the time of contentious relations between the West and the Soviet Union. The main audience of these articles were Oriental people living within the Soviet Union and their Oriental counterparts outside of the Soviet Union, in order to promote the image of the Soviet Union as an anti-imperialist power on the side of the oppressed peoples. The power dialogues between Kurdish historians and the Soviet Union creates a mutual discourse of anti-Western imperialism and pro-Kurdish liberation through a socialist revolution. Despite the use of socialist and pro-Soviet terminology in Jalil's works, clearly influenced by Soviet's effort to promote a positive image of the country to its audience in West Asia in order to counteract Western influence that was beginning to dominate the region during this period, Soviet Kurds were able to promote their national rights and goals of national liberation to their oppressed kin abroad. This, in turn, served as their only outlet to express their goals, dissatisfactions and historical grievances. Soviet Kurds were not powerless -- rather they implemented their own power dynamics in ways that would not put them at risk of imprisonment by the Soviet Union, for instance, by inserting pro-Soviet messages in their works

or by incorporating their own thoughts and aspirations as a nation whose population surprasses beyond Soviet borders. Consequently, a dialogue interaction was taking place between the Soviet Union, the West as well as the Kurds in the Soviet Union and the ones abroad. The Soviet Union, despite its propaganda machine, was the only place where Kurds could establish this form of interaction. Kurdologists, such as Jalil and Gissarov who were both of native Soviet Kurdish backgrounds, were able to discuss topics that were restricted before due to the rising importance of Kurds in Soviet foreign policy. This reveals the evolving state discourse on the Kurds, and therefore, the lessening of restrictions of topics that could be addressed in Kurdology departments. Jalil and Gissarov were able to express their own interests using Soviet language, or as Stephen Kotkin put it "by speaking Bolshevik" (Kotkin 1995). As Bakhtin analyzed in heteroglossia, subjects could manipulate the central discourse by adapting the language used by the authority; power exists here in a multidimensional manner. Kurdologists were able to expose the Soviet public and their readers to the plight of their kin abroad, and in turn, raise more awareness and support. Ultimately, this also reveals the Soviet Union's complex form of Orientalism, because ultimately Soviet subjects had power that did adhere to the binary power as analyzed by Said towards Orient-Occident power relationships.

Conclusion

This paper explores the impact of Oriental Studies and Kurdology departments of the Soviet Union in the formation of the modern Kurdish identity that became prominent in Kurdish circles not only within the Soviet Union, but also in other parts of Southwest Asia where Kurds preside. Although it is important to note that these academic departments were Orientalizing in nature and were further motivated by Soviet domestic and foreign policy interests, unlike their counterparts in the West as criticized in the works of Said, they were often led by Orientalists from the Oriental backgrounds in question. Kurdology, which was mainly led by academics in Yerevan and Leningrad from Kurdish and especially Yezidi backgrounds, was no exception to this pattern. There were also complex power relations involved in the making of these departments – while Kurdologists had to adhere to the socialist ideology of the state in the making of their works, they also incorporated their own political beliefs into their works that don't entirely adhere to the state's conception of what is a Kurd. Throughout this thesis, I discuss

how this critical distinction has allowed Soviet Oriental departments have a unique impact on the communities they were studying and even “Orientalizing”, as it also provided them with necessary tools of nation and identity building with examples being the development of an alphabet that allowed the increase of literacy and analysis of sociocultural factors that were previously neglected as in the case of Kurds. As my argument states, there is a complexity of how Orientalism was practiced by the Soviet Union because power did not exist in an unequal position. The work of Soviet Kurdologists were especially far-reaching in their influence due to the harsh difference in experience for Kurds outside of its borders such as those living in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran who were by contrast living under varying degrees of assimilationist policies that targeted them as a community. This significance can be observed in the reaction to the Soviet Kurdological works and events both within academia and politics in Kurdish literary and activist circles beyond the Iron Curtain, with many cultural leaders finding them as an inspiration and even dedicating poetry to Soviet trained leaders such as Barzani. Therefore, even though issues of Soviet Orientalism cannot be understated, especially when looking into the shape it took during the Stalinist era with a heightened interest in Southwest Asia as well as the rise of the korenizatsiia policy which reshaped Kurdish identity within an essentialist and limiting framework, the positive impact it had on Kurdish identity and activism led by the works of significant Kurdish Orientalists must be taken into account for a more nuanced understanding of how Soviet Orientalism was distinct from similar writings produced in the West, which was by contrast penned by Western colonialists with the agenda to justify their imperial presence in the region.

Kurdish identity as formed in the Soviet Union had a lasting effect on the contemporary processes and components of the contemporary identity, whether it is in the Soviet Union or in Southwest Asia. Kurdish identity in Southwest Asia can be labeled as left-leaning since Marxist ideas are now central to their national liberation. For instance, the PKK received Soviet support until the collapse of the Soviet Union, which informed their Communist political stances. It is also noteworthy that it was only with the collapse of the Soviet Union that the PKK switched to Anarchism. Furthermore, the Barzani clan has also gained prestige in Iraq due to Soviet connections and the Kurdish Communist Party in Iraq was birthed with the aid of the Soviet Union. Kurdology departments in Iraq switched from their initial Islamist ideology to Marxism

because of Soviet interferrance and aid to the country's Kurds. Even in contemporary Kurdish circles, Islam is becoming less and less popular among Kurds due to growing Communist influence.

The works of Rogushin and Jalile particularly promoted the message that the Kurdish movement's demise is credited in its bourgeois leadership that excluded more anti-imperialist and working class sections of Kurdish society. According to the two scholars, the working class section was the genuine section of society that fiercely, independently, and free of Western influence, fought for Kurdish liberation. Words such as "bourgeois", "liberation", "anti-Western imperialist", "communism", and appraisal of the Soviet Union are extensively utilized throughout both of the articles. Moreover, the wording of the papers directly conveys that without Soviet support and Communist influence, the Kurdish movement would not have survived. To illustrate, state politics in contemporary Kurdish circles is deeply affected by Soviet construction of Kurdish identity, especially given the fact that Barzani, the current clan that dominates Iraqi-Kurdish politics, was sponsored and placed into power by the Soviet Union. Therefore, naturally the Kurds in Iraq would utilize Soviet-sourced information to justify their nationalist policies. Jalile, who was an ethnic Yezidi, discusses how Kurdish poets from abroad visited the Soviet Union and were deeply inspired by its progress and multiculturality which can be seen in the works of poets such as Cadres Jan, who had described their travel to the Soviet Union a "hajj" -- a religious term for Islamic pilgrimage to the holy Mecca. The poet manages to redefine and manipulate a religious term to convert into something secular and socialist by symbolizing the Soviet Union as a place of socialist, rather than religious, pilgrimage. This, in turn, again represents Kurds as a group that does not subscribe to Islamic beliefs nor were they part of the Islamic tradition, but rather as a secular group for whom the Soviet Union is a source of ideology and spirituality. Similarly, in Rogushin's article, the author cites the intricacies of the awakening of the Kurdish movement in the later Ottoman period where Kurdish literary culture was thriving and Kurdish intelligentsia was thriving in Constantinople and Europe; Kurdish journals and newspapers were not a rare sight to catch in shops despite the pro-separatist messages they wrote about. Nevertheless, despite the initial growth of the Kurdish cultural movement in the late Ottoman period, it was led by the intelligentsia who were not aware of the feudal nature of Kurdish society and its tardiness in the progression of the Marxist historical

timeline, which resulted in the collapse of the revolution said intelligentsia attempted to build. The intelligentsia ended up surrendering to the Turkish independence movement and aligning with them in order to petition for autonomy. The working-class section remained victimized to economic and ethnic discrimination. Thus, the working-class was eventually mobilized by a new socialist Kurdish national liberation movement that was receiving partial or full Soviet support. The propaganda machine of the Soviet Union managed to spill into the Kurdish movements abroad.

The folklorization and primordialization of Kurdish identity contributed to the view of Kurdish identity as never-changing and salient. Even in the contemporary period, Kurds trace back their history to the past millennium by utilizing historical narratives stated in Soviet literature. There is currently promotion of a Kurdish identity that is unique and isolationist with the Arab and Turkish influence on the identity left erased as evidenced by Kurdish linguistics' attempt to purify the Kurdish language. That being said, this pursuit for the purification of the Kurdish language is also rooted in the original Kurmanji manufactured by the Soviet academics. Furthermore, the revival of Zoroastrianism of Kurds in Iraq may be considered to be influenced by the Soviet-Kurdish identity discourses. As a result of folklorization and primordialization, Islam became marginal to Kurdish identity and pre-Islamic elements became the central point. The folkloric literature on the Kurds emphasized non-Islamic elements of Kurdish identity and their pre-Islamic Zoroastrian or Yezidi roots. Furthermore, when addressing the religious elements of the Kurdish identity, Aristova is dismissive, citing that the rift between Muslims and Yezidis had disappeared with Soviet tutelage. Alternatively, Aristova focuses on the agricultural and particular ancient cultural rituals practiced by the Kurds in Iran and Iraq. Overtime, Islam lost spiritual and political importance in the life of Soviet Muslims, instead Leninist discourses defined their history, culture, politics and everyday practices (Wolters 2014, 3).

Finally, the cultural significance and complex history of Kurdology departments in the Soviet Union, not only is there much to discuss on how the rhetorics they have developed have helped shape modern Kurdish identity but future research can also benefit from exploring how these dynamics have politically positioned Kurds in the political context of contemporary Southwest Asia, paying close attention specifically to how this formation of Kurdishness impacted attitudes

towards Kurds and Kurdish independence by their neighbors, allies, and oppressors. Another topic that should be considered for future exploration is the complexity of Soviet Orientalism in the nationality policy towards its Oriental minorities, as argued in the article, did not entirely fit the paradigm explained by Said. Soviet Orientalism remains largely unstudied, and the existing studies rarely analyze the dispersed power binary between the center and the periphery and instead continue to view the Soviet Union from a biased perspective – painting it as a monolithic empire where the power dynamics were one-sided. Subsequently, they disregarded the voices and perspectives of the Soviet ordinary citizens whom they purported to study.

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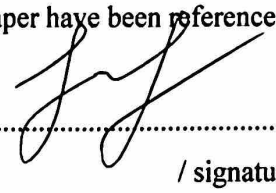

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