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Dieter Christensen

Hakkâri/Colemêrg

Travels to the Eastern Taurus (1958, 1965)

Edited by Martin Greve

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Ethnologisches Museum
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

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Martin Greve

Dieter Christensen: The Difficult Legacy

I met Dieter Christensen almost one year before his death. I visited him in his small apartment in Berlin-Kreuzberg along with the anthropologist and expert on Kurdish *dengbêj*, Wendelmoet Hamelink. The initial plan was to interview Christensen about his pioneering research on Kurdish music, which he had conducted in the 1950s and 1960s. During our meeting, he told us openly and cynically about his cancer and that he was waiting to die. He said his only wish was to be together with his wife again, who had passed away in 2003. Our interview (see below, p. 89) did not last long; scarred by his illness and imminent death, he had trouble concentrating for longer periods of time. We agreed to prepare his fieldwork notes, photos, and all recordings to be transferred in future to the Department for Ethnomusicology of the Museum for Ethnology Berlin, the former Berlin Phonogram Archive, where he, sixty years ago, had begun his career. We imagined editing his recordings with encompassing notes and analysis. Over several days, Wendelmoet Hamelink and I listened to his recordings, checked his meticulous lists of digitized photos, notes, and documents, and tried to understand what he had done during his early research on Kurdish music. We realized that most of his recordings and almost all his photos had never been published yet. Wendelmoet Hamelink later told me that despite Christensen's physical weakness, she felt uncomfortable being alone in an apartment with this man.

In 2017, back in Istanbul, I read that Dieter Christensen had passed away. Slowly, the work on our Christensen project continued. After several months, his academic bequest was eventually transported to the Phonogram Archive, where it is stored in 55 boxes until now. About half a year later, in July 2018, the project was shaken by a sudden shock. On her Facebook page, Helen Myers, a well-known ethnomusicologist, made a public declaration: "Dieter Christensen raped me." She explained how, as a young PhD student, it had been impossible for her to speak up and how she had remained silent until after his death, a testimony to the power this famous academic had during

his life. Endless messages of solidarity followed, and international colleagues supported her courage. Ethnomusicology had its "Me Too" debate. After this terrible and painful revelation, Wendelmoet and I felt conflicted and repelled about Christensen's legacy, and for several years, we were unable to continue the project.

For Dieter Christensen, the time around 1957 must have been a turning point. Two years earlier, in 1955, he had joined the musicologist Kurt Reinhard (1914–1979) on his first fieldwork trip to Turkey.[1] Searching for Turkish music in the region of Adana, both men had no contact with Kurdish music at that time. In 1957, at the age of 26, Christensen finished his PhD under the supervision of Reinhard. Reinhard himself had already written his PhD in 1939 on music in Burma, and, in 1956, another book on music in China, without, of course, having ever seen either Burma or China. Moreover, Christensen began in Reinhard's tradition as a classic armchair comparative musicologist, now writing a thesis[2] using recordings from New Guinea, which he found in the Berlin Phonogram Archive. He did not know any language spoken there, and had no idea of the ecological, political and social situation in New Guinea. He just cared for musical structures.

Christensen became a research assistant in the Phonogram Archive; later, in 1967, he even replaced Reinhard as director. I do not know when Christensen married his peer ethnologist Nerthus L. Karger (1932–2003), but when they were invited by the ethnologist Prof. Dr. Sigrid Westphal-Hellbusch (1915–1984) on a trip to Hakkâri in southeast Turkey in 1958, they had already decided to travel together. At that time, almost nothing was known about this region and its music in Germany. Just one LP with recordings of Kurdish music was available, edited by Ralph S. Solecki.[3]

1 On Reinhard, see Tahtaişleyen (2021); Baumann & Çiftçi (2021); also a forthcoming Pera-Blatt by Nihan Tahtaişleyen (in preparation).
2 Published in Berlin 1957 as: *Die Musik der Kate und Sialum. Beiträge zur Ethnographie Neuguineas* [Music of the Kate and Sialum. Contributions to the Ethnography of New Guinea] (see Christensen 1957 in the bibliography below).
3 Solecki (1955).

Figure 1: Dieter Christensen and Nerthus Christensen riding in Şemdinli.

Eventually, a group of five researchers left Berlin for Turkey on 1 August 1958. In Siirt, the group split. While Sigrid Westphal-Hellbusch and her husband Heinz Westphal (1912–1984) continued northward around the Van Lake, the Christensens, together with the nine years older anthropologist Wolfgang Rudolph (1921–1999), continued to the south, to Hakkâri.[4] The journey, which initially had no ethnomusicological goals, would lay the foundation for Christensen's reputation as an international leading expert on Kurdish music for fifty years.

All we read about Christensen's first trip to Southeast Anatolia recalls orientalist travelogues of the 19th century. Several photos show him dressed up in the German academic manner of the period.

Christensen never perceived a problem in having close contact with the local Turkish government and security forces. In Siirt, the three scholars directly headed to the *vali* Enver Kuray (provincial governor; Christensen does not give his name[5]). Later they also met the

4 Rudolph (1959).

5 Resmî Gazete 9968 (30 July 1958): 1 (https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/arsiv/

Figure 2: "Cemil Özbek, Oberagha of the Ertoşi, with his bodyguards during a visit of the Gevdam, July 1965" (Christensen 2002b: 72). Second from right: Dieter Christensen.

mayor of the city. Similarly, in Şırnak: "*The kaymakam graciously helps us to find transportation: one horse and two mules; and he also provides for protectors: two gendarmes. They are unfamiliar with the local people and their language but carry guns.*" Only one remark indicates doubts concerning the escort of Turkish officials. On 19 August, Nerthus Christensen notes in a former version of the present manuscript: "*Went to Eruh together with Şerif Bey. Knows the inspector in Eruh. He controls the village and also the mayor. Since we were close to the inspector, sleeping next door, etc., there was no hope to get in touch with the people who opposed rejected the inspector. Didn't want to come to the house we lived in to play music.*"[6] In his writings Christensen never reflects on his role in terms of how his interlocu-

9968.pdf; last retrieved 13 July 2023). I thank Prof. Dr. Christoph K. Neumann (Orient-Institut Istanbul) for this hint.

6 In original German: "Nach Eruh gefahren zusammen mit Şerif Bey. Kennt in Eruh den Inspektor. Dieser kontrolliert das Dorf u. auch den Bürgermeister. Da wir in der Nähe des Inspektors waren: nebenan schliefen etc. war es aussichtslos mit den Leuten Kontakt zu bekommen, die den Inspektor ablehnten. Wollten nicht zum musizieren, in das Haus kommen, in dem wir wohnten."

Figure 3: Nerthus Christensen in Hakkâri, 1958.

tors may have regarded him and his wife. Only a few general remarks deal with the political situation of the region. While in his recording sheets, names of musicians are always noted, in his articles and this present manuscript, Christensen rarely gives the names of musicians and interlocutors. The only exceptions are a few officials and the Christensens' guide, whom he refers to as "Salih of Şırnak" (according to the city where Christensen hired him). General descriptions of "the Kurds" often show a romantic idealization, as in the present text: "*The Kurds of Hakkâri in their land, still little disturbed in their way of life by political developments that were to shatter their existence in the late 1960s. We found dignity, pride, generosity, hospitality and the mutual trust we have now shared with Kurdish friends for 50 years.*" The numerous beautiful landscape photographs – much more prevalent than pictures of individuals – show how much the Christensens were impressed by the mountains of Hakkâri.

During their fieldwork, Nerthus Christensen collected material with the intention of studying Kurdish pottery and ethnic crafts. Among her notes, we find several detailed sketches of wares and gadgetry. She seems to have been in good contact with Kurdish women. The numer-

ous pictures and recordings of Kurdish women must have been made by her. Christensen's photos of Nerthus show a happy and open-minded young woman. The couple seems to have had a happy time in Hakkâri.

Following the German tradition of comparative musicology, Christensen focused on recordings. On 24 August, the researcher passed through Şiköy. Nerthus notes, "Armenian village. Kildani = language = siriyani old name. Colloquial, understand Kurdish."[7] Hearing about afternoon praying in the village's church, they immediately recorded it – and continued their travel without further research on what they witnessed. Christensen recorded whatever he could access; in Siirt, for example, religious and a few non-religious Arabic songs, later mainly among the Ertoşi Kurds of Beytüşşebap wedding songs, *kilam*s in the style of *dengbêj* (singer-poets) and instrumental pieces, for example on the flute *kaval*. Thanks to Nerthus Christensen, several songs sung by women are preserved in the collection.

An episode of his second trip to Hakkâri in 1965 shows his preoccupation with recordings: Delayed by snow in the middle of Hakkâri, the Christensens decided to drive 800 km (at that time probably one or two days on the road) up to Sivas, where they knew from Reinhard about the existence of Kurdish people, in order to record there. Three weeks later the snow had obviously melted, as we find Christensen again recording in Hakkâri. Staying for over three weeks in Hakkâri without the hope of encountering musicians, not recording anything and simply talking to people does not seem to have been an option for Christensen. After all, thanks to this bizarre jaunt, some previously unnoticed early recordings from Koçgiri survive in the Berlin Phonogram Archive.

Christensen followed Reinhard's methods in recording and managed to hold efficient and well-organised sessions (see Tahtaişleyen 2021). Often a significant number of songs were recorded in one day. In his record sheets, Christensen meticulously noted the date and place of

7 In original: "armenisches Dorf. Kildani = Sprache = siriyani alte Bezeichnung. Umgangssprache, verstehen kurdisch."

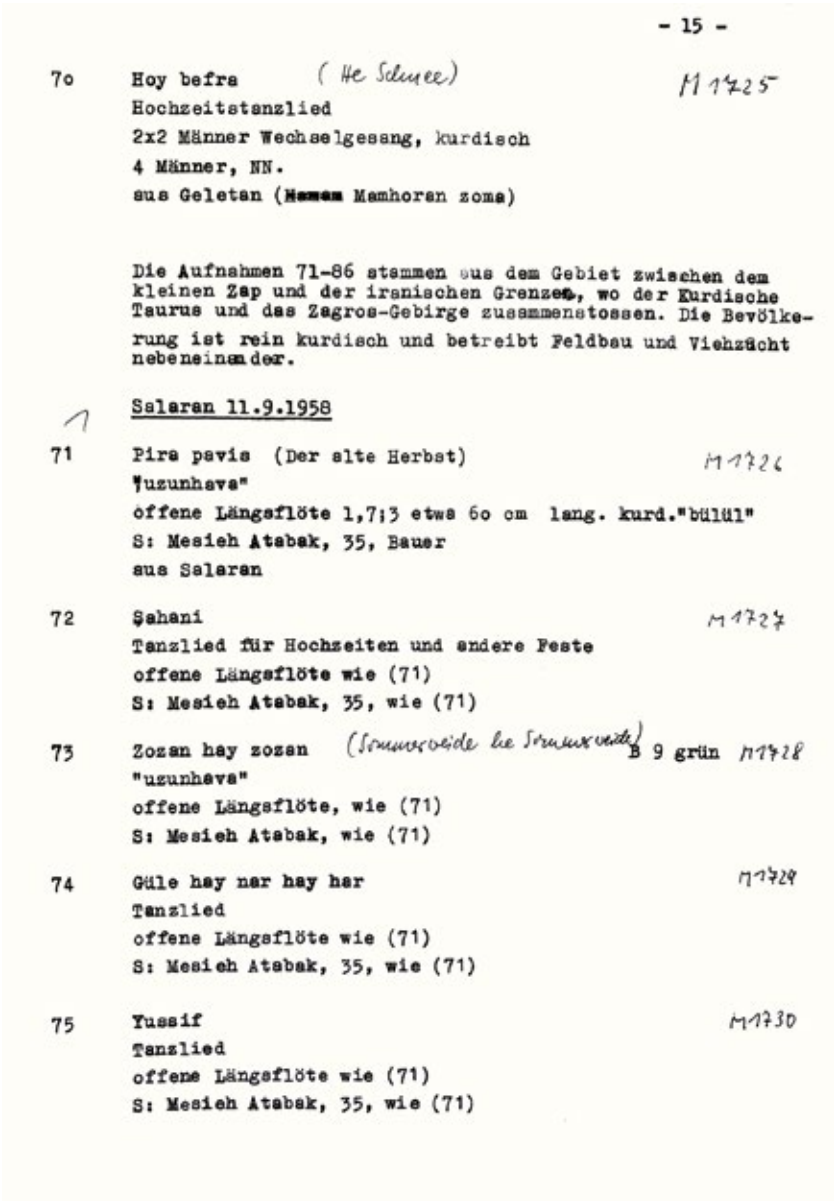
the recording, the recording device, the title of the recorded piece or song, genre, age, the origin of the song, performers, text-language, performer / singer (name, age, profession, ethnic group "Volk"), the origin of the performer, remarks. In addition, every recording received a number. Later the signature of the tape was added in handwriting. The same hand often added a German translation of Kurdish song names. These translations hence must have been made later in the museum (see Figure 4).

Nerthus and Dieter Christensen's detailed personal notes also demonstrate that their fieldwork was much shorter than what Dieter Christensen later suggested. Even in his last interview (see below), he declared they had "*hired a guide to accompany us who was familiar with the area and with whom we toured it for two months*". In fact, the complete journey of the Christensens lasted from 1 August until 8 November 1958, hence more than three months. However, the fieldwork only began upon their arrival in Şırnak on 20 August. Ten days later, they passed Beytüşşebap, and by 15 September, the group arrived in Van. The fieldwork, therefore, lasted just 25 days. Subsequently, the Christensens did an extensive touristic tour through Turkey, visiting several cities, including Van, Bitlis, Diyarbakir, Ankara, and Konya, ending up in Antalya for one month of holiday from 26 September to 27 October. Then, after another week in Istanbul, both returned to Berlin.

This short visit to Hakkâri also invites questions about the Christensens' language acquisition. In our interview, Dieter Christensen told us, "*We somehow had to get into conversation with them [the local Kurds] and stay with them, and so she [Nerthus] learned some Kurdish in practice. My Kurdish is not very good.*" At least during their first three weeks in Hakkâri, we can assume that they could hardly learn more than a few words and sentences of Kurdish.

One year after this first fieldwork, Nerthus Christensen published a first article entitled "Notes on Kurdish Pottery".[8] Dieter Christensen

8 Christensen & Christensen (1959).



- 15 -

70 Hoy befra (He Schnee) M 1725
Hochzeitstanzlied
2x2 Männer Wechselgesang, kurdisch
4 Männer, NN.
aus Geletan (Hemam Mamhoran zoma)

Die Aufnahmen 71-86 stammen aus dem Gebiet zwischen dem kleinen Zap und der iranischen Grenze, wo der Kurdische Taurus und das Zagros-Gebirge zusammenstossen. Die Bevölkerung ist rein kurdisch und betreibt Feldbau und Viehzucht nebeneinander.

Salaran 11.9.1958

71 Pira pavis (Der alte Herbst) M 1726
"uzunhava"
offene Längsflöte 1,7;3 etwa 60 cm lang. kurd."bülül"
S: Mesieh Atabak, 35, Bauer
aus Salaran

72 Şahani M 1727
Tanzlied für Hochzeiten und andere Feste
offene Längsflöte wie (71)
S: Mesieh Atabak, 35, wie (71)

73 Zozan hay zozan (Sommerweide he Sommerweide) B 9 grün M 1728
"uzunhava"
offene Längsflöte, wie (71)
S: Mesieh Atabak, wie (71)

74 Güle hay nar hay har M 1729
Tanzlied
offene Längsflöte wie (71)
S: Mesieh Atabak, 35, wie (71)

75 Yussif M 1730
Tanzlied
offene Längsflöte wie (71)
S: Mesieh Atabak, 35, wie (71)

Figure 4: Record sheet from Dieter Christensen, 1958.

later included this article in his bibliography with himself as the primary author "together with Nerthus Christensen."[9] Again, one year later, Dieter Christensen recorded 14 songs of Dizayi Kurds from the region of Erbil (Iraq) in Berlin. Most probably, these where the first research recordings made among migrants in Germany. Today, these recordings are stored with all other recordings made by Christensen at the Berlin Phonogram archive. Dieter Christensen's first short article on Kurdish music, published in 1961, dealt with Kurdish bridal songs from Hakkâri.[10] In 1962, accompanied again by Wolfgang Rudolph, the couple travelled to Western Iran. Between 23 July and 26 October, the Christensens recorded several Kurdish songs of various genres. The record entitled *Kurdish Folk Music from Western Iran* was the second international annotated documentation of Kurdish music published by the Ethnic Folkways Library after the record by Solecki noted above.[11] In 1965, the Christensens returned to Hakkâri for two weeks from 10 to 22 May. As mentioned, they interrupted their work and continued to work in two villages near Sivas: first, in the village Armut Çayır close to Serefiye, district Zara (2 June), then in Ortaköy / Ortabucak, Şarkışla. From 16 June until 9 July, the Christensens continued their fieldwork around Beytüşşebap in Hakkâri. The most extensive article on Kurdish music by Christensen was published in 1963 in *Jahrbuch für musikalische Volks- und Völkerkunde,* the only German journal for comparative musicology of the period.[12] Following the methodological approach of Kurt Reinhard, Christensen analyzed several wedding songs he had recorded during his two fieldwork travels in Hakkâri. Three further articles from the 1960s contained only a short analysis of songs.[13] We learn from them that, already in the late 1960s, thirteen collections including recordings of 800 Kurdish songs have been stored at the Berlin Phonogram Archive. The period of intense working on Kurdish music saw a last culmination in 1970 with 41 recordings, again from Ortaköy, Sivas, where Christensen,

9 Cf. http://www.columbia.edu/~dc22/dcbib.htm (last retrieved 13 July 2023).
10 Christensen (1961).
11 Christensen (1965).
12 Christensen (1963).
13 Christensen (1967a); Christensen (1967b); Christensen (1968).

among others, recorded one song from Zakine Satıroğlu and Zühra Başer, two daughters of Aşık Veysel. Eventually, in the same year, Christensen visited Kurds in Northern Iraq. For whatever reason, after the travel in 1955, which for both men was their first experience in Turkey, Kurt Reinhard and Dieter Christensen had parted ways and never worked together again. Except for two minor articles published in 1975,[14] Christensen's research on Kurdish music seems to have ended with the recordings in 1970.

Again, Christensen's life changed. In 1971, the then 39-year-old German musicologist left Germany and arrived in the USA. For one year, he worked at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut; one year later, he was appointed Director of the Center for Ethnomusicology at Columbia University, where he stayed until his retirement in 2002. In 1981, he additionally became Secretary General of the International Council for Traditional Music (a post he occupied until 2001), then General Editor of the *Yearbook for Traditional Music* (1982 – 2001) and editor of the *UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music* (Paris, 1994 – 2001). Over the years, Christensen published many reviews and smaller articles on music in New Guinea, Polynesia, Herzegovina, Oman, and, in his later years, on early German comparative musicology.

While Dieter Christensen became an influential scholar of international ethnomusicology, he also was in an increasingly powerful position. During his time in New York, he seems to have raped at least one younger colleague. As we now know from Helen Myers, Christensen grotesquely abused his position by intimidating and violating one of his students. These revelations raise questions about how he may have misused his position at other moments as well. Nerthus Christensen left her academic career, and between 1982 and 2001, worked as the Council's Executive Secretary. She passed away on Christmas, in Massachusetts on 25 December 2003, with little public acknowledgement of her life and work.

14 Christensen (1975a); Christensen (1975b).

With the rise of international Kurdish Studies,[15] Kurdish music also attracted a more general interest. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Christensen wrote several general articles on Kurdish music for leading encyclopedias, including the second edition of the German *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (*MGG;* 1997), the second edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (2001), and *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* (2002a). In all of his writings, he emphasized that his material had been collected more than 30 years ago. In 2002, for example, he wrote, *"This essay deals with music and dance as an expressive behaviour of individuals and groups, among whom we were able to spend a few months in 1958 and 1965 in the Turkish part of Central Kurdistan. It describes conditions as they existed before the violent changes that have devastated the areas near the border since the 1970s and have largely driven out the local population."*[16] Still, it is surprising that international ethnomusicology regarded Christensen as a specialist in Kurdish music. No younger ethnomusicologist could be found to add recent material. At most, the *MGG* inserted a short addendum penned by Stephen Blum entitled "Kurdish Music in the Late 20th Century". In two articles published after 2000, Christensen tried to resume his studies on Kurdish music. However, his methodology was too far from that of contemporary ethnomusicology and anthropology to attract larger interest.[17]

In August 2010, Dieter Christensen, aged 78, returned to Berlin. He began to investigate Kurdish music in Berlin. However, he was unable to catch up with the rapidly growing research on migration and diaspora.[18]

The Manuscript: "Hakkâri/Colemêrg. Travels to the Eastern Taurus (1958, 1965)"

In Christensen's bequest, I found several versions of a manuscript in which he obviously intended to publish a selection of the photo-

15 Cf. Bruinessen (2014).
16 Christensen (2002b: 57).
17 Christensen (2007); Christensen (2009).
18 Christensen (2010).

graphs he and Nerthus had taken during their early fieldwork travels in Hakkâri. The first sketch appears to have been written by Nerthus; a later, almost complete version is still in German. I do not know if he translated it into English himself or hired a translator. Neither the text nor the selection of photographs has been completed by Christensen. For the edition of this book, I removed some technically faulty pictures along with a few less meaningful landscape photographs without immediate interest in terms of content. Furthermore, the number of detailed photographs concerning the crafts and work of women taken by Nerthus was reduced to a few examples. Although the original titles just mentioned the travel of 1958, Christensen has added numerous photos from 1965 as well. I tried to arrange these photographs in a way that the reader can understand the year in which the pictures were taken. If no year is indicated, the photos were taken in 1958. Turkish words and names have been corrected according to standard orthography.

After several years of doubts, I eventually decided that the Kurds of Hakkâri and their history and culture, already hardly visible in international research, would not be served by letting Christensen's archive lie unused. This present book can only be a first introduction to this very problematic scholar's work. His entire bequest is still waiting to be investigated.

Concerning the region of Hakkâri and its music, since Christensen's days further research has been published: The excellent audio documentation project *Eyhok: Traditional Music from Hakkari,* published by Kalan Music in Turkey in 2004, provides a contemporary view of music in Hakkâri.[19]

Looking at the photos and what I saw from the Christensens' notes, I think that back in the mid-1950s, another future might have been possible for him. Like his teacher Kurt Reinhard, he began as an Orientalist and naive armchair scholar. However, as Nihan Tahtaişleyen has shown in her PhD thesis on Reinhard's research in Turkey, Kurt

19 Ataş et al. (2004).

Figure 5: Nerthus Christensen recording in 1958.

Reinhard, accompanied and supported by his wife Ursula Reinhard, continued to travel to Turkey over decades. Kurt and in particular Ursula Reinhard learned Turkish. Kurt Reinhard began to understand Turkish history and culture and eventually transformed from an armchair scholar of comparative musicology into a modern ethnomusicologist. According to academic standards, his student Dieter Christensen achieved the more prominent career, even succeeding in New York and becoming a leading actor in international ethnomusicology. However, he abused his powerful position most cruelly. In 1958 and still in 1965, Christensen must still have had some kind of passion for travelling and music and less aspiration for social power. In New York, however, he remained an Orientalist, and became a man of social power. As such, eventually, he became a rapist.

After the manuscript of this book was finished, I searched for further information on the "Me Too" scandal of ethnomusicology in 2018. Google did not find one single publication. I hope Helen Myers, this courageous woman, still adheres to the advice she gave me during our long chats over Facebook in 2018 to publish the Christensens' photos of 1958 and 1965 here. Never in my academic life have

I worked on a project with such a sense of guilt, discomfort, disgust, and grief. At the same time, I am nonetheless deeply convinced that the recordings and photos made by Nerthus and Dieter Christensen have a high historical value today.

I am more than grateful to Wendelmoet Hamelink and Nihan Tahtaişleyen for their advice.

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Dieter Christensen

Hakkâri/Colemêrg: Travels to the Eastern Taurus (1958, 1965) Images and Memories

What We Looked For and What We Found

June 1958. Three young German scholars leave the train at Kurtalan, the final stop on the southeastern end of the Turkish railroad. A bus takes us to Siirt, where we pay our respects to the *vali*, the governor of Siirt province. There are no tourists here, foreign travelers are a rarity, and the central government in Ankara needs to know who visits these Eastern parts of Turkey and why.

A few days later, we move on to Şırnak, a small town near the border to Iraq. Only jeeps and trucks can pass here. Thanks to the kind intervention of the governor, it is the *kaymakam* [Ali İhsan Yıldırım][20], the administrator of Şırnak county himself, who takes us in his jeep and helps with further arrangements. We want to go to Hakkâri, the old Colemêrg. The road, a very rough dirt track, ends in Şırnak. From here on, one can only continue by riding horse or mule.

We have a clear, unambiguously scholarly mission, approved by the Turkish authorities. We are to explore whether an ancient Mesopotamian culture, such as it is well-documented for the Ma'dan in the swamps of Southern Iraq, at one time extended Northward into the mountains of the Eastern Taurus into what are now the Turkish provinces of Siirt and Hakkâri. The hypothesis to be tested is that remnants of that ancient way of life – in particular, forms of keeping and using water buffalo, and architectonic elements using

20 [MG]: Resmî Gazete 10025 (6 October 1958): 1 (https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/arsiv/10025.pdf; last retrieved 13 July 2023). I am again grateful to Christoph K. Neumann for the hint.

Route of the journey 1958 (source: Christensen 1963: 12).

reed in house construction houses – may have endured here over millennia in the isolated mountains at the head of the Mesopotamian lowlands. We are well-prepared for the assignment given to us by Prof. Dr. Sigrid Westphal-Hellbusch, the head of the Ethnological Institute at the Free University of Berlin and the author of this hypothesis. The leader of our little group is Dr. Wolfgang Rudolph, social anthropologist and docent at the institute. Also with us are Nerthus Christensen, student of West-Asian Archaeology, Iranian Languages and Ethnology, and Dr. Dieter Christensen, who is not only married to Nerthus but also an ethnomusicologist and ethnologist as well as research assistant at the Berlin Phonogram Archive with field work experience in southern Turkey and some knowledge of the Turkish language. The *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* sponsors the enterprise.

Water buffalo and reeds in 1958

To make a long story short: we found no water buffalo in the mountains, only in the wide Gevar (Yüksekova) valley, and even there, nothing pointed to the historical connections with ancient lower Mesopotamia for which we were searching.

Instead, we found something that was to become much more important and fulfilling for us: the Kurds of Hakkâri in their own land, still relatively undisturbed in their way of life by political developments that were to shatter their existence in the late 1960s. We found dignity, pride, generosity, hospitality, and the mutual trust we have now shared with Kurdish friends for 50 years. We found a world that was alien to us, but the people soon became familiar. We found a way of life very different from that of big cities, but the people we would later meet again outside of Kurdistan, in western Turkey, America, Europe, and especially Berlin, had carried the spirit of the Kurdish mountains with them. In our thoughts, in our scholarly work, and in our teaching[21] in the decades that followed, we traveled time and again to Kurdistan; in physical reality, we had done so in the 1960s.

21 Until his death in 1995, Wolfgang Rudolph lectured on Kurdish Culture and Social Structure at the Free University Berlin; until his retirement in 2005, Dieter Christensen offered courses on Kurdish music at Columbia University in New York. Both also presented public and conference lectures on Kurdish culture and published extensively on the subject. [Dieter Christensen]

The three of us together conducted in 1962 a survey of Western Iran, where Dr. Rudolph continued his research between 1964 and 1965. Nerthus and Dieter Christensen returned to Hakkâri in 1965 and spent a summer on the high pastures with their hosts of 1958. Then, the political developments around Kurdistan and our own commitments made further visits impossible for almost 40 years.

The images in this volume are intended to convey an impression of the people and the landscapes in which they live – or rather, lived. Through these pictures we are trying to convey what we were privileged to experience in 1958 and 1965. It is the immense hospitality we were shown wherever we went, the dignified reception and indulgent acceptance of us always-curious strangers to which these images owe their existence.

The vast majority of the photographs in this volume were taken by Nerthus or Dieter Christensen – we have always understood whatever we did as a shared good, and we have never bothered to mark what was hers or his; however, in particular the faces of women and children show when Nerthus was behind the camera. The remaining photos were taken by Karsten Christensen and Wolfgang Rudolph.

The idea for this volume and the invitation to prepare it came in the spring of 2003 from the "Berliner Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Kurdologie" [Berlin Association for the Promotion of Kurdish Studies] and was directed to Nerthus. Shortly thereafter, Nerthus was diagnosed with advanced cancer. We discussed the project and started with preparations, but the disease was faster. Nerthus died on 25 December 2003 at our home in Drury, Massachusetts.

To Şırnak

In Siirt, on this June day in 1958, the three of us are not certain how we shall get on our way, but we know that somehow we will find our way to Şırnak, a crossroads of annual migrations from the Bohtan and Euphrates valleys into the mountain pastures of the Eastern Tau-

The *kaymakam* of Şırnak (center, with shotgun) with Nerthus Christensen, Wolfgang Rudolph and company on the way to Şırnak.

rus and the mountain tracks connecting the plains around Diyarbakır with the Great Zab River which flows into the Tigris. From Siirt, we are planning to follow these mountain routes east in our search for reed houses and the water buffalo, reach Hakkâri town, and then explore, with the same goals, the region east of the Great Zab River.

The many hours of driving over the rough, dusty track, the beauty of the Bohtan river valley along which the road meanders, the tent camps of migrating pastoralists, with their flocks of sheep on the way from the lowlands to the high mountain pastures – all this gives us a first taste of the two months of rich, if not always easy and comfortable, life we have ahead of us.

Şırnak is an old town with flat-roofed houses of dried clay bricks. Its cobblestoned streets end at the outskirts. Gardens surround the town. The wide valley of the Bohtan river opens into the Mesopotamian lowland where three countries come together: Turkey, Iraq

and Syria. Şırnak is home to Kurds, Armenians and Chaldean Christians, renowned as a center for weaving and tailoring the fine cloth from which *şal u şapik*,[22], the traditional men's dress of the region, is made. Şırnak is also the capital of the county.[23] The small castle or *konak* which dominates the town is the office and residence of the *kaymakam*, our host.

22 [MG]: Traditionelle Männerkleidung: weite Hose, Weste und offene Jacke.
23 [MG]: In 1990, Şırnak became the center of the newly-established province of the same name. Since Christensen's visit, the population has roughly tripled.

Left page

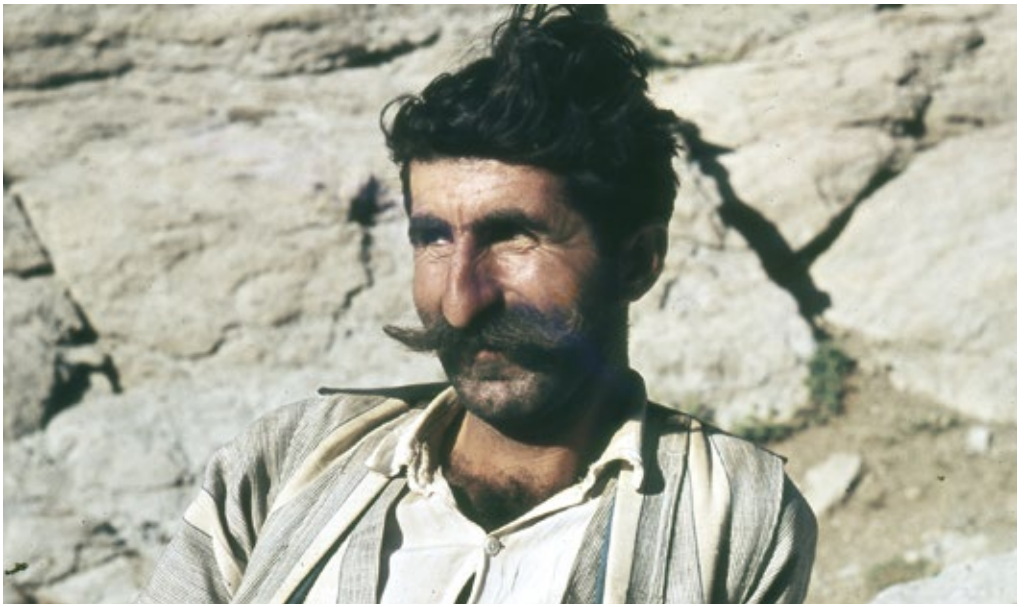
Şırnak town, with the *konak* – the residence of the *kaymakam* – on top.

Right page

Top: Cobblestoned street in town.

Middle: The rooftop as the summer bedroom.

Bottom: Communal baking oven *furun*.



Salih of Şırnak

The *kaymakam* gracefully helps us with finding transportation – one horse and two mules – and he also provides for protectors, two gendarmes. They are not familiar with the local people and their language, but they carry guns. The owner of the animals we rent, Salih, comes along on his own mule, and he turns soon into a knowledgeable and faithful guide and companion. How could we have ever managed without Salih of Şırnak?

We have explained to Salih, in my [DC's] somewhat rudimentary Turkish, that we needed his animals to carry us and our luggage – personal things and our recording equipment – in a slow and leisurely way to Hakkâri, that we wanted to visit villages and summer pastures, that we were looking for water buffalo and reed houses, and that we would pay for the animals per day. It was understood that, as is customary, Salih would accompany his beasts of burden to watch them and care for them, and to collect the rent at the end, but there was no talk of any further services or pay for him.

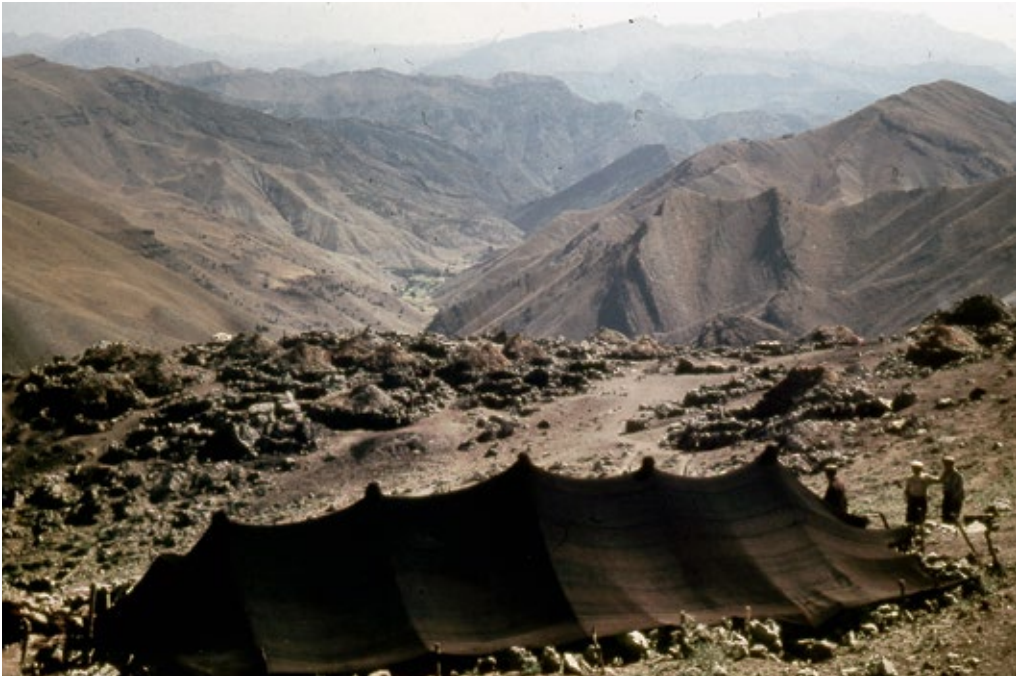
From here we headed into the mountains.

Among the Göyan of the "Great Valley"

The Göyan are farmers. Their fields occupy the long-stretching valleys along the streams that run between the faults of the mountain chain. They also keep flocks of sheep and goats, and at this time of the year when it gets hot and humid in the valleys, those who do not have to stay with the village and fields move with the flocks high up into the mountains. The wealthy ones – like the *axa*[24] who hosts us – will put up a black tent, with covers of black goat hair. The majority just restore their huts from the previous year – the rough stone walls are still in place, and an airy roof is quickly built from sticks and grass. In June, the men are still busy with rebuilding, while the women are spinning, milking, churning butter, and making cheese for the winter. Drying yoghurt cakes rest on the roofs like huge eggs.

Down in the valleys, square stone houses with tiny window holes high up under the flat roofs are stacked up like boxes against the mountain slopes. The clay roof of one house becomes the front yard and workspace of the one above. In some places, grain is spread to be threshed by horses in an ancient technique. Also ancient is the way of making pottery without a potter's wheel, the work of women. They shape the wet, pliable clay on a flat stone or an old shard by hand into pots, jars or pitchers that show ornamentation known from Babylonian times. Yes, there are traces of ancient Mesopotamia in these mountains, but no water buffalo and no reed houses.

24 [MG]: Leader, landlord.



Top: Over the mountains into the land of the Göyan.
Bottom: On the summer pasture of Kilban-Uludere. The tent of the *axa* in the foreground.

Left page

A cluster of conical summer huts.

Right page

Top: The men place rough branches on the rim of the circular stone wall to form a conical roof which they cover with hay.

Bottom: The work of the women never stops – spinning black yarn from goat wool

Left page
Top: In the Uludere – the "Great Valley." Cornfields and winter villages.
Bottom: The stone houses with their flat roofs sit on top of one another.

Right page
Galleries provide airy and protected spaces for the hot season.

Left page

Top: Threshing the wheat using *gêre*, the age-old technique of driving horses in a circle over the spread-out harvest.

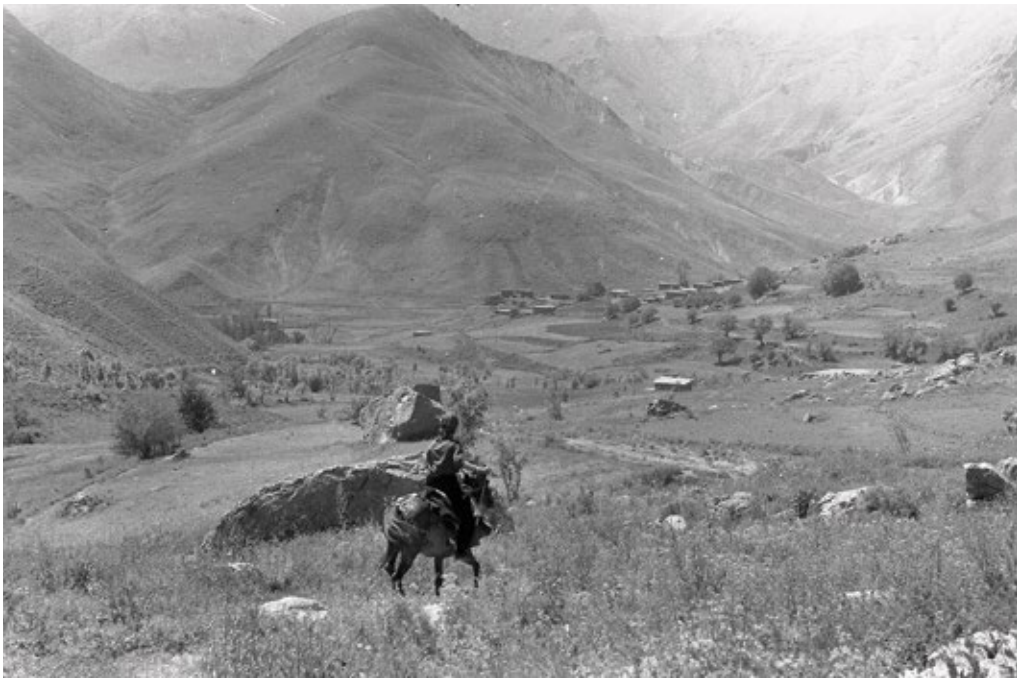
Bottom: Free-hand pottery. An old woman shapes the beginning of a clay jar from moist potter's clay on a large shard. With the work piece turned over, the jar begins to take shape. Both handles and an ornamental notched band around the hip of the jar are in place, and now the potter will build the rounded body of the jar from pliable rolls of clay.

Right page

Entrance to the *kildani*-church in Şiköy

Among the Ertoşi of Beytüşşebap

A large area of mountainous land east and north of Beytüşşebap (Arabic for "House of the Young People") is the land of the Ertoşi, a confederation of Kurdish tribes that, according to written and oral tradition, goes back many generations. Their wise men explain that the tribes are descendants from twelve brothers who spent winters in the northern reaches of the Mesopotamian plain with their flocks of sheep. In the hot summers, they took their animals to the high pastures of Hakkâri, always living in tents and depending entirely on husbandry for their living. "Sometime, perhaps two-hundred years ago" some families began to stay in the mountains, taking quarter with unwilling hosts – *fellah*, Christians – while other remained in the lowlands, built houses there and started subsidiary farming. In the 1920s, when the new borders between the new states, the Turkish Republic and Iraq, closed and the annual migration became impossible, the vast majority of the Ertoşi remained in the Hakkâri highlands, with migration only



from their villages to and among the high pastures. Their houses are built like those of the Göyan – stone walls and flat, rolled clay roofs – but their villages are not compact and crowded into narrow valleys, but spread out, leaving space among individual houses or family clusters. And the basis of their economy continues to be the flocks of sheep. Practically everyone spends the summer months on the summer pasture, in black tents, following the sheep by moving camp further up as the snow recedes, the flocks exhaust the fodder, and the soil gets dry and barren. The summer pasture is where the Ertoşi feel at home. Some men are busy herding and guarding the animals, some are occupied with occasional tasks, such as moving camp and making tent fences, collecting wood for fuel or taking summer products to the market – but overall, summer is the time of leisure for them. Women, on the other hand, can never rest. There are children to take care of, cooking, and general housekeeping. Their major work, however, is processing whatever the sheep and goats give: milk into yoghurt and butter, wool into yarn, yarn into woven or knotted rugs, straps and

Left page

A winter village of the Ertoşi in 1965. The houses are spread out over a wide area along a stream.

Right page

Top: Camp in July 1958. The ground is trodden and dry, time to move higher up to fresh pastures.

Bottom: Winter house among the fields in 1965. On the flat clay roof the stone rollers.

saddle bags. There are a few chores in which women and men join, but on the whole, the summer at the *zoma*[25] is the season of men's leisure, enlivened with visiting neighbours and relatives or the market and by receiving guests. Summer is also the preferred wedding season. Food is plentiful, travel is easy, and the summer pastures and the tents give virtually unlimited space for guests and entertainment.

25 [MG]: Kurdish: Summer pasture.

Setting up Tents on the Summer Pasture in 1965

Tents, tent poles, reed fences, *kilim*s and all other summer needs are moved, loaded on cattle as beasts of burden, from the winter village to the first summer pasture.

Left page

Top: Even before the tents are put up, women will have milked goats and sheep and started churning butter with the butter bag *meşk* in its tripod.

Bottom: Men and women lay out the tent cover.

Right page

Men's work: setting and securing the tent poles.

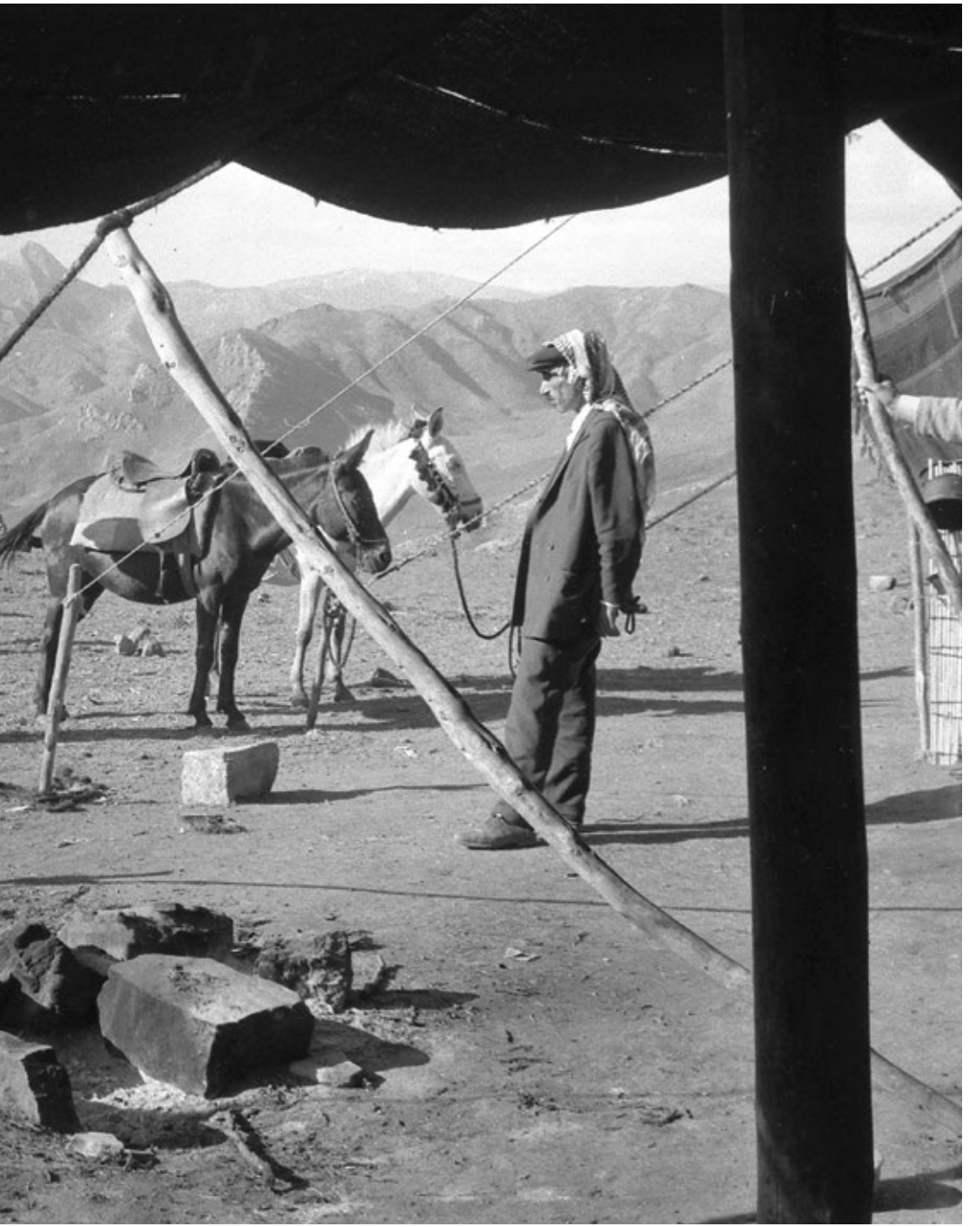
Left page

While the men are setting up the tents, some women forage for wild vegetables.

Right page

Top: The left half of the tent is the *divan*, where male guests are received. The right half is the *mal*, the "home", the family section. When respected guests are present, the two tent halves are usually separated by a reed fence or a curtain.

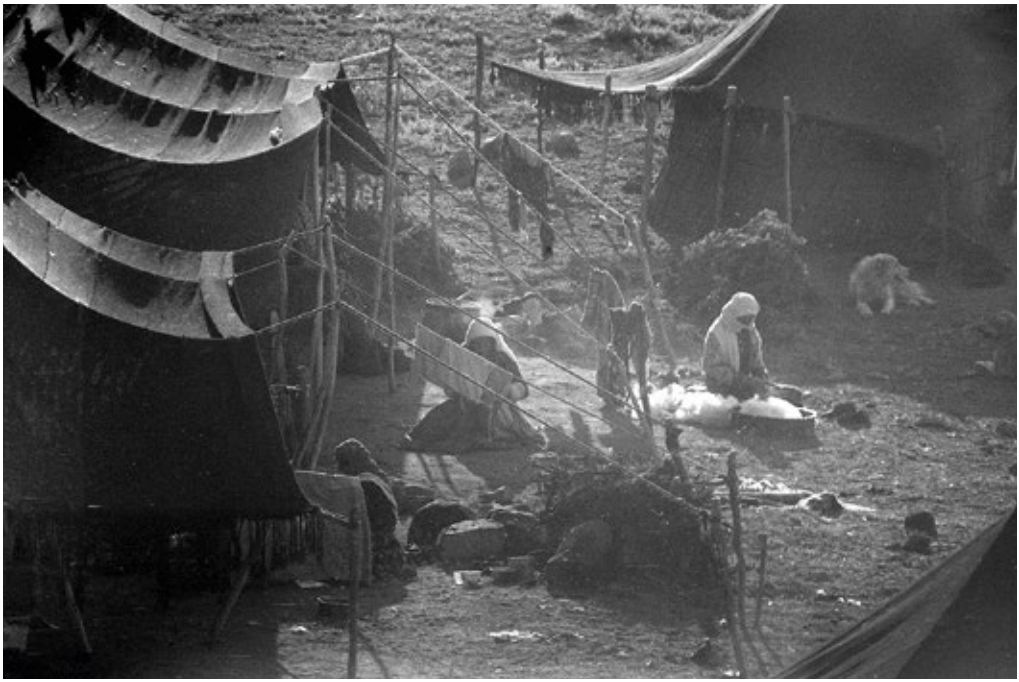
Life in the Summer Camp in 1965

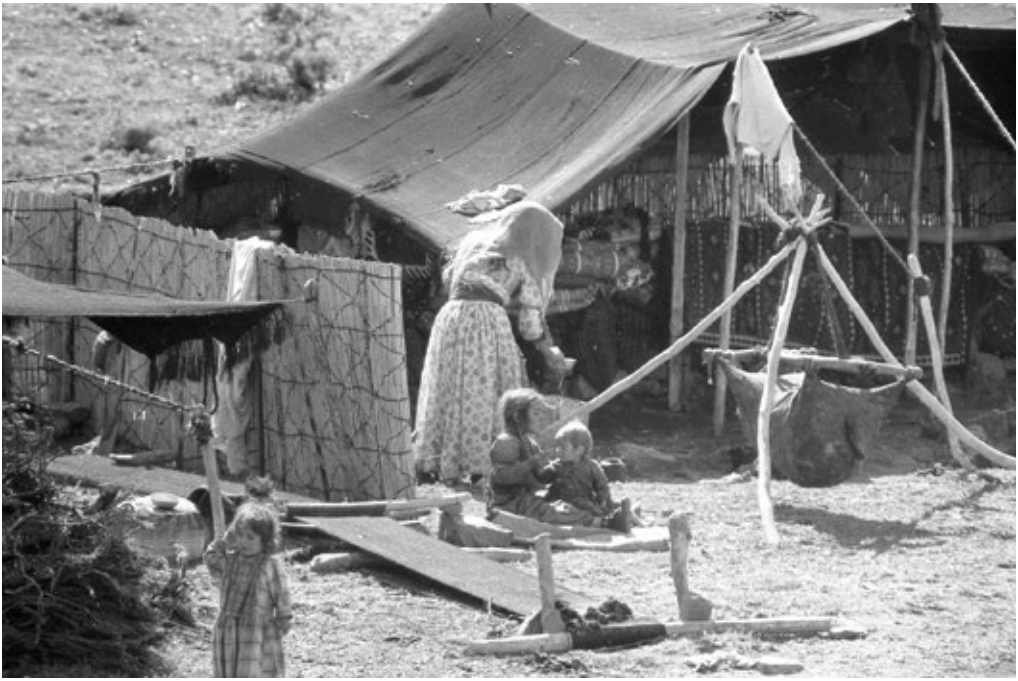


Milking the Animals

1965. In the late afternoon, women will go to milk the sheep and goats of their family, often followed by small children.

Domestic Scenes 1965:
Children at Play, Cooking and Baking





Working with Wool (1958)

Left page

Breakfast

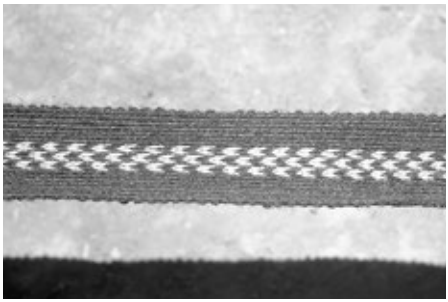
Right page

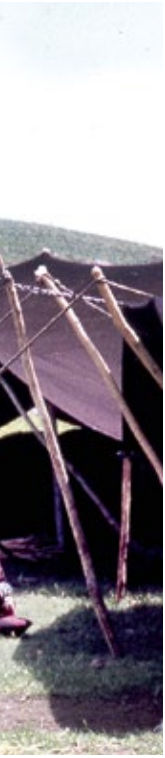
Top: Carding wool on a nail board.

Bottom: Weaving black tent cloth. Also, spinning goat yarn.

Saddle Bags (1965)

Stringing the *kette* for saddle bags.





Right page

Top: A woman in Beytüşşebap is knotting a rug in 1958. Turkish *halı*, something not seen among the formerly nomadic tribes in the area.

Bottom: Twisting ropes.

Left page

Card weaving for saddle belts.

Top: Tying fence.

Right: A dervish passes through (1965).

A Wedding

July 1958. For a week now there has been an air of excitement in the tents. Guests have arrived and men have assembled in the men's sections; women have pulled out colorful dresses and cleaned and mended them. The *axa* has engaged professional musicians from far away – Cizre – because there are no professional musicians among the *eşir*[26]. They have been put up in a tent a bit apart from that of the *axa* where we stay. They have instruments with them – a big drum, *dehol*, an oboe, *zorne*, and a stringed instrument, the *riçak*. In the evening, they will sit and sing for the guests in the *axa*'s tent where the food is more plentiful than ever. One of his cousins is going to marry a girl of the neighboring Ertoşi tribe; tomorrow the procession will leave to bring her from the camp of her parents, some six hours away on horseback, over mountains and through ravines. There will be dancing to the sounds of *dehol* and *zorne*; then the musicians will lead the procession in which most men and a few women of our camp will join.

The arrival at the bride's camp is like a wild attack, a conquest. Gun shots echo from the mountains, the dust rises high, but the excitement soon settles into triumphant dancing all around the tents; it lasts deep into the night, in a large circle led by a man who waves a green cloth; elsewhere, women in their bright dresses are dancing in a single line, holding each other tight, and singing the old dance songs *govend*. Then the meal is served – sumptuous, with mountains of rice and a lot of meat.

The next day, the procession returns with the bride under a yellow veil. The last stretch sees a fantasia – even mules are made to gallop, there is much triumphant shooting, the bride is sprayed with sweets as she enters her new husband's tent where the ceremonial wedding songs are performed. Outside, there is dancing, then a festive meal for all.

The next morning the musicians leave. Life returns to normal.

26 [MG]: Members of the tribe.

Left page

Top: Professional musicians – *mitirp* – have arrived from Cizre to entertain the wedding guests. Their leader sings the praise of the hosting *axa*. He accompanies himself on a three-stringed spike fiddle, the *riçak*.

Bottom: The lead dancer waves a green cloth.

Right page

Top: The dancers, all men, move in a line to the sounds of drum and shawm.

Bottom: The musicians, with shawm and drum, are ready to lead the bridal procession.

Left page

Top: Departure for the camp of the bride.

Bottom: Final descent – in the foreground our guide, Salih.

Right page

We conquer the bride's camp.

Pages 70/71

The women join in dancing the govend, apart from the men, and without instruments.

Left page

Top: The "victors" and the "vanquished" celebrate.

Right page

Top: Resting on the long way back to the camp where the groom is waiting. The bride, under a golden veil, at a spring.

Bottom: Triumphant return to the groom's camp.

East of the Great Zab River: The *Gevar Ova* (*dolê Gêvar*)

In 1958 and still in 1965, a narrow dirt road connects Hakkâri – the "town" of a few hundred residents – with Van and the Turkish roads further north and West. This road follows the narrow gorge of the Great Zab River, clinging to the steep slopes and bare rocks in an often-breathtaking way.

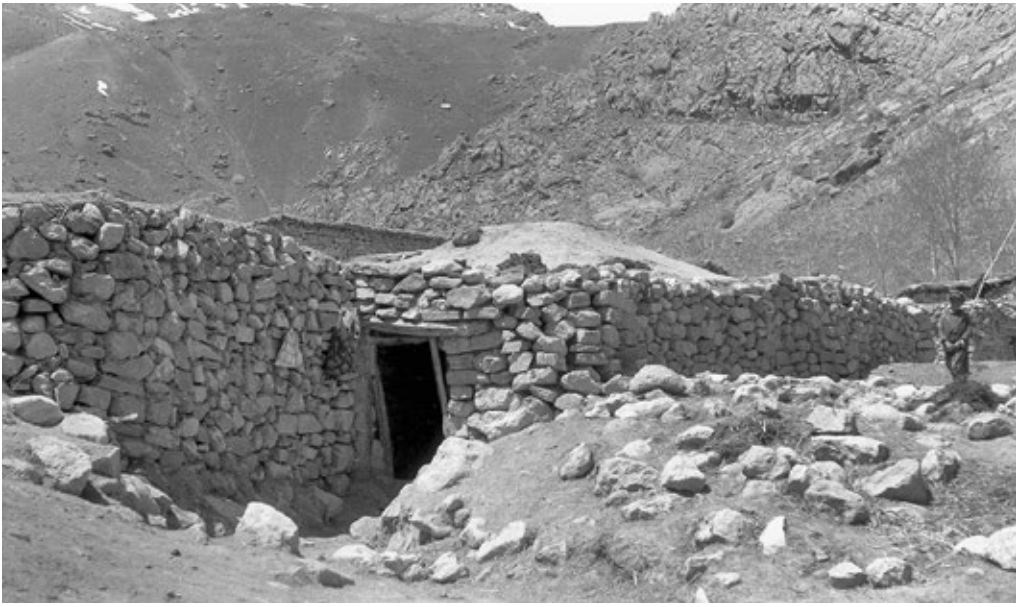
On the first day of May in 1965, snow blocked the road and we had to turn back with our car to return three weeks later. There was still snow on the mountains, but the narrow, winding side road into the *dolê Gêvar*, the high valley (Yüksekova) was now passable. Spring was coming, rain turned the slopes of the valley green, and the fertile valley bottom was all abloom.

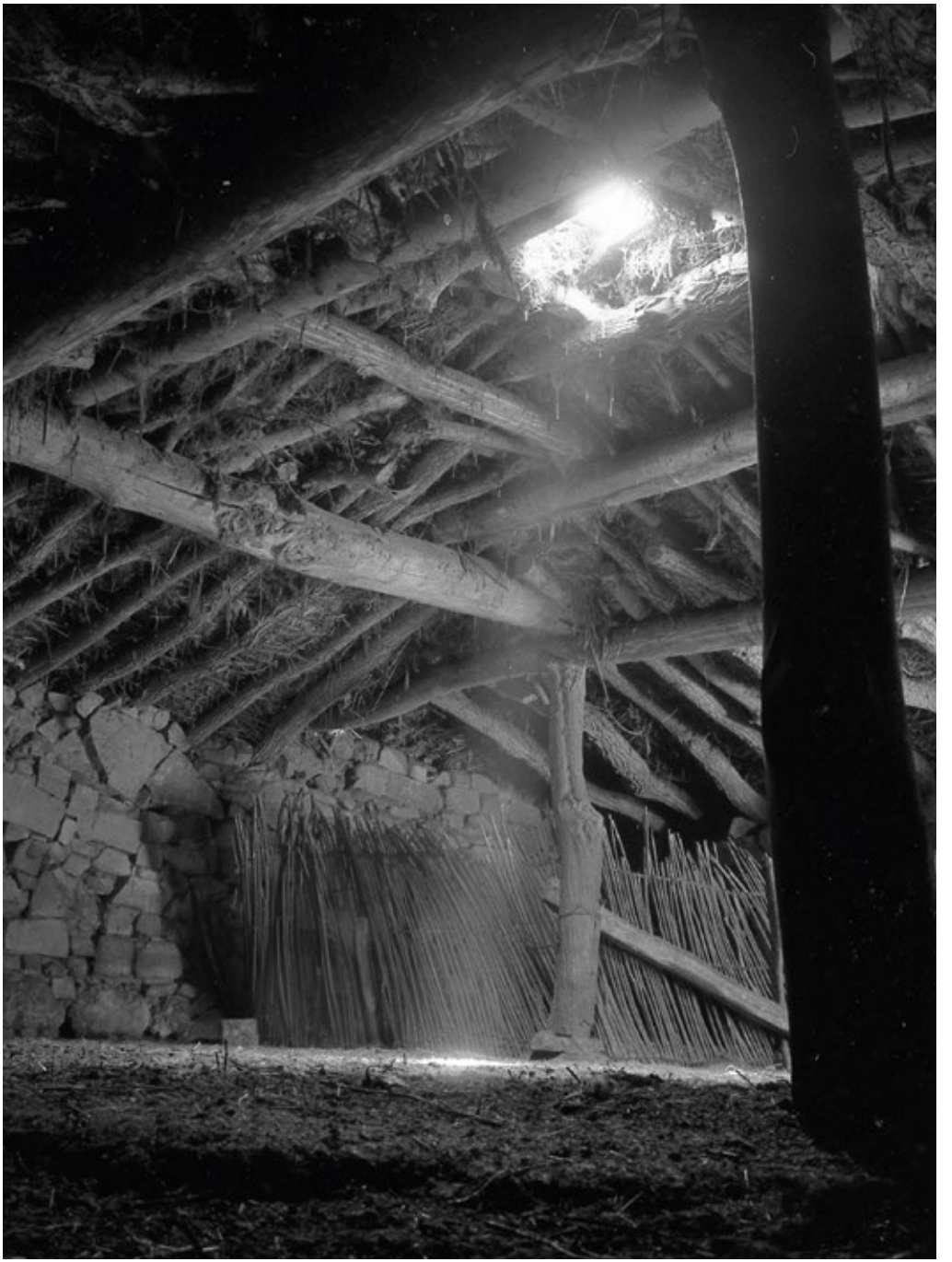
[The photos were taken in 1965.]

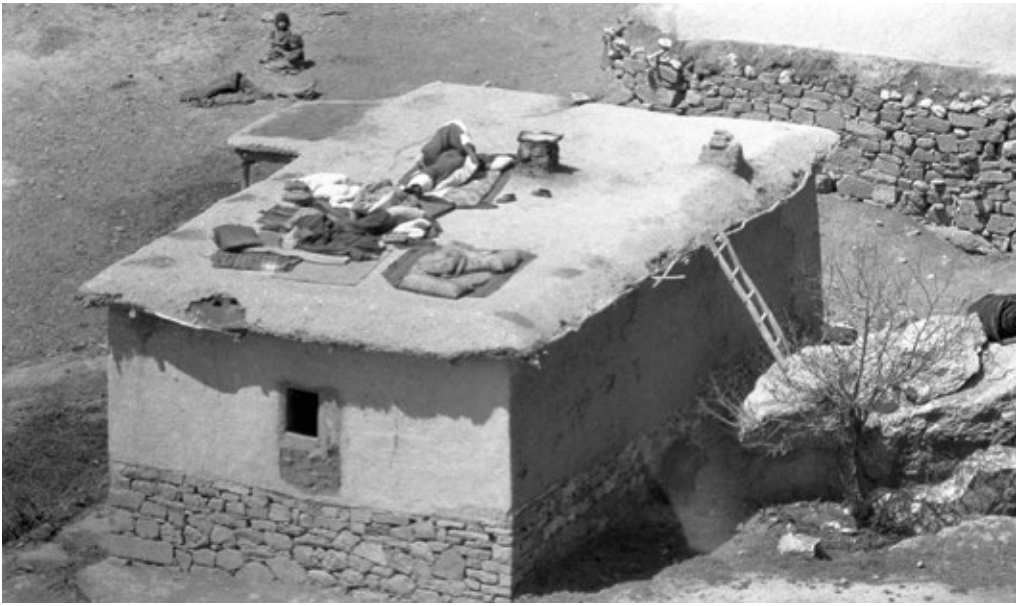

TR

1958

Houses (1965)







Left page

Houses in the valley are mostly underground, or at least partly built into the ground – living quarters as well as stables.

Right page

Bottom: Where there is a house with a roof high enough to make access for animals difficult, it will become a sleeping platform in the hot summer months.

1958

Bottom: Over the summer, piles of stacked dry manure surround the houses – fuel for the winter.

1965

Wendelmoet Hamelink, Martin Greve

Interview with Dieter Christensen

This supposedly last interview with Dieter Christensen took place in his apartment in Berlin on 6 April 2016. The interview was conducted in German, translation by MG. For the interview situation, see p. 5.

How did you come to ethnomusicology?

I'm a musician. At least, my father thought that I would become a musician. He loved chamber music more than anything. When I was nine, I took cello lessons from Richard Klemm [1902 – 1988], a very, very good Berlin musician who later became a member of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and who was a professor at the Berlin Conservatory [Hochschule für Musik Berlin]. Then, it didn't take long for people to notice me at school, and when [in 1948] the RIAS school radio orchestra[27] was founded, I was there and played with it for years. Later, it was called "Berlin Youth Orchestra." I thought I would become a musician. When it was time to graduate from high school, I thought: high school, why actually? I don't need that at all. At the conservatory, you didn't need a high school diploma to be admitted. For some reason I did it anyway, almost incidentally. I was already at music college [Musikhochschule]. I thought things were going well, but there's no downside, so I'll do my high school degree [Abitur], as well. Fortunately! And then I realized that the music school and being a musician, just being a musician, wasn't enough for me. Luckily, I had my *abitur*, I looked around at the university, at the FU [Free University] Berlin, and then I came to music history. Adam Adrio [1901 – 1973] lectured on baroque music. He understood lecturing to mean reading aloud: he came with a sheaf of paper or a little book and read from it. Then I thought: I've already learned to read on my own. So that wasn't very exciting. Then I looked around further and happened to come across a seminar being held by an associate pro-

27 RIAS ("Radio in the American Sector") was a radio channel in West-Berlin, 1946 – 1993.

fessor, a lecturer, of a very lowly rank. That was Kurt Reinhard.[28] I found this interesting, because people actually reflected and asked questions, even the students who were there – there were very few of them. I found that very attractive. So I took part.

Kurt Reinhard was very young back then …

That was in the 1950s. In 1955 I started thinking about a dissertation. I had already looked around at the phonogram archive, and there was this enormous mass of recordings, phonograms, acoustically terrible things that lay there and that nobody cared about except for Reinhard and the two or three students he inspired and who worked there voluntarily and without pay. That still existed at that time. Of course, I was there right away and looked around at the materials there. I found things that interested me, completely unedited recordings from New Guinea, far away from the Kurds. It was a well-documented collection from a doctor who had been a missionary there around the time of World War I. So, I decided to make a dissertation out of it. I did that, too, and did my doctorate using it in 1957.[29] Back then, Kurt Reinhard was still young, he wasn't yet a professor, not a "decent person" [*laughs*]. One day in 1955, before I started my dissertation, he asked me to come to Turkey with him. I said yes, but why Turkey, what is there? In the phonogram archive there was a collection from Béla Bartók [1881 – 1945, Hungarian composer and folk song collector]. These were not only Hungarian recordings, but also his recordings from Turkey [1936]. He wanted to investigate that and asked whether I would come with him on the condition that I learned Turkish. I said: yes, Doctor, I'll learn Turkish, no problem. I have always been interested in languages. Then I sat down and learned Turkish for three or four months from a very good woman who was a lecturer at the Free University and gave courses. So we went to Turkey together, and I acted as an interpreter because Kurt Reinhard hadn't learned Turkish.

28 1914 – 1979, German ethnomusicologist, see fn. 1.

29 *Die Musik der Kate und Sialum. Beiträge zur Ethnographie Neuguineas* [Music of the Kate and Sialum. Contributions to the Ethnography of New Guinea]. Berlin 1957.

Later his wife translated for him.

Yes, exactly, Ursula [Reinhard, 1915 – 2006]. She was very diligent and very pleasant. But at that time, she was not really present yet. So I drove with him to Turkey, to the Toros area, Adana *bölgesinde falan* [around the region of Adana].

So you went where Bartók had gone?

That's why we went there: in the footsteps of Bartók. We visited the places where Bartók made recordings. Reinhard's idea was to see what had changed in the years since Bartók's recordings – his recordings were from 1936. He was always interested in change, not just earlier conditions. Then we looked for people who had been recorded by Bartók at the time and their environment to see what would have changed and to follow that in recordings. The condition was that I learned Turkish and that I paid for my trip myself. That's what you call an "invitation" [*laughs*]. But it was very nice and of course it gave me a totally new impetus. I owe him what I did in the years that followed. That was not limited to Bartók or Turkey. I then also worked in the wider area, in Iran, Bosnia, in southern Arabia; I also worked in Oman, where I broke my arm, but that has nothing to do with music. Then I worked in the wider area of the Islamic Middle East.

How did you get to Hakkâri?

That happened later. I was still studying at the Free University with an ethnologist who taught folklore [Völkerkunde] here.[30] She had done research in southern Iraq, in the swamp area. She had stayed there for a long time, about a year, and asked whether I might study the Hor culture in southern Iraq, which is characterized by water buffalo and reeds. The question arose whether this culture might have continued to northern Iraq and southeastern Turkey. In the meantime, I had already married and decided to go to this area with

30 See introduction, p. 5.

my wife [Nerthus, 1932 – 2003], and pursue this question. That's how we came to Hakkâri. The Institute of Ethnology [of the FU Berlin] planned an excursion to this area, led by the assistant professor Wolfgang Rudolph [1921 – 1999, German ethnologist], to investigate this question, and of course we were the appropriate participants for it. Not only because I could speak Turkish to some extent, but also because we were interested in the area. So once again we had an "invitation" to join this group. I really enjoyed doing that, it fit very well. So I continued that. Then in 1957/58 we went to the area, the southeast of Turkey, Vilayet Hakkâri, actually only to do basic ethnographic work. It wasn't particularly geared towards music, we knew very little about the population at the time. And above all, you didn't know what it was all about with these reeds and the water buffalo [*laughs*].

How did you get there?

We went to Kurtalan [between Siirt and Batman], the terminus of the railway in the area. A pretty endless journey by train. Then at some point we dropped out and continue by horses. We moved on by looking for local connections. I noticed very early on that it is important in Turkey to have official government references and support. We contacted the *vali* [governor]. I then managed to rent a car and hire a guide to accompany us who was familiar with the area and with whom we toured the area for two months. At first, we went to the smaller towns and then to the countryside to the people who spent the summer in the *yayla* [summer pasture]. And of course, those were Kurds.

It was summer at that time. So the people were in the yaylas*?*

Yes. That was in the summer. We have been there repeatedly; it wasn't just once. My wife, who also studied ethnology and Iranian studies and, to round things off a bit, Japanese studies [*laughs*], was of course always with me. She was used to learning languages, she built up her Turkish and Serbo-Croatian together with me. […]

Did your wife also learn Kurdish?

Not really, just in practice. We then moved around to the *yayla*s in Hakkâri and Turkish wasn't very well known among the women there. We somehow had to get into conversation with them and stay with them, and so she learned some Kurdish in practice. My Kurdish is not very good. […]

Did you travel by horse or by car?

No car, no, no. On animals. My wife, of course, had to have the only horse and I got the mule. The mule was the best mean of transportation, it was best to go around with it. It happened that we always looked around for first-class hotels [*laughs*], but there weren't any. In this way we depended on and had the wonderful opportunity to enjoy Kurdish hospitality. We got somewhere, then the elder, the Agha or whoever, was alerted: these weird strangers have arrived. We were then accepted as guests and in fact stayed as guests the whole time. That was exclusively on the *yayla*. In the summer months they weren't in the village, they were on the *yayla*. Everything was open on the *yayla*, which means you could talk to anyone, you had access. We lived in tents. And the tents were of course in fact public, everyone had access. People came and sat down; it was fantastic.

We then spent the summer of the year looking around: what is happening there, who is talking to whom, where are the people from. Since it was close to the border, there were also people who crossed the border. Anyway, we tried to learn a lot. Our conversation was in Turkish where possible. Most of the Kurds didn't know any other languages than Kurdish, and their Turkish wasn't perfect either. But that was our language. We didn't just watch and watch. My wife tried to be a doctor. She wasn't a doctor, but women came to her and told her about their problems, "now help me". She was always with the women; they were attached to her. She was obviously healthy; how did she do that? I had more to do with the men and they told me what they were doing. So that was after we traveled without Reinhard. The question about Bartók was *out of the picture* [original English].

Have you also seen dengbêj*s, the poet-singers?*

Ah *dengbêj*. Yes, of course there were, I recorded them, too. There were some, of course, but they weren't considered singers of popular music. These were people who were known as singers and could sing well.

They also lived on the yayla *or did they travel around?*

No, they didn't wander, they belonged to the people. You were on the *yayla*. Wandering singers, quasi-professional singers, did not exist there.

How far have you traveled around this area?

With the help of our guide, we came to a group in the western part of Hakkâri province. They received us very hospitably and we basically stayed with them. But then we moved further east to the Persian border and also went to Iran once, which was illegal because we had no papers. But that didn't matter, everyone did it. The idea wasn't to get a systematic overview of Hakkâri's ethnography, but it all came about that way. We made our recordings. We always came very quickly to the topic: what can you sing. And then they sang and I did my recordings. It was unknown at the time that someone with a tape recorder showed up there.

Have you witnessed weddings in Hakkâri?

Yes, we have. Weddings meant we had to dress respectably. In my apartment on the wall there is a photo of my wife, photographed in a Kurdish wedding dress. Not because she got married, but because she was dressed respectably in our hosts' clothes. And that happened often. By that she learned what clothes are made of. She was happy to do that.

And then you recorded the songs?

When we were together and there was singing, I used to pull out the tape recorder for them to start singing. I tried to do it more or less

systematically to get an overview of the repertoire and everything that had to do with music. That's why I was actually there; not because of the few water buffaloes. Up in the mountains, things aren't so promising in terms of water buffalo [*laughs*], nor with reed huts. But I continued to pursue the music, and later I also wrote a lot about it. I haven't written a book on Kurdish music but published a number of articles on its various aspects. One thing I've wanted to do, and I still have to do, is to write a book that brings these stories together in a systematic way. If you don't forestall me [*laughs*].

Did you also do interviews?

I also talked to people and did interviews. Some of them are still on the tapes. But I never went through these interviews systematically. But they are there. […]

Didn't you want to return later?

Yes, we did that too, in the 1960s. And afterwards we went more to Iran and Oman.

But before you have been in western Iran?

Yes. We got around quite a bit. My wife also did ethnographic research in Iran. She has been interested in farms, building and development of farms, and also pottery. Her master's thesis was based on this research. She did a master in the USA. Actually, she had the material for a doctoral thesis. But she needed an academic degree to take a job as a librarian, which she needed because the German Research Foundation [Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft] wanted to send her to Mexico. She would have a good job there. We have also been to Mexico, once or twice for a long time, in dangerous areas.

You also went to Sivas in 1970.

In Sivas was our dear friend and colleague Halil Baykız Bey, he was the museum director, we met him on our trip with Reinhard. I visited

him to prepare for trips to villages in which Kurds also lived. In the meantime our son was born, so he came with us. This was a great joy for the local children, who had never seen such a strange creature. He learned his first Turkish, namely the word *anne* [mother]. He learned that from the children there. And I looked around to see if I could do research in the area later.

Biographies

Dieter Christensen (1932 – 2017) studied comparative musicology, historical musicology and anthropology in Berlin. In 1958 he became a research assistant at the Berlin Phonogram Archive; from 1967 until 1970, he served as its director. From 1972 until 2002, Christensen was director of the Center for Ethnomusicology at Columbia University New York; he was secretary general of the International Council for Traditional Music (1981 – 2001) and general editor of the *Yearbook for Traditional Music* (1982 – 2001). He did fieldwork in Turkey, Iran, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mexico and Oman. In addition, Christensen was a member of numerous academic boards, edited and published numerous record series, articles, and reviews.

Martin Greve is a German ethnomusicologist based in Istanbul, Turkey. His doctoral thesis deals with the history of Turkish art music in the 20th century. His habilitation thesis is a study of Turkish music in Germany. From 2005 until 2011, he was the coordinator of the Study Program of Turkish Music at the Rotterdam World Music Academy. From May 2011 until September 2018, Martin Greve was a research associate at the Orient-Institut Istanbul responsible for the research field "Music in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey". From December 2020 until March 2023, he directed the DFG-funded research project entitled "Music, Migration and Musical Expression" at the Orient-Institut Istanbul.

Pera-Blätter

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In 1958 and again in 1965, the German ethnomusicologist Dieter Christensen and his wife, Nerthus Christensen, travelled to Hakkâri for field research. Their material became the basis for numerous academic articles. Despite an evident orientalist approach and, as we know today, the cruel personal misuse of his high position, Dieter Christensen dominated the Kurdish music field within international ethnomusicology for over fifty years.

The present volume is an edition of a personal travelogue which Christensen could not accomplish before he died in 2017. It includes photos of the couple depicting Kurdish life before the arrival of electricity, television, phones, cars and modern wedding bands.