

Western Thrace Turks in Australia

Western Thrace Turks in Australia

1969 – 2009



Feyyaz Sağlam
Sihem İmam-Hüseyin



The Western Thrace Turks who have migrated to Australia have succeeded in keeping their identity and culture alive, as well as giving their children a good future through hard work in difficult conditions.

The Australian Western Thrace Turks have not forgotten their homeland. Through their publications, they leave their research on their culture and history to Australian society and researchers as source material.

Living as contented citizens in Australia, the Western Thrace Turks make constructive contributions to Australian culture, literature, economic life and politics.

WESTERN THRACE TURKS IN AUSTRALIA



*The group responsible for the business of the
Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association during 2008–2009
Executive committee, Audit committees,
Women’s subgroup and Publications subgroup committees*

WESTERN THRACE TURKS IN AUSTRALIA

Feyyaz Sağlam

Updated and Expanded by

Sihem İmam-Hüseyin

Translated from Turkish by

Gündoğdu Gencer
Ayşe Aday
Baki Yiğit



Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association

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Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association

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This book was edited by Sihem İmam-Hüseyin
on behalf of the
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Emine Haliloğlu, the association and many more community members

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HISTORY

Dedicated to
Western Thrace Turkish children and youth
in Australia

“Eğitimin ve Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’ün yapmış olduğu yeniliklerin Türk milletini çağdaş medeniyetler seviyesine getireceğine inanan ve bunun için büyük çalışmalar yapan Batı Trakya’nın Domruköy’ünde doğup büyümüş ve ölmüş olan değerli babamız Hüseyin Efendi’nin (1911 – 13 Eylül 1995) anısına ...”

*Memet & Sihem
İMAM-HÜSEYİN*



*Sihem & Memet İmam-Hüseyin, with Feyyaz Sağlam
July 2004, Melbourne.*

The note above is written in memory of Hüseyin Efendi (Memet’s father) for his contribution to education and the community in Western Thrace. And for Memet’s contribution to printing of the Turkish book *Avustralya’da Batı Trakya Türkleri* in honour of his father.

About the author

Feyyaz Sağlam was born in Ilgın (in Konya) in 1959. He graduated from the Turkish Language and Literature Department of the Buca Education Faculty of Dokuz Eylül University in 1985. For a short while, he worked as a teacher of literature at the Kars Anadolu High School. In 1986–8, he worked as a tutor in Turkish language in the Dokuz Eylül University. Since 1988,



he has been a lecturer in the literatures of the Turkish-speaking world / contemporary Turkish dialects in the Buca Education Faculty of the same university. He is well known for his research and analyses of the literatures of various Turkish communities. Especially his work on the culture and literature of Turks in Greece (Western Thrace) has been greeted with great interest by Turcologists. He has presented papers and talks in various international conferences at home and abroad.

The 20th anniversary of Feyyaz Sağlam's studies on the Western Thrace Turks was celebrated in Munich, Germany on 29 January 2005 at an international gathering organised by BATTAM (Western Thrace Turks Research Centre).

Feyyaz Sağlam has won a number of awards for his work in the field of the Literatures of the Turkish World. These include:

- International Prize for services to the Turkish Culture in the Balkans, 1996, Prizren/Kosova.

- International Süleyman Birina Prize for services to the Turkish Culture in the Balkans, 1999, Nicosia/TRNC.
- ‘Honorary Doctorate’ for services to the Literature of the Turkic World by the VEKTÖR International Science Centre, Gence / Azerbaijan, 22 May 2007.

Feyyaz Sağlam’s research, studies and poetry have been published in Greece, Kosovo, England, Romania, Bulgaria, Australia, Macedonia, Germany, TRNC, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Hungary, Israel and the Netherlands. Some of his research papers and poetry have been translated into English, German, Dutch, Hebrew, Romanian, Polish, Bulgarian, Serbian, Greek and the Uzbek, Azeri, Kazakh and Tatar dialects of Turkish. Feyyaz Sağlam’s works are listed under the heading ‘Author’s published books’ at the end of this publication.

He has also organised over 15 international scientific-artistic gatherings in cooperation with various institutions both home and abroad. These include:

- Second International Festival of Turkish Culture-Arts in the Balkans, İzmir, 1997.
- International Symposium on the Past, Present and Future of Turkish Culture in the Balkans, Bursa, 2001.
- Third International Congress of Western Thrace Turks Research, Munich / Germany, 2009.

Feyyaz Sağlam is also president of KIBATEK (Cyprus–Balkans–Eurasia Turkish Literatures Organisation), an idea that he transformed into reality with Şaban M. Kalkan. Sağlam publishes the KIBATEK Bulletin.

Foreword to the Turkish edition

The book *Avustralya’da Batı Trakya Türkleri* (Western Thrace Turks in Australia), written and prepared by Feyyaz Sağlam, a lecturer of Turkic literature at 9 Eylül University and expert on the Western Thrace Turks, is an important study from many perspectives. In its field it is a first and before anything else it is an historical study of us Western Thrace Turks who have been living in Australia since 1969. With the publication of this book, our children and grandchildren, especially those born in Australia, will learn of their roots, history and realise our 37-year history in Australia. This study will form a strong everlasting bridge between our past and the new generation.

Mr Feyyaz Sağlam has published numerous books of research relating to the Western Thrace Turks. In the meantime he has not neglected us Western Thrace Turks residing in Australia. In July–August of 2004 he lived among us for one month, conducting research and making preparations. The book you hold in your hands saw light of day these coordinated preparations with our Association.

As we flip the pages we will go back in time through those 37 years. Bitter sweet memories will come alive and we will once again think of where we have come today. We will search for answers to questions such as, ‘How will we look to our future with greater confidence?’ and ‘How can we continue to preserve our identity and culture in this country?’

We are grateful to Feyyaz Sağlam for giving us, the Western Thrace Turks, such a well-documented study and we wish him further success in any new research that he may undertake.

Nadir Celil
Former president of AWTTA
Melbourne, March 2006



Melbourne cityscape where the third generation Western Thrace Turkish children are growing up. (The photograph was taken from the Shrine of Remembrance, on the day of '19 May Youth Sport, Commemoration of Atatürk & 40th Year march' by Sihem İmam-Hüseyin, 20 May 2007)



*Students and teachers with the parents and grandparents,
23 April Turkish Children's Day , 2009*

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Preface to the Turkish edition

I commenced my research into the Western Thrace Turks in the year 1985 at Dokuz Eylül University in İzmir, Turkey. I discovered that this Turkish community had an extensive diaspora. According to my research, Western Thrace Turks lived not only in Western Thrace but also in motherland Turkey as well as in the continents of Europe, America and Australia.

It was at this stage that I realised in order to understand and perceive the Western Thrace situation and hence produce a concrete study, I needed to communicate with Western Thrace Turks living in other parts of the world, who, according to my sources, outnumbered those in their homeland.

After conducting preliminary studies with Western Thrace Turks and their associations in Turkey, I visited Western Thrace in 1988. I had the good fortune to research and study this Turkish community. I saw at first hand their oppression, injustice and struggle. Our studies were also applied to the Western Thrace Turks in Germany. We coordinated conferences, panels, articles and the like.

I of course was aware that there was a Western Thrace Turkish community in Australia; however, we were not in correspondence. This began when in the ninth year (1994) of my studies I received a large envelope posted to my address. The envelope contained four copies of a magazine titled *Avustralya'da Elele*, published by the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association, together with a politely written note expressing their wish to cooperate and communicate with me. With great interest I read, studied and then archived the magazines and the note sent to me. It is from that day that I became interested in studying the Western Thrace Turks in Australia. Our friendship and dialogue have been built around a framework of respect and cooperation and have lasted to this day by way of letters, phone conversations, facsimile exchanges, emails and visits. As I found time I contributed articles to the *Avustralya'da Elele* magazine. Our friends at the magazine were kind enough to publish my biography together with my studies on Western Thrace. In 1996, with a national spirit, they kindly took on the publication of the fourth volume

of our series titled *Studies on the Literature of the Western Thrace Turks*. Association committee members such as Nadir Celil, Feriha and Salih Reşitoğlu, Mustafa Mustafaoğlu and Hayrettin Tahiroğlu visited me on their travels to Turkey and with them we exchanged ideas. In 1997, I presented my work titled *A View of Western Thrace Turkish Culture in Australia* at the 4th International Turkish Cultural Congress in Ankara, which was organised by the Atatürk Cultural Centre. In this way I was able to bring the subject to the attention of Turkology circles. As president of KIBATEK, I endeavoured to put the subject of the Australian Western Thrace Turks on the agenda of international seminars we organised.

All these positive developments formed a good foundation for our studies; however, our main objective was to conduct research, especially in Australia and then to publish a book.

Due to the sincerity and warmth of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association committee and members, I was able to visit Australia during July–August 2004, for a month, for research and study purposes. The visit was advantageous in many ways and together with the association in Melbourne we realised cultural and artistic events. This modest work you are holding is my fifteenth book directly relating to the Western Thrace Turks. It is a debt of love to my Western Thrace Turkish friends in Australia. I hope that with our continuing dialogue, based on love and respect, we will forge a new and everlasting beauty.

I am grateful to the committee and its members among whom I lived for a month for showing me great hospitality. First; the families of Azize and Nadir Celil, Sihem and Memet Imam-Hüseyin and Feriha and Salih Reşitoğlu; also Şerafettin Reşitoğlu, Niyazi Selimoğlu, Hüsnü Tansel, Arif İbrahim and to all those Australian Western Thrace Turks whose names I cannot recall. I am also indebted to the Turkish Consulate in Melbourne and to representatives of the Australian Turkish community at large, to Emine Öz for the English translations and to all other friends for supporting my research while in Australia.

Feyyaz Sağlam
President, KIBATEK
İzmir, March 2006

Translator's note

Languages die and disappear every day. And they take unique, irreplaceable cultures to the grave with them. At other times, some languages swamp other cultures and suffocate them. In a world that is increasingly and frighteningly being homogenised, it is not just a fancy to try to preserve the different colours of the human achievements in every corner of the world. It is indeed as important for our survival as bio-diversity is. Resisting the juggernaut of internationalisation and globalisation, each unique culture must and should make itself heard and take its rightful place alongside its more powerful sisters.

Western Thrace Turkish culture is one such piece of the human mosaic. A fragment of this colourful mosaic happens to be in Australia, primarily in Melbourne. It has its proud place not only within the Australian multicultural fabric, but also in the Turkish-speaking world, which stretches from western China all the way to central Europe.

The Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association has done a commendable job in putting this book together, which should become a reference book for the generations to come in Australia. If I have facilitated access to it for the English-speaking reader, I can say, citing a Turkish proverb, I am pleased that 'I contributed a pinch of salt to the soup'.

Gündoğdu Gencer
Sydney

Editor's note

It was my wish to have the Western Thrace Turks in Australia, who are part of the social mosaic of Australia, known and recognised by other communities. I also wanted to leave a resource to those who may wish to research them in the future. Hence the efforts resulted in the publication of this book.

You will find in this book the journey to this distant land by Western Thrace Turks without the chance to be informed about the geographic and social circumstances of Australia, their struggle to get established here, their way of life and their successes.

The Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association had participated in the Prahran Cultural Festival on 19 March 1995 and had prepared a booklet called *Brief History of Western Thrace and the Thracian Turks*. This booklet attracted as much interest as their cultural activities during the festival and they were asked for more information about themselves.

Both my husband Memet İmam-Hüseyin and I were aware of the need to leave a record of the history of Western Thrace Turks in Australia, in English, to future generations and the wider Australian community. We regarded this as our duty. It is with this in mind that we have been concentrating our efforts in the Publications Subgroup and publishing the community's life and activities with pictures in *Avustralya'da Elele* magazine.

This magazine was a major resource for the book in Turkish, *Avustralya'da Batı Trakya Türkleri*, written by Feyyaz Sağlam and published in 2006. The magazine has also been a resource in the updating and expanding of this edition in English. I am grateful to Feyyaz Sağlam for his valuable work. He made it much easier to achieve my goal regarding English translation of our history in Australia.

The approval by the Victorian Government's Community Support Fund and Public Record Office Victoria in June 2008 of our project, which we as the Association started in 2006, to

have the book in Turkish translated into English, was a very happy outcome.

With this publication in English, as well as aiming for our history in Australia to be source of pride, education and inspiration for the Western Thrace youth, I shall feel happy if I can make it a resource for all communities living in Australia about Western Thrace Turks in their research.

I wish to express my gratitude to everyone who has supported and assisted me throughout my work on this project, especially:

The Victorian Government's Community Support Fund and Public Record Office Victoria,

Hüseyin Meyzin, AWTTA President and Mustafa Mustafaoğlu, secretary, for their support,

Our association and community members who gave their biographies and provided information,

Feyyaz Sağlam, KIBATEK President, for his support in updating, editing and proofreading the Turkish version of the book prior to translation,

Handan Hancıoğlu, for proofreading the Turkish version Gündoğdu Gencer for the English translation of most chapters in the book,

Baki Yiğit for the English translation of poems,

Ayşe Aday for the English translation of stories, play, speeches and quotes,

Richard McGregor for copyediting/proofreading of the book

Turhan Peker for his tireless support in drafting the book cover

Luke Harris, Chameleon Print Design for the final design of the book cover

Bahri and Kadir Aldatmaz, Printmode for printing of the book

My husband Memet, and my sons Özgür and Tolga for their endless support during this project.

Sihem İmam-Hüseyin

Editor, *Avustralya'da Elele* magazine, AWTTA

Acknowledgements

Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association gratefully acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government through the Community Support Fund and Public Record Office Victoria for making this project possible.

The executive committee, on behalf of the Association and its members is proud to publish its second book in Australia. This book was originally written in Turkish by Feyyaz Sağlam in 2006. However, as we wanted to share our history and traditions with the Australian community we decided to translate this book into English; publish and distribute it to libraries, schools, community centres and associations for the wider community to read.

We believe that as books are everlasting work of art it will tell the story and experiences of the Western Thrace Turkish Community to the current and future generations of Australians.

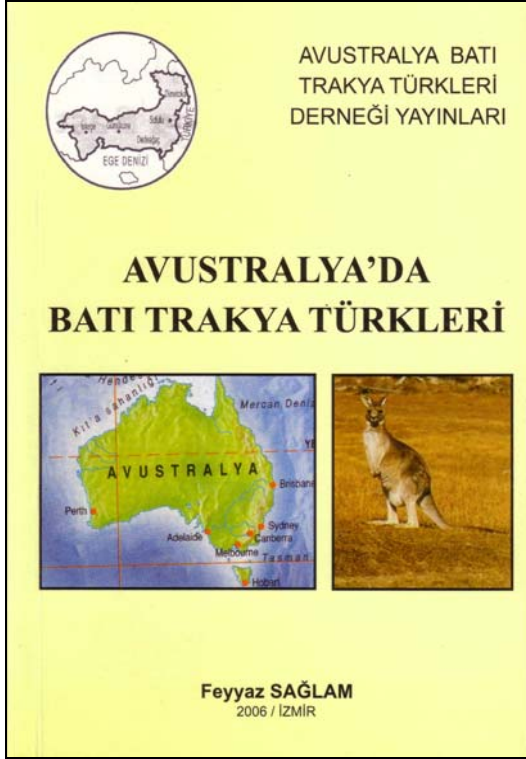
In addition, we would also like to thank Sihem Imam-Hüseyin who volunteered her time and experience to ensure that this project is completed as scheduled.

Hüseyin Meyzin

President

Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association

We proudly present you with our history in Australia,
which was written in Turkish by Feyyaz Sağlam and published
in 2006 as the following book,



and

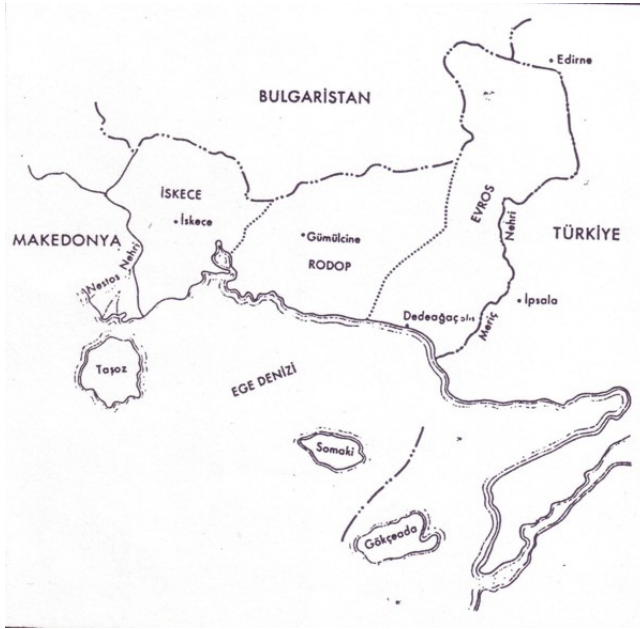
updated and expanded by Sihem İmam-Hüseyin, Melbourne,
2009, in the book you are holding.



*The two most important Turkish settlements
in Western Thrace: Gümülcine and İskeçe*

Part One

INTRODUCTION TO WESTERN THRACE



The geographic map of Western Thrace

Chapter 1

Western Thrace and its people

Western Thrace (Geographic Characteristics)

The region named Thrace in the Balkans is currently within the borders of Greece and Turkey. The eastern part of Thrace (Eastern Thrace) is in Turkey and the western part (Western Thrace) in Greece.

Western Thrace is the region between the Meriç (Maritsa) and Karasu (Nestos) rivers with a total area of 8579 square kilometers. To the east of Western Thrace is Turkey, to the west is the Greek region of Macedonia, to the north is Bulgaria and to the south is the Aegean Sea. It is the most northeastern region of Greece. There are currently three provinces in Western Thrace:

1. Meriç (Evros) province: Its provincial capital is Dedeağaç (Aleksandropolis).
2. Rodop (Rodhōpī) province: Its provincial capital is Gümülcine (Komotini).
3. İskeçe (Xanthi) province: Its provincial capital is İskeçe (Xanthi).

The northern part of Western Thrace is mountainous, encircled by the Rodop Mountains. The southern part is a plain.

Western Thrace Turks (Ethnic Characteristics)

Thrace is a region inhabited since 2000 BC. Phrygians, Etruscans, Thracians, Persians, Greeks, Celts, Macedonians, Romans, Byzantines, Visigoths and Ostrogoths have ruled this region at different times. Throughout history the region of Thrace, East and West, played an important part in Turkish history and the Turkish world. The Turks moved to this region from the north along with the Huns in the fourth and fifth centuries. In the sixth to eighth centuries the Avars, in the sixth century Peçenekler (the Pechenegs), in the seventh century the

Bulgars, in the tenth century the Kumans and in the thirteenth century Aydınoğulları came to Western Thrace. The descendants of the Uz, Gagauz, Bulgar, Kuman and Pecheneg Turks currently live in Western Thrace. For example, Turks bearing the surname Peçenek live in the village of Ketenlik (Kentavros) in Western Thrace.

In the year 1354 Gazi Süleyman Paşa and his troops crossed into Europe on eighty rafts. Prior to this, there had been forty-three crossings into Western Thrace by various Turkish tribes.¹ Subsequently, Hacı İlbey conquered Dimetoka in 1359, Gazi Evrenos Bey conquered Gümülcine and İskeçe in 1360, Lala Şahin Paşa conquered Şahin in 1360 and the same commander conquered Dedeagaç in 1361. Oğuz Turks were sent from around Konya, Aydın and Balıkesir to settle in Western Thrace.

Following five and a half centuries of Ottoman rule between 1360 and 1913, Western Thrace was given to Greece at the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 although it was within the boundaries defined by the ‘Misak-ı Millî’ (National Charter). On 31 August 1913, the first Turkish Republic was established in Western Thrace but it did not have a long life.

In the Lausanne Treaty of 24 July 1923, the Muslim Western Thrace Turks and the Orthodox Greeks of İstanbul were excluded from the population exchange. Based on the region they had inhabited for centuries, this Turkish community was called the ‘Western Thrace Turks’. The Lausanne Treaty left the Western Thrace Turks with a formally recognised minority status in Greece. Their rights are clearly stated in the agreement’s articles 37 to 45. However, it can be said that in the eighty-six years since the Lausanne Treaty, there has been no changes in the official policies of Greece towards the Western Thrace Turks who are her own citizens, who fulfil all the responsibilities of citizenship and who have always been a harmonious community. There have been regime changes in Greece during this long period and

important developments have occurred such as the Second World War, the Greek Civil War and the Junta Period. There have been no changes in the negative policies towards the Western Thrace Turks by any of the governments, including the transition to democracy and afterwards and the European Union (EU) period. In fact, the word ‘Turk’ is still banned despite Greece being a member of the EU and associations such as the İskeçe (Xanthi) Turkish Union that could operate even under the fascist junta can be closed down.

Western Thrace Turks are characteristically quiet, adaptable, introverted people. They had been involved in animal husbandry, forestry and agriculture. They are compliant people who are always respectful of the state and who fulfil their obligations without fail. They have always fulfilled their obligations as citizens since the Lausanne Treaty. As many as 16,500 Western Thrace Turks took part in the Greek–Italian war in 1940–50 and have died when required for their country. (The list of Western Thrace Turks who died for Greece is on a panel in the İskeçe (Xanthi) Turkish Union hall). However, Greece (whichever administration, whichever political colour the government may be) has always regarded the Western Thrace Turks with suspicion as a national policy, forcing them to emigrate, trying to divide them into three and, as in 29 January 1990, has not hesitated to use violence and state terror against them.

The Western Thrace Turks who lived in an insular way for many years taking part in a social struggle, began in legal forums after the 1980s, influenced by opening up to the world and the political changes in the world. The leadership and idealism of Dr Sadık Ahmet has been an important factor in this struggle. The issue of Western Thrace Turks, minority rights and the violation of these rights have been taken to international forums, including the United Nations (UN), the Council of Europe, the European Union (EU) and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE),

and public awareness has been raised. As a result of the recent successful efforts, the Western Thrace Turks have been permanently represented in the UN Economic and Social Council since July 2006, in the Federal Union of European Peoples since May 2007 and in the European Forum for Dialogue since May 2008.

The Western Thrace Turks and the emigration phenomenon

The Western Thrace Turks who came under the rule of Greece as an ‘officially recognised minority’ as a result of the Lausanne Treaty of 24 July 1923 have been faced with political, economic, religious, social and cultural oppression by that country’s administration for the last eighty-six years. Whatever their political views may be, the policies of the Greek administration have not changed. In this context, the core Western Thrace Turkish population in Greece is gradually diminishing, whereas it should exceed one million, according to normal demographic criteria. While 84 percent of the Western Thrace land was owned by the Turks in 1923, this is now down to 24 percent. While two-thirds of the Western Thrace population comprised Turks in the same year, this ratio is now down to one-third.

One of the most significant elements of Greek national policy that has been applied systematically is the ‘emigration’ phenomenon. Due to the oppressive policies of the Greek administrations, the Turks being systematically dispossessed of their lands, heavy working conditions and backwardness in the region, being treated as second-class citizens, concern for the future and the like, Western Thrace Turks have been forced to abandon the land they were born and raised in and emigrate to different countries. Followed by the mother country Turkey, European countries, America and Australia have been major areas of this emigration.

It is not possible to accurately determine the number of Western Thrace Turks in the mother country, Turkey. They live mostly in İstanbul, Bursa, İzmir and İzmit and various other cities. Since 1946, they have been organised within the structure of the Western Thrace Turks Solidarity Association (despite some name changes). This association currently has 16 branches. Trusts and sporting clubs have also been established.

Germany has been a major country of migration for the Western Thrace Turks in Europe. Their numbers there approach 40,000. They started migrating to Germany in the 1960s. The first Western Thrace Turkish Association was established in Giessen in 1978 and as the number of associations increased, a number of associations formed the German Federation of Western Thrace Turkish Associations in 1988. In 1996, the name of the federation was changed to Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF). This federation has played an important part in informing European public opinion about the Western Thrace issue.² Initially going to Germany as workers, Western Thrace Turks have gradually become employers as well. There are students among them. The Western Thrace Turks in Germany are also involved in an intense lobbying effort. The Bavarian State Western Thrace Turks Family Association in Munich and BATTAM (Western Thrace Turks Research Centre) operating within this association are involved in some important work. Publishing many scientific studies in relation to the Western Thrace Turks, this centre organised the First International Western Thrace Turks Research Congress in Munich on 28–30 January 2005, the Second International Western Thrace Turks Research Congress in Munich on 26–28 January 2007 and the Third International Western Thrace Turks Research Congress in Munich on 31 January–1 February 2009.³

Western Thrace Turks have also emigrated to Britain. Western Thrace Turks, who are mostly students in London, have formed the British Western Thrace Turks Solidarity

Association on 15 January 1990. The association is also a member of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe. In addition, the Western Thrace Turkish Students Association formed in Glasgow, Scotland, operated for some time.

Western Thrace Turks who emigrated to the Netherlands are concentrated around Alblasserdam and formed the Holland / Alblasserdam Western Thrace Turkish Association. In addition, the Hague Western Thrace Turkish Cultural Association was formed in The Hague on 20 October 2005.

Although the number of Western Thrace Turks who emigrated to the United States is small, they managed to form the American Western Thrace Turkish Association in 1995.⁴ The Western Thrace Turks living in America are students and single young people who became refugees while working on ships .

Small numbers of Western Thrace Turks also live in Canada, France, Switzerland, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and other countries. They have not yet been able to form associations. (The associations formed in the TRNC and Scotland did not last long.)

It is the Western Thrace Turks who have emigrated to Australia and have been living in this country for 40 years who are examined in detail in this book.



*The first generation who arrived as young people
and grew old in Australia
in front of the first association building, 1996*

Part Two

WESTERN THRACE TURKS IN AUSTRALIA

10

11

ΘΕΟΦΗΛΗΣ ΑΝΑΝΕΩΣΙΣ ΕΠΕΚΤΑΣΙΣ
VISAS - RENOUVELLEMENT - EXTENSION
(VISAS) - (RENEWAL) - (EXTENSION)

Memet İMAM - HOUSEIN.

I.C.E.M./MASS SCHEME

VISA FOR AUSTRALIA 282

(Subject to grant on arrival of an entry permit under the Migration Act, 1958-1966.)

1. Visa Number *B 336587*
2. Type of Visa *Temporary (APS)*
3. Date of Issue *24 November 1970*
4. Date of Expiry *30 April 1971*
5. Good for *Single* journeys to Australia until date of expiry, subject to passport remaining valid.
6. LIMITATION, NOT VALID FOR TRAVEL BY AIR
7. Period of stay in Australia which may be authorised by issue of entry permit on

Indefinite

Gratia

V.O.

Athens

10

11

ΘΕΟΦΗΛΗΣ ΑΝΑΝΕΩΣΙΣ ΕΠΕΚΤΑΣΙΣ
VISAS - RENOUVELLEMENT - EXTENSION
(VISAS) - (RENEWAL) - (EXTENSION)

12 DEC 1970

10

A passport showing the visa for Australia and the entry permit to Australia on 12 December 1970



A group of first generation fathers and children of 2nd generation, Prahran, 1971 (Courtesy of Halil Ahmetoğlu)

Chapter 2

The Historical Process 1969–2009

Introduction

The 'migration policy' that Australia has been practising for long years is based in principle on the culture of every ethnic group that shows respect for the laws to be nourished and developed. As many as 200 ethnic groups speaking 180 languages and practising 110 faiths have been able to live together in peace in this country. This picture, which includes Turks who have emigrated from various geographical regions, comprises Australia's multicoloured, multicultural make-up. The first group of Turks to have migrated to Australia were the 'Cypriot Turks' in the 1940s (after the Second World War). The migration that started with 2500 people carrying British passports accelerated in the later part of the 1960s, with the migration from Turkey of 51 men, 42 women and 75 children in 1968.

There are serious deficiencies in the data I have obtained from Levent Efe's work entitled 'Australian Turks'.¹ Because there have been the Balkan (Thracian) Turks in the last quarter-century among the Turks who have migrated to Australia and continue to live here as well as the Turks from Turkey and Cyprus. For instance, Australian Western Thrace Turks, who are the subject of this study, have lived in this country since 1969. Another researcher, the Australian Shane Maloney, has indicated that there have been migrations from Central Asia and Greece as well as Turkey and Cyprus, thereby providing information that is more accurate.²

Western Thrace Turks have lived in Australia for 40 years. However, no academic studies of this not insignificant period have been conducted to date. Turcological sources mention the Turks in Australia, but there is no mention of Western Thrace Turks in this country.³ The first scientific study of the subject was the paper I presented to the Fourth International Turkish Congress, organised by the Atatürk Cultural Centre in Ankara in 1997.⁴ The paper I presented to the First International

Western Thrace Turks Research Congress, which was organised by BATTAM in 2005 in Germany, is the second study in this area.⁵ In some books published in Australia by the Turkish community, Western Thrace Turks occupy a section.⁶ The Turkish version of the book you are holding was the first book-length study in this field.

The reasons for the migration of Western Thrace Turks to Australia

In 1969, a new door opened for migration in the history of the Western Thrace Turks. Australia, which takes migrants from various regions of the world, attract Western Thrace Turks frustrated by the Greek oppression with its affluence, standard of living and its respectful approach to migrants. In a short period of time another settlement of Western Thrace Turks takes shape in Australia. Without a doubt, the fundamental cause for this migration is the systematic Greek oppression perpetrated since the Lausanne Treaty of 1923.

During our interviews with Western Thrace Turks in Australia, we discovered that each one had individual, interesting and even tragic stories. (These stories and personal histories are published directly or in poetry, in the *Avustralya'da Elele* magazine (Hand in Hand/Harmony in Australia). The response to the question we posed to the first generation of migrants in Australia, 'What was your aim in migrating to this country?' was almost always the same: 'To stay in Australia for 4–5 years, earn a lot of money by working hard and to return to Western Thrace or Turkey'. However, this plan was not realised. Those Western Thrace Turks who managed to carry out this plan are Latif Hoca from Sirkeli, Kapıcı Mehmet from Ircan and Mehmet Mehmetali from Taşkınlar. In fact, for migrants coming to Australia from many countries, staying for a short period, earning money and

returning was always on the agenda. In the long term, staying in Australia permanently is not valid just for the Turks, but for all ethnic groups. Because Australia binds people to itself with its high standard of living and makes them settle down.

As well as the personal explanations and evaluations regarding Western Thrace Turks' reasons for migrating to Australia, office-bearers of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association have, in some of their articles and speeches they have given on various occasions, explained the reasons for the migration of Western Thrace Turks to Australia. The views of association president Nadir Celil and vice-president Memet İmam-Hüseyin on the subject in 2005 were as follows:

The reasons for people leaving the places they were born and grew up in are many. We Western Thrace Turks have also come here from where we used to live.

- a) Heavy working conditions, low income, the income being insufficient to sustain a family
- b) The pressures applied by the Greek Government to us in the areas of education, social life and working life
- c) To provide better living conditions for our children and ourselves
- d) The fact that Australia is an affluent country with good living conditions, the things we heard and read about Australia are the reasons for us coming here.⁷

The formation of the Western Thrace Turkish community in Australia

The formation of the Western Thrace Turkish community in Australia can be explained demographically in the following terms:

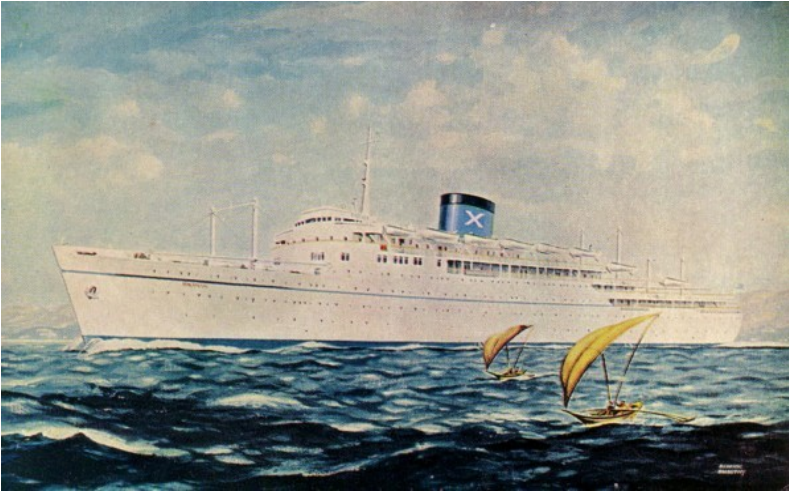
- a) Those who have arrived as legal migrants

- b) Western Thrace Turks who have found asylum here while working on Greek ships
- c) Those who have arrived through marriage (family reunion)
- d) The children and grandchildren of the Western Thrace Turks born in Australia
- e) Those who went from Western Thrace to Germany to work, then being unhappy in Germany, have come to Australia.⁸

Migration to Australia from Western Thrace was initially by sea, then by air. Western Thrace Turks who went to Athens from Gümülcine by train arrived in Melbourne after a 30-day sea voyage. On another route, some went to Djibouti from Athens on a four-hour flight, then on to Melbourne after a 16-day sea voyage. In the years 1969–71, six sea voyages carried Western Thrace Turks to Australia on board the *Patris* and the *Ellinis*. On one of these voyages, the ship that took Western Thrace Turks and Greeks from Athens stopped in Yugoslavia first and, taking Yugoslav migrants, headed for Melbourne. On 14 March 1972 Mustafa Çolak from the village of Büyük Sirkeli was the first person to fly from Athens to Melbourne with his family, thus ending long sea voyages. Most of the Western Thrace Turks coming to Australia by boat or plane were travelling abroad for the first time. The first to arrive in Australia from Western Thrace was Mehmet Hacıoğlu and family from Kızılağaç. After trying for two years, they disembarked in Melbourne on 23 September 1969 after a sea voyage. They were the only Turkish family on board. The family was first taken to the Bonegilla Migrant Camp near Mildura. The practice of the Australian Government was to take the families from Europe to this camp before they were sent on to the various states. Mehmet Hacıoğlu and his family chose Victoria and they were taken to the Broadmeadows

Migrant Camp, 18 kilometres to the north of Melbourne. He later settled in Prahran and his aim was to help the Turks coming from Western Thrace to settle in Prahran in any way he could. In fact, Prahran gradually became the centre of Western Thrace Turks in Australia. Other Western Thrace Turks followed the Hacıoğlu family after a short time. The second family to arrive in Australia was Feyiz Mehmet and family on 3 March 1970. Mehmet Mehmetali from Taşkınlar followed and on 27 September, 1970 Halil Ahmetoğlu and Mehmet Haliloğlu and their families arrived from Doğanca.

The date 16 December 1970 is an important one in the migration of Western Thrace Turks to Australia. It was on this day that the first group of migrants from Western Thrace arrived in Melbourne. The Western Thrace group comprising 15 families and two single men were first taken to the Melbourne and Broadmeadows migrant camps, then almost all of them settled in Prahran.



Arrival in Australia on the ship Patris (The photograph belongs to Mehmet Haliloğlu. At the back of it is a note: 'We came on this ship, 27 September 1970')



Arriving in Australia by air. (The note ‘The aeroplane that brought us to Australia’ is dated 31 December 1972. (Courtesy of Nadir Celil)



Feyiz Mehmet and family, who were the second arrivals in Australia, in Prahran, June 1970



Hüseyin Haliloğlu, the son of the fourth family to emigrate to Australia (left) with a friend on the ship Patris in September 1970

The first group migration to Australia from Western Thrace arrived in Fremantle harbour in Western Australia at 1.00 pm on 12 December 1970 on the ship Patris. Three documents substantiating this.
(Source: Fremantle Customs / West Australian, Saturday, 12 December 1970, page 37.)

p.m.	DUE TODAY
	FAIRSTAR, from Southampton with passengers. Berths passenger terminal about 10 a.m. Associated Steamships, agent.
*	PATRIS, from Mauritius with passengers. Berths passenger terminal about 1 p.m. Associated Steamships, agent.
	AL MAHROSA, from Kuwait to load livestock. Berths No. 2 north quay about 1.30 p.m. Dalgety, agent.
	ALARTIC, from Liverpool with general cargo. Berths E Shed about 7 p.m. Shaw Savill, agent.
	CYMRIC, from Glasgow with general cargo. Berths E shed about 7.30 a.m. Shaw Savill, agent.
	BP ENDEAVOUR (tanker) from E.S. to load oil products. Berths refinery jetty about 1 p.m. P and O Lines, agent.
	JADE LILY, from Geraldton to top up bulk wheat. Berths No. 9 north quay about 4 p.m. James Patrick, agent.
	AKADEMIK SHIRSOV, from overseas for stores. Berths A shed about 6.30 p.m. James Patrick, agent.
	SIMSMETAL, from Vancouver with phosphate. Berths No. 4 north quay about 6.30 a.m. British Phosphate Commission, agent.
	SAILING TODAY
	DIANA CLAUSEN, for Kuwait, 4 p.m.; Bawean, for Europe, noon; MIASA MARU, for Japan, 5 p.m.; ESSI KARI (tanker) for U.K., late p.m.; OCEAN MASTER, for overseas, p.m.; PATRIS, for Adelaide, 5 p.m.; FAIRSTAR, for E.S., 5 p.m.
*	DUE TOMORROW
	GALILEO, from E.S. with passengers. Berths passenger terminal

From the West Australian.
*The parts marked with * show the arrival and departure of the ship Patris at the harbour.*

ANNEX "A"
(Page 1)

Form M.....

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

MIGRATION ACT

INWARDS PASSENGER MANIFEST - DISEMBARKING


R.H.M.S. "PATRIS..

Name of Ship
 Port of Arrival **FREMANTLE**
 Date of Arrival **12 DEC 1970**

Subsequent Ports of Call in Australia at Which Overseas Passengers Intend to Disembark _

Name of Port	Scheduled Date of Arrival
MELBOURNE	17 DEC 1970
SYDNEY	19 DEC 1970
.....
.....

This Manifest comprises 24 sheets and lists the names of 946 (total) disembarking passengers.



Signature of Master
1.12.1970

NOTE: The names of all passengers disembarking in Australia must be listed in numerical and alphabetical sequence, and by port of intended

The document showing the entry of the Patris passengers into Australia

Western Thrace Turks in Australia

ANNEX "A"
(Page 2)

Port of Disembarkation: MELBOURNE - Date: 17.12.70
Sheet No 7

Serial No	Passenger's Surname and Initial	Indicate by whether		INTENDED ADDRESS IN AUSTRALIA
		Brit	non Brit.	
235	* HUSEIN	H.	v	Bonegilla C.I.C.
236	* do	S.	v	do
237	* do	N.	v	do
238	* do	A.	v	do
239	* do	F.	v	do
240	HOUJIARAS	A.	v	32 Normbany St, Oakleigh VIC
241	* HOURMAS	A.	v	193 Pitt St, Waterloo N.S.W. 2017
242	* do	A.	v	do
243	* do	C.	v	do
244	* do	I.	v	do
245	HRISTOPOULOS	V.	v	F 164 90 Brunswick St, Fitzroy VIC
246	* HRISTOFILAKIS	D.	v	50 Murray St, Prahran VIC
247	* do	E.	v	do
248	* do	M.	v	do
249	* do	J.	v	do
250	HUSSEIN	N.	v	13 Heron Ave, North Sunshine Melb.VIC
251	do	Y.	v	22 Sydney St, Albion Sunshine Melb.VIC
252	* HRYSAFIS	D.	v	9 Buneay St, Fawkner VIC
253	* HRYSOULIS	I.	v	1/7 Allan Ave, Belmore N.S.W.
254	* do	T.	v	do
255	* do	M.	v	do
256	* do	O.	v	do
* (257)	* IBRAM	Arif	v	Bonegilla C.I.C. Port Melbourne
258	* IKONOMOU	D.	v	35 Regent St, Oakleigh VIC
259	ILIADIS	H.	v	9 Weller St, Dandenong VIC
260	do	G.	v	do
261	do	G.	v	do
262	IMBRAM	I.	v	Bonegilla C.I.C.
263	do	R.	v	do
264	do	M.	v	do
265	do	S.	v	do
266	* IMBRAIM	F.	v	Bonegilla C.I.C.
267	* do	S.	v	do
268	* do	F.	v	do
269	* do	F.	v	do
270	* do	M.	v	do
* (271)	* IMAM HUSEIN	Memet	v	Bonegilla C.I.C. Port Melbourne
272	* KAPALTIS	A.	v	541 Burke Rd, Camberwell VIC
273	* do	A.	v	do
274	* do	C.	v	do

**The document showing the Patris Passenger List and their destinations.
The names İBRAHİM Arif (257) and İMAM-HÜSEYİN Memet (271)
marked with * are Western Thrace Turks.**



Niyazi Selimoğlu, one of the Western Thracian Turks, with his children and the captain of the ship Patris, during their voyage, 6 February 1971

The migration story of the Western Thrace Turks has been told in the magazine *Avustralya'da Elele*, the publication of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association, from time to time. The articles 'O Günden Bu Güne' (From that Day to this) by Feriha Reşitoğlu⁹ and 'Neyiz, Nasıl Olmalıyız?' (What are we and what should we become?) by Hasan Meyzinoğlu¹⁰ are two examples.

The first Western Thrace Turk to marry in Australia was Memet İmam-Hüseyin. His wife Sihem İmam-Hüseyin is a Turkish Cypriot from the village of Yeşilırmak in Cyprus. Their story 'Journey of Hope' is rather interesting.¹¹ The first marriage between Western Thrace Turks was between Arif İbrahim from the village of Çepelli and Rukiye Ahmetoğlu from Evrenköy. (Rukiye Ahmetoğlu was born in Manisa, Turkey. Her family settled in Western Thrace when she was three years old. She regards herself as being from Western Thrace). They married in Windsor-Prahran on 11 November 1972.

Western Thrace Turkish marriages in Australia are:

- Marriages between Western Thrace Turks
- b) Marriages between Western Thrace Turks and Turkish Cypriots
- c) Marriages between Western Thrace Turks and Turks from Turkey
- d) Marriages between Western Thrace Turks and Turks from Bulgaria
- e) Marriages between Western Thrace Turks and Australians and people of other ethnic backgrounds.

Generally, Western Thrace Turks marry girls from other groups. A few Western Thrace Turkish girls have also married men from other groups.



*The first Western Thrace Turk to get married in Australia:
Memet İmam-Hüseyin from Domruköy marries a Turkish Cypriot,
Sihem Mehmet, on 14 July 1971 in Sydney*



*The first wedding in Australia: Arif İbrahim from the village of Çepelli in
Western Thrace marries Rukiye Ahmetoğlu from Evrenköy on 11 November
1972 in Windsor–Pahran, Vic.*

Note: These two photographs were included in posters and slideshows during the activities celebrating the 40th year of Turks in Australia in 2007–09.

The first baby to be born to Western Thrace Turks was Özlem Mehmetoğlu, daughter of Erol Mehmetoğlu from Sarıca and Ferište from the same village. She was born on 21 April 1972. (Özlem Mehmetoğlu is now the mother of two boys).

The second baby and the first boy to be born was Akın Tansel, the son of Hüsnü Tansel from the village of Hacı-mustafaköy and Saliha from Gümölcine. (Akın Tansel is now the father of three children). The first twins were Tijen and Müjde, daughters of Arif İbrahim and Rukiye İbrahim. (Tijen İbrahim is now the mother of two boys.)

During the initial years, Western Thrace Turkish children faced serious difficulties, as did their parents, in Australia. The idea that the families were here to earn a lot of money in a short time and go back naturally affected the children, too. Children who went without a lot of things and could not look after themselves found that they were caring for their siblings because their parents were at work. They ended up being sent to work themselves, instead of going to school.



The first Western Thrace baby born in Australia: Özlem Mehmetoğlu, the daughter of Erol Mehmetoğlu from Sarıca and Ferište from the same village.

Born in Melbourne on 21 April, 1972.

In the context of this kind of deprivation, the tradition which is important in Turkish social life, the circumcision celebration did not take place during the initial years. Children were circumcised in hospitals and there were only small family celebrations. The first child to have a circumcision celebration was Halilibrahim and Beyda Memiş's son, Hüseyin. This circumcision celebration took place in the Prahran Town Hall on 14 January 1978.

The first Western Thrace Turk to have migrated to Australia and die here away from home was Hüseyin Dominik from Gümülcine on 26 February 1980. Western Thrace Turks who die in Australia are buried in two cemeteries. These are the Springvale Necropolis and the Fawkner Cemetery. Their tombstones have Turkish inscriptions, stating they are Western Thrace Turks. Most tombstones carry the symbol, the crescent and the star.

It was seen as appropriate to include the table 'Western Thrace Turks who have passed away in Australia', published in the 40th issue of the *Avustralya'da Elele* magazine. Table 2.1 starts chronologically with the most recent death. Those names with an asterisk (*) are those who passed away in Western Thrace while on a holiday.

Table 2.1 WESTERN THRACE TURKS WHO HAVE PASSED AWAY IN AUSTRALIA

Name	Date of birth	Date of death	Place of birth in Western Thrace	Date of arrival in Aust.
Mustafa Şen	21-12-1938	28-03-2009	Kozlukibir	1971
Nahide Müezzinoğlu	03-12-1946	05-03-2009	Karagözlü	1970
Salaettin Latifoğlu	08-01-1958	10-02-2009	Hacımustafaköy	1971
Sabri Latifoğlu	18-09-1936	06-12-2008	Hacımustafaköy	1971
Ahmet Molla	06-07-1941	14-01-2008	Hacımustafaköy	1971
Ahmet İsmailoğlu*	14-03-1939	05-09-2007	Kalenderköy	1971
Mehmet Hasan	1938	11-06-2007	Müsellimköy	1973
Yakup Halil	2-02-1947	28-09-2005	Bıyıklıköy	1977
Ahmet Elmas	28-04-1942	19-12-2004	Bıyıklıköy	1970
Sabri Özsoy	18-04-1938	25-06-2004	Karacaoğlan	1971
Sabiha Seyhanlı	15-08-1960	15-12-2003	İrcan	1970
Haysiye Yürük	06-03-1929	18-07-2003	Arşag (Aşağı) köy	1974
Fehime Selimoğlu	13-08-1935	22-04-2003	İrcan	1971
Mustafa Kâmil	05-11-1957	13-01-2003	Eşekçili	1976
Refika Paçaman*	18-01-1943	10-01-2003	Büyük Sirkeli	1972
Mehmet Arifoğlu	10-10-1932	14-12-2001	Karamusa	1970
Cavit Mestan	15-08-1944	22-06-2001	Meşe	1971
Salih Müminoğlu	18-09-1929	26-03-2000	Basırlıköy	1971
Fatma Ali	14-05-1931	26-08-1999	Karacaoğlan	1982
Niyazi Salimusa	15-08-1942	26-10-1998	İrcan	1971
Fatme Altunel	1954	03-08-1998	Çepelli	1975
Salih Mehmetoğlu	15-07-1936	24-04-1998	Kozlukibir	1971
Arif Ali	02-08-1956	24-05-1997	Kalenderköy	-
İzzet Ahmetoğlu	1938	17-09-1996	İskeçe	-
Reşit Mustafaoğlu	1913	01-03-1995	Büyük Sirkeli	1986
Hayriye Ahmet	1915	05-08-1994	Büyük Müsellim	-
Ayyüce Atasoy	05-05-1987	1992	Melbourne	
Eda Osmanoğlu	16-07-1990	11-12-1990	Melbourne	
Meryem Turgut	-	18-08-1988	Kalkanca	1987
Ali Osman Babaçka	1919	02-1985	Basırlıköy	1985
Ali Mehmet	1912	10-04-1984	Hacımustafaköy	1979
Hüseyin Dominik	1934	26-02-1980	Usallı	1971



*Western Thrace Turks' graves
in the Springvale Necropolis in Melbourne*

In line with the migration policy of the Australian Government, Western Thrace Turks were allowed to settle in Australia if they had a relative or a friend who had migrated before (and became a sponsor). Those who had no relatives or friends were settled by the government through its own system. The first Western Thrace Turkish migrants rented shared houses in Prahran in 1970–73, reflecting the conditions of the time. Each family occupied one room in the house. The fear of being alone, the wish to return in a short time and the desire to earn as much money as possible in the shortest time were factors that made the Western Thrace Turks become thrifty and live this way. Because they came to Australia with the thought of going back, they only brought the bare necessities to Australia from Western Thrace, avoiding any superfluous expenses. Fathers worked at night, mothers worked during the day. This way of living continued for two to three years out of necessity.

With this idea of going back soon, the money earned by families in difficult conditions was not invested in real estate. However, in time there was a shift in the thinking of Western Thrace Turks who had migrated to Australia. The plans they had made did not work out and there was a gradual realisation that they were not going to go back. The way of life of those early days was slowly abandoned as the first Western Thrace Turks bought their first house in Australia. The first to decide that they were now in Australia permanently was Recep Hasan from Sarica, who bought a house on 11 December 1971. He relates that he had long arguments with his wife about buying this house and that he had to make an effort to persuade her. Following him was Ahmet Hüseyin from Sarica who bought the second house. Yusuf Kapancı from Domruköy and Hüsnü Tansel from Hacımustafaköy bought the third house in partnership.

Because people did not speak English, they tried to resolve the problems they faced by using Greek, of which they had

some knowledge. During those years, a lot of business was conducted with Greeks out of necessity, trying to meet their needs jointly (there is a sizeable Greek population in Melbourne).

It was Yusuf Mustafa from Ircan who first went back to Western Thrace in 1972 to visit his parents. This first visit was an important event among Western Thrace Turks at the time. Visits have become much more frequent now, thanks to increased affluence and air travel.

The first to return to Western Thrace from Australia were Mehmet Mehmetali from the village of Taşkınlar, Ahmet İsmailoğlu from the village of Kalender and Mehmet Alioğlu from the village of Ircan, who returned permanently to Western Thrace in 1976. However, they came back to Australia after a short while as they could find no peace there. Likewise, Western Thrace Turks who wanted to leave Australia and settle in Turkey have also come back after a short while. Halil Sadık and Mehmet Çolak from the village of Büyük Sirkeli, Tevfik Öngören and Kâmil Öngören from Hacımustafaköy, Cavit Mestan from the village of Meşe, Hüsnü Tansel from Hacımustafaköy and Mustafa Mustafa from the village of Ircan went and settled in Turkey, but could not live there long and returned to Melbourne.

Currently there are approximately 200 Western Thrace families in Australia comprising some 750 people. (It is difficult to provide a precise figure due to mixed marriages and Australian citizenship). Although there are a few Western Thrace families in Sydney, it can be said that almost all Western Thrace Turks live in Melbourne. There is currently no migration to Australia from Western Thrace. Most Western Thrace Turks here have become Australian citizens. The first generation to migrate to this country as labourers were faced with serious difficulties. The second and third generations are better educated and better equipped. Their command of English is better. About 40 Western Thrace Turkish youth have

graduated from universities and about 20 from TAFE (Tertiary and Further Education). The first university graduate was Perihan Alcan (Özsoy) (1983, LaTrobe University) whose family came from the village of Karacaoğlan. About 15 young people are currently attending universities and TAFE. The number of Western Thrace Turks who are university graduates and are professionals is increasing day by day.



The first house bought by a Western Thrace Turk in Australia: the home of Recep Hasan, 11.12.1971, 27 Osborn Street, South Yarra, Vic.

Western Thrace Turks and Prahran

For the Western Thrace Turks who have migrated to Australia the suburb Prahran in Melbourne is a very important centre of settlement. The word, which was originally *Pourra-ran* in the local Aboriginal language and meant ‘a place that is inundated when it rains/land surrounded by water’ changed to Prahran in time.

The information in *Avustralya'da Elele*, the publication of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association, is important in this respect:

Most of us were not aware of the fact that the real origin of the word Prahran was the Aboriginal word 'Purran', which meant a piece of land partly surrounded by water and that it had changed in time to Prahran. In fact, the Prahran area can be considered to be the first centre of settlement for the Western Thrace Turks. Sweet and bitter memories of many Western Thrace Turks lie there. Prahran is very important for us now as it was in the past. Our association which is the source of our great hopes is located in Prahran and all our activities are run from there. In short, it can be considered to be both our history and our future.¹²

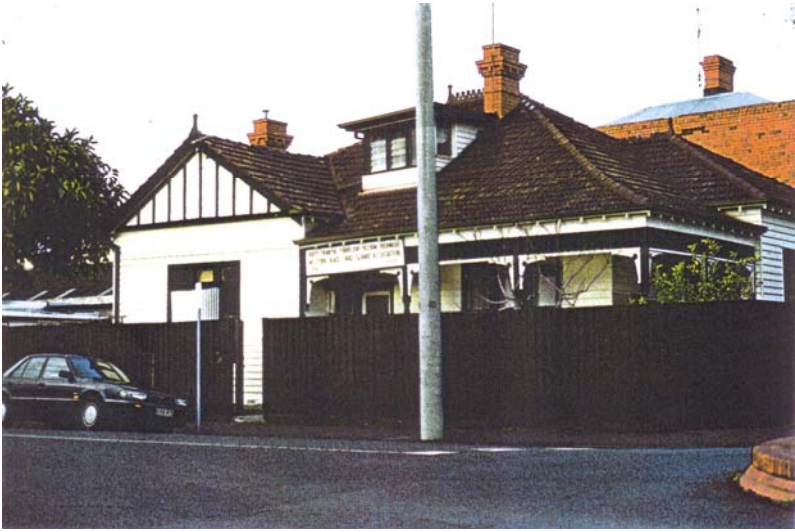
The first migrant from Western Thrace to Australia, Mehmet Hacıoğlu, and his family chose to live in Prahran and for Western Thrace Turks who migrated later, this area became the focal point. Mehmet Hacıoğlu aimed to help newly arrived migrants from Western Thrace to settle in every way possible. And that is exactly what happened. During the initial years most Western Thrace Turks settled in Prahran almost instinctively as their compatriots were there. Most of them still live in Prahran and it is as if they have become synonymous with Prahran.

The article 'Prahran, our village for a quarter of a century' by Yusuf Kapancı published, in the magazine *Avustralya'da Elele*, is an important source.¹³ Even the title indicates how much Western Thrace Turks identify with Prahran. When municipal councils in Melbourne were amalgamated in 1994, the new name of the council became the City of Stonnington. This council area covers three or four suburbs like Prahran.

Western Thrace Turks bought their association building at 16 Kent Street, Windsor on 24 July 1978. The religion officer sent by the Religious Affairs Directorate in Turkey for the Western Thrace Turkish community lived in rented accommodation for a while, then in 124 Peel Street, Windsor, a house bought by the association on 31 August 1987. This house and the first house that was bought were both sold and the current association building at 103–109 Union Street, Windsor, was bought. This association building was approved for the association's use on 9 November 1999. There have always been good, civilised, friendly relationships between the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association and the Prahran Council and other officials.

The council provides financial and other support for the association from time to time. The Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association actively participated in the Prahran festival on 27 June 1993 and every year since then. The Western Thrace Turkish Association took part in the Prahran Cultural Festival on 18–19 March 1995 with their regional costumes, food, handicrafts, serving coffee and Turkish delight, handing out brochures and a folk dancing-music show, gaining the council's appreciation.

One of the pleasing outcomes of this positive cooperation, with too many examples to enumerate, has been the monument erected in Little Chapel Street at Princes Garden for the Western Thrace Turks. The unveiling of this monument and those for other ethnic groups created by Judy Lorraine occurred in a ceremony on 3 December 1994 with the participation of the Western Thrace Turks.¹⁴



The first association building



The second (current) association building



*The monument erected
by the council for the
Western Thrace Turks
in Prahran where they
have settled
(Little Chapel Street at
Princes Garden)*

*Top: Association
representatives and artists
with council staff on the
unveiling day,
3 December 1994*

*Feyyaz Sağlam and
association president
Nadir Celil visiting the
monument in August 2004*

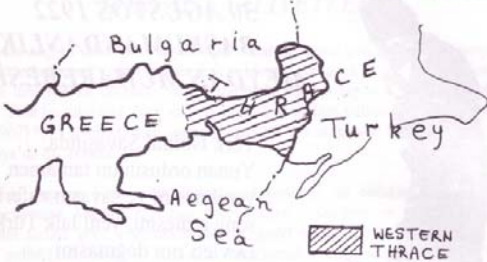




*Visiting
council
staff with
association
and the
women's
subgroup
members,
23 December
1993*



*Western Thrace Turks during the Prahran Cultural Festival.
Middle: the youngsters in their regional costumes, Above: the Classical
Turkish Music Ensemble of the Association, 18–19 March 1995*



**BRIEF HISTORY OF WESTERN THRACE
AND THE THRACIAN TURKS**

Western Thrace Turks, who inhabit the Thrace region of Greece, presently constitute a population of approximately 145,000.

Thrace has obtained its name from the Trak Tribe who settled in this region between 2600 - 1200 BC and despite the fact that it covers a larger territory geographically, Western Thrace lies within the Thrace section of Greece.

The history of the Western Thrace Turks began with the conquest of the region by the Ottoman Empire in 1364. After

unsettled disputes in its political history, the Lausanne Peace Treaty which was signed in 1923 recognised the Western Thrace Turks as a minority in Greece.

Until this very day, Western Thrace Turks who have longed for freedom, have sought consolation by migrating from their homeland. We, who have joined this immigration are currently residing in Prahran.

By doing so, we have chosen Australia as our homeland and having escaped the "minority" status, we are proud and pleased to be living as free citizens in Australia.

Western Thrace Turkish Association
16 Kent Street PRAHRAN VIC 3181
Telephone: 033510 4889

Sayfa 2

The leaflet distributed by the Western Thrace Turks during the Prahran Cultural Festival on 19 March 1995

Employment (economic situation)

Most of the Western Thrace Turks who migrated to Australia came from rural backgrounds; they were farmers and were regarded as unqualified workers. There were a few teachers among them. Most of the first generation of men worked in the General Motors Holden and Ford car factories while most of the women worked in the Red Tulip chocolate factory. There are those among the first and second generation who have established their own businesses and who work as managers in various businesses. The new generation is in a different situation as they are better qualified. The more than 60 university and TAFE graduates occupy better positions. Among them are:

- Teachers
- Ophthalmologists
- Architects
- Engineers (in different fields)
- Managers
- Psychologists
- Real estate agents
- Legal and administrative secretaries
- Nurses
- Economists
- Accountants
- Interpreters
- Electricians
- Hairdressers
- Technicians
- Sports trainers
- Communications and marketing people
- Linguists



The Red Tulip chocolate factory in Australia, where Western Thrace women worked, 1971 (Courtesy of Recep Hasan)



Ford car factory, one of the first factories where Western Thrace men worked

The first person to establish his own business in Australia was İrfan Hafız-Hüseyin from Gümülcine on 6 May 1974.

Currently more than 30 Australian Western Thrace Turks own businesses as listed below:

- Grocery
- Bedding factory
- Electrician
- Carpentry workshop/kitchen manufacturing
- Motor mechanic
- Second-hand car and parts sales / repairs
- Restaurants and fast food outlets
- Taxi and limousine service
- Textile and sewing workshop
- Television and electronic goods sales / repairs
- Fruit shop
- Glass door/window manufacturing
- Painter
- Alarms / security equipment sales and installation
- Wedding dress design and sales
- Musical instrument sales

Start of the association

The Western Thrace Turks, after overcoming the initial hardships of migration, felt the need to associate and started the process. In a distant and strange country close social ties are important. Men went to Greek coffee houses from time to time and sometimes gathered in Victoria Park in High Street, Prahran and discussed association activities. The first effort to form an association began in the house of the first Western Thrace Turk to migrate to Australia, Mehmet Hacıoğlu from Kızılağaç, at 71 Perth Street, Prahran, on 25 December 1971. This initiative was somewhat stalled and there was a gap of several years. Finally, on 29 March 1975 a general meeting adopted the constitution and

the association was formally established. The official temporary correspondence address of the Western Thrace Turkish Association from that day on was Ahmet Haliloğlu's (Çakıroğlu) home at 66 Andrew Street, Windsor. The Turkish community was informed of this by way of Turkish newspapers as well as government bodies. For about a year during the formative management committee period, the affairs of the association were conducted in this house under the presidency of Ahmet Çakıroğlu.



*The temporary
correspondence address
of the Western Thrace
Turkish Association was
Ahmet Çakıroğlu's
house at
66 Andrew Street,
Windsor,
1975–1976*

The names of the first management committee members elected at the general meeting on 3 April 1976 were published in the first issue of the magazine *Avustralya'da Elele*:

Ahmet Çakıroğlu – President (from Domruköy)

Hasan Meyzinoğlu – Secretary (from Doğanca)

Mehmet Hacıoğlu (from Kızılağaç)

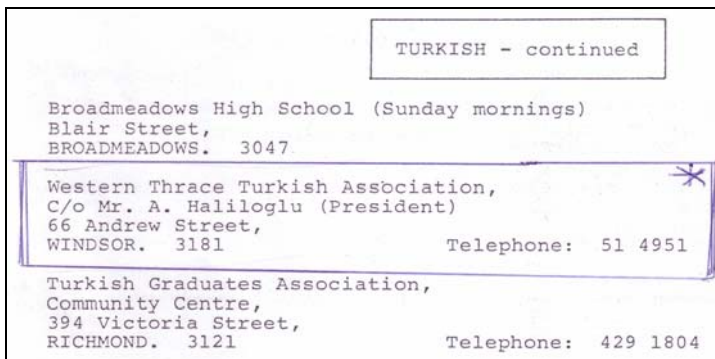
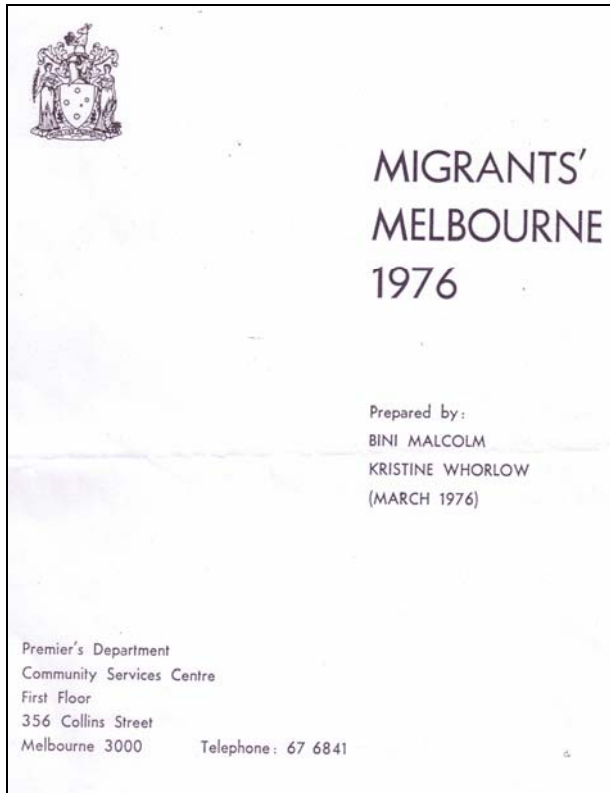
Yusuf Kapancı (from Domruköy)

Hasan Mehmetoğlu (from Bıyıklıköy)

Ferruh İbrahim (from Gümülcine)

Nadir Celil (from Meşe)

Memet İmam-Hüseyin (from Domruköy)



Official documents dated March 1976, showing the association's temporary address

Development of the Association

AUSTRALIAN WESTERN THRACE TURKISH ASSOCIATION (AWTTA)

On 3 April 1976 a small two-bedroom house in the back yard of Hasan Meyzinoğlu's property at 23 Normanby Street, Windsor, was rented, a general meeting was held, a management committee was elected and activities started. For more than two years the association conducted its activities from this address. On 24 July 1978 a house was bought in Prahran to be used as the association building. For the purchase of this building, Cavit Mestan (1944–2001) from the village of Meşe, Sabri Tütüncü (Özsoy) (1938–2004) from the village of Karacaoğlu and İbrahim Dellal, a Turkish Cypriot, acted as guarantors. This building was used as the association grew, until 1998 when the building was no longer sufficient. In 1999, during the time of the management committee with Ahmet Hüseyin as its president, this building was sold and an empty factory building in the same area was bought. The settlement date was 8 February 1999.



AWTTA Management Committee Members in 1999

Seated – from the left: Ali Seyhanlı, Ahmet Hüseyin, Mustafa Mustafaoğlu, standing: Kâmil Atasoy, İbrahim İbrahim, Hüseyin Yakup, Arif İbrahim, Ali Duralı. (Photo from the association records.)



*The current association building at the time it was purchased.
Top: the entrance, Above: an empty warehouse. A joyful visit by the first
and second generation members, 9 November 1999*

Following the completion of the required legal processes, a permit to use this new building as the association building was obtained on Tuesday 9 November 1999. Sitting on 1775 square metres of land, the internal useable space of the building is 946 square metres. The building works commenced straight away and continued by the new management committee elected on 7 January 2001 with Nadir Celil as its president.

On 24 October 2003, the first part of the building comprising offices, prayer room, library and tearoom opened for service and are still in use. The second part of the building comprising a conference room, classe rooms and main corridors was completed in 2006–07 and opened for members' use as the work was completed. Following the completion of the conference room, the official opening of the building as a community centre took place on 3 November 2007 after some intense work during Mustafa Hasanoğlu's presidency. In this official opening, which included cultural activities, the Western Thrace Turks celebrated their 38 years in Australia with 200 members and guests. More information and photographs about this event are included in Chapter 7 of this book.

According to the information provided in 2005 by Nadir Celil, a former president of the association, the association had 164 members. In June 2008, association secretary Mustafa Mustafaoğlu stated that the number of members was 170.

Subgroups of the association

1. Education subgroup (established in 1972. The Australian Western Thrace Turkish School is run by this subgroup).
2. Women's subgroup (established in 1991, became a separate association in 1998, and reverted to being a subgroup in 2006).
3. Media and publications subgroup (established in 1991, started to publish the magazine *Avustralya'da Elele* (Hand-in-hand /Harmony in Australia).

4. Music subgroup (established in 1993 as a Classical Turkish Music Group).
5. Youth subgroup (was established in 1991. The young groups organise occasional activities among themselves).
6. Sport subgroup (was established in 1991 and continued for some time).

The association, which was established as the ‘Western Thrace Turkish Association’ in 1975, adopted the name ‘Western Thrace Turkish Islamic Association’ in 1980. It has continued as the ‘Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association’ since 1996. Since the time it was established, the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association has been one of the most active and respected associations in this country. The association is visited frequently by officials of the Republic of Turkey who come to Australia, officials of the Republic of Turkey in Australia and local, state and federal politicians. Scientists, researchers, writers and artists are also among those who visit the association.

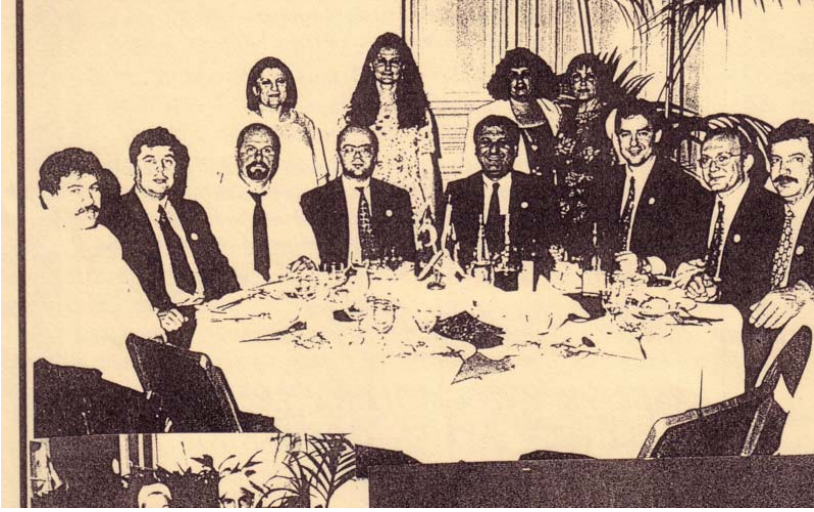
Speaker of the Turkish Parliament Bülent Arınç (8 May 2005), Turkish Minister of State Dr Mehmet Aydın (16 March 2005) and Defence Minister Sabahattin Çakmakoglu (14 September 2002) have visited the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association and addressed the people. Also, the Turkish ambassadors to Australia Bilal N. Şimşir (2 November 1996), Tansu Okandan (17 November 2001 and 14 September 2002) and N. Murat Ersavcı (10 November 2007) have visited the association. Melbourne consul generals of the Republic of Turkey, Deniz Özmen, Cengiz Sanay, Hasan Aşan, Aykut Sezgin, Aydın Nurhan (and other consulate officials) have also visited the association frequently and taken part as speakers in functions organised by the association.

Dr Mehdi İlhan (Australian National University, Professor of History), gave a talk on ‘The Turks’ Arrival in the Balkans’

on 21 September 2003 in the Prahran town hall. Author Feyyaz Sağlam, a lecturer at the Dokuz Eylül University, gave a talk entitled 'Western Thrace Turks from Past to Present' on 14 August 2004. Bilâl N. Şimşir, who is a researcher as well as being the ambassador, and academics such as Ali Bilge Okan and Zeynep Beykont, have cooperated with the association in their research activities.

Professor Türkkaya Ataöv gave the talk 'Turkish Identity and the Armenian Issue' on 27 April 2008 to the Turkish communities. (This talk was organised by the Australian Turkish Seminars group and hosted by the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association.) Turkish folk musician Sümer Ezgü also visited the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association on 30 March 2008.

Victorian Immigration Minister John Pandazopoulos visited the association on 5 September 2002, 17 June 2004 and 24 February 2006. The State MP for the Prahran area Tony Lupton also visited the association several times and heard the wishes of the community. (9 September 2005, 24 February 2006, 5 March 2006, 26 October 2006, 2 March 2007 and 28 August 2008). Prahran (Stonnington) Mayor John Chandler attended the association's Unity-Togetherness function on 27 July 1996, and greeted the community in his address. As well as these visits, office-bearers of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association have been invited to parliament, the embassy, the consulate, cultural activities organised by the Victorian state former and present premiers, and the activities of the Victorian Multicultural Commission, where they have exchanged ideas. Tony Lupton's invitation to the association management to Parliament House on 12 December 2004 and Ambassador Bilâl N. Şimşir's invitation to the association management on 29 October 1997 to the embassy in Canberra are some examples.



Australian Western Thrace Turks celebrated their 25 years in Australia on 13 January 1996. The photograph shows the office-bearers of the Western Thrace Turkish Solidarity Association in Turkey and Australian Western Thrace Turks.



The Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association is visited by officials of the Republic of Turkey. Defence Minister Sabahattin Çakmakoglu presents a Turkish flag to the association during his visit on 14 September 2002.

The association management places great importance on keeping the national and moral values of the community alive, as we shall see in some details in chapter 4. (See Table 2.2 for complete list of presidents.) National and religious holidays are celebrated routinely and activities are organised in relation to important Western Thrace events and individuals. Commemorations in memory of the deceased Western Thrace Turkish leader Dr Sadık Ahmet are organised on the anniversary of his death. The records of these ceremonies are published in the magazine *Avustralya'da Elele* with poems and articles (nos. 14, 18, 23, 28 and 41). A mother and a father of the year are chosen regularly and special meetings are held for this purpose. The Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association always actively participates in activities organised by the Turkish community in Melbourne. Taking part in the Melbourne Turkish Day on 12 October 1997, 11–12 October 1998 and 13–14 October 2001, Como Turkish Festival on 18–28 April, 2002, 19 May Youth and Sports / Atatürk Remembrance March on 20 May 2007, the third Turkish Tulip Festival on 16–17 September 2007, the Fourth Turkish Tulip Festival on 13–14 September 2008, and the 40 Years of Turkish Migration to Australia celebrations during 2007–08 are some examples.

The articles published in the magazine *Avustralya'da Elele* such as 'From that Day to This' by Feriha Reşitoğlu and 'What are We and What should We Become?' by Hasan Meyzinoğlu and the talk by Sihem İmam-Hüseyin, 'Becoming Association in Australia and our Activities' during the 'Western Thrace Turkish Culture from Past to Present' event organised by the association on 25 July 1998 are important reference materials in terms of the history of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association. In addition, 'The Good in Having Community Organisations' by Ayşe Aday explains the importance of the association for the support and benefits provides to the community. This article was published in the 41st issue of *Avustralya'da Elele*.



The association officials providing information to the Minister John Pandazopoulos and Tony Lupton, MP, about the hall being constructed, 24 February 2006



Australian Western Thrace Turks planting a tree in commemoration of their 35 years of migration to Australia. In the photograph from left: Councillor Chris Gahan, Nadir Celil, Feyiz Mehmet. Prahran, 21 September 2003.

Table 2.2 **PRESIDENTS OF THE AUSTRALIAN
WESTERN THRACE TURKISH
ASSOCIATION**

Name	Start date	End date
Ahmet Çakıroğlu	03-04-1976	30-04-1977
Nadir Celil	30-04-1977	1979
Sabri Özsoy	1979	1980
Mehmet Hacıoğlu	1980	15-03-1981
Ahmet Çakıroğlu	15-03-1981	1985
Mustafa Karacaoğlu	29-12-1985	1987
Niyazi Selimoğlu	10-01-1988	08-01-1989
Hamdi Mehmet	08-01-1989	1990
Failat Delioğlu	20-01-1991	19-01-1992
Mustafa Karacaoğlu	19-01-1992	06-09-1992
Nadir Celil	06-09-1992	January 1993
Kâmil Atasoy	January 1993	30-01-1994
Nurettin Boca	30-01-1994	04-04-1994
Kâmil Atasoy	04-04-1994	08-01-1995
Altan Ademoğlu	08-01-1995	January 1996
Hayrettin Tahiroğlu	January 1996	30-03-1997
Hamdi Mehmet	30-03-1997	16-06-1997
Ahmet Hüseyin	16-06-1997	05-03-2000
Mustafa Mustafaoğlu	05-03-2000	07-01-2001
Nadir Celil	07-01-2001	15-01-2006
Mustafa Mustafaoğlu	15-01-2006	18-01-2007
Niyazi Selimoğlu	18-01-2007	05-03-2007
Mustafa Hasanoğlu	08-03-2007	13-01-2008
Hüseyin Meyzin	13-01-2008	

This was the management committee of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association as we prepared our book *Western Thrace Turks in Australia* in Turkish for publication in 2004:

President	Nadir Celil
Vice President	Memet İmam-Hüseyin
Secretary	Mustafa Mustafaoglu
Treasurer	Hüseyin Meyzin
Committee members	Salih Reşitoğlu Ebrahim Güler, Hamdi Mehmet
Audit Committee	Hüseyin Hasanoğlu, Bülent Öz, Hüseyin Haliloğlu



A group of management committees members preparing the association's cultural-artistic activities with the participation of Feyyaz Sağlam, July 2004

The draft copy of our book in Turkish, *Western Thrace Turks in Australia*, completed in November 2005, was examined by the association's management committee and the media and publications subgroup.



The association's management committee and members of the media and publications subgroup, March 2005

As our book in Turkish was being prepared for publication, a new general meeting of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association was held on 15 January 2006 and the following office-bearers were elected:

President	Mustafa Mustafaoğlu
Vice President	Ayhan Boz
Secretary	Emrah Reşitoğlu
Asst Secretary	Emine Öz
Treasurer	Hülya Hasanoğlu
Asst Treasurer	Figen Celil
Audit Committee	Nadir Celil, Hüseyin Meyzin, Sihem İmam-Hüseyin



*Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association
management committee members, 2006*

Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association: Women's subgroup

When the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association was established, one of the subgroups formed was the Women's Subgroup. It was established in 1991. The founding members were: Feriha Reşitoğlu, Sacide Dede, Halide Boca and Turkish Cypriot Aycan İbrahim. With the large number of Australian Western Thrace Turkish women taking part in the 1992 and 1993 mother's day celebrations, it was felt necessary that the women's subgroup should become official. Following the

elections in May 1993, the women's subgroup started work in full capacity under president Rukiye İbrahim and conducted many successful activities aimed at the Western Thrace women within the association. In 1998, the women's subgroup was transformed into a separate association. This re-structuring was aimed at making the activities for Western Thrace women more comprehensive. Also, it was hoped the change would make it easier to obtain material and moral support from the government and to exercise authority in terms of certain projects. The activities of the Women's Association were regularly presented in the *Avustralya'da Elele* magazine. Among them are health seminars targeting women and other routine cultural activities.



Australian Western Thrace Turkish Women's Association management committee, 8 May 2004



*Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association Women's subgroup
management committee, 1994*



*Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association Women's subgroup
management committee, 1996*



The Women's Association members to have completed the jewellery course and entered the competition in February 2004



The Women's subgroup management committee and the association president, May 2007

The handicrafts exhibition, one of the important projects and activities that take place every year, has played an important role in making Western Thrace Turkish culture known to the Australian public. As the women continued with their activities as a subgroup and as an association, they have contributed greatly to the fulfilment of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association.

Considering that it would be more efficient and more productive for all its members and the community to be under the same umbrella, the Australia Western Thrace Turkish Association, at its meeting of 6 August 2006, decided to change the Women's Association to a subgroup. At the extraordinary general meeting of the Women's Association of 19 August 2006, the new management committee started functioning as the 'Women's Subgroup'. Meanwhile, the Needlework and Proverbs book projects that were underway were suspended. In January 2007 Sihem İmam-Hüseyin, who was responsible for the association's publications activities, undertook the continuation of the Proverbs book project. As nobody could be found to start and continue the Needlework book project, it had to be cancelled.

The Australian Western Thrace Turkish Women's Association was officially abolished on 21 July 2007. The women started to carry out their activities as Women's Subgroup of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association.

The elections held in January and February 2009 for the Women's subgroup management committee were unsuccessful. With the resignation of the president and some committee members, important activities are left to be carried out by the association.

Table 2.3 shows the presidents of the Women's Subgroup / Association.

Table 2.3 THE PRESIDENTS OF THE WOMEN'S SUBGROUP / ASSOCIATION

Name	Start date	End date
Rukiye İbrahim	May 1993	May 1995
Fatma Hüseyin	May 1995	May 1996
Ayşe Aday	May 1996	May 1997
Rukiye İbrahim	May 1997	May 2001
Feriha Reşitoğlu	May 2001	September 2005
Sihem İmam-Hüseyin (Temporary president)	September 2005	August 2006
Fatma Hüseyin	August 2006	March 2009
Position is vacant	March 2009	

Greece Turks Association of Australia

The centre of Western Thrace Turks in Australia is Prahran. However, the population shifted to other areas in time. The Western Thrace Turks living in Springvale established a 'Greece Turks Association of Australia'. This association also runs a school of its own.

THE GOOD IN HAVING COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

'No man is an island,' said John Donne a long time ago. He was right. People are social beings and psychologists tell us that people have a need to belong in a group. Community organisations such as the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association help people to feel accepted and give the individuals and families in a community a sense of belonging.

Not only do such community organisations cater for some social, cultural and religious needs of ethnic groups in Australia, they cater for different age groups and interests of the community. These non-profit organizations are supported through grants provided by all levels of government but more directly by local governments, which also provide facilities such as buses and halls for functions free of charge.

New migrants in Australia choose to live in suburbs where there are support groups in place for people of the same ethnicity. Associations such as the Western Thrace Turkish Association have played a huge role in keeping Western Thrace Turks together as one community in Prahran since it was started in 1971. The association has a weekend Turkish language school, a reception room for functions, congregational prayer rooms, a snooker room and coffee lounge, offices for meetings and more. The association has various wings such as the Music Group, Youth Group, Women's Group, Elderly Citizens Coffee and Chat Group and the Publishing Group.

Youth these days appear to have steered away from the community and now associate with a broader range of friends who don't necessarily come from similar backgrounds or from the same community. Nothing wrong there, but comments such as: 'Our people are sticky beaks. They gossip and make everybody else's business their own business' coming from our youth make me think. Why worry about gossip if you're not doing anything wrong? So the youth are not comfortable in social settings where everyone knows them. They feel intimidated by such settings. It might be strange to say this, but I honestly believe that gossip is beneficial in a lot of ways. It keeps people decent. It ensures people do what is morally and socially acceptable unless they want to be 'the talk of the town'. Also, close-knit communities keep people competitive because people may envy 'so and so' for the way she dresses, for the job title she holds, for the beautiful house she lives in or even for her social flair. Call me old-fashioned, but knowing a lot of people gives someone a sense of where they *are* and where they need

to *go* to make their life worthwhile. Comparing oneself to someone accessible and real in the community is surely more realistic than comparing oneself to an American pop star on television. Our youth are walking the streets with trousers on their hips, showing their jockeys because rap music stars are doing it and it is 'cool' to show half your behind in public! Television and internet make our kids feel that individuals are as real as they are presented, and we all know that what we see on TV and the internet are only glimpses of a person's life story. That is not so in communities where people interact with each other regularly enough to know the whole story of someone else's life.

Gone are the days where everyone knew each other as in small towns. In cities, community organisations and interest groups re-create that warm social atmosphere so needed by people in this day and age. Our youth have their own social groups outside the reach and view of adults these days, which is not always very positive in terms of their own safety and habit-forming activities. We need to bring the youth back into communities somehow. Families, like communities, need to stick together. Why can't youths go where families go? It is just not happening.

It is wise of governments to support ethnic groups in their community efforts but this support is unfortunately minimal. Our association runs its business completely through volunteers. If I had any say in policy making in the government, I would pay people to do such work because of the amount of good these institutions do to communities. Individual members should be paid for keeping community members psychologically and emotionally balanced and healthy, and for keeping good old traditional values alive if not for anything else. Why would anybody volunteer hours of their precious time to work for a community based organisation if the individual could not see that it is so terribly important? People are doing it all the time. Well done to these selfless souls who understand sociology better than some governments.

Not only do community organisations such as the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association help new arriving migrants to integrate into the broader community with ease, they keep communities together; they ensure the elderly have *people* instead of *pets* as friends; they keep people occupied and entertained through celebrations, parties and special days; they keep cultures alive, recognise achievements and offer prayers in congregation to acknowledge their beliefs in the Almighty; they educate children in a language other than English and ensure they learn about their parents' culture and so have a different perspective of life; they uphold traditional values that are universally accepted as *good* or *right*; that not to mention they keep people in line through constructive gossip!

Ayşe Aday, Teacher,
English and Turkish language
Melbourne, 2009



The group who had prepared food every Saturday for the students of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish School together with parents, 1999



*A group of students from the Australian Western Thrace
Turkish school with Feyyaz Sağlam, August 2004*

Chapter 3

Education and Training

Australian Western Thrace Turkish School and its activities

One of the most important problems faced by the Western Thrace Turks whose numbers have increased and who have settled in Australia was the education of their children and their future in the process. A Western Thrace teacher, Ahmet akırođlu from Domruk y, opened his rented house at 112 High Street, Prahran, to the Western Thrace Turkish children in the early years and started giving Turkish lessons on his own initiative. His initiative formed the foundations of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish School. In 1972 the education subgroup of the association was formed. With the increase in the number of students, the school moved to the rented house of Hasan Meyzinođlu and Efrahim G ler from Dođanca at 12 Newry Street, Prahran, in the 1973 school year.



The first photograph of Australian Western Thrace Turkish School students together with their teachers at 12 Newry Street, Prahran, 1973

Ahmet akirođlu, Nadir Celil and Mustafa Karacaođlan, who worked as teachers in Western Thrace before migrating to Australia, became volunteer teachers in this school that operated on weekends.

With another increase in the number of students in a short time, the school was moved to the Prahran College building. Later, education continued in the Toorak, Huntingdale and Windsor (later named Stonnington) public schools. The school is run by the education subgroup of the association. There are students from Turkey and other Turkish groups as well as Western Thrace children. According to the 2004 records, around 65 students were receiving education at the primary and secondary education level. The curriculum has also been published in the 2004 school magazine. In the 2006 education year, primary and secondary education was continuing in the association building with 29 students. The classes are conducted by teachers with pedagogical training on Saturdays. Information about the school and the education and training activities is regularly published in the magazine *Avustralya'da Elele*. A Western Thrace Turk, Ayşe Aday was the principal of the school from 2000 until the end of the 2006 school year.

Australian Western Thrace Turkish School celebrates the 'April 23 National Sovereignty and Children's Day' and all other national holidays and intermittently takes part in the Australia Day celebrations on 26 January as it did in 2004 and 2006. The school also took part in celebrations in the Melbourne Consulate General along with other Turkish schools. Social activities and competitions (such as composition competitions) take place at the school in conjunction with the association. The Australian Western Thrace Turkish School students published their works in *Yankı* (1992), *Elele Children's Magazine* (1998) and the *Australian Western Thrace Turkish School Magazine* (2004). In the 2008 school year the number of students dropped to twelve, but the association made sure that the Australian Western Thrace

Turkish School continued. The school also continued with 19 students and two teachers at the primary level in the association building during 2009 school year.

Western Thrace Turks living in Springvale, Victoria, have also started the Western Thrace Huntingdale Turkish School under their association.

Pedagogical articles that are published in the magazine *Avustralya'da Elele*, which is the voice of the Western Thrace Turks in Australia, should also be mentioned here. The articles that relate to religious pedagogy are written by the religious officer of the association and the school's religious instructor, Duran Öz. He also compiled the 'Religious Information Guide' to assist the students in their religious instruction in 1995. Other examples of pedagogical articles in other areas are: 'Our Children's Education and Training' by Nadir Celil¹, 'The Child and Discipline' by Ayşe Aday² and 'The Family and Education' by Salih Reşitoğlu.³

Teachers who have worked in the Australian Western Thrace Turkish School

The first teachers to work in the Australian Western Thrace Turkish School were Ahmet Çakıroğlu, Mustafa Karacaoğlu and Nadir Celil. Working as volunteers, these pioneer teachers had worked as teachers before migrating to Australia.

Following the move to Prahran College, professional teachers worked in the school. These teachers came from Western Thrace, Cyprus, Bulgaria and Turkey. Lemi Salih, Mustafa Çavdar, Hakkı Manlacı, Özlem Mehmetoğlu, Gökşan Sapmaztürk, Adil Sapmaztürk, Duran Öz, Ramazan Tırlı, Ferhan Can, Levent Can, Melek Aşık, Zeynep Bozdoğan, Ayşe Aday, Sabri Serbest, Vedat Keskin and Yusuf Vanlıoğlu have all worked in the Australian Western Thrace Turkish School at various times. Duran Öz and his daughter Esra Öz started teaching at the school at the beginning of the 2009 school year.



Australian Western Thrace Turkish School students with their teachers Nadir Celil (top) and Ahmet akırođlu (above) continuing their education at the Prahran College in 1976



Images from the 23 April Turkish Children's Day celebrations by the Australian Western Thrace Turkish School, Melbourne, 1997.

Western Thrace Turks in Australia



At Australia Day, 26 January 2004



*Australian Western Thrace Turkish School students in a Turkish class
with their teacher Ayşe Aday, May 2006*

Two compositions by school students

MY BACKGROUND IS WESTERN THRACE

I am a student born in Australia with a Western Thrace background. I learn to read and write Turkish in the Australian Western Thrace Turkish School I attend on weekends. Alongside that, I also learn about the customs and traditions my mother and my grandfathers continue in Australia.

My family is from the villages of Gümülcine and İskeçe in Western Thrace. It has been twenty-five years since my mother's side came to Australia. I have not yet seen Western Thrace. My mother's side tells me that Western Thrace has great natural beauty. I want to see it one day.

The centre of Western Thrace is the town of Gümülcine, followed by the town of İskeçe. Both Gümülcine and İskeçe have a Turkish High School each. The images I present in the school magazine are from the towns of Gümülcine and İskeçe.

Ercüment İsmail (grade 4)

(*Yankı* no. 1, 1996, p. 7)

MY WESTERN THRACE HOLIDAY

I wish to share some of my unforgettable memories of a two-month holiday I had in Western Thrace, full of memories in July and August.

After 24 hours of tiring air travel, we landed at the İstanbul airport. I was filled with indescribable excitement. I wanted to join up with my grandmother, grandfather and my relatives as soon as possible. When we landed in Turkey, everything appeared different to me. I could not understand anything. It must have been

out of tiredness. It was midnight by the time we took a taxi and travelled to Western Thrace. It took me about a week to get used to the place. I met all my cousins. Some of them were about my age. We went to two village weddings. We had a great time. We went to the beach and took other trips. I can't express how much I loved it there. I can't forget the beautiful days I had in Turkey. One becomes rather different in one's own country. We visited some historic sites. The crowds in İstanbul were exhausting at times. When we travelled from Lapseki to Gallipoli by boat, I thought of the Battle of Gallipoli.

There are so many things to tell that it is impossible to fit them on this page. I enjoyed my two-month holiday a great deal. Once again, I recognised the beauty of being a Western Thrace child. My only wish is to go there again as soon as possible. I correspond with my cousins and friends there in English and in Turkish. Although we are thousands of kilometres away from Western Thrace and Turkey, my yearning and my emotions are very close.

Yeliz Hasan (Junior High School 2)
(*Yankı*, no. 2, 1996, p. 16)



*Australian Western Thrace Turkish School students and their teachers,
Toorak, Vic, 4 April 1998*



*Australian Western Thrace Turkish School students and their teachers,
Windsor, Vic., 4 September 2004*



The 29 October Republic Day of Turkey celebrations of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish School, 29 October 2005



The students of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish School celebrated the 23 April Turkish Children's Day in 2007, as they did every year.



*Australian Western Thrace Turkish School Students in class,
November 2008*



*The Australian Western Thrace Turkish School celebrating
the 23 April Turkish Children's Day in 2009*



The Turkish World Panel, Melbourne 14 August 2004

Chapter 4

Cultural make-up

Language

The mother tongue of the Western Thrace Turkish community is naturally the Turkish spoken in Turkey. Greek, which people spoke more or less well before migrating to this country, is gradually being forgotten and English naturally comes to the fore for the new generations as Australia's official language. One ought to remember again that the first generation to have migrated here experienced great difficulties due to lack of English and used Greek in their social interactions (and naturally dealt with Greeks in many areas).

It is also true that those of the second and third generations who came here very young or were born here have grown up regarding English as their everyday language through the education system. In fact, for Western Thrace Turks, like all Turks living in Australia (no matter which Turkish community they may be from), the immense influence of English is obvious.¹ The language problem, the dilemma of the Western Thrace children in this country, is expressed in the writings and poetry of the 11-year-old Selin Hüssemoglu, daughter of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association, Women's subgroup member Melâhat Hüssemoglu. This Western Thrace Turkish girl can express her feelings and thoughts better in English.² Within the same context, we can also see those who write and publish poetry in a mixture of Turkish and English. Here is a poem written by Tijen İsmail and published in *Avustralya'da Elele*:³

BİR RÜYA GİBİ (LIKE A DREAM)

İnanılmaz bir aşk yaşadık
 Seninle biz bir mehtaplı yaz gecesi
 Masum bakışlarla, anlatılmaz anılarla
 İlk hevesim, ilk sevgim seninle geçti

O gece yollarımız birleşip,
Kaderim seni seçti.
Çal kemancı çal sabahlara kadar
İçtiğim şaraplarda,
Dinlediğim şarkılarda onu göreyim
Doldur meyhaneci doldur, ağzına kadar
Onun uğruna bir daha alev alev yanayım.

When you feel that
You have reached the end,
That you cannot go one step
Further, when life seems to be drained
Of all purpose ...
Opportunity to start all over again,
To turn over a new page.

Tijen İsmail

In some issues of *Avustralya'da Elele*, one can find poems in translation. We can cite the poem 'Yaşanan Yıllar / The Living Years' published in the 21st issue of the magazine as an example.

Given the intense pressure from English, some articles of warning related to this issue also appear in *Avustralya'da Elele*. 'Dilimizi Bozanlar Bizim Kızanlar' (Our children who spoil the language) by Feriha Reşitoğlu,⁴ 'Türkçe'yi Öğrenmek Çocuklarımız İçin Niçin Zor Geliyor? Çözüm Yolu Nedir?' (Why do our children find it difficult to learn Turkish? What is the solution?) by Ayşe Aday⁵ are examples.

Looking at the linguistic aspect of the Western Thrace Turks in Australia, another important detail to be stressed is this: some words used regionally in Western Thrace are explained in *Avustralya'da Elele*. These words, listed in various issues of the magazine are important not only with respect to studying the Western Thrace Turkish dialect, but also getting the new generations in Australia to know the

authentic Western Thrace Turkish culture. The person who compiled the words listed in issues 17, 18, 19, 28, 29 and 36 is Feriha Reşitoğlu. We wish to list the words in the Western Thrace Turkish dialect, which have so far reached 96:

Aretlik	: brothers and sisters in this life and after
Afır	: a small pond in front of public taps
Ağızlık	: cigarette-holder
Alentrik	: electricity
Annadın mı	: Did you get it?
Antari	: dress
Avustos	: August
Ayak yolu	: toilet
Azmak	: puddle
Babuç	: shoe
Bayın	: spoiled
Belperde	: balustrade
Beygir	: horse
Biğbi	: turkey
Bostan	: watermelon
Buba	: father
Cığci	: cicada
Çanak	: plate
Çekişmek	: to argue
Çetik	: woven slipper
Çıkırık	: spinning wheel
Çöcük	: boy
Çurfalık	: loom
Çüymek	: to hop, to jump
Dam	: animal pen/stable
Dedemek	: hoopoe (a bird)

Değirmi	: round
Diğren/değren	: pitchfork
Dikolta	: women's underwear/slip
Dımdıkı	: 'bağlama', 'saz' (a musical instrument)
Don	: baggy trousers/shalvar
Düğlek	: honeydew
Gadinge	: aunt-in-law
Gagalı	: pitchfork
Galgımak	: to jump up and down
Gaygana	: pastry made with cornmeal and leeks
Gelberi	: tool used in ovens to move embers
Gıdaş	: brother
Gidişmek	: to scratch
Gırnata	: clarinet
Goga	: hard snot
Gonguruk	: bubbles in water
Gork	: brooding hen
Gölmek	: handwoven underwear for men and women
Grep	: a light embroidered headscarf for women
Gugutçuk	: turtledove
Gunnik	: pastry made with flour, cornmeal and spinach
Harem	: courtyard
Hasıl	: small area of land adjoining a house
Hasır	: rush mat
Haymana	: one who loves going out
Hergele	: renegade
Hotoz	: bride's crest
İçirik	: useless pieces of cloth

İğşi	: sour
İstavroz	: sign of the cross
İzve	: basement
Kade	: a form of address for old women in the neighbourhood
Kaspannan	: never
Kılçı	: fine, full particles of falling snow
Kırkma	: fringe (hair)
Kıstırkaç	: buckle or peg
Konapa	: nappy
Kota	: calf of water buffalo
Kumpil	: potatoes
Kuruhasan	: croissant
Mancarak	: lizard
Maşına	: stove with oven
Nünü	: funnel
Oynatmak	: to lose one's mind
Ödek	: coward
Pamık	: cotton
Pardı	: long pole
Patlak	: popcorn
Pervane	: fan
Pılıpırtı	: goods and clothes
Pırtı	: clothes
Saçak	: verandah
Saçkaya	: cast-iron tray
Sampı	: a slowish person
Setere	: jacket
Sıkı	: miser, stingy
Südü	: people with a common wet nurse
Şapşal	: chatterbox
Şılak	: shiny

Şirane	: large basket used to crush grapes
Şiratava	: wide and large pan to boil grape syrup
Şişirgen	: balloon
Şoşa	: wide road
Şuşka	: small hot pepper
Tağle	: field
Uğratma	: to send away
Üleştirmek	: to divide and distribute equally
Velespit	: bicycle
Yavsu	: tick (insect)
Yılbak	: smooth

The 96 words are regularly used by first generation Australian Western Thrace Turkish women and men, and passed on to new generations. The following photographs show the three generations.



The first- generation of Western Thrace Turkish women to have migrated to Australia, August 1997



Australian Western Thrace Turkish youth together, Mother's Day 2005



Some first-generation Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association members as a group, 2 October 2005

Second generation young Australian Western Thrace Turks continue their culture. Among them are poets, play actor and actresses.



*Above:
AWTTA Youth subgroup
committee, 6 October 1996*



*Left:
AWTTA Youth subgroup
committee, 7 March 1998*

Literature

It is now possible to evaluate the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Community using contemporary criteria for literature. The only reference in this respect is again *Avustralya'da Elele*.

POETS AND WRITERS

We can list the names who are involved in literary work within their own limits as such: Rukiye İbrahim, Feriha Reşitoğlu, Nadir Celil, Sayde Ahmetoğlu, Kâmil Atasoy, Sacide Dede, Tijen İsmail, Memet İmam-Hüseyin, Hasan Meyzinoğlu, Sihem İmam-Hüseyin. These are the names of poets/writers who frequently publish in *Avustralya'da Elele*. Less frequently, Nurten Mustafa, Salih Mustafaoğlu, Hasan Mehmetoğlu, Halide Boca, Necla Alioğlu, Sabahat İbrahim, Dursun Hasan, Figen Koparan, Sabriye Abdurrahman, Perihan Hafız-Hüseyin (who is originally a Turkish Cypriot) have published poetry and writings in *Avustralya'da Elele*. It appears that about ten of

the twenty or so names are more active. We can also see the poems of M.Türkay Ilıcak, a Turkish Cypriot poet living in Australia, Hüseyin Ziya and an Iraqi Turcoman poet Salah Nevres, as well as the late Osman Ahmet Hulusi, a Turkish poet who lived in Cyprus.

LITERARY TEXTS

A search through the issues 1 to 41, 1993–2009 of the *Avustralya'da Elele* magazine reveals:

Poetry	: 69	Satire	: 3
Stories	: 9	Translation	: 1
Letter	: 1	Diary	: 1
Essay	: 14	Theatre	: 2
Fiction	: 2	Memoirs	: 3

This gives a total of 105 literary texts. When we add the more than ten items that do not fit into any category, we are talking about over 115 texts. Compared to the earlier issues of *Avustralya'da Elele*, it can easily be said that the later texts are much more powerful.

It is hoped that these texts can reach a point where they can be evaluated in terms of contemporary literary standards. It can be expected that especially university-educated Australian Western Thrace youth who are interested in literature will produce more powerful texts.

The Australian Western Thrace Turks published in 1998 an anthology of works written between 1969 and 1998.⁶ Compiled by Sihem İmam-Hüseyin, this publication comprises texts selected from the first 27 issues of the *Avustralya'da Elele*. This work also has the distinction of being the first anthology of Western Thrace Turkish literature published by the diaspora.

Australian Western Thrace Turkish poets and writers can also be found in the two-volume *An Anthology of Australian Turkish Literature*, prepared by Bilâl N. Şimşir, which is the

only published reference book to date.⁷ In this comprehensive anthology, Kâmil Atasoy (Gurbetten Ana'ya Mektup), Sihem İmam-Hüseyin (Maniler-Kıbrıs'tan Batı Trakya'dan), Rukiye İbrahim (Geriye Kalan), Feriha Reşitoğlu (Ah Avustralyam) appeared in volume I; and Hasan Meyzinoğlu (Öylesine Bir Masal), Hacı Reşit (Türkülerimiz Öykülerimiz), Feriha Reşitoğlu (Analık Kolay mı? and Karpuz) appeared in volume II, representing Western Thrace Turks in the Turkish literature originating in Australia. The writer Bilâl N. Şimşir also included biographies of Rukiye İbrahim, Sihem İmam-Hüseyin, Hasan Meyzinoğlu and Feriha Reşitoğlu in the brief biographies section at the end of the anthology.

Also, 'Doğum Günün Kutlu Olsun Oğlum' (Happy Birthday my Son) by Feriha Reşitoğlu was broadcast on the radio and was included in the Turkish book used in schools. '*Moreland Turkish Education and Social Affairs Centre*', published by the Australian Moreland Turkish Association also included two texts by Feriha Reşitoğlu, a Western Thrace Turk.⁸ We have always included Western Thrace Turkish literature in Australia in our work as a sub-section; endeavouring to attract the Western Thrace Turkish community to this field of activity. In our study *Yunanistan'da (Batı Trakya'da) Çağdaş Türk Şiiri Antolojisi* (An Anthology of Contemporary Turkish Poetry in Greece—Western Thrace) in 1995 we included examples of literary works by Western Thrace Turks in Australia.⁹

Also our work *Dünyada Türkçe ve Türk Edebiyatları* (Turkish and Turkish Literature in the World) was published in 2003 and is used as a text book by the Dokuz Eylül University. In its 'Turkish Migrant Literature in Australia' section, Tijen İsmailoğlu is included, representing Western Thrace Turkish poets.¹⁰

The first individual book published by an Australian Western Thrace Turkish litterateur was Tijen İsmailoğlu's book of poetry *Bir Sana Yandım / Bin Şiir Yazdım* (I burned for

you once / I wrote a thousand poems), published in 2006.¹¹ The second book to be published was *Turkish Proverbs and Idioms* (Türk Atasözleri ve Deyimleri Sözlüğü) The book was published in Turkish and English by the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association in October 2007.¹² Feriha Reşitoğlu is currently compiling her poetry for publication under the title *Vatansız Kuşlar* (Birds without a Homeland). An Australian Western Thrace Turkish litterateur, Feriha Reşitoğlu, took part in the 17th KIBATEK International Literature Festival, organised in İzmir on 3–5 December 2005, where her poems and talk were received with interest. One hundred and sixty poets from 20 countries were included in the *KIBATEK International Anthology of Poetry*. Nadir Celil and Feriha Reşitoğlu, Australian Western Thrace Turks, appear in this international anthology with their poetry and biographies.¹³



Feriha Reşitoğlu at the 17th KIBATEK International Literature Festival, İzmir, 3 December 2005



Feyyaz Sağlam at a conference in Melbourne entitled 'Western Thrace Turks from Past to Present' on 15 August 2004 with Tansel Ali.



Australian Western Thrace Turkish Culture and Arts Forum bringing together seven ethnic Turkish groups in Prahran, 14–15 August 2004

Some examples of poetry and stories by Australian Western Thrace Turkish writers

YEARNING

I am watching you from beyond the clouds,
I yearn for your presence when I am left face to face
with my loneliness.
I open my window into the sky to hear your voice
I come close to seeing your face in the darkness.

You offer your hands, as it were, to hold my hands
Your fingertips come to touch my face.
You run and go away from me towards the darkness
And you disappear in the space evermore.

Then you become time in my heart.
Expectancy is the last resort for my hopelessness,
Although I know that you have gone for good.

Nadir Celil

THE SAILING SHIP

She was shining like a morning sun
On the blue wide sea
Now her journey flag was hoisted
In order to arrive at her destination overnight.

I wish she hadn't plunged into the horizon and sailed
away
Like a fog getting out of sight
Here her dim track is still seen
From far off.

Nadir Celil

WOMAN

Oh woman, you are upright and proud like a monument!
The Creator has created you in such a way that no one
else could do it.

You shoot hearts with your figure, and you beat with
your looks.

You are fresh as a newly bloomed flower in my
heart.

Beauty has been gathered drop by drop in you.

You have become a rosebud, a unique one.

The Creator took pains to create you, so that your
face is beautiful

And your skin is beautiful and you are never pale.

You are beautiful in sense, in spirit and also in me.

You drive me crazy with your glance, you bother me
with your reproval.

You are a plectrum for my instrument, a tune on my
tongue and a reed flute in my breath

And you are an undying belle who lies down in my
heart.

Nadir Celil

I SAW

I saw that sadness and hope were living together.

I saw the traces of loneliness on the traces of you.

You embraced the wind and together you flew into the
clouds

I saw your face in the moon shining in the sky.

I saw your hair swaying like a weeping willow
Which was touching my face.
And one morning when I woke up
I thought I saw you lying on my bed.
Yet when I wanted to reach out and caress you
I saw that everything was not real but a dream.

Nadir Celil

THE REMNANT

You sacrificed yourself for the earth and the stones of
this land
You took pains without considering your youth for
years
You worked and endeavoured without wearying
Finally your youth was gone.

You left many things behind in Australia,
Your youth, your beauty and your vigour.
Now you have no remaining hair or teeth
And your running feet are too weak.

Rukiye İbrahim

MY THRACE

My Western Thrace with sad looks,
Surrounded by spring, still in winter,
Tired out and tearful,
Each teardrop tells of separation, yearning and worry.
I miss you greatly, my home, I long for you.

You've fallen into unappreciative hands,
I stop and asked the blowing winds how you are.
As I pluck upon the strings,
Each tune tells of separation, yearning and worry.
I miss you greatly, my home, I long for you.

Your vision arises inside me every day
And my yearning takes a different shape each moment
As the white takes over my hair strand by strand,
Each hair tells of separation, yearning and worry.
I miss you greatly, my home, I long for you.

Feriha Reşitoğlu

DR SADIK AHMET

The misfortune of Sadık
His two infants now fatherless.
It never leaves my mind
That damned road accident.

Oh Sadık, brave Sadık,
All our people lamented.
You went on the Susurköy road.
Why don't you come back now?

Having dealt with the minority's problems
In the Western Thrace region,
You did not die, you became legendary
In the heart of the Turkish nation.

Oh Sadık, brave Sadık,
All our people lamented.
You went on the Susurköy road.
Why don't you come back now?

Feriha Reşitoğlu

LOVE

Burning like the sun
Bright and shining like stars
Clear and bright like the moon
You flow through veins.

White and pure like clouds
Clear and fresh like streams
High and mighty like seas
You leave forever in hearts.

Sacide Dede

SUFFERING

For many years in my Thrace
Even in my dreams I have never laughed.
I tried hard for so long
But I could not overcome the oppressor.

Greeks breathing down my neck,
I am not happy even if I laugh.
If they exploit me
Then it doesn't matter if I survive or die.

I always shed tears.
Why do I always have one trouble
Following another in quick succession?
Hence my patience came to an end and I knew sorrow.

Weren't we the birthplace of democracy
And the cradle of civilisation?
We were citizens in the year two thousand.
Doesn't the world see me?

Feriha Reşitoğlu

MOTHER'S DAY

It's Mother's Day again
But it will obviously regret having come.
Mother, do not expect a gift from me this year
I also told my children not to buy a gift for me
Because this is a kind of protest against the damned war
Look, it's the new fashion: imperialistic spirit!
Troubled economies will be rescued in this way from
now on
There will be a place to shoot at every depression
Only yesterday thousands of people were alive
They were very healthy and doing well.
Mothers had children, and children had mothers
Who begrudged them this happiness.
Households perished in fire and were destroyed in
recent years
Children were orphaned, look at the empty laps
Mother, did you watch the TV news the other day?
A 10-year-old child's body burned and his hands and
feet were blown off in Iraq
His mother, father and brothers were all killed
The only thing remaining in good condition was his
own head.
Mother, on this Mother's Day I'll come and sit on your lap
To fill the mothers' laps left empty in the absence of
their own
Today I am going to embrace my children firmly
As if I am taking all the orphaned children in my arms
in their absence.

Feriha Reşitoğlu

THE UNLUCKY

If I go straight, the roads do not allow me
The curved roads resemble my sadness
The high mountains are not passable
The ruined vineyards are like my heart.

The wild brooks flow without stopping
Like my tears
All the rocks are mossy
Like the stones in my heart.

Sayde Ahmetoğlu

JOURNEY TO THE FOREIGN LAND

If you are away from your homeland,
Take your musical instrument along, and come that way.
If separation frightens you,
Put the yearning in your pocket, and come that way.

If you regard the foreign land as your helper
Forget your birth place and come that way.
If you divorce and cut yourself away from your beloved,
Put your past in the oubliette, and come that way.

If you leave your family home,
Come without thinking of going back.
If you say that you are coming for two years,
Take your shroud along, and come that way.

Rukiye İbrahim

THE FOREIGN LAND

I'm away from my homeland, I'm grieved.
I can't talk about my troubles, I'm grieved.
To whom should I go, to whom tell my complaints?
I'm away from my homeland, my heart is filled with woe.

Where are my mother, my father and my brother now?
My heart always looks for and wants to see them.
My heart wants to converse and to have fun and to laugh
And to come together with them and to love.

My visions and my dreams are full of them
And my pitiful heart is full of yearning
I hope to go back one day
I pour comfort into my poor heart this way.

Perihan Hafiz-Hüseyin

MOTHER

I saw you in my dreams last night
I kissed, I loved and caressed you until I was fulfilled
I smelt you to my heart's content
I gazed at you and I quenched my yearning.

How nice, we were together again
We had a chat, a heart-to-heart talk and pleased each other
You laughed, you rejoiced and you felt happy
You gave me your unending love.

It's a mother's love which is true
It's a mother's lap which is cosy
It's a mother's compassion which fills my heart
I long for you, I long for you too much, my mother.

Perihan Hafiz-Hüseyin

MOTHER, MY HANDS ARE HENNAED

Mother, my hands are hennaed
There is a gold necklace around my neck
Mother, I am wearing a wedding dress and a veil
Let me see our house for the last time
Let me smell the flowers in our garden
Those were the days we spent hours here
We laughed and wept and conversed through the night
Forgive me, mother, give up your rights on me
Don't cry or else I'll cry, too.
Now I'm going to set up a home
And be happy throughout life, if it is God's will.

Tijen İsmailoğlu

I'M EXPECTING YOU

I looked at your picture last night
I wept watching it again and again
My hopes were broken
My dreams were destroyed.
I drowned in my sorrows, give me a breath
Believe me, life is unbearable, I beg you.
I miss your face greatly, I long for your scent
Surely you'll come back, I'm expecting you.

Tijen İsmailoğlu

IT'S OUR LUCK

Please don't ask me what is wrong with me
I don't know either, it's my destiny.
Tell me, what is wrong with you?
You have fallen in love once, I can see it in your eyes.

It's burning you and making you suffer.
Don't worry, my friend, it's lovers' destiny
Our only guilt is of loving, that's our luck.

Tijen İsmailoğlu

FOR OUR FATHER

They say mothers' hearts are heavy with sorrow
They forget fathers and they pass them by
However, many many things live in fathers' hearts
Fathers' eyes are dry but their tears flow secretly
Perhaps they cry for their children at night
They'd do anything for their children, although they
don't always reveal it
Sometimes they don't have to say anything, we can tell
from their look
It's our father who loves us most.

Tijen İsmailoğlu

WE NEED TRUST

At a young age in our lives we begin making mischief
and later on we start making small mistakes. These
incidents are recorded in a book called memory and
forgotten as they are attributed to 'childhood'.

When we are older, we continue to make mistakes
but this time we record these mistakes in our
'conscience book'. At times this 'conscience book'
becomes too heavy a load to carry. This is when we feel
the need to share the load with someone else.
Unfortunately, it is very difficult to find a friend we can
trust. Sometimes we feel depressed and our conscience

haunts us so much that we decide to share all our problems with friends we believe we can trust. We tell them everything. This is how we add to our mistakes.

In this day and age, it is much more difficult to find a loyal friend than it is to win a lottery.

Rukiye İbrahim

YOUTH

We will all grow old one day. Youth is not a gift from God we can keep eternally. When we lose our youth one day, we will replace the older generation of today.

We will look into the eyes of our youth in the hope that they have some sweet words to share with us. We might then remember our own youth and feel guilty for mistreating the elderly. However, it will be too late. We will all, each and every one of us, reap what we sow. It should not be forgotten that in this life we take everything in turns. I wish to end my writing with a poem.

As I skim through shadows of the past
I remember my autumn as though it were spring,
Don't underestimate me just because
My hair is grey and I have old skin.

Rukiye İbrahim

DUCK HUNTING

In the last few years we preferred to hunt at Lake Buloke. This lake was known to have a lot of ducks. In fact, as it existed within the boundaries of the city, it had been used to promote 'Donald'. The sign on the entrance to the city which read 'Welcome to the City of Ducks' reflected this fact.

Surrounding the lake was a band of native eucalyptus trees. Except during the wet season, when waters would reach this end of the lake, camping under the shade of these trees was very convenient. Between this band of trees and the water's edge was an area that measured about 50–60 metres. Among the few scattered trees within this reedy field, there were some that had dried up or were patchy green irrespective of the water. The dense green patches of reed were difficult to penetrate.

The duck hunt was to begin half an hour before dawn. It was Saturday morning, the third week of May when I was in the bush, near a dead tree, under a clear sky full of twinkling stars. I was listening to the lake.

The lake was asleep. If it wasn't for the orchestrated songs of the birds, foxes and bugs, it might have awoken. The lake was sleeping like a pampered baby that I could hear breathing among the gentle wave of winds. In the animal kingdom, I was a guest who immediately recognised the familiar sounds of the cricket nearby. It had snuggled up closer to make me feel more at home. It took me to a familiar environment in the distance where my home was. I got the shivers as I remembered my home. I thought of summer nights in my village.

While herding my grazing sheep, while keeping watch over the harvest at night, while peeling corn cobs, while sleeping on my dear mother's lap at night as a child ... was it not this chirping which had kept me company? I remembered the African Kunta Kinte from the film *Roots*, who was captured on his farm in Africa and sold as a slave. The night he escaped

with the plan to return back to Africa, he shared his problems with a cricket – a familiar creature from his past, which he held in his palm. Dear friend of the past ... the effect you have on people where you settle is amazing!

Dawn was breaking when the ducks began quacking feverishly on the inner banks of the river. As hunting time neared, my soul filled with a sweet feeling of excitement which made me as happy as children can be. All birds were now awake. Small flocks of grey-pink cockatoos were screeching and flying about as if inspecting the area and as if they were signalling the coming of a catastrophic event. The water birds also appeared nervous. Of these, the ducks in particular were not used to seeing strange creatures among them and they were rushing about in one direction after another in distress and confusion. Had last year's survivors informed them that this sight they were witnessing was not good news?

The lake looked as if it awoke in fright. Its chest swelled and flattened with the coming of stronger winds. I checked the time on my watch. There was still 12 minutes remaining before we could lawfully shoot. So that the kill was clearly visible, we were required to abide by this rule. However, each year we would witness some impatient hunters who would disregard the rule. There! They had already started! One shot was sufficient to cause a chain reaction. The loud complaints against this disrespectful behaviour of course were as effective as the bullets that lost friction in the air and fell to the water in a state of exhaustion. The constant gunfire turned this area into a battlefield which was not different from a festival site for us hunters who had awaited a whole year for this day. However, was this true for the peaceful birds and particularly for the poor helpless ducks? The hunters nearer to the lake where the duck traffic was heavier were luckier. Firing frequently, they were relieving stress. There were so many hunters. Even if the prey escaped one bullet, it would surely get hit by another. I could

see this from where I stood. I was envious. I wished that they would come closer to my side.

Finally, I see a pair of ducks approaching me from above. They could be the species it is illegal to hunt. I must be absolutely certain. The sky is clear, I can easily see. Yes. it is legal to kill black duck. My excitement is intense. Good camouflage; I'm not visible. They are in shooting range. Right! There, one is shot. It falls a little further back, closer to the trees. But I can't run! The dense bush is difficult to penetrate.

When I arrived and found it, the helpless duckling was taking its last breath of life. It was obviously from this year's brood. It hadn't yet lived its life to the full before it was taken out by a monstrous hunter. Its half-shut eyelids were black lined and misty. The blood from its heavily wounded little chest had splattered all over its body. Its only mistake was to have come into this world as a hunted animal. Hunting was considered a type of sport. People had the right to do sport! Furthermore, humans are considered to be the most distinguished of all living creatures. They had earned the special right to do many more things.

While my mind was wandering in a whirlpool of thoughts which a hunter would find unnecessary, I was startled by a rustling in the bush. When I lifted my head to look, just eight to ten steps away from me between the trees, I was amazed to see a wallaby standing upright on its hind legs, watching me. Its gaze communicated an awful lot: curiosity, confusion, hatred, malice and even sorrow. If it could talk, it would surely say: 'So you're supposed to be the most distinguished creatures alive? Preposterous! Is it because you are such intelligent and thoughtful creatures that you have caused the earth to reach an uninhabitable state even for yourselves? You also pride yourselves in having beautiful traits like pity and compassion. And these human traits ... are you expressing them while you kill these animals for fun? I feel sorry for you. In the animal kingdom which you undermine, your class description was in

fact left void. However, we can now comfortably fill that space: “Family name is human. Has double standards, is an imposter, a traitor; is the most detrimental creature nature has ever produced.””

The wallaby took off in silence. And I was left face to face with my conscience.

Hasan Meyzinoğlu

YANTAL OSMAN (crook/dishonest Osman)

‘Society prepares crime, criminals work.’ H. Buckle

After spending the night barely blinking his eyes from excitement and curiosity, the long awaited day had finally arrived for Yantal Osman. He wanted to see İsmet, one of his four sons, who was physically and mentally more distinguished than the others. İsmet was his bullied and degraded father’s only hope and salvation, his pride and joy. He went to the playground of the village primary school located opposite the village café and sat under the century-old olive tree in the early hours of the morning. İsmet had arrived last night together with other villagers who also worked in Germany. He would surely come to the café this morning. Even if from a distance, Osman was going to watch his son and satisfy his deep yearning by absorbing the view like absorbing oxygen into his lungs through his breath. Sadly, his son had a grudge against him for an offence he had committed. The violence he regularly used on his family he had displayed in public also, by breaking a wooden fork on İsmet’s older brother Mad Mistik’s back and bashing his mother contemptuously after she tried to interfere. İsmet had not been able to forgive his father for that public outburst. During the five years he had spent in Germany where he had gone to work, he had sent photos and letters addressed only to his mother. He had also regularly sent money to his family.

Yantal Osman was born disadvantaged. His father had settled at the village having come from nowhere; his mother was a poor servant girl with no known parents. In fact he was a docile, quiet and honest boy until third grade in primary school when he decided to steal an ağa's (agha's) turkey. The agha's rough son had caught him in the act. The devil had entered his mind that day as he was walking home for lunch during school lunch break. He had no idea why he got himself into such a terrible mess. The agha's stupid son, whose sense of reason was not yet developed, pounced on poor Osman like a hunter pounces on his prey, and tied the turkey around his neck with a rope. He dragged Osman all the way to the school yard in this state to ridicule him in front of his friends.

Osman never forgot the soul-torturing incident he endured that day. The adults in front of the café had also witnessed the scene and the community never let him forget his crime. The community had thought it appropriate to label Osman with the nickname 'Yantal', which meant 'Crook', and the nickname stuck to him. He was so badly harassed and isolated by the community that he left primary school before he graduated. He gave up, since even his teacher could not change public opinion. But was it only his schooling he had not completed? He didn't turn out to be brave and tough either. He was like fruit that grew without sufficient water, like sour fruit that had no time to ripen. He became bitter. And since he was seen as deserving of such a damning nickname, he continued to steal increasingly more.

Assuming that it would be more effective, the villagers had once put him through a 'rug thrashing'. This was a type of group beating done in a public room. The moment the offender walked in through the door, the men would throw a rug or a similar object at him and give him a good beating. Since humans learn through role-model examples and animals through experience, Osman applied this violence learnt by example and he built up anger. He expressed his anger by beating his children at home and by stealing from the community. Apart

from İsmet, all three of his other sons were surely abnormal when compared to children in their age group. The eldest, Mıstık, displayed such abnormalities that he gave the villagers reason to qualify him as ‘mad’ upfront. This situation would hurt Osman’s feelings that much more: It was as if fate was also agreeing with and supporting public opinion. For this reason he would curse and abuse his cruel fate. This was precisely why İsmet soothed his broken heart. As well as being normal, the fact that he had educated himself and developed himself culturally made him distinguished. These characteristics he possessed presented him with the opportunity to marry a girl from the village who loved him and to have two beautiful daughters. He showed particular interest in their education. Regardless of how distant his son had been to him, Yantal Osman was in no way hurt by this. In fact, he would prefer to keep his distance in case he tarnished his son’s good name. But he couldn’t stand not seeing him. He always kept his son’s family photo on him but today he was going to see his son personally. Then later when they would surely go to visit İsmet’s mother, Osman would view his grandchildren, secretly from somewhere or other.

İsmet told his wife that he would return in a few hours, then left the beautiful house which they had constructed and furnished according to their own taste. He turned towards the café, which was a few hundred metres away from his house. He was also going to visit his brother Mad Mıstık who, like himself, had abandoned his father and settled in a deserted house in the village. He would of course greet and talk to some neighbours along the way. When also İsmet took off from home, the village folk had, although they knew this would hurt him, as usual, already begun picking on his older brother Mad Mıstık. This unpleasant game was played by Blockhead Nuri’s similarly stupid son Ape Necmi, who was addicted to relentlessly picking on Mad Mıstık.

When Yantal Osman was present, his requests to ‘please stop teasing him’, and other people’s suggestions that he stop

being rude and that he had gone too far, did not hold much meaning for Ape Necmi. He would only reply by saying: 'It doesn't matter, he doesn't understand, he's mad.' Furthermore his fingering Mad Mistik from the back would fling the poor victim into a temper tantrum. Yantal Osman would take all this patiently and internalise the pain it caused his son. İsmet had reached the café when he heard nauseating screams from inside. He rushed into the café and sat his exasperated brother on a chair and settled him down before turning towards Ape Necmi and saying: 'Human beings should have some sense of reason and pity. Mankind should have empathy. If the same thing was done to you, would you take it? Someone who can lower himself to the extent of using another's handicap as a source of enjoyment and torture cannot say he is human.' These words, directed to him by the son of a man who was scum, and obviously they were effective words, as shown by the lowered heads and silence in the café, upset Ape Necmi.

'Well, well, well ... Look who's talking!' he said. 'Since when have donkeys been preferred to horses? As if we don't know the Yantal's son! His mother is garlic and his father an onion!'

İsmet could barely hold back his fury when he moved closer to Necmi and said: 'Your ears should hear what your mouth is saying, you ill-mannered man! You need to know this: it is what comes out of a man's mouth that makes people call him a man or that makes people call him an animal! You describe yourself well with your own mouth!'

These revealing words, which came from a man whom Necmi had no respect for, threw him into a rage and he gave İsmet a quick hard slap on the face. To protect himself, İsmet tried stepping back, when Lop Lip Şakir deliberately tripped him with his foot. İsmet fell backwards and landed on the floor.

About 50 to 60 metres away, a wrinkle-faced man was perched on a wall, watching, in absolute delight, the first scene of a film that had his son playing as the main character. He had a big smile on his face. This must have been a gift from God.

He silently thanked his creator. 'See for yourselves,' he said quietly. 'See if a black sheep can't produce white offspring. If God is willing, he will help anyone's son or daughter. There you go, a lesson on civil rights and ethics, coming from the filthy Yantal's son!'

When these thoughts were going through his mind, he did not know that everything was going to change for the worse. Yantal Osman felt something collapse inside him when his son fell to the ground soon after the hard slap on the face. So they weren't going to respect his offspring either, ay! His heart pounded in his chest like it was going to puncture it. He became furious. His brain chemistry changed. Osman was now a different person. Two strong hands grabbed Ape Necmi, like a flash of lightning, instantly breaking his neck and sending him lifeless to the floor. One of those hands pulled out a silvery shiny object from inside his sock and threw it at Blockhead Nuri, who had come to help his son Ape Necmi. The object flashed twice on his chest. The mob dispersed instantly, and Osman's vicious hands grabbed Ape Necmi's accomplice Lop Lip Shakir, who had tried to flee, and finished him off as well. No-one witnessed the deeds of those two hands that continued the journey up that narrow street and out of the village, apart from the notorious olive tree, which had witnessed countless other misfortunes in its lifetime.

The search for the evil monster carried out by the police stations in the district for days was fruitless. The investigation came to an end and the information was filed away.

Mother nature continued her duties as usual; flowers bloomed, birds flew, clouds cried, creeks flowed, a considerable amount of water flowed under the willows. Days turned into weeks and the weeks turned into months and that day arrived. Among the thick crops in a plain which was split from north to west by running waters, a hunter's dog was barking insistently and leaping around a spot near the river bank. The hunter curiously followed his dog there, reaching the spot with great difficulty. When he realised that the dog had discovered a human

skeleton, the terrified hunter ran off to notify the district police of the situation.

The rotten clothes partially displayed a skeleton. On the right side of the skeleton lay a rusty dagger and on the left side of its chest a small plastic bundle was suspended. When the bundle was opened, it was discovered to contain a few thousand drachmas and a photo that no doubt showed a family. It was a pose taken of a smiling young man and woman lovingly hugging their two daughters. There was an inscription on the back of the photo written in Turkish. The police had it translated: ‘Dear Mother, I send this photo to you, to my brothers and all from Germany with a whole heap of yearning and regards. I, your daughter-in-law Fadile and your grandchildren kiss your hands, and wish you health and happiness. Your son, İsmet.’

Hasan Meyzinoğlu

Note: The above text is an abridged version of the Yantal Osman story published in the 40th issue of *Avustralya’da Elele*.

JOURNEY OF HOPE

Bülbülü altın kafese koymuşlar ‘Ah vatanım demiş’

They put the nightingale in a golden cage: it still craved for its country.

Ana gibi yâr, vatan gibi diyar olmaz

There is no love like a mother’s love nor better place than the homeland.

Regardless of the truth inherent in the above two proverbs, which have been generated as a result of hundreds of years of human experience, people still abandon their much loved mothers, fathers, siblings and their homeland under certain

circumstances. Those deep-felt migration folksongs were written for good reasons.

The date was 29 November 1970. Hundreds of people from the Balkans and the Mediterranean left their homeland and went to Djibouti (in eastern Africa) by plane to catch the passenger ship *Patris* to come to Australia. The 956 passengers were transferred to the ship by bus as the planes landed. Soon after everyone had boarded, dinner was served. The next morning some passengers went into town while others impatiently waited for departure. Finally, after dinner the ship left Djibouti and sailed towards the Indian Ocean. This is a story about two young people who came from different countries and met each other on this ship, shared the same hope and ambition for their life in Australia. Here is their story.

Memet came from the village of Domruköy, a pretty Turkish village along the skirts of the Rodop Mountains. This area was handed over to Greece following the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923.

It was one of the happiest days when Memet discovered that he had passed his entry exam to a teachers college in Turkey. During his tertiary studies at Hasanoğlu teachers college, Memet had many fervent ambitions. After graduating from college he was going to work as a teacher in any one of the Turkish village schools in Western Thrace and teach tomorrow's adults all about the value of education and set them on the right path. After completing two years of compulsory army service in his homeland Greece, he thought that it was time to earn his own living. Unfortunately, his many applications to the Education Department in Komotini (Gümülcine) to teach in Turkish schools were rejected for political reasons. Memet was left in the dark. His dreams were shattered and in despair he decided to migrate to Australia.

At the same time in another country a young woman shared the same fate as Memet. That was Sihem, who came

from a picturesque Turkish village called Yeşilırmak along the north coast of Cyprus. She also had great ambitions when she completed high school but as a result of political and economic instability she could see no bright future for herself. She too decided to migrate to Australia.

This journey of hope would be a turning point in life for both Memet and Sihem. Like many people on the ship they watched the land and lights disappear in the distance after the ship left Djibouti. Most days all they could see was the blue colours of the ocean and the sky. The most interesting things for them were watching the whales during the day, dinner with the captain, attending the English course and the emergency drill, and talking about the culture and history of their homeland.

On 12 December 1970, Memet and Sihem were watching the coastline from the top deck of the *Patris*. At 1.00 p.m. the captain announced that the ship was entering the Fremantle port 'Berths Terminal'. Yes, they had arrived in Australia but they were both nervous about what they had left behind and how life would be in this new country. Most of their journey, which took 13 days from Djibouti to Fremantle, was over.

After a four-hour stop in Fremantle, the *Patris* sailed to Melbourne where Memet would settle and then on to Sydney, Sihem's destination. The *Patris* arrived at Port Melbourne's 'Station Pier Outer West' about 11.00 p.m. on 16 December 1970. It was time to say goodbye. Sihem looked at Memet and said: 'Thank you for your honesty and openness during our journey across the Indian Ocean. Now it is coming to an end.' Memet replied, 'My wish is for our friendship to last for a lifetime' and asked for her address to write to her once he knew where he would be staying. Migrants, like Memet, who had no family or friends in Melbourne, were given a colour tag which represented a hostel. Groups would then be shuttled by bus to various hostels around Melbourne.

Memet was taken to Fishermen's Bend Hostel, which was close to Station Pier. He stayed in a half-barrel-shaped hut with his friend Arif, who had also come across on the *Patris*. (Their friendship had started at the compulsory English course for single migrants in Salonika, Greece.) The accommodation in the hostel was average and a month after their friend Irfan came to Melbourne they decided to rent a house and move to Prahran, where most Western Thrace Turks were living. Memet chose to work afternoon shift at General Motors Holden in Port Melbourne and study English during the day. He settled into Melbourne very quickly and decided this was where he would like to get married and raise a family.

Sihem, who had sailed on to Sydney, was picked up by her relatives at Darling Harbour on 19 December 1970. She went to live with her uncle and his family in Mt Druitt. She started working in the Arnotts Biscuit Factory and was happy with her life but sometimes she would wonder how Memet was doing in Melbourne. In the first week of January 1971, Sihem received a postcard with Memet's New Year's wishes and his address. In those days the only form of communication was by letter. Email did not exist and many people didn't even have a telephone at home. They continued writing letters and over time they got to know each other very well.

Four months later, Memet wrote a letter to his parents advising them about his intentions to marry Sihem. They promptly replied with 'You have seen her and love her therefore we trust your decision. Our blessings are with you.' But they also expressed their concern by saying: 'A life time is not enough to know a person. Please think carefully when choosing the person who will share everything with you all your life.'

Memet knew that he had made the right decision and he would do everything in his power to join his life with Sihem's.

He wrote and told her that he was willing to go to Sydney and marry her. It was now time for Sihem to tell her own family.

When Sihem told her uncle of Memet's intentions, her uncle became very angry and did not believe that Memet would come for her. He said: 'Write and ask him to be at my house on 23 June at 3.00 p.m. I will take three days off work. We will see how honest he is. Also, you are not to pick him up from the airport or train station. You have to go to work.' According to her uncle, it was not appropriate to marry somebody she hardly knew and the family did not know at all. She was upset but fulfilled her uncle's demands.

Sihem already had her parents' approval to marry anybody she personally chose and somebody she knew in her heart she would be happy with. She knew that Memet would keep his promise and come to Sydney. She was running out of time. She sent an urgent telegraph stating her uncle's request, as a letter would have taken far too long to arrive. His reply was, 'I will be there.' She also wrote to her parents and explained the situation.

It was a cold day on 23 June 1971. Memet caught the tram to Melbourne city, then a bus to Tullamarine Airport. He was excited but was also concerned about how he would find Sihem's home, which was on the outskirts of Sydney, with his limited English. When he arrived at Sydney Airport he followed the crowd and collected his suitcase. He caught the airport shuttle bus to Sydney city. So far so good he thought. He approached a taxi and showed the driver the address he wanted. The taxi driver said: 'Mt Druitt? No, no. It is too far. It will cost you a lot of money. You must catch a train,' and pointed across the road to Central Station. Memet insisted but the driver kept saying 'No, I can't take you.' Memet went across to the train station and joined the queue to buy a train ticket but he could not understand why the taxi driver refused to take him. Memet also had difficulties understanding the instructions given by the employee at the ticket office. The

employee explained to Memet that he needed to go to platform 2, catch the train to Granville, change trains at Granville for Penrith and then get off at Mt Druitt station. Memet did not understand what the employee had said and therefore looked lost. An old man beside him took his arm and said ‘Come with me, I am going to Granville.’ They went through a tunnel and up the stairs to a platform. The man checked the board and told Memet the express train was coming. They got on the train and started talking with a lot of sign language. Memet understood that the old man was German and that he lived in Granville. The old man had convinced a few school boys in the same carriage to help Memet to catch the train to Penrith and get off at Mt Druitt. Memet was amazed and grateful that people were willing to help. He tried very hard to understand what they were talking about.

At Granville the old man said goodbye and the students guided Memet to the next platform and with them he caught the train to Penrith. It was just after 3.00 p.m. when Memet was told that the next station was Mt Druitt. He smiled and thanked the students. He stood at the platform and waved back to them until the train left the station. Memet noticed the taxi stop beside the road. He showed the address and the driver said ‘Okay.’ After a 15-minute drive through new streets and houses the taxi stopped in front of a house and said ‘This is it.’ Memet paid the taxi driver, approached the man standing at the gate and asked in Turkish, ‘Is this where Sihem lives?’ The man replied in Turkish, ‘Yes, I am her uncle Yusuf. You must be Memet, we have been waiting for you. Please come in.’ After a stressful day Memet took a big breath and relaxed. He was introduced to uncle Yusuf’s wife and children. He was trying to understand while drinking his Turkish coffee why Sihem was still at work and not at home. Finally she arrived at 5.30 p.m. and apologised for being late. Her brother and other close relatives also started arriving.

After dinner everyone wanted to know more about Memet and his plans. Sihem came from a respectable family and they would not let her go unless they were convinced that Memet was the right person. Sihem's two uncles suggested that they would support the young couple to have a good life if Memet moved to Sydney. They planned to find a job for Memet and help with the wedding expenses. Memet told them that despite their good intentions, their wishes would not be possible. Sihem was wondering, why not? She thought it would be nice to stay in Sydney close to her family. She turned to Memet and said 'My uncles are right. Why can't we settle in Sydney?' Memet was very angry and as he stood up he said 'Sihem, I did not come here to stay. I came to marry you and take you back to Melbourne with me. I have a job and it is my responsibility to support you. If you want to stay in Sydney, there is nothing else to say. I must leave now.' He was not kidding. He was very serious. Everyone was stunned and sat in silence. Sihem got up and said 'Please sit down. You are right. I will come to Melbourne with you.' She moved her chair and sat beside him. Then she turned to everyone in the room and said 'Thank you for your concerns but I must follow my husband-to-be. I am sure I will be happy.'

The next morning they travelled to the city to make an appointment with a marriage celebrant. Uncle Yusuf approached an official and asked if the young couple could be married within a few days. The official asked if Memet was going to fight in the Vietnam War. Uncle Yusuf replied 'No, but Memet came from Melbourne and he needs to return to work within a week.' The official, with a big smile on his face, said: 'Tell him to go back to his work and return in three weeks. Urgent marriage certificates can only be granted to soldiers going to Vietnam.' Memet and Sihem knew that there was nothing they could do but wait for three weeks. In the meantime, they shopped and bought the rings and held a small engagement party at uncle Yusuf's house with a group of close

relatives. Memet cut his trip short and returned to Melbourne, knowing that he would be back in Sydney in three weeks.

Memet and Sihem were married in Sydney on Wednesday 14 July 1971. They celebrated this happy event with relatives at her uncle's house. They both believed there was no need for a big wedding as none of the parents of either were in Australia and a big wedding would only be a waste of money and energy. In their view they had each other and they didn't need a big wedding in order to prove their happiness. They spent the first few days of their marriage in Sydney before preparing to return to Melbourne.

It was raining and very cold when they arrived at Strathfield train station on 18 July 1971 at 5.30 a.m. for their departure to Melbourne. Sihem could not hide her tears. She hugged her uncle then her brother. The last call for boarding was announced. Memet thanked them both again and assisted his wife onto the train. Sihem looked back and waved until she could barely see the station. Her husband, still holding her hand, said: 'Don't worry. We will visit them whenever you want.' She looked at him and said 'I want you to know that I am crying but I am fine and very happy.'

The 13-hour train trip was very tiring and it was dark when they arrived at Spencer Street station in Melbourne. They collected the suitcases and waited outside for Memet's friend to pick them up. Unfortunately, they waited for half an hour in the freezing cold before realising that Memet's friend was not coming. They decided to catch a taxi to Memet's house in High Street, Prahran, when it became apparent that his friend had mistaken the arrival date.

The next day Memet took Sihem around to look for a rental property. She made a few phone calls and they inspected some houses. Finally they found a flat that was affordable and was available to move into on that day. It didn't take long to move their belongings into the one-bedroom flat. All they had was a double bed, two suitcases, boxes of kitchenware, bed linen, towels they had received as wedding presents and some books.

They had no chairs or a table for a week, but that was not an issue. They were happy eating at a *sofra* (a meal laid out on a cloth on the floor) in front of a heater. They knew that by working together and hard, in a loving and respectful relationship, they could achieve anything they wanted and then buy whatever they needed.

And that is exactly what happened. As the years went by, they both completed short courses alongside their normal work and they were eventually able to attain better jobs and achieve most of their goals. They are proud parents of two sons, Özgür and Tolga, whom they brought up to be good citizens and active members of the community with a deep knowledge of their Turkish culture.

After 38 years of living in Melbourne as proud citizens of Australia, Sihem and Memet, although they are of retirement age, continue to work and enjoy life as a happy couple. They still share a passion for community work, gardening, reading, traveling and good food. They believe that a long and healthy life is a result of keeping the mind and body active, being positive and enjoying life with whatever you have. Both are active members of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association and take on the most challenging responsibilities. Their aim is to ensure their Turkish culture is kept alive by passing it on to the coming generations and to make as many Australians aware of this beautiful and interesting culture.

Memet and Sihem share the view that their life in Australia has been much better than they could have ever expected. This is a country of many opportunities. People can reach their goals by taking these opportunities and using them in the right way with a lot of determination and hard work.

Sihem İmam-Hüseyin

September 2005–Updated March 2009

Folklore

When we look at the make-up of the Western Thrace Turks living in Australia we observe a rich and colourful background. This make-up is naturally nourished directly from Western Thrace. Even an examination of the 41 issues of *Avustralya'da Elele* from the point of view of folkloric studies reveals a colourful picture comprising songs, dirges, anecdotes, proverbs and other genres. To give some brief examples:

ELEGIES

We know that the Western Thrace Turks have written elegies, faced with death during the 1970s when they migrated to this country and that these elegies found a place in the Western Thrace Turkish press.¹⁴ The elegy titled 'Biricik Nail'ime Destan' (Elegy for my One and Only Nail) was presented to the Fourth National Turkish Folk Literature and Folklore Congress and to the academic community as an example of an 'Elegy of the Australian Western Thrace Turks'.¹⁵

This elegy was republished in *Avustralya'da Elele* (no. 26).¹⁶

ELEGY TO ALİ NAIL

Ali Nail was killed in a motorbike accident on 27 February 1979. He was Erol Mehmetoğlu's cousin. Erol Mehmetoğlu from Sarıca was one of the Western Thrace Turks who immigrated to Australia. Upon the sorrowful death Erol Mehmetoğlu wrote an elegy consisting of nine quatrains.

Ali Nail was a young fiancé from Western Thrace, and he had shared his joy with his relatives in Australia by mailing the photographs taken during his engagement ceremony. He was preparing a wedding, so he was excited. But his early and unexpected death causes his family and friends in Western Thrace and also his

relatives in Australia to mourn. With the elegy upon his cousin's death Erol Mehmetoğlu calls out to his dead cousin and the community. He cannot accept this tragic and early death. He conveys how the death shocks his relatives in Australia. He explains that they will never forget Ali Nail. With a religious approach at the end of the elegy, he tries to find consolation as he points out that God has taken along Ali Nail, for he affects Ali more than themselves.

DITTIES

The first example of a ditty in *Avustralya'da Elele* can be seen in the 12th issue. In this issue, there were five Ramadan ditties. A further seven Ramadan ditties collected by Hacı Ali Mustafa Salih, born in the village of Ircan in 1931 and who migrated to Australia, were also published in *Avustralya'da Elele* issue 33. Let's see an example:

Look at the rim of my drum
A nightingale is sitting on a vine
Come in, aghas, come in
To eat fried partridge this evening
Boom boom boom ...

In the 36th issue of the magazine, 11 further Ramadan ditties prepared by Mehmet Hasan were also published. There was also a 'Hidrellez' (Spring Festival) ditty in the 33rd issue. With regard to this form, the first interesting publication was the article called 'Maniler' (Ditties) by Sihem İmam-Hüseyin in the 13th issue. Seven Western Thrace and seven Cypriot ditties were presented following an overview of the ditty form. This study was also published in the *Anthology of Turkish Literature in Australia*.¹⁷ Here we reprint two examples of Western Thrace ditties from this publication:

There are mountains around Florina
On which winds are biting
As if I take the consequences
For the sins of my ancestors

The black hen cawed
And wanted me to see its egg
My mum allowed me to marry
My dad said I was too young

Two more ditties on affection, love and respect are taken as
Sihem İmam-Hüseyin heard them from Ganaf dayı from Domruköy.
(*Avustralya'da Elele*, nos. 16 and 40).

If the horse doesn't neigh on the road
If the child doesn't listen to advice
If the wife doesn't laugh at home
Then there is no need for a funeral
Come in and weep ... Go out and weep ...

If the horse neighs on the road
If the child listens to advice
If the wife laughs at home
Then there is no need for a wedding
Come in and dance ... Go out and dance ...

ANECDOTES

Many anecdotes have been published in *Avustralya'da Elele*. These are generally well-known anecdotes. As well as Nasreddin Hodja's anecdotes have also been published in the magazine as prose and poetry. What we concentrate on with respect to anecdotes are those original ones that are part of the culture of Western Thrace Turks living in Australia. Anecdotes compiled by Salih Mustafaoğlu, Emine Haliloğlu and Feriha Reşitoğlu were published in the magazine nos. 8, 10, 11 and 28.

Here is a Western Thrace anecdote as compiled by Salih Mustafaoğlu:

A Western Thrace woman migrates to Turkey and settles in the city of Van, which is famous for its beautiful cats. Soon after, her son dies, but not knowing anyone in town, she can't share her pain with anyone. When she hears painful cries coming from her neighbour, together with her husband she goes and finds out that the neighbour's cat has died. The woman says, 'Well, neighbour, it's God's will, it can't be helped. We lost our son just recently. What can we do?' The neighbour responds: 'What are you talking about, woman? It's a good breed of cat from Van that died, not a bloody migrant!'

PROVERBS

A selection of proverbs prepared by Emine Haliloğlu, who migrated to Australia from the village of Doğanca was published in *Avustralya'da Elele* no. 10.

The most serious study in this field was the book *Turkish Proverbs and Idioms* prepared by Sihem İmam-Hüseyin for the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association in 2007. Western Thrace proverbs are dealt with in detail in this book. To give five examples:

Allah kalp insanın torbasına günde kırk kere bakar.

Güvenilmez bir kişiye bir işi yaptırabilmek için, onu devamlı kontrol etmek gerekir.

God checks the purse of a dishonest person 40 times a day.

To have any work done by a dishonest person, one must constantly check him.

Akrabanın akrabaya ettiğini akrep etmez.

Yakınlarımızın bize yaptığı kötülükler, yabancıların yapacağından daha acıdır.

A scorpion is not as harmful as a relative can be.

Harm caused by relatives is more painful than the harm from our worst enemy.

Daldan düşmeyen haldan anlamaz.

Hayatta zorlukla karşılaşmayan, zor durumda olanın halinden anlamaz.

Until one falls off a tree, one won't feel another's pain.

We cannot appreciate other people's predicaments until we have experienced our own.

Kızanla potak avlanmaz

Bir işin nasıl yapılacağı hakkında bilgisi olmayanla o işi yapmaya kalkmamalı, aksi halde sana engeller çıkarabilir.

You can't hunt a bird with a child

Choose the right person for the job or face difficulties.

'Don't send a child to do a man's job.'

İnsanın kendine ettiğini bütün köylü etmez.

İnsanın aldığı yanlış kararlar başına, başkalarının açamayacağı kadar büyük zararlar açar.

The harm caused by oneself is greater than the people of a whole village can inflict.

The greatest harm comes from one's own actions.

FOLK SONGS

When the 41 issues of *Avustralya'da Elele* are scanned for folk songs, one comes across many texts. These Western Thrace Turkish folk songs must be classified into two groups in terms

of their sources. The first is folk songs published in Western Thrace and that have reached Australia. Folk songs such as ‘Poş Poş Türküsü’, ‘Debreli Hasan’, ‘Penceresi Yola Karşı, and Mirinin Evleri’ (transcribed by Feriha Reşitoğlu), ‘Beyler Bahçesi’ and ‘Yeni Mahalle Çeşmeleri’ (transcribed by Sihem İmam-Hüseyin) are taken from the book *Öyküsüyle Notasıyla Batı Trakya Türküleri* (Western Thrace Folk Songs with their Texts and Scores) published in Gümülcine in 1994.¹⁸ The second and more important group of folk songs are Western Thrace folk songs compiled and uncovered through the efforts of Western Thrace Turks who have migrated to Australia, such as Feriha Reşitoğlu, Hacı Reşit, Dilber Hasan, Mine İbrahim and Hasan Mehmetoğlu. The publishing dates of these folk songs collected with the stories of the songs as told by especially older Western Thrace Turks are:

Şakir Ağa Türküsü, Hasan Mehmetoğlu (comp.),

Avustralya’da Elele, no. 8, 1994, p. 6.

İmamın Kızları Türküsü, Hacı Reşit (source), *Avustralya’da Elele*, no. 11, 1994, p. 10.

Dertli Beyin Türküsü, Feriha Reşitoğlu (comp.) as told by Hacı Reşit, *Avustralya’da Elele*, no. 12, 1995.

Zindan, Türkü Öyküsü, Mine İbrahim (comp.), *Avustralya’da Elele*, no. 24, 1997.

Pamuğun Türküsü, Feriha Reşitoğlu (comp.) as told by Emine Raif, *Avustralya’da Elele*, no. 28, 1998.

Verem Türküsü, Feriha Reşitoğlu (comp.), *Avustralya’da Elele*, no. 29, 1999.

Oynak Ahmet Türküsü, Feriha Reşitoğlu (comp.), *Avustralya’da Elele*, no. 30, 2001.

Gelin Kınası Türküsü, Feriha Reşitoğlu (comp.) as told by Dilber Hasan, *Avustralya’da Elele*, no. 32, 2003.

Halay Türküsü, Raife Meyzin (comp.), *Avustralya’da Elele*, no. 34, 2004.

(The lyrics of the folk song ‘Deryalar’ from Bulgarian Turks is also published in *Avustralya’da Elele* no. 22).

Let us have a look at the story and lyrics of a folk song from the above list. The folk song was prepared by Feriha Reşitoğlu as told by Emine Raif.

THE SONG OF COTTON AND ITS STORY

We do not know who first sang this song and when. But we do know that while it was a folk song sung and loved in Western Thrace until two or three generations ago, it was left to be forgotten due to lack of interest on the part of following generations. My mother told me that her grandmother used to sing this song while she was weaving a ‘kilim’ at the loom. Obviously, the author of this folk song was a long-suffering Western Thrace woman like herself. The family, trying to make ends meet by tilling a small plot of land, start weaving kilims and cloth for the cotton merchants in Drama when they fall on hard times. But, whatever happened that year, the weaving took until summer to finish, when new orders started coming. The poor woman, who still had to finish the old ones, started worrying about the new orders. While she was dreaming of making a ‘şalvar’ (pair of loose pants) for herself from the leftover cotton, her mother-in-law said, ‘I must have a şalvar from the leftover cotton.’ What happened next? Let us find out from the lyrics of the folk song:

MY COTTON

I spun my humming reel
I sent my man to the field
I lost my mind due to solitude
My cotton lay untouched till August.

Why did he buy this cotton
Which resembles cat's fur
And whose price was seventeen per oke?
My cotton lay untouched till August.

They sow cotton in Drama
They always sell it to my man
They bore me in this way
My cotton lay untouched till August.

They grow cotton in Drama
My mother-in-law argues with me.
Oh you, mother-in-law, shut up,
There's enough to make baggy trousers for each of us!

It lay untouched till August,
And bored me,
And also destroyed my home.
My cotton separated me from my man.

Also, the folk song 'Muhayyer Türkü', composed by Nadir Celil from the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association Music Ensemble, has been published in *Avustralya'da Elele*, no. 36.

OTHER STUDIES IN THE FIELD OF FOLKLORE

There have been compilations of words in the Western Thrace Turkish dialect from older Western Thrace Turks. (Some examples were cited earlier under the heading Language). We can cite other articles dealing with folklore such as: 'Batı Trakya'da Eski Kış Geceleri, Köy Düğünleri' (Old Winter nights, Village Weddings in Western Thrace, prepared by, Hacı Salih, *Avustralya'da Elele*, no. 18). The Western Thrace Turks of Australia also formed a folk-dancing group in 1998 comprising young people.



*Australian Western Thrace Turkish Folk-dancing Group,
Pahran, 1998*



*Australian Western Thrace Turkish music ensemble and the women's
choir in concert, Pahran, 25 July 1998*

Music

The first musical effort by the Australian Western Thrace Turks was the Bozkurtlar band formed by the Şerafettin and Salih Reşitoğlu brothers in 1975 together with their friends Ridvan Gagalı and Ali Seyhanlı as an individual endeavour. The group played in the national and religious functions not as a band, but as volunteer association members. At times, Ahmet Ahmetoğlu, Dursun Hasan and Hüseyin Memiş joined them.

Following Bozkurtlar, the bands Şahinler, and later Özgürler were formed. All three of these bands dissolved after three to five years and their members started working in various bands in Melbourne. However, performances at association functions continued under Salih Reşitoğlu with no band name.

The first efforts within the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association started in 1993 as a Classical Turkish Music group. This is a performance group. Apart from Western Thrace Turks, it includes Turks from Turkey, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Bulgaria and Kosovo. The group's work is followed with interest by the Turkish community in Australia as well as other ethnic groups. It appears on stage at the association's functions and as invited by other associations and government department. It has also produced a CD. The formation of the women's choir within the music group is an important development. As an example of the group's work, we include the score of a song in the 'uşşak' genre, 'Senin Kalbine Bir Girebilsem', with lyrics and music by Nadir Celil.

As well as participating in the Classical Turkish Music Ensemble of the association, the Salih and Şerafettin Reşitoğlu brothers have also performed Sufi music independently. They terminated their musical work in the association in 2007 to publicise this music and its instruments in the broader Australian community. They continue their intense work on Sufi music with a separate group.

Western Thrace Turks in Australia have been playing the following instruments in their Turkish folk music, classical Turkish music, western music and Sufi music works, which they have been performing since 1975: 'Bağlama', 'Kanun', 'Ud', percussion ('Darbuka'), violin, 'Bendir', clarinet, bouzouki, guitar and keyboard.

Also, as mentioned in the folklore section of this study, one needs to emphasise here the musical aspect of the compilation of folk songs, especially from the first generation of migrants to Australia.



Regular music practice at the association, August 2004

Uslû: *Düyek* UŞSAK SARKI
(Senin kalbine bir girebilsem) Söz ve beste: NADİR CELİL

Aranağme

Senin ka... l bi ne bir gi re Bil sem

-saz-- bir gi re Bil sem--saz-- sem--saz--

gözle ri nin ren.. gi ni bir gö re Bil sem--saz..

bir--gö ne.. bil sem--saz-- sem--saz-- o tat lı ---

se-ği ni ---saz--- bir du ya Bil sem----- bi--r du

ya bil sem--saz--- sem--saz--

Senin kalbine bir girebilsem
Gözlerinin rengini bir görebilsem (ah)
O falkı sesini bir duyabilsem
Gözlerinin rengini bir görebilsem (ah..) 26-Şubat-02

*An example of the work of the AWTTA music ensemble:
A song written by Nadir Celil*



The first band of the Western Thrace Turks in Australia, Bozkurtlar, playing Western music, October 1978



The band Bozkurtlar playing Turkish folk music during a function of Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association, 1980s

History

The efforts of the Australian Western Thrace Turks in the field of history can be classified into three groups.

STUDIES IN GENERAL TURKISH HISTORY

The articles in *Avustralya'da Elele* magazine in this field are written or prepared by Memet İmam-Hüseyin. The following articles can be mentioned: 'Başkumandanlık Meydan Muharebesi/ 30 August 1922' (no. 7), 'Biz Kimiz?' (no. 8; this article deals with general Turkish history, linking it with Western Thrace Turks.), 'Başkumandanlık Meydan Muharebesi' (no. 9), 'Mustafa Kemal Atatürk' (no. 10) and 'Cumhuriyetin İlanı' (no. 10). An article by Perihan Alcan entitled 'Çanakkale Savaşına Genel Bakış' was also published in *Avustralya'da Elele* (no. 21).

STUDIES IN WESTERN THRACE TURKISH HISTORY

Articles on Western Thrace Turkish history also appear in *Avustralya'da Elele*. Articles such as 'Batı Trakya'mız ve Sorunları' (no. 9), 'Lozan Antlaşması' (no. 10), 'Meşe Köyü' (no. 11) and 'Lozan Antlaşması ve Lozan'dan Günümüze Batı Trakya' (no. 28) by Nadir Celil; 'Batı Trakya Türk Cumhuriyeti' (no. 22) by Memet İmam-Hüseyin; and 'Batı Trakya Türklerinin Tarihsel Geçmişine Özet Bir Bakış' (no. 28) by Hasan Meyzinoğlu and Memet İmam-Hüseyin are examples.

STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WESTERN THRACE TURKS

Studies in this field also appear in *Avustralya'da Elele*. The articles 'Çeyrek Asırlık Köyümüz Pahrhan' (nos. 13–15) by Yusuf Kapancı, 'Avustralya'da 25. Yılımızı Kutluyoruz' (no. 16) and 'Batı Trakya ve Avustralya'da Batı Trakya Türk Toplumu' (no. 39) by Memet İmam-Hüseyin are examples.

While these historical studies examine from various angles the experiences of Western Thrace Turks following the Treaty of Lausanne, they are also significant in that they enable younger generation Western Thrace Turks born here to become well informed about their roots. More recently, Australian Western Thrace Turks have been including articles about Turkish history in Cyprus. We shall deal with this topic in the section ‘Relations with the Turkish world’ in chapter 6.

Theatre

The cultural history of the Australian Western Thrace Turks has recently included theatre activities as well. This is naturally a positive development. Two scripts written by Feriha Reşitoğlu have been staged and published in *Avustralya’da Elele*. One of them, *Gurbete Gidiş* (Going to a Foreign Land) was written in 1998 and performed on 25 July 1998 during the ‘Geçmişten Günümüze Batı Trakya Kültür Günü’ (Western Thrace Culture from past to present) in Melbourne. (no. 28.). The second theatre script, *Ana Nasihatı* (A Mother’s Counsel), was staged on 11 May 2003 during the ‘Mothers Day’ celebrations (no. 32), and also on 21 September 2003 during the ‘*Avustralya’da Elele*’nin 10. Yıldönümü ve Kültürel Kutlama Gecesi’ (10th Anniversary of *Avustralya’da Elele* and Cultural celebrations) (no. 33). Theatre work is promising for the future of the Western Thrace Turkish community.



*A scene from the play Gurbete Gidiş:
Dad finds out from his daughter-in-law that his son is determined to go to
Australia. 25 July 1998.*



*The group that staged the play Ana Nasihati.,
21 September 2003*

**A THEATRE SCRIPT BY AUSTRALIAN WESTERN
THRACE TURK**

***GURBETE GIDIŞ*
TRAVELING TO A FOREIGN LAND**

Written by Feriha Reşitoğlu

Dramatis personae:

FATHER:	Ahmet Hüseyin	MOTHER:	Fatma Hüseyin
HASAN:	Seymur Fırıncıoğlu	HAYRIYE:	Yasemin Memiş
LÜTFİYE:	Arayla Sali	LÜTFİ:	Yusuf Sali

HASAN: *[Enters and snuggles up close to his mother who is busy rolling pastry on the floor]* Greetings, Mother! I hope you are enjoying that. Every time I see you, you are intently occupied with something. What will you cook this time ... liver, bulgur (burghal) or pumpkin pie?

MOTHER: I would appreciate some help, but you are a man. I thought I might help my daughter-in-law while my hands and feet are still in working order. What is one to do? A daughter-in-law is not a slave for us. Poor thing has a flock of sheep, the farm, two children and a whole lot of washing to attend to. To which job is she supposed to run? I'm not good for much else, so I might as well do the cooking to ease her burden.

HASAN: Dear Mother, what sort of nonsense is that? Haven't you worked enough as it is? It is our turn now. If we could provide as much to our children, we would be happy with that.

MOTHER: I am sure you will achieve just as much. If God wills that you have a healthy and long life, you are sure to achieve a lot.

HASAN: Mother, I want to tell you something but please don't get upset, and please don't say 'no'.

MOTHER: Move on, Hasan. Go away. Don't you have other things to do? Let me get on with my work or it will be embarrassing for me to face my daughter-in-law later. She will say, 'Mum couldn't prepare three sheets of pastry in three hours! [*Hasan stands up to leave*]

Umm ... Hasan, son. It appears as though you have something important to say. Tell me, is it something that will anger me or please me?

HASAN: Mother, I am going to Australia.

MOTHER: Now, from where did you get that idea? Where is that? Is it at least nearby?

HASAN: No mother, it's a bit distant.

MOTHER: Is it further than Turkey?

HASAN: Oh yes! It's neither as near as Turkey nor Germany, dear Mother. Australia is at the other end of the globe.

MOTHER: Well ... what business do you have in a land so far away? Don't we have sufficient space for you here that you need to travel to the other end of the globe? I heard they made a ladder that takes you into space, you might as well try that too!

HASAN: I know, Mum. You are right of course, but I am young like my friends and I want to explore new places. Anyway, take a close look at those who went to Germany. They went on foot but they are all returning in cars. In any case, our paperwork is ready. There's no turning back, Mum. Please understand. If you give me your approval, I won't feel so guilty.

- MOTHER:** Oh, you cheeky, impudent brat! So you tell me about this after everything is finalised? You impudent, insincere brat! Does your father know about this?
- HASAN:** No. I haven't had the courage to tell him. I was going to ask you to do that. Would you discuss the situation with him, Mother?
- MOTHER:** Get out of here! You've lost your mind. I don't know about Australia. And it won't matter to me that you're married when I whack you with this rolling pin. You always got your way because we never smacked you. Son, I beg you. Drop this idea. Don't allow us to long for you during our old age.
- HASAN:** Don't worry so much, Mum. I'm not going to stay there permanently. I'll be back here in two years. I promise. I will stay exactly two years. What's a year anyway? All these years have passed ... did you notice anything? Please convince dad, alright?
- MOTHER:** Get out of here! I would have preferred a slap in the face than to have heard this nonsense from you. It would have hurt less.
- HASAN:** It is difficult for me too. If we disregard my army duty, this would be my first separation from you. It will be the first and last time I will ever be away from you. The very last. Come on, Mum, convince dad. [*He kneels, crouches and places his arm over his mother's shoulders. The mother raises the rolling pin into the air and Hasan stands up. The mother sits him back down.*]
- MOTHER:** What sort of a person are you? I said you can't go and that's final. Don't mention this to your father. He'll destroy us. Listen, forget this idea. That way, neither you or we will suffer. My life has passed by with suffering. Forget leaving this country, I didn't even consider walking out through that door. [*She points to the door.*] Listen, son ... I was around the

age of five. I barely remember my father. He left one day and never returned. My little heart grew up empty, longing for paternal love. I always awaited his return and prayed that he would. My mother and I worked as servants for other people. Our aim was to work to survive, not to make money. We worked to protect our honour and dignity. When I was a little older, my dear mother explained that my father was taken as prisoner of war by the Bulgarians in the First World War. The Bulgarians locked them up in camps surrounded with barbed wire fences. They were hungry and miserable. They were not provided with shelter to protect them from the elements.

One day, Sulman Aga's son and my father sent word to the village folk. They requested some food and clothing. The next day Sulman Aga took to the roads with a huge amount of supplies and went to seek his son who was in this camp. When he found the camp, even Sulman Aga couldn't hold back his tears, and he cried out aloud like a child at what he witnessed.

Starvation and suffering were so severe that people had eaten all the grass, the barks and leaves of trees as far as they could reach. Apparently, they would even eat the leftover food from the Bulgarians' animals. And those who fell ill from the cold or an infestation of lice would die a slow and painful death without the aid of doctors or medicine. Sulman Aga returned to the village with two oxen and a cart and took more supplies to the men, but when he arrived at the camp again, he discovered that my father had died just two days earlier. My mother was widowed at a young age and I was an orphan, but that is life! You don't die with the dead. As we thought of my father's misery in that camp we

believed we had no right to complain about our life. We thank God for all the provisions we have.

When I grew up, I got married to your father and you were born. I always prayed that God would give me a son who looked like my dear father. We gave you my father's name so that I may remember him every time I call your name. As I expressed my love for you as a son, I filled that empty space left in my heart that belonged to my father. If you leave us and go, I will fall apart. I will not survive.

HASAN: I better go so that I can stop causing you any more pain, Mother. [*Hasan leaves*]

MOTHER: Oh, dear me! Dear me! ... [*The father walks in while the mother is mumbling to herself*]

FATHER: What's happened? What is it? I could hear you talking from the street. Hasan looked upset as he was leaving and your face is drooping.

MOTHER: Hasan has decided to go to Australia and so we quarrelled.

FATHER: Oh ... is that right? Call that hoodlum here for a chat then.

MOTHER: Listen, I just had a two-hour quarrel with Hasan. He has arranged everything and has no intention of changing his mind. You should listen to me and speak to our daughter-in-law. She is our only hope in solving this problem.

FATHER: Well then, call Hayriye to come here. [*The mother rushes inside and returns with Hayriye*]

HAYRIYE: What is it, Father? You called for me.

FATHER: Hayriye, my daughter, could you first make me a cup of coffee please?

HAYRIYE: Right away. [*Hayriye returns with a cup of coffee within five minutes*]

HAYRIYE: Please take it, Father. May it do you some good.

- FATHER:** Thank you, my daughter. Please sit down. Hayriye my daughter, Hasan has told your mother something. Is it true?
- HAYRIYE:** It's true, Father.
- FATHER:** Look, my daughter, you need to talk to Hasan and convince him to forget about this idea.
- HAYRIYE:** I don't think I can, Father. I'm not interested in going but all the paperwork is ready. He told me that either I go with him or I go back to my father's house. It's best if you talk it over with him yourself.
- FATHER:** Call Hasan here! [*Hasan walks in*]
- HASAN:** Hayriyeee Hayriye Can you pass me my jacket from there.
- HAYRIYE:** Hasan, one moment. Your father is asking for you.
- FATHER:** Hasan! From what I'm hearing, comfort has burdened you! I hear you're going to Australia, is that true?
- HASAN:** Yes. I am going, but don't you dare try to stop me this time, Father. I have all the paperwork ready.
- FATHER:** Listen, son. We don't want to let you go, but since you say everything is ready and you have set a date, I have a few words I want to share with you. From this age on, I have no strength to run after sheep and lambs. I will sell them all and enjoy spending the returns with your mother. Oh, and you have said that that place is very far, that people have gone but not returned. If things don't work out and you do return, you won't find your sheep and goats awaiting you and don't expect help from your father either!
- MOTHER:** Hey, what happened? Did you convince the children?
- FATHER:** As if it was possible! Since the daughter-in-law arrived, you just simply couldn't keep your tongue from unleashing, could you? D'you see what you've gotten us into?

MOTHER: Am I the guilty face behind everything that happens in this family?

FATHER: Of course you are. If you hadn't seen our daughter-in-law as a housekeeper, and if you had treated her kindly, I don't think things would have turned out this way.

MOTHER: What have I done to my daughter-in-law? If I was envious of her, I wouldn't have gone and asked for her hand in marriage for my Hasan. As if you're such a goody yourself. Once you start talking, you don't know when to stop!

MOTHER: Go on, go out so that I can get on with my work. Those two are obviously going. Let's not lash out at each other unnecessarily.

NARRATOR: *They say 'Time goes quickly when you set dates.' At home there were feelings of great anxiety, deep heartfelt pain in anticipation of longing for loved ones and mixed thoughts about the country of destination. Everything was packed and ready for travelling. It was now time to get in the taxi waiting outside the family home]*

HASAN: Father, the time of departure has arrived. Allow me to kiss your hand and please forgive me. [*The father pulls his hand away from Hasan's grasp in anger*] Come on father, don't behave like a child. Please give me your hand so that I may kiss it. [*The father cannot resist any longer. He hugs his son and cries.*]

FATHER: I forgive you, my son. Return soon, all right?

MOTHER: Are you still sure you want to go, son? If you change your mind and stay, I'm going to sell my gold coins and buy you a motorcycle. Stay. Don't go.

HASAN: Let's not return to the beginning, Mother dear. We had an agreement with you. When I return in two

years time, I will stay near you and never leave you again. Now you need to forgive me so that I can depart happy.

MOTHER: I forgive you, my Hasan, my dear Hayriye, my little Lütü, my little Lütüye, my babies. Allow me to kiss you one last time ... to smell you. You may go but not return. You may come but not find us as we are now. When you get there, please write to us. Look after my daughter-in-law and my grandchildren, Hasan. All of you take care. You better not get sick there. I will always pray for you.

FATHER: Shush, woman, everyone is looking at you. This is not the time and place to cry. At first you encourage them, then you whinge and cry. Don't you think I know that Hasan is his mother's baby? He wouldn't have left if you hadn't encouraged him.

NARRATOR: *Hasan and Hayriye arrive in Australia after 20 days of travel. They travel halfway in an aeroplane and the rest of the way on a ship. They are greeted at Port Melbourne by folk from their own region who arrived in Melbourne a few months earlier. The established migrants take their guests into their own homes. These people who arrived earlier shared accommodation with two or three other families because they did not speak the local language or know the locality well enough to be self-sufficient. As soon as Hasan and his family arrive, they are taken to Şükri's place. He is from Shapchi. Hasan's family has four members as does Şükri's family.*

Although it was inadequate and difficult, these eight people were to persevere living together in a three-bedroom home because it was a financially viable option. This way all the expenditures were cut in half. In addition, all the household members were

empathetic towards each other as they shared common problems and circumstances. The crowded environment made them feel more secure and less lonely. In this country they were now all like relatives. They would share each other's joys and sorrows.

HASAN: Well, Hayriye, tell me ... are you happy with your job? How about your boss, is he a bad person?

HAYRIYE: I don't know. My boss is a woman. Sometimes the poor lady talks to me with a smile and at other times in fury but who knows what she is saying? She talks to herself and she listens to herself talk. It is very difficult to communicate when people don't understand each other's language. Since I am still employed, I suppose the work is getting done. Oh yeah, let's leave the job to one side ... what I'd like to know is why you came home so late today? ... tell me that! We have only been here a short time. Have you started wandering around in search of something again? Have you brought your old habits here too? Back home, the sheep or the goats were your excuse. I am curious as to what excuse you can come up with now, since the time you start and finish work is clearly predetermined.

HASAN: Don't slander me Hayriye! Would I smell a rose other than you? Anyway, I've never cheated on you. Back at home, I would get together with a few mates and have a few drinks, play backgamon or cards in the evenings ... and for this you are just about to label me a prominent womaniser! Things are different now, Hayriye. We have no-one but each other to rely on. It is now that I realise I am married and have a family to take care of. I'll tell you why I came home late today and you can decide whether to

laugh or cry at my story. You are very lucky because your job is close by. I travel incredibly far to get to work, but you are unaware of this.

You know Ismail, who works at General Motors, don't you? Well he told me to take a bus there because he said it is a much cheaper and faster way to travel. He gave me very clear directions. Getting there was fine but on the way home I caught the wrong bus. I got off the bus as soon as I realised my mistake but I lost my way home. Along the way I saw a Coles supermarket and thought, that's it, the rest is easy, but I then realised it wasn't our supermarket. The worst thing about this country is that all the streets and all the shops look the same. You have no idea how frightened I was until I discovered my way home.

HAYRIYE: Look, Hasan, I want something from you. Şükrü and his wife are good people. They took us into their home when they didn't even know us. I'm grateful for that but this house is now too small for us. You know I'm very particular. I don't like mess. Nazmiye is exactly the opposite, she is careless with her cleaning. In fact a few days ago we had a small argument. She left her child's soiled nappies unrinsed in the laundry. I persevered for one day, two days, three days and for five days. I couldn't go into the laundry to wash the clothes from the stink. Eventually I could not stand it and I said, 'Nazmiye, you better wash those nappies because I haven't been able to go into the laundry for a week from the stink.' Then I realised that she wasn't going to take notice of the nappies so I put them in a plastic bag and threw them into the bin. She scolded me for throwing the nappies away and we had an argument over the incident. I have been meaning to tell you about it but

we hardly have a chance to be alone. Fortunately for us, husband and wife are both doing overtime tonight, so we have this chance to discuss our problems.

HASAN: That's fine, Hayriye, but at the moment we are paying \$15 in rent but if we shift we'll have to pay \$30. I earn \$46.39 a weekly. Are we supposed to do our shopping, pay the electricity and gas bills with the remaining or save it? You're young, so you only get \$28 a week. What money are we going to use for rent? It's best to persevere a little longer. Look at everyone else. They are all managing. You need to do the same. We need to make some money quickly so I can take you to see your mother. Keep it up a while longer, we only have two years to earn whatever we can.

HAYRIYE: Hasan, I forgot to give you the surprise. We received a letter from your mother today. We couldn't wait so we opened and read it with the kids. Here, you read it too. [*Hasan takes 'the first letter' from his mother and reads it*] I'm going to bed because I'm working tomorrow. Have a good night.

HASAN: Goodnight to you too. I'm going to sit up for a while and go to bed later.

NARRATOR: *One day Hasan comes home with his work bag and a letter while Hayriye is busily cleaning the house. He sits in a corner in the living room.*

HAYRIYE: Oh, get away from there! He comes in with filthy clothes and sits in the most prominent corner of the room.

HASAN: For goodness sake, Hayriye! Turn this tape recorder and vacuum cleaner off so I can read this letter from my mother. Working all day has exhausted me to the point of death, now don't you start nagging.

- HAYRIYE: Alright, alright. Read it aloud so I can hear it too. Let's hear what my dear mother-in-law has written. [*Hasan reads 'the second letter'.*]
- HAYRIYE: Oh, Hasan. It's a good thing I didn't listen to my friends and cut my hair like they did. I need not lie. I love your mother like my own. I wouldn't want her to stress over a handful of hair. She has put up with so much of my immature behaviour.
- HASAN: Come on now, you are only saying that because she isn't here. If we lived together, I wouldn't catch you talking like that.
- HAYRIYE: Off with you! I can't even exchange a few words with you. Go away and let me get on with my work.
- HASAN: All right, all right. [*He walks off the stage and the narrator reads 'the third letter'.*]

[Ends]

The first letter from Hasan's mother

The apples of my eye, my lambs, my Hasan, my Hayriye and my sweet, sweet grandchildren, how are you all?

Since you left this place it seems our world has darkened. It is still and quiet everywhere. Nobody comes around or enquires about us. Apparently it was not just air, bread and water that gave us life. It was also your presence that allowed us to live but we were not aware of this.

My dear child, you ask us in your letter how we are doing. How could we be doing? Even if we are unhappy, we are trying to live. We have been counting the days down since you left. Two years is a long time to count down. We already miss you so much that I cannot explain.

Anyway, son, I don't want to cause you grief by telling you sad stories. You said in your letter that you live together with two or three other families in one dwelling, Hasan. That is a good idea if you ask me, after all you didn't go there for a better lifestyle. Save your money so that you may return quicker. And think about when we were young. We lived in a house two unmarried sisters-in-law and three married ones including kids. All 15 of us worked and cooked and ate together in one house. And we were happy. Look, son, since Hayriye and you have both found a job, you might as well work. Don't be wasteful of your money by buying unnecessary items, because you will then need to bring them back here.

My dear Hasan, it has now been two and a half months since you left. There is still one year and nine and a half months before you return. I got Memet Aga's younger son Ali to write this letter to you. On your return, bring him a small gift to make him happy. Don't forget, all right?

My Hasan, my Hayriye, I bid you farewell for now. Kiss and smell our little lambs for us. Your father and I send you our regards.

Looking forward to a quick reply,
Your mother *Şadiye*

The second letter

My dear precious children,

We have received your letter. We kissed and smelt the sheets of paper on which you wrote, thinking your hands had touched them and your scent would still be on them.

My dear Hasan, you ask us why we don't write to you more often; as if you don't know that we are

illiterate! You don't realise how hard I try to get my neighbour's children to write a few lines for me. The poor things find any excuse to avoid me so that I won't hassle them about writing letters. This time I got Teacher Ahmet to write for me. I appreciate it that he didn't refuse. But you are literate, my son, so even if we don't write to you, you make the effort to write to us, all right?

How are you, my Hasan? I hope you are well since your last letter. How are Hayriye and the children? We have missed you all a great deal. You have stayed long enough, you should come back now. Oh, Hasan, do you know what bothers me most? Three months from now it will be bayram. This bayram will be very painful and difficult for us. While others will be celebrating in joy we will be waiting to see who comes through the door. My dear Hasan, the only consolation we have is knowing that you are alive and well.

Dear son, have you at least made some money? You are coming back home in a year and a half. All this yearning cannot be for nothing.

Hasan, I want to ask you a question but tell me the honest truth, all right? Did Hayriye cut off her plaits or does she still have them? If she hasn't cut them off, please make sure she doesn't, Hasan. When I first saw her at Hacı İbrahim's wedding, I was bewildered by her plaits, so I went and asked for her hand in marriage for you. And do you know why I am telling you this? Remember Limp Hacı's son and daughter-in-law who went to Germany? Well, recently they came for a visit and would you believe she has cut off those beautiful braids she had? Thick as a wrist, they were. She looks like a goat! Young people can be foolish.

My son Hasan, there is a lot to write about but unfortunately I can't say it all in a letter. I wish to send

my love and kisses to you, my daughter-in-law, Lütfi and to my darling Lütfiye. Also, Gran Ayşe, Aunt Şükriye and Uncle Nuri send their regards.

Your mother *Şadiye*

The third letter

Oh my dear Hasan, my dear Hasan,

My son who went for two years but who never returned. Come back now, I am miserable. We have lost your father too. The pillar of our house has fallen. Enough! Come back now! Don't allow this old heart of mine to miss you so. Let me see you for the last time so my eyes don't remain unshut before I die. Look! You promised to return in two years but it has now been 25 years since you left. Let this be my last letter. I want your return, not your letters, my Hasan. If we don't see each other, forgive my sins, my children.

Your mother *Şadiye*

Note: Hasan goes to Western Thrace with his family as soon as he receives this letter. After staying there a short time he returns to Australia with his mother and so puts an end to this yearning. If you were Hasan, you would have done the same, would you not?

Customs and traditions

Western Thrace Turks living in Australia have been striving to keep their customs and traditions, which are an important part of their culture, alive in this distant country and pass them on

to the new generations. Among these customs and traditions are Ramadan, ‘Hidrellez’ (Hidrellez spring festival), ‘Sünnet’ (circumcision celebrations), marriages-weddings, costumes-clothes, handicrafts and food. Let us look into these in some detail.

RAMADAN

Western Thrace Turks continue to keep alive in Australia the traditions passed on by their ancestors. ‘İftar’ (breaking of the fast) and ‘sahur’ (meal before fasting) traditions are kept alive. Anonymous Ramadan ditties were published in the 12th issue of *Avustralya’da Elele* magazine, and others related by Hacı Ali Mustafa Salih from the village of Ircan in the 33th issue and by Mehmet Hasan in the 36th issue.

HIDRELLEZ

The Hidrellez tradition, one of the most important traditions kept alive in Western Thrace, has also been continued in Australia. The first article written on the subject can be seen in the fourth issue of *Yankı* magazine, the publication of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish School, dated 1997. A Western Thrace student, Sinan Mustafa, tells about Hidrellez in the following terms:

HIDRELLEZ

This is one of the folk beliefs and traditions still kept alive in Western Thrace. It is celebrated on 6 May every year. Western Thrace Turks believe according to a Muslim tradition, that the two brothers Kasım and Hıdır İlyas get together on that day, go out into the country and have a picnic, singing songs and ditties, and swing from trees. Young girls fill an earthen jar with water the day before Hidrellez and each girl leaves a bunch of flowers in the jar that they can identify as theirs. The jar

is sealed, placed under a tree and left there overnight. On the day of Hidrellez, the afternoon is the time anticipated eagerly by the girls and the boys. A girl called the ‘jar girl’ is seated next to the jar, surrounded by those who are to sing the ditties. The jar girl wears a red head-tie and pulls out a bunch of flowers from the jar. The ditty sung at that point is dedicated to the owner of that bunch. The game goes on until everyone is covered. On the day of Hidrellez, making swings, swinging, and various festivities are special events of the day. A lamb on a spit, fresh stuffed vine leaves, a broad-bean dish and some corn from each household boiled in a cauldron are eaten. This is called ‘gölle’. These are the main Western Thrace Turkish Hidrellez dishes.

Sinan Mustafa

Memet İmam-Hüseyin, in an article he wrote with information from issue 1091 of the İleri newspaper published in Gümülcine, entitled ‘Hidrellez – 6 May 2003’ in the 32nd issue of *Avustralya’da Elele* talks about the origins of Hidrellez and the Hidrellez tradition of the Western Thrace Turks. He notes the hindering of Hidrellez festivities by Greek authorities in İskeçe in 2003 and condemn the banning of such a good, peace-loving activity. A Hidrellez ditty was also published in the same issue of the magazine.

COSTUMES AND CLOTHES

Western Thrace Turks in migrating to Australia, have not forgotten the authentic costumes worn by their ancestors in Western Thrace for years. These costumes are worn during cultural activities and functions, thus keeping traditions alive. Fashion shows are organised for the new generations and people from other cultures to see these costumes. On the 20

July 1997 a ‘şalvar’ (shalvar – loose pants) competition was organised by the association with more than 20 Western Thrace Turkish women participating. An article by Sihem İmam-Hüseyin on the subject appeared in the 23rd issue of *Avustralya’da Elele*. The ‘Costumes of Three Generations’ fashion show put on for the celebration of the 10th year of *Avustralya’da Elele* on 21 September 2003 should also be mentioned. In this show the Western Thrace ‘Bindallı’ (a thousand branches) costume and authentic Western Thrace men’s and women’s costumes worn by young Western Thrace Turks were shown. Also on the official opening day of the association building on 3 November 2007 and the celebration of 38 years in Australia, Western Thrace Turkish costumes were exhibited and authentic costumes 50 to 80 year old such as wedding dresses, clothes used for social visits, jackets, ‘ferace’ (a loose black dress worn by women) and headscarves were observed with great interest. The hostesses wearing the ‘Bindallı’, shalvar/vest and needlework headbands were admired by the guests. The photographs of this exhibition appeared in *Avustralya’da Elele*, no. 39. See also Chapter 7 of this book, ‘AWTTA official opening and the celebration of 38 years in Australia’.

WEDDINGS

Australian Western Thrace Turks have striven to keep their wedding traditions alive in their adopted country. For them, weddings in Western Thrace are pleasant memories. The article ‘Village Weddings’ by the association’s café manager uncle Hacı Salih published in the 18th issue of *Avustralya’da Elele* is a reflection of this yearning.

The ‘Bindallı’ worn by the bride in Western Thrace weddings are special costumes decorated from top to toe with tinsel. Western Thrace Turks in Australia are keeping alive this bride/costume tradition. On 17 August 1996, a special function called ‘Tinsel Night’ was organised and a tinsel costume

competition was held. Belkız Turyan, Perihan Hafız-Hüseyin, Halide Boca and Rukiye İbrahim won prizes in the competition with their ‘Bindallı’ and tinsel bride costumes. The folk song ‘Gelin Kınası’ (Bride’s Henna), compiled by Dilber Hasan and published in the 32nd issue of *Avustralya’da Elele*, shows that the Western Thrace tradition carries on in Australia. Ferize Hüseyin’s article ‘Kına Gecesi’ (The Henna Night) is also a good example. It was published in the 33rd issue of the same magazine. A section of this article reads:

Days passed quickly and the henna night arrived. It was a night I shall never forget. The way I wore that beautiful bindallı, the tinsel on the sides of my head and the beautiful gold-laden crest my mother-in-law placed on my head never leaves my mind. I recommend our girls who are about to be married wear the bindallı on their henna night. It’s a great feeling ...

In *Avustralya’da Elele*, the photographs of some of our brides wearing the ‘Bindallı’ on their henna night appear as well as this article: Nuran Basırlı (no. 26), Ferize Hüseyin and Yasemin Aktepe (no. 33), Sebahat İbrahim (no. 36) and Melis Mümin (no. 37). In the 34th issue of the magazine, ‘Halay Türküsü’ (The Halay Song) sung by girls as they do the ‘halay’ (a group folk dance) during Western Thrace weddings also appears as compiled by Raife Meyzin. In the 40th issue of *Avustralya’da Elele*, under the heading ‘Batı Trakya Türk Göreneklerimiz – Evlilik’ (Our Western Thrace Traditions – Marriage) by Sihem İmam-Hüseyin, the whole process from asking for the girl’s hand to the after wedding trips is briefly described and Emrah Reşitoğlu’s ‘Bundle in exchange for a handkerchief’ is given as an example.



Cihan Aday
1st generation formal costume



Kevser Reşitoğlu
1st generation formal dress



Hakan Özgür
2nd generation formal costume



Nesrin Mehmet
2nd generation formal dress

**Images from the ‘Costumes of Three Generations’
fashion show, 21 September 2003**



*The Bindallı tradition kept alive by Western Thrace Turks in Australia,
Yasemin Aktepe and Ferize Hüseyin*



*Emrah Reşitoğlu's 'Bundle in exchange for a handkerchief' in Australia,
2 February 2008*

CIRCUMCISION

During the initial years of their migration to Australia, the Western Thrace Turks, intending to earn money and going back after a short time, did not have circumcision celebrations and chose to save money, as mentioned earlier. Boys were circumcised in hospitals in this period. The boys who were circumcised were given traditional costumes to wear and modest celebrations were held at home among family members and friends. In time, when the idea of returning home faded and the community became more settled, the circumcision celebration tradition started to reappear in full. Circumcision celebrations are now held in reception halls. The first boy to have a circumcision ceremony in Australia was Hüseyin, the son of Halilibrahim and Beyda Memiş from Gümülcine. This circumcision ceremony was held in the Prahran Town Hall on 14 January 1978 with food and entertainment. Sometimes the circumcision ‘mevlüd’ (religious recitation) is also held in a reception hall like the circumcision ceremony.

An example of this is the circumcision mevlüd on 20 January 2008 for Evren Haliloğlu, the son of Nedim Haliloğlu from the village of Sirkeli and Emine from the village of Taşkınlar held in the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association hall with 200 guests being served food.

The article ‘The Circumcision Tradition’ that appeared in the 32nd issue of *Avustralya’da Elele* is important in this respect. The author of the article was Sibel Sipahi, a Macedonian Turk who has participated in a number of social and cultural activities in Melbourne.



The first circumcision ceremony in Australia, the circumcision ceremony of Hüseyin Memiş, 14 January 1978



A circumcision ‘mevlüd’ in Australia for Evren Haliloğlu, 20 January 2008

HANDICRAFTS

Another tradition being kept alive by the Western Thrace Turks in Australia is the tradition of authentic handicrafts which represents the handiwork and diligence of young girls and women. This has been transformed from something kept alive privately within the community to an effective publicity and lobbying tool thanks to the efforts of the Australian Western Thrace Turks. Between the years 1995 and 2008, Western Thrace Turkish women have organised almost 15 exhibitions in Melbourne. The first handicrafts exhibition was held during the Prahran Cultural Festival on 19 March 1995. Also, the handicrafts exhibited during the Como Turkish Festival on 21 and 27–28 April 2002 with the participation of a large number of non-Turkish people were very popular.

The Western Thrace Turkish Handicrafts exhibitions in Melbourne have been: ‘Threads Hold Memories’ (17–29 March 2004, Prahran, then Malvern Town Hall 1–30 April 2004), ‘Western Thrace Turkish Handicrafts Exhibition’ in the Toorak Library (November 2004 – January 2005), ‘Languages of the Heart’ (20 April – 2 May 2005) and ‘Colours of Culture’ (30 May – 18 June 2006), all in Prahran. These exhibitions have been received with great interest. Politicians and representatives of arts organisations have taken part in the openings. We should also mention the two talks given by the President of the Women’s Association, Feriha Reşitoğlu, on Western Thrace Turkish Handicrafts on 10 and 13 July 2004 at The Embroidery Guild.

In 2007–08, the format of handicraft exhibitions changed. The association participated in a number of important cultural festivals held in Melbourne and Western Thrace Turkish handicrafts were exhibited and explained in different tents. These events included the ‘Third Turkish Tulip Festival’ (16–17 September 2007), ‘The opening of the 40th year celebrations of Turks in Australia’ (11 November 2007), ‘60th year Festival of Turkish Cypriots in Australia’ (17 February 2008) the ‘Turkish Pazar Festival’ within the 40th Year celebrations

(13 April 2008), and the 'Fourth Turkish Tulip Festival' (13–14 September 2008).

The extensive Handicrafts and costumes exhibition held during the opening of the new Association building on 3 November 2007 and the 38th year celebrations of Western Thrace Turks in Australia have been one of the richest and the biggest so far. Among those who appreciated the exhibition were diplomats, politicians and artists. Articles and images relating to handicrafts exhibitions held from 1995 on have been included in *Avustralya'da Elele* magazine.



***Australian Western Thrace Turkish Women's Association
handicrafts exhibition poster, 20 April 2005***



Our Threads Hold Memories Handicrafts exhibition, 17 March 2004



Photos about the Australian Western Thrace Turkish community, magazines and books as well as handicrafts were included in the tent during the Turkish Cypriots 60th Year festival. 17 February 2008.

FOOD

Australian Western Thrace Turks have been keeping alive their authentic foods in this new country they have migrated to. These foods are prepared for special days and celebrations to make them known as well as passing them on to the new generations. Among them are ‘börek’ (pastries with various fillings), ‘akıtma çörek’ (pancake with chicken casserole), ‘nohutlu pilav’ (rice with chickpeas, also known as ‘düğün pilavı’), ‘irmik helvası’ (sweet made with semolina, also known as ‘düğün helvası’).

OTHER DETAILS RELATING TO CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

Some other details relating to customs and traditions should also be mentioned here. An article by Yeliz Hasan, a Year 9 student that appeared in the fourth issue of the *Yankı* magazine is rather interesting:

FIRST STEP ÇÖREK (CHOEREK) DAY

The First Steps Choerek Day is one of the traditional celebrations undertaken by Western Thrace Turks. Choerek (a flat, round pastry fried in oil) is made when babies begin to walk.

My sister began walking before she turned one. A few weeks later we made some choereks. My mother called one of our older relatives to help. My cousins were also present.

My mum and aunty prepared the dough and cooked the choereks. The first cooked one was separated from the rest and put aside. Once all the choereks were cooked, two pieces of baklava and two choereks were packaged for each designated family. These packaged

sweets and choereks were handed out to relatives and friends later on.

During the choerek ceremony, a choerek was placed in a plate on one side of a table. Then a pair of scissors and the holy book Qur'an placed on the other side of the table. My sister's feet were tied together with a red ribbon and I got to cut the ribbon. We then took my sister over to the table. According to traditional belief, if the child walks to the choerek and picks it up, she will grow up to be greedy. If she picks up the scissors, she will grow up to be a dressmaker and if she picks up the Qur'an she will be an educated person. My sister picked up the choerek and started eating it. We all laughed at her loudly. We then went out to give the choereks and sweets to neighbours and relatives.

Yeliz Hasan (Year 9 student)



The association management congratulates Mustafa Hasanoğlu, who was chosen father of the year in 2002. 1 September 2002.

The article entitled ‘Old Winter Days’ that appeared in the 18th issue of *Avustralya’da Elele* is also interesting in this respect. The Western Thrace Turks choose mother and father of the year in Australia every year. (This is becoming a tradition in Australia.) In the 32nd issue of the magazine, a chronological list of the mothers and fathers of the year was published.

Religious life

Western Thrace Turks who have migrated to Australia have tried to meet their social needs through the association while also trying to adapt to this new country and survive. Religious life has always been a part of this. Ahmet Çakıroğlu has been a leader in fulfilling the religious duties of the community from the day he arrived. He has been the ‘imam’ (prayer leader) both in the rented association building and the first association building that was bought. Among his services have been the religious marriage ceremonies of 11 Western Thrace Turkish couples. Ahmet Çakıroğlu has fulfilled his religious duties as a volunteer in the school and in the association.

At one stage the word ‘İslâm’ was included in the Association’s name (Western Thrace Turkish Islamic Association). This was meant to emphasise the Turkish-Islamic character in a new country. Currently a prayer room (Mescid) is open for services in the association building. Other Turkish groups in Melbourne also use this facility. The contributions of Duran Öz, who has acted as a religious leader at times, are very important in the religious and cultural life of the Australian Western Thrace Turks. He compiled the ‘Religious Information Guide’ for the association. The aim was to explain in a brief, understandable language the religious topics that everybody needed to know about and to facilitate the learning of students in religious classes. He has also contributed religious articles regularly to *Avustralya’da Elele*. We occasionally find articles

and poems with religious content in the magazine such as ‘İlahi / Yunus Emre’ (no. 9), ‘The Association’s End of the Year Hatim Ceremony’ (reading the Qur’an from cover to cover). / ‘The Qur’anic Course Celebration Ceremony’ (no. 11) and ‘Yâ Râb’ (no. 26).

Western Thrace Turks have been trying to keep alive their religious life in Australia as much as they can. Halil Reşitoğlu and Niyazi Selimoğlu have been doing the duties of ‘imam’ for years as volunteers.

Whilst the Australian Western Thrace Turks continue their own religious lives, they are also in amicable relations with other religious groups aiming for friendship, peace and dialogue. The joint activity with representatives of other religious groups on 13 March 2005 in the prayer room in the association building is an example of this. An article about this activity written by Memet İmam-Hüseyin was published in the 35th issue of *Avustralya’da Elele*.



Images from the prayer room (mescid) in the association building



Religious knowledge competition during the ‘Hatim’ day ceremony of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish School, 30 November 1997



The Turkish Consul General and consulate personnel at ‘İftar’ (breaking of the fast) during Ramadan 2008 with the Australian Western Thrace Turkish community.



*Western Thrace Turks with Ambassador Bilâl N. Şimşir
during the 'Turkish Press in Australia' exhibition
at the Turkish Embassy in Canberra,
29 October 1997*

Chapter 5

Publications

The Western Thrace Turks who migrated to Australia, starting in 1969, were not able to have a publication of their own for 24 long years. A Media and Publications subgroup was formed within the association in 1991. However, this subgroup was inactive for two years. In 1993, *Avustralya'da Elele* began publication. Later, publications such as *Yankı*, *Elele Children's Magazine* and *Australian Western Thrace Turkish School Magazine*, all targeting the children of the Turkish community, appeared. Of these, the *Avustralya'da Elele* and *Yankı* find their place in the Australian Turkish press bibliography.¹ Apart from the magazines, two books were published. One is a book of poetry called *Bir Sana Yandım Bin Şiir Yazdım* by Tijen İsmailoğlu published in 2006. The other one is the *Turkish Proverbs and Idioms* compiled by Sihem İmam-Hüseyin on behalf of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association and published in Turkish and English. We shall now look at these publications in detail under three headings.

***Avustralya'da Elele* magazine**

Publication commenced in 1993 as a joint project of the association's Women's subgroup, and the Media and Publications subgroup, led by Feriha Reşitoğlu, with Ayşe Aday's and Türkân Gagalı's support. The magazine is currently the only publication of the Western Thrace Turks in Australia. It has been published continuously for 16 years. Although there have been occasional disruptions, it is nevertheless a continuous publication. An important function of the magazine is the formation of a platform of cooperation and communication between the Western Thrace Turks in Australia and Western Thrace Turks in other parts of the world. When the magazine is examined in this context, it can be seen that articles, poems and news from the Western Thrace Turkish diaspora in Scotland, England, Germany, the United States and Turkey also appears. And of course, communication with Western Thrace is paramount. Poems,

news items and other articles are taken from *Yuvamız*, *Gündem*, *İleri* and *Cumhuriyet*, all published in Gümölcine. The latest issue of *Avustralya'da Elele* is issue 41, dated July 2009. Sihem İmam-Hüseyin has increased her contribution to the magazine, starting with issue 9. She arranged for issues 9–25 to be printed for free or at a very low rates until 1997. While the initial issues of the magazine looked rather amateurish, due to the constraints of the period, it gradually developed, renewed itself and has become a better quality publication with better coverage. It started being published in colour from issue 19. The magazine, which started as an eight-page publication, is now a 28 page colour magazine and rather satisfying. *Avustralya'da Elele* is followed with interest now in Western Thrace, Turkey and Europe. Bilâl N. Şimşir, in his book *Turkish Press in Australia* says this about *Avustralya'da Elele*:

Avustralya'da Elele is a magazine with educational and cultural qualities. Alongside the news relating to the association, it publishes poetry, short stories, tales, songs, religious discussions, news from Western Thrace, and so on. The magazine places great importance on historical and national subjects such as Atatürk, the Turkish Struggle for Independence, the Turkish National Anthem, the Republic Festival and the 30 August Victory Festival. It also reserves a special section for the leader of the Western Thrace Turkish community, Dr Sadık Ahmet, who has passed away.

The *Avustralya'da Elele* magazine was initially an amateurish publication containing eight pages and a black and white cover page. Its volume and quality is consistently improving. The 19th issue of *Avustralya'da Elele* magazine, dated September–October 1996, was published on first-grade, 80-gram paper, was 26 pages in length and contained a cover page that was in colour. The magazine continues to enrich its contents.²

Bilâl N. Şimşir also provides biographies at the end of his book of people who have served the Australian Turkish press. Information about Sihem İmam-Hüseyin, Rukiye İbrahim, Hasan Meyzinoğlu and Feriha Reşitoğlu is provided in this section.

Avustralya'da Elele also has an important place, weight and reputation within the Western Thrace Turkish press in migration in terms of the Western Thrace Turkish Publications.³ A feast celebrating *Avustralya'da Elele* magazine's 10 years of publication was held in Melbourne on 21 September 2003. Sihem İmam-Hüseyin has been the editor of the magazine, which is the news, history, literary, pedagogical and cultural voice of the Western Thrace Turks in Australia, starting with issue 26.⁴ The articles are examined by her husband Memet İmam-Hüseyin. Feriha Reşitoğlu had been instrumental in preparing the magazine for printing until 2006. The magazine is currently being published by Sihem and Memet İmam-Hüseyin. The magazine has correspondents in Turkey and Germany. It is considered the most important resource for any research done about the Western Thrace Turks in Australia.

School magazines

YANKI (ECHO)

Yankı is published with an educational content by the students and teachers of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish School operating within the association. Its subtitle is 'The Voice of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish School Students'. The first issue was published in 1996. The title of the article written by Grade 4 student Ercüment İsmail in the first issue, 'My origins are Western Thrace', the article 'My Western Thrace Holiday' by Yeliz Hasan in the second issue and the article 'Hidrellez in Western Thrace' by Sinan Mustafa in the fourth

issue are noteworthy and we have quoted from them in this book. *Yankı* is also included in the bibliography of the *Turkish Press in Australia*. Bilâl N. Şimşir says this about *Yankı*:

Yankı is an educational school magazine. It primarily publishes material for Australian Western Thrace Turkish children and youth and contains educational material for use by other schools.⁵ Four issues of *Yankı* were published in 1996–97.

ELELE CHILDREN’S MAGAZINE

Its first issue was published in June 1998 and the second issue in December 1999. It is the publication of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish School. Its contents are the same as the *Yankı* magazine.

AUSTRALIAN WESTERN THRACE TURKISH SCHOOL MAGAZINE

The contents are the same as the *Yankı* and *Elele Children’s Magazine*. It was published in 2004.

RELIGIOUS INFORMATION GUIDE

A booklet of 21x15 cm with a yellow cover, this guide was compiled by the religion officer of the association Duran Öz in 1995. It was written to explain in brief, understandable language the religious topics that everybody needed to know about. It has helped to facilitate the studies of students in religious classes.

Anthology and books

AN ANTHOLOGY OF STORIES AND POETRY FROM THE WESTERN THRACE TURKS IN AUSTRALIA

About 50 texts and biographies of writers and poets are included in this anthology (in Turkish) prepared by Sihem İmam-Hüseyin in 1998 on behalf of the association. It also has the distinction of being the first anthology of Western Thrace Turks from the diaspora.

BİR SANA YANDIM BİN ŞİİR YAZDIM – POETRY

Tijen İsmailoğlu, who is from a Western Thrace background grew up in Australia, published her poems in 2006 in Melbourne. The 70-page book contains 58 poems.

TURKISH PROVERBS AND IDIOMS – DICTIONARY

Compiled by Sihem İmam-Hüseyin on behalf of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association and published in Turkish and English, this book constitutes a major contribution to multicultural Australia.

The Turkish proverbs project was initiated by the Australian Western Thrace Turkish women led by Feriha Reşitoğlu in 2005. The project, which stalled for a while, was restarted by Sihem İmam-Hüseyin in 2007, and she ensured its completion.

The aim of the project was to collect and compile in book form the Western Thrace Turkish proverbs and idioms. These proverbs and idioms that demonstrate the richness of the Turkish language and form part of the culture. The intention was to convey to the wider Australian community that they have a positive effect on the way people view everyday life and events, and to provide libraries and schools with a resource for Turkish children and researchers.

The book was distributed to the members of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association and school children, the State Library Victoria, the National Library in Canberra, to the officials of the Stonnington Council, libraries and schools, ethnic groups in the region, government departments, Turkish schools, regional libraries with high Turkish populations, the Turkish Embassy and the Melbourne Consulate of the Republic of Turkey, some Turkish associations and organisations, and Western Thrace Turkish associations outside Australia.

Comprising 410 proverbs and 150 idioms, this book, with its English translations, can be a resource for all communities living in Australia.

Two comments regarding the book *Turkish Proverbs and Idioms*

a) The comments made by the President of the Australian Turkish Cultural Platform Mrs Hilkat Özgün about the book *Turkish Proverbs and Idioms* were published in the 39th issue of *Avustralya'da Elele* in December 2007.

On behalf of the Australian Turkish Cultural Platform, I would like to wholeheartedly congratulate the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association and the publishing group for giving the book on proverbs and idioms to the Turkish community. Proverbs and idioms form part of our culture and the book was compiled in a way which can be understood by the younger generation in Australia. Living in harmony in a multicultural country like Australia is made possible through knowledge about other cultures. In this respect, the book you have compiled is very significant.

b) A complete literary evaluation by the president of KIBATEK, Feyyaz Sağlam, was published in the 40th issue of *Avustralya'da Elele*, under the heading 'A New Book about the Western Thrace Turkish Folklore, *Turkish Proverbs and*

Idioms’, in September 2008. Some very short excerpts are included in this book:

By publishing their new book called *Turkish Proverbs and Idioms* in 2007, the Australian Western Thrace Turks have given the Turks in the world and the Western Thrace Turkish community a lasting piece of literature about our culture.

The book is comprised of viii+168 pages. It contains various sections titled: Introduction, Foreword, Special Thanks, A Brief Introduction of Western Thrace and so on. The book was compiled in English and Turkish, and introduces the Western Thrace Turks in Australia. The contents are compiled under these headings:

1. Short folk stories of sayings used by Western Thrace Turks
2. Proverbs from Western Thrace
3. Idioms from Western Thrace
4. Proverbs and idioms used by Cypriot Turks
5. Proverbs A-Z Turkish-English with explanations
6. Idioms A-Z Turkish-English with explanations
7. Bibliography

When we look at the Western Thrace Turks’ cultural history in folklore as a whole, we find that this is the first publication on proverbs and idioms in book form. Sihem İmam-Hüseyin, has enriched literature in the Balkans by publishing some Western Thrace proverbs and idioms in the form of a book.

Feyyaz Sağlam’s evaluation of the book *Turkish Proverbs and Idioms* was also published in abridged form in the 104th issue of the *Evlâd-ı Fatihan* magazine in April 2008 under the same title.

Radio broadcasts

Australian Western Thrace Turks had a program called 'Western Thrace Turks' on the Australian 3ZZZ ethnic radio in 1997–98 included in the Cypriot Turkish program on Monday nights between 9 and 11 p.m. The program that was prepared by Salih and Feriha Reşitoğlu continued for some time. Emine and Bülent Öz and Perihan Alcan (Özsoy) also worked on this program for short periods.

Batı Trakyalı Türkler aylık dergi çıkarıyor

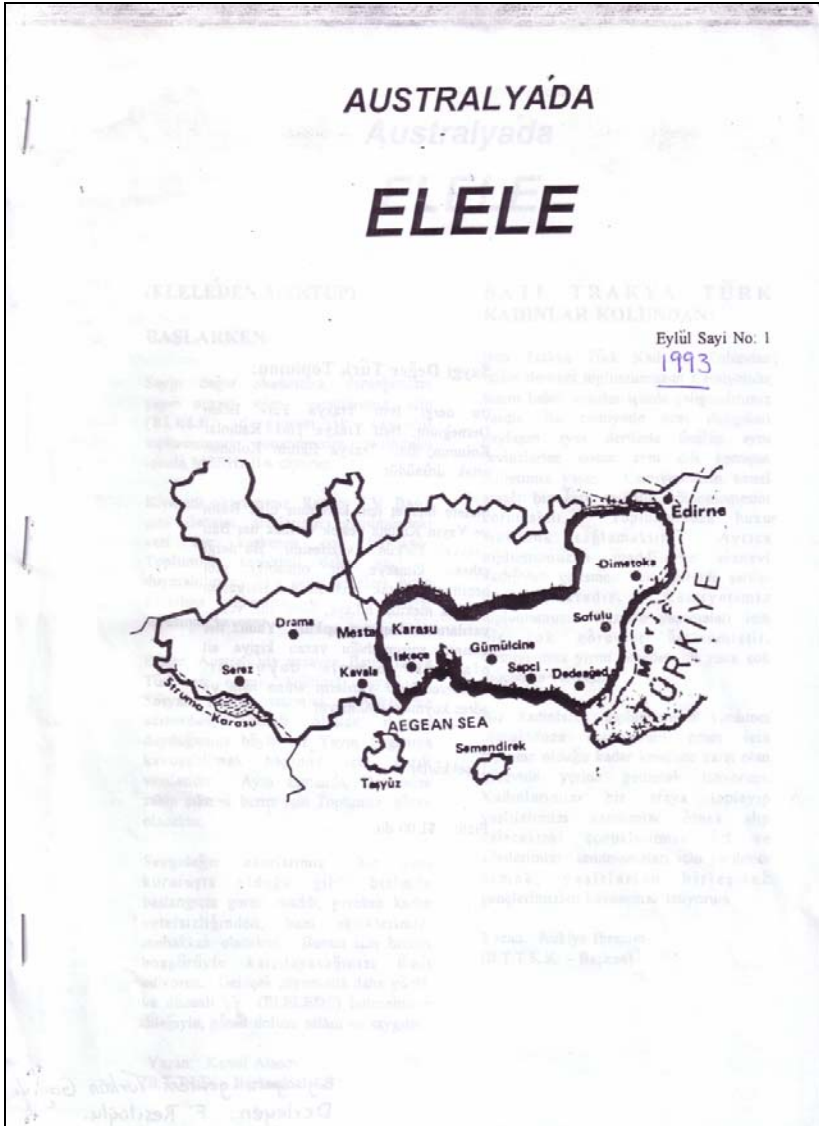
Gazete-Özel
Melbourne'de yaşayan Batı Trakyalılar, "Avustralya'da Elele" adlı bir dergi çıkıyorlar. Dergi, Batı Trakya Türk İslam Derneği, Batı Trakya Türk Kadınlar Kolu ve Batı Trakya Eğitim Kolu'nun ortak çalışmasıyla ayda bir yayınlanıyor. Şu ana kadar beş sayı çıkmış durumda.

Dergi fikrini ortaya atan ve şu anda bizzat ilgilenen Feriha Reşitoğlu, amaçlarının kültürlerini devam ettirmek ve varlıklarını duyurmak olduğunu söylüyor. "Topluma kendini kabul ettirmek için basının önemi çok büyük. Ben bir dergi çıkaralım dedim, arkadaşlar 'sen başlat biz destek verelim' dediler. Amacımız buradaki Batı Trakyalı halkın problemlerini ortaya koymak, sesimizi duyurmak, toplumda kendimizi kabul ettirmek. Kültürümüzü,



"Avustralya'da Elele"yi hazırlayan Feriha Reşitoğlu, Ayşe Aday ve Türkan Gagalı birliği sürdürmek istiyoruz. Dergimizde herkes yazı yazabilir. Bu derol her Feriha Reşitoğlu, katkıda bulunmayı kabul eden kişi lenden vazilen tonluşur. Daha çalışmaları yapmak üzere kullanılacak olması. Her tici de Yamanin

A copy of the article about the publication of Avustralya'da Elele magazine by Western Thrace Turks – Turkish Weekly Gazette, Melbourne, 15 February 1994



The first issue of Avustralya'da Elele magazine, September 1993



AVUSTRALYA'DA
ELELE

Yıl: 16
Sayı: 41
Ekim 2008 –
Temmuz 2009

HAYATTA EN HAKİKİ MÜRŞİT İLİMDİR
M.K. Atatürk

AVUSTRALYA BATI TRAKYA
TÜRKLERİ DERNEĞİ



Avustralya'nın Melbourne şehrinde yaşayan Batı Trakya Türkleri
Dr Sadık Ahmet'i, 14. Ölüm Yıldönümünde andılar



Öğrencilerimiz İstiklal Marşını söylerken



Alara 'Trakyam', Evren 'Sadık Ahmet ölmüş dediler' şiirlerini sunarken



ABTT
Okulu
23 Nisan
Egemenlik
ve Çocuk
Bayramını
kutladı.
Öğretmen
Esra Öz ve
şirlerini
okuyan
öğrenciler

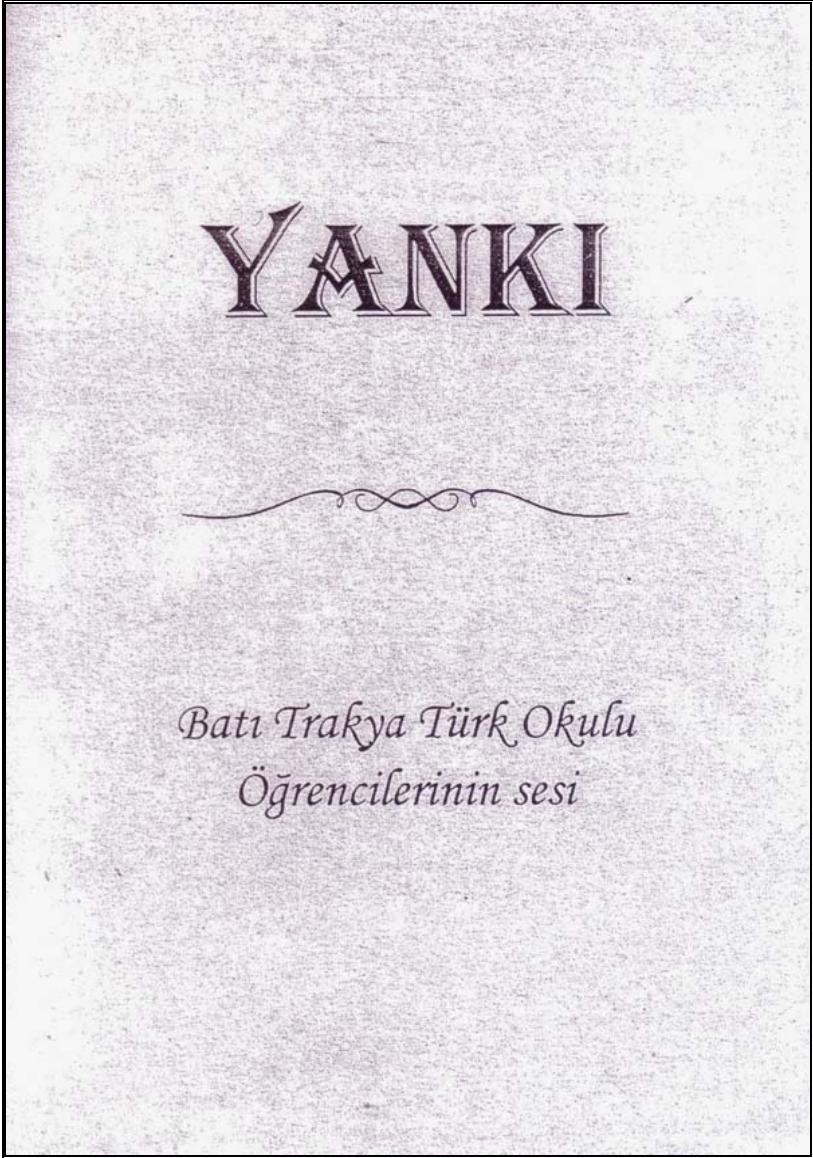


Avustralya Batı Trakya Türkleri – Üç nesil bir arada

Nadir Celil, toplumumuz içinde eğitimci, yönetici, şair, müzisyen, bahçıvan, becerikli; kabiliyetlerinden sadece bir kaç... Nadir aynı zamanda çevreye de çok önem vermektedir. Gökten evinin damına düşen yağmur sularını toplayarak bir damlasını dahi ziyan etmeden bahçesini yemyeşil tutmaktadır. Eşi Azize hanımla birlikte kendi ihtiyaçları olan sebzeleri yetiştirip, fazlasını komşuları ve dostlarıyla paylaşmaktan zevk almaktadırlar.
1 Şubat 2009



The 41st issue of Avustralya'da Elele magazine published while this book was being prepared for copyediting/proofreading, July 2009



The cover of the first issue of Yankı magazine, 1996

ELELE ÇOCUK DERGİSİ

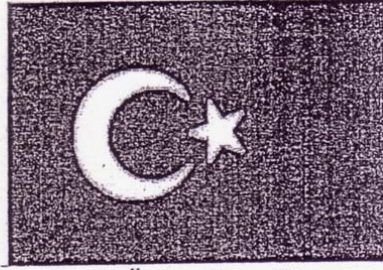


HAZİRAN 1998. SAYI:1. ÜCRETSİZDİR

The first issue of Elele Children's Magazine, 1998.

AVUSTRALYA BATI TRAKYA TÜRK OKULU

2004 OKUL DERGİSİ



Türk: Övün Çalış Güven
Mustafa Kemal Atatürk



Avustralya Batı Trakya Türkleri Derneği
103 - 109 Union Street, Prahran, Victoria 3181 Telefon / Faks: 03 9510 4889

Australian Western Thrace Turkish school magazine, 2004



Religious Information Guide, 1995

AVUSTRALYA'da ELELE



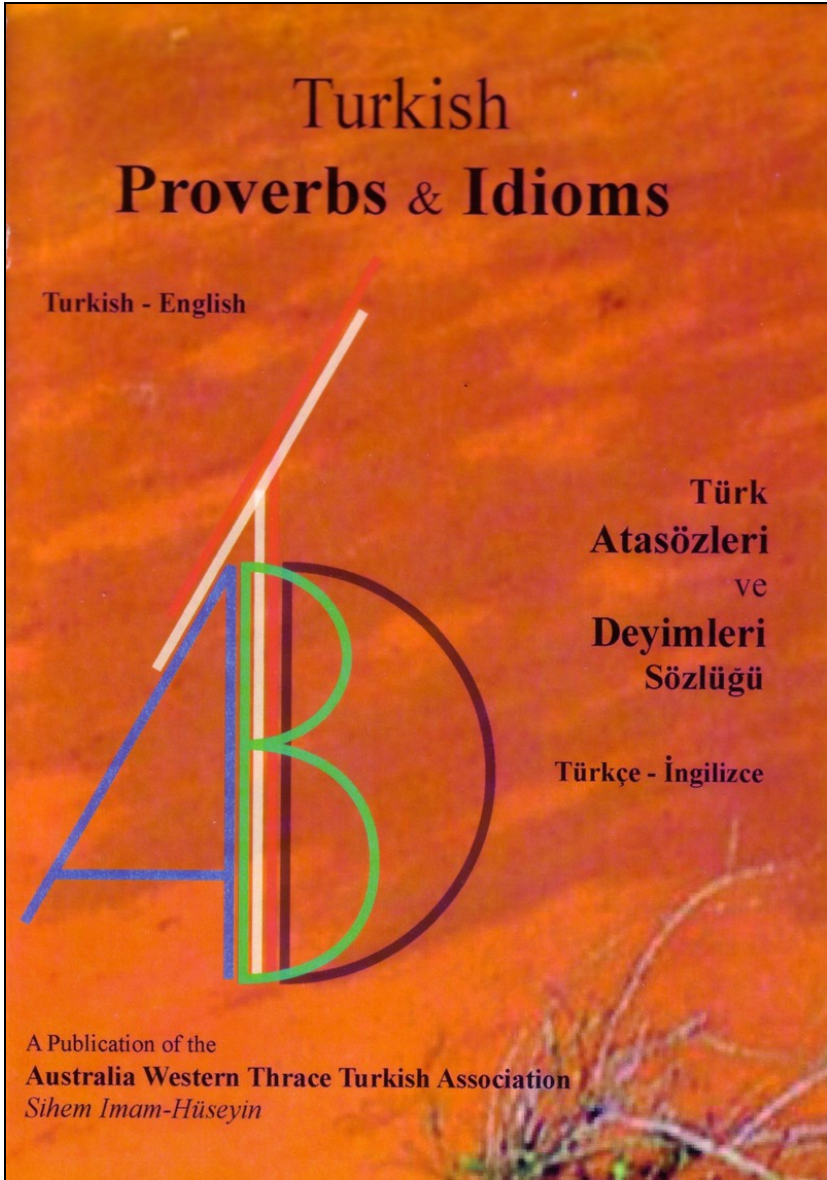
AVUSTRALYA
BATI TRAKYA TÜRKLERİNDEN
HİKÂYE VE ŞİİRLER



Yazar ve Şairlerimiz Dernek Binamız Önünde

Arka sıra soldan: Hasan Meyzinoğlu, Feriha Reşitoğlu, Neclâ Alioğlu,
Dursun Hasan. Ön sıra soldan: Nadir Celil, Sacide Dede,
Sayde Ahmetoğlu, Rukiye İbrahim

Literary Anthology, 1998



Turkish Proverbs and Idioms – a dictionary



Bir Sana Yandım Bin Şiir Yazdım – poetry

ASİL TÜRK TOPLUMU

Dur dinle !

"DÜNYA SEMLERİ: ÖZYURDUN SAYILAN, BU GÜN İSE YUNAN TOPRAKLARINDA KALAN"
CANININ BİR PARÇASI ÖZB E ÖZ MÜSLÜMAN TÜRK OLAN UATI TRAKYA TOPRAKLARINDA
CANI PAPANDREU VE YÖNETİMİ KAN KUSTURUYOR.

TÜRKÇE ÖĞRETİMİ YASAKLIYOR, TÜRK DERNEKLERİNİ KAPATILIYOR, CAMİLER
OKULLAR YIKILIYOR, EZAN SESİ SUSTURULUYOR, ELLERİNDEN TOPRAKLAR
ALINIYOR, BU ZÜLME KARŞI GELENLER ZİNDANLARA ATILIYOR.

UATI TRAKYA'DA İNSAN HAK VE HÜRKİYETLERİ HİÇ DÜNYANIN GÖZLERİ
ÖNÜNDE GAŞI EDİLİYOR. BU ACI FERYADA HİÇ BİR ÜLKE KULAK VERMİYOR.

AZİZ TÜRK TOPLUMU DUN KIBRIS'TA BU GÜN UATI TRAKYADA YAPILAN BU
İGRENCİ SOYKIRIMINI LANETLEMELİK İÇİN BÜTÜN GÜCÜNLE BU PROTESTO YÜRÜYÜ-
ŞÜNE KATIL.

AVUSTRALYA TÜRKLERİ KONSEYİ VE ÜYE KURULUŞLARI ADINA

YÜRÜYÜŞ KOMİTESİ

TARİH 5-3-1988 CUMARTESİ GÜNÜ SAAT 12.00 de

TOPLANTI YERİ.

FLAGSTAFF GARDENS

VICTORIA MARKETİ KARSISI

MELBOURNE

THE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN TURKS

INC

AVUSTRALYA TÜRKLERİ KONSEYİ

POSTAL ADRES P.O.BOX 285 BUNSWICK 3056
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

*One of the flyers by the Australian Western Thrace Turks protesting
against policies of the Greek Government, 5 March 1988*



An example of the reflection of Australian culture on the Western Thrace Turks: Graffiti on the wall of Yakup Halil's house

Chapter 6

Relationships of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish community

A sociological examination of the relationships of the Western Thrace Turks who have been living in Australia for 40 years reveals four different dimensions. In fact, these four dimensions are closely interrelated, with each one occupying a place of vital importance for the Western Thrace Turks. Let us look at these dimensions closely.

Relations with Western Thrace

Western Thrace Turks living in Australia have, most importantly, managed to preserve their identity as Western Thrace Turks in their new country. The vast distance between their homeland Western Thrace and the country they have migrated to and adopted as their new homeland is naturally the biggest obstacle in their relations. It is noteworthy that visits to Western Thrace from Australia began in 1972 (three years after the initial migration), at a time of difficult conditions. In time, visits have become easier and more frequent thanks to economic improvements and air travel. All members of the Western Thrace Turkish community have Western Thrace alive in their hearts. Compared to the Western Thrace Turks in Germany and Turkey, their relations with Western Thrace are limited, as can be expected. Through those who have subscribed to Western Thrace Turkish press, people try to follow current developments in Western Thrace.

News, commentaries and excerpts about Western Thrace are being published in *Avustralya'da Elele*. Among these are: 'Gümülcine in pictures' (Halide Boca, no. 10), Information about Western Thrace villages: 'Meşe' (Nadir Celil, no. 11), 'Domruköy' (Sihem İmam-Hüseyin, no. 16) and 'Sirkeli' (Feriha Reşitoğlu, no. 8). The following articles are also worth mentioning: 'Our Western Thrace and its Problems' (Feriha Reşitoğlu, no. 9), 'Dr Sadık Ahmet' (Memet İmam-Hüseyin, no. 14), 'I hold a Mirror to Ourselves' and 'Yantal Osman' (Hasan Meyzinoğlu, nos. 17 and 40), 'My Overseas Holiday –

Interview with the elected Mufti İbrahim Şerif in Western Thrace' (Feriha Reşitoğlu, no. 37), The Fifth International Congress of Western Thrace Turks 15–17 September 2006 (Participation of the Association president Mustafa Mustafaoğlu in this congress, no. 38) Also, the photography competition 'Landscapes from Western Thrace' in the 13th issue of the magazine ought to be mentioned.

In recent years, thanks to the internet and email, the Australian Western Thrace Turks are able to keep close contact with Western Thrace, Turkey and the Turkish world.

Relations with Turkey

The Western Thrace Turks living in Australia continue their relationship with homeland Turkey in various ways. There are some among them who completed their secondary and tertiary education in Turkey. When they visit Western Thrace and on their return, it is always via Turkey. Some have investments (homes, land, etc.) in Turkey. They follow closely all the political, social, economic and cultural developments in Turkey. Turkish television (TRT channels and commercial TV stations) are watched. Through these channels, relationships are established not only with Turkey, but Western Thrace and the rest of the Turkish world as well. (This development is of great importance in terms of the use of Turkish by the younger generations). The Australian Western Thrace Turks reacted with great sadness to the Marmara earthquake on 17 August 1999 and launched assistance campaigns. In the 29th issue of *Avustralya'da Elele*, this event was dealt with in detail with the following announcement:

**WE ARE INFINITELY SADDENED
BY THE EARTHQUAKE DISASTER IN
MOTHERLAND TURKEY**

We have lost thousands of our people, thousands were injured and thousands of our children were left without parents in the earthquake on 17 August 1999 in our motherland. We wish God's mercy on all those we have lost, condolences and patience to us all and safe recovery to all our injured. We embrace our children who are most affected by this disaster, determined to do everything we can from Australia for them to be able to lead normal lives.

Avustralya'da Elele – Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association, Melbourne

The Australian Western Thrace Turks are also in close contact with the embassy and consulates of the Republic of Turkey. The ambassadors and consul generals of the Republic of Turkey (as well as ministers from Turkey visiting Australia) visit the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association and address the association members. Academics and researchers from universities in Turkey conduct research on the Western Thrace Turks in Australia, in collaboration with the association.

Relations with the Turkish world

The first Turkish group to have come to Australia en masse were the Turkish Cypriots. In time, migrants arrived in this country from Turkey, Greece (Western Thrace), Bulgaria, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Tataristan, Kosovo, Azerbaijan and China (East Turkistan) and the total number of Turks exceeds 100,000. While the Western Thrace Turks tried to adapt to this new country and stand on their own feet, they have always been in

dialogue and solidarity with the other Turkish communities, primarily with the Turks from Turkey. More specifically, the two Turkish communities who have both experienced the Greek oppression have a shared destiny. The relationship between the Western Thrace Turks and the Turkish Cypriots in Australia is important enough to warrant an altogether separate study. Marriages by Western Thrace Turks are a case in point. Important leading names of the Western Thrace Turks in Australia such as Memet İmam-Hüseyin and İrfan Hafız-Hüseyin have married Turkish Cypriots. Specifically, Sihem İmam-Hüseyin, a Turkish Cypriot has become a bridge of love and of culture between the Western Thrace Turks and Turkish Cypriots in Australia.

When the first association building was bought, Turkish Cypriots became guarantors for the Western Thrace Turks. On 3 December 1996 a joint delegation of Cypriot and Western Thrace associations visited Canberra, conducted official talks in the Australian Parliament and the Turkish Embassy, shaping joint policies. The Western Thrace Turks made their voices heard on the Melbourne Ethnic Radio 3ZZZ Turkish Cypriot program. Articles about Turkish Cypriots in *Avustralya'da Elele* are another important detail worth a mention. Among those are: 'As we remember 20 July 1974' (Sihem İmam-Hüseyin, no. 9), 'Cyprus and 20 July' (Perihan Hafız-Hüseyin, no. 14) and 'Cyprus is burning' (Hülya Peker, no. 29). There have also been poems by M. Türkay Ilıcak, a Cypriot poet living in Australia, such as 'Yarıbuçuk Bir Şiir' (no. 32) and 'Kimlik Destanı' (no. 33), by Hüseyin Ziya, 'Kader Kardeşliği ve Batı Trakya' (no. 39), and by the late Cypriot Osman Nuri A. Hulusi, 'Bir Göçmenin Aile Derdi' (no. 14) and 'Türk Kardeşlerime Sesleniş' (no. 37).

The lecture by Professor Mehdi İlhan entitled 'Turks in the Balkans' during the cultural event organised by the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association on 21 September 2003 in

the Prahran Town Hall is another contribution not to be forgotten (no. 33). The activities organised by the Western Thrace Turks in Australia on 14–15 August 2004 were an important initiative in terms of the relations with the Turkish world. Turks from Turkey, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Kosovo and Western Thrace participated in these activities. It was also important that the Melbourne Consul General of the Republic of Turkey, Hasan Aşan, took part in the activities, giving the opening and closing speeches. The 34th issue of *Avustralya'da Elele* had wide coverage of these activities.

Feriha Reşitoğlu, participating with her poetry as a representative in the KIBATEK 17th International Literature Festival, has once again demonstrated that the Australian Western Thrace Turks are in contact with the Turkish world. (*Avustralya'da Elele*, no. 37).

Also, some of the media releases issued by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe and the Western Thrace Turks Research Centre in Germany have been published in *Avustralya'da Elele*. The following are some of these: 'Avrupa İnsan Hakları Mahkemesinde Batı Trakya Türkü'nün Zaferi' (no. 39), 'II. Uluslararası Batı Trakya Türkleri Araştırma Kongresi Sonuç Bildirgesi ve Değerlendirme Konuşması' (no. 39), 'Batı Trakya Türk Azınlığı tarafından Seçilmiş İskeçe Müftüsü Mehmet Emin Aga 9 Eylül 2006 tarihinde vefat etti' (no. 38)' and '5. Uluslararası Batı Trakya Türkleri Kurultayı Sonuç Bildirisi' (no. 38). Some of the activities of the American Western Thrace Turkish Association have also been published in *Avustralya'da Elele* (no. 37).

It ought to be added that Bosnians and Albanians who have migrated to Australia and who are closely linked to the Turkish culture are also in friendly relations with the association, that they use the association facility and follow the activities organised by the association.

Relations with Australian governments and the community

Western Thrace Turks who have migrated to Australia reflect the respectful and egalitarian approach of the administration towards them; have always been respectful of this country and her laws. As they have their share of the peace and welfare in this country as well-adapted Australian citizens of equal standing, they have never failed to fulfil their obligations. The Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association has had ongoing dialogue and cooperation with community organisations, local, state and federal politicians and representatives of religious groups in Melbourne (and in Australia) from the time it was first established.

The association building is constantly visited by politicians and the activities of the association appreciated. The ‘multicultural’ policies of the Australian Government provide exposure for Western Thrace Turkish culture. It should also be borne in mind that the friendly relations that have developed with Australia since Gallipoli apply to the Western Thrace Turks as well. The article entitled ‘The friendship brought about by the war fought 90 years ago’ which appeared in the 35th issue of *Avustralya’da Elele* is an example of this sensitivity. There have also been numerous news items and photographs throughout the 41 issues of the magazine demonstrating the civilised relations the Western Thrace Turks have in Australia, of which they are citizens.



Feriha Reşitoğlu serving coffee to Ambassador Bilal N. Şimşir, his wife and Consul General Cengiz Sanay during the Turkish Day in Melbourne on 12 October 1997



Ms Leonie Burke MP, State Member for Prahran with a group of AWTT Women's Association management committee and members, 19 April 2002



Bülent Arınç, Speaker of the Turkish Parliament, visiting the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association, 8 April 2005



Writer Serpil Ural and the Melbourne Consul General of the Republic of Turkey, Hasan Aşan, visiting the Australian Western Thrace Turkish School, 3 April 2003



The Victorian Minister for Multicultural Affairs, John Pandazopoulos, with Memet İmam-Hüseyin during his visit to the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association, 17 June 2004



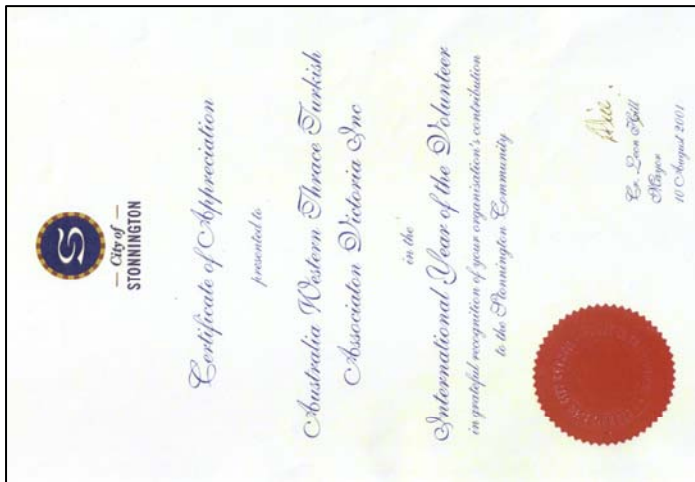
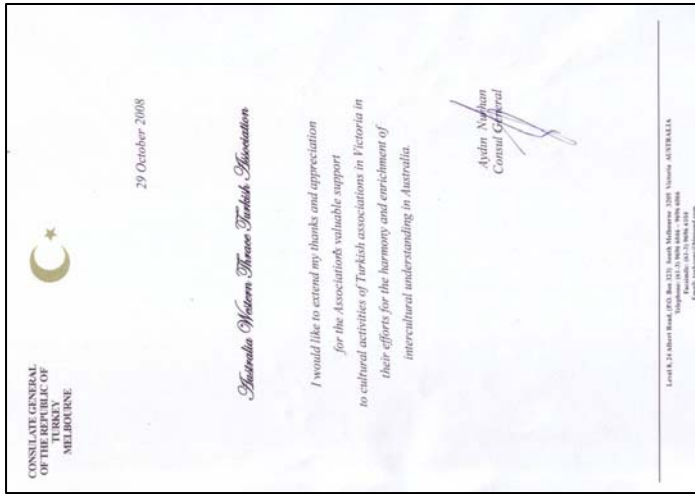
Australian Western Thrace Turkish Women's Association members at the opening of the Handicrafts Exhibition with local MP Tony Lupton and guests, 17 March 2004



*Ambassador Murat Ersavcı and Melbourne Consul General Aykut Sezgin
of the Republic of Turkey, visit the association,
10 November 2007*



*Mr Tony
Lupton MP,
State Member
for Prahran
and Cabinet
Secretary,
visited the
AWTTA,
28 August
2008*





A group of second-generation members, 3 November 2007

Chapter 7

Official opening of the association

Official opening of the AWTTA and the celebrations of 38 years in Australia

To have the official opening of the association building, achieved after arduous efforts by the Australian Western Thrace Turks, and to celebrate the 38th anniversary of their arrival in Australia, the management committee called a special general meeting on 15 July 2007. The majority decision was to have the official opening on 3 November 2007.

Every member was informed and invited by letter to take part in the organising committee of this activity. Those who accepted the invitation planned the opening, led by Sihem İmam-Hüseyin from the management committee. Those who accepted responsibilities undertook to ensure that the activities happened well and on time and to determine the program as summarised below together with the management committee:

- Preparing the invitations and the guest list
- Preparing the program and the speeches
- The opening plaque and stage requirements
- Handicrafts and photographic exhibition
- A short film about Western Thrace
- Thrace songs by the Music Ensemble of the association
- Finding or sewing Western Thrace costumes
- Preparing and serving cold food, sweets and drinks

The committee met frequently and managed to complete all tasks on time with the help of the management committee.

The Official opening of the association building and the celebration of 38 years in Australia on 3 November 2007 a great success, with the participation of about 200 members and guests. This event was covered in detail in the 39th issue of *Avustralya'da Elele* in Turkish and in English. Below are the invitation, the program, speeches, interviews, photographs, exhibition, epic and poetry presented on the day.

7 Official opening of the association

AUSTRALIA WESTERN THRACE
TURKISH ASSOCIATION
AUSTRALYA BATI TRAKYA
TOKLEKLEKLERİ DERNEĞİ

The Opening of our Community Centre on the 38th year in Australia
38. Yılımları Kutlarken... Toplum Merkezimizi açıyoruz



AUSTRALIA WESTERN THRACE TURKISH ASSOCIATION

3 Kasım 2007, Cumartesi
saat 14'te yapılacak olan
Toplum Merkezimizin açılışı
ile
Avustralya'da 38. Yılımları
kutlama gününde sizleri aramızda
görmele mutlu olacağız.

Program sonunda içecek ve yiyecekler ikram
edilecektir.



You are cordially invited
to attend the Official Opening of
our Community Centre
and
Mark our 38th Year in Australia
followed by light refreshments and
Turkish appetizers
on Saturday, 3rd November, 2007 at
2:00 pm.

ADDRESS: 102 - 104 Union Street
Windsor, VIC. 3181
R.S.V.P. By: 15-Oct-2007, to: Silem
Tel: 0439 209 545 or (03) 9313 1194
Email: silem.falgout@gmail.com

SUPPORTED BY: 

The invitation



*The
management
committee
members of
AWTTA who
accomplished
the official
opening
of the
association
building
in 2007*

The Opening Day program

	<p align="center">OFFICIAL OPENING & 38th YEAR IN AUSTRALIA CELEBRATIONS PROGRAM Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association Saturday, 3rd November 2007</p>
1.30 pm	Start picture slide show for guests arriving – by Murat Reşitoğlu
2.00	Start of the program Presenter Hülya Hasanoğlu (English and Turkish)
2.05	Tony Lupton MP, State member for Prahran, to present the Victorian flag to Mustafa Hasanoğlu, President, Australia Western Thrace Turkish Association
2.10	National Anthems (Australian and Turkish)
2.15	Mustafa Hasanoğlu, President, AWTTA for his opening speech in Turkish
2.30	Sihem Imam-Hüseyin, Vice President, AWTTA, for the opening speech in English
2.40	Mr Aykut Sezgin, Consul General, Republic of Turkey, to officially open the community centre
2.45	A speech from Mr Aykut Sezgin, Consul General, Republic of Turkey
2.50	‘Western Thrace and Western Thrace Turks in Australia’, Turkish speech by Mr Memet Imam-Hüseyin
3.00	‘Western Thrace and Western Thrace Turks in Australia’, English speech by Mrs Ayşe Aday
3.10	Poems from our children – Meriç Öz, Koray Hasanoğlu, Alara Öz
3.15	<i>Way of life in Western Thrace</i> : short documentary by Tolga İmam and Murat Reşitoğlu
3.30	A speech from Tony Lupton MP, state member for Prahran, Cabinet Secretary, representing The Honourable John Brumby, Premier of Vic.
3.35	A speech from Mr John Pandazopoulos, state member for Dandenong
3.45	The Publications of Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association English and Turkish – Sihem İmam-Hüseyin
3.50	Councillor Chris Gahan, City of Stonnington, speech and the launch of the book <i>Turkish Proverbs and Idioms</i>
4.00	===== A SHORT BREAK =====
4.15	Australian Western Thrace Turkish Classical Music --- Rumeli (Balkan) songs by Nadir Celil and his group
4.45 6.30 pm	Program closure speech by Hülya Hasanoğlu and start of a cocktail END OF COCKTAIL



*Invited guests and members filling the hall
on the opening day*

Speeches

All the speeches made in Turkish and English on the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association opening day are given below in full and as they were at that time.



Opening and hosting the program for the day – Hülya Hasanoğlu

Good afternoon distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,
My name is Hülya Hasanoğlu and I am your host for this afternoon. I want to thank you all for being present here today to join us in our celebration that is the official opening of our great

building and our 38th anniversary in partnership together with the City of Stonnington and the Victorian Government. Without either, this brilliant establishment would have been impossible. Having said that, our community members and leaders voluntarily worked very hard and committed their time and themselves, selflessly to complete this building works as soon as possible.

They deserve notable acknowledgement and honourable mention. Please join me thanking these people. Being a multicultural event, I will be presenting and introducing both in English and Turkish. Enjoy the afternoon.

The opening speech by the President, Mustafa Hasanoğlu
(Sihem İmam-Hüseyin gave the same speech in English)



‘TC Melbourne
Başkonsolosumuz Sayın
Aykut Sezgin,
KKTC Melbourne
Temsilcisi Sayın Hasan
Sayar,
Viktorya Çokkültürlülük
Komisyonundan Sayın
Marcia Pinski,

Prahran bölgesi Milletvekili ve Kabine sekreteri Sayın Tony Lupton, Dandenong Milletvekili Sayın John Pandazopoulos, Değerli dernek ve kuruluş temsilcileri, basın mensupları, misafirler, bu günün gerçekleşmesinde katkısı olan üyelerimiz ve sevgili çocuklar.

ABTTD yönetim kurulumuz ve üyelerimiz adına en içten duygularıyla hepinize hoş geldiniz diyor, saygı ve sevgilerimi sunuyorum ...’

**President's opening speech in English –
by Sihem İmam-Hüseyin**

Mr Aykut Sezgin, Consul General,
Republic of Turkey,
Mr Hasan Sayar, Representative,
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus,
Mr Tony Lupton MP, State Member
for Prahran, Cabinet Secretary, also
representing The Honourable John
Brumby, Premier of Victoria,
Commissioner Ms Marsia Pinskiar,
Victorian Multicultural Commission,
representing Mr George Lekakis,
Chairperson VMC,



Mr John Pandazopoulos, state member for Dandenong,
Councillors Chris Gahan and Sarah Davies, City of
Stonnington,

Representatives of associations and organisations, media, our
valued members, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish
Association executive committee, I would like to extend a very
warm welcome to all of you.

We are here today to officially open our community centre
and mark our 38th year in Australia.

I feel proud because we have achieved a lot with very little.
The building we currently occupy has been established as a
result of self-sacrificing members who either supported the
association financially, physically or through moral support.
Our member sacrifices have led us to almost wipe out the huge
bank debts we had incurred to complete the project to this
stage. The builders, traders and apprentices were all from our
own community who are members of the association. In short,
this structure has been built by our community for the
community through persistent hard work and perseverance.

Dear guests, in your presence I would like to thank all the association members who so willingly supported the construction of this building. I would like to congratulate our members for their huge efforts and support which made it possible to complete this project. This is our landmark and we can be proud of it. As always, I hope that we continue to unite as one to achieve much more in the coming years.

On behalf of our community I would also like to thank Mr John Pandazopoulos (former state minister) and Mr Tony Lupton MP, our state member for Prahran, for providing some financial support that allowed us to complete this hall.

The building has now come to a stage that satisfies most of our needs as a community. Our aspirations and objectives from this point on will be to continue to provide for the social needs of our community; and to educate and pass on our rich language skills, cultural and religious values to the following generations. Our aim is to generate and support initiatives and programs by individuals or other ethnic groups that will benefit our community in terms of those objectives. More important of course is our aim to raise well-adjusted, decent young people who will contribute positively to this country's future.

I would like to thank all of you for participating in our celebrations today. Have a great afternoon.

After the speech, Sihem invite Mr Aykut Sezgin, Consul General, Republic of Turkey for Melbourne, to officially open the Australian Western Thrace Turkish community centre.

Mr Aykut Sezgin, Consul General, Republic of Turkey for Melbourne, addressed the gathering and made the following speech.



I would like to thank the President Mr Mustafa Hasanoğlu and the members for inviting us to the opening of Australia Western Thrace Turkish Community Centre.

My wife and I feel privileged to be here today and have the opportunity to participate in this special event; Australian Western Thrace Turks are celebrating their 38 years in this country. They

came to Australia to build a better life for themselves and a better future for their children. In 38 years they have been successful and not only have been contributing to the economy of this country, but they have also made many contributions to Australia's rich cultural diversity and helped shape and create a harmonious society. I cannot let this moment pass without mentioning the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Women's Group and the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Classical Music Group. They have played an important role in promoting Turkish culture in Prahran and beyond, participating in many cultural activities with music and fine rare works of embroidery.

Today's occasion which brings us together is the culmination of lots of work until now since 1999 undertaken by the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association with valuable support and encouragement of the local and Victorian governments.

I would like to congratulate the President Mr Mustafa Hasanoğlu and the members of the association for their tireless efforts to make the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association centre – this magnificent building – a reality.

There is no doubt that each and every member's energy and enthusiasm have contributed in large measure to what we are celebrating today.

Ladies and gentlemen, before concluding I would like to wish all the best to you and it is my distinct pleasure to declare Australia Western Thrace Turkish community centre officially open.

Western Thrace and Western Thrace Turks in Australia – in Turkish by Memet İmam-Hüseyin

‘Honourable Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I start my speech in Turkish I would like to welcome you all to this important event and thank you for being with us. Enjoy the afternoon.

Sayın Misafirlerler ve Dernek Üyelerimiz,

Avustralya Batı Trakya Türkleri'nin bugüne kadar olan geçmişlerini şöyle özetleyebiliriz: ... İşte değerli misafirler, geleceğe daima umutla bakan Avustralya Batı Trakya Türkleri'nin hayatı bu. Teşekkür ederim.'



Western Thrace and Western Thrace Turks in Australia – in English by Ayşe Aday

I would like to say welcome to all our special guests and members of the association. Here is a translation of Memet İmam-Hüseyin's speech about our history in Australia and in Western Thrace.



Our ancestors first migrated to Western Thrace, after crossing the Strait of Dardanelle from Anatolia in 1362, and they lived in harmony and happily with local people and ethnic groups for over five centuries under Turkish sovereignty.

When the Ottomans withdrew from the Balkans, the Turks who wanted to live independently formed the Western Thrace Turkish Republic government in 1913. In history, this was the first Turkish Republic but was abolished shortly after and this flag you see is the symbol of all Western Thrace Turks around the world.

With the Treaty of Lausanne, which was signed on the 24th of July 1923, Western Thrace was surrendered to Greece. Under this treaty, Western Thrace Turks were going to be able to continue teaching and learning in Turkish and maintain their culture and identity as an ethnic group. The years that followed showed that slowly but surely the rights the Lausanne Treaty gave the Turkish community living in Western Thrace were taken away from them and nothing evolved in the way expected. Politics evolved in such a way that the Turkish community was denied their right to elect their own Mufti.

People have always wanted to live in countries which offer freedom of speech and comfortable living standards; and there was such a land, which was motherland Turkey. After the Treaty of Lausanne, a large number of people illegally crossed the border to Turkey and settled there for good.

The second wave of migration was to Germany and the third wave in the early 1970s was to a beautiful country we now call home – Australia.

On 23 September 1969, the Hacıoğlu family from the village of Kızılağaç was the first family from Western Thrace to migrate to Australia. The Australian Government offered every assistance to make the transition comfortable for newcomers. The Hacıoğlu family was taken to the Bonagilla Guest House before settling in the suburb of Prahran.

The first group of Western Thrace Turks arrived in Port Melbourne by ship and they soon realised that the rights and opportunities they were denied in their homeland they were going to find here in Australia. Their children's education was very important to them and they sent their children to state schools in their neighbourhood and in 1972 established their own weekend school so their children may maintain their precious culture and mother tongue. The Australian Western Thrace Turkish School continues to operate to this day.

As more people migrated to Australia, the need to form an association was felt more strongly and on 25 December 1971, community groups began to work towards forming an association. In 1976, a constitution was drawn up and the Australia Western Thrace Turkish Association was officially established.

Community activities resumed in a rented home. On 12 July 1978 a spacious house was bought by the community and was refurbished to accommodate their social needs. In time, this building was deemed insufficient in accommodating all community needs and it was sold.

On 9 November 1999, this building in Union Street was bought. It was nothing more than four walls. The community worked hard to restructure it so that it is functional and we have now come to this current stage in developing it. The Western Thrace community who were not ever supported in their affairs by the Greek Government, did not request financial support from the Australian Government to purchase this building. But in more recent years, a fair amount of financial assistance was sought and was granted by the local and state governments to improve the building. These grants were much appreciated.

The Prahran Council, now the City of Stonnington, has always shown support for this community. We appreciate and acknowledge the services, facilities and grants they provide for in support of ethnic groups. We would like to thank our local

and state governments for all the support they have shown us recently and in the past.

Our women particularly have made great contributions in introducing and representing our group to the wider Australian community with the cultural and social events they have organised. We recognise and appreciate their wonderful efforts.

Music is an art form which smoothes the soul and within our community a group of musicians have formed the Turkish Classical Music Group and have represented the Western Thrace Turks in many events. Later on in the program they will perform some 'Rumelia' songs for us. These are Balkan Turkish songs.

All individuals from the community have in one way or another contributed to the establishment and functioning of our association. There were those among us who have passed away now, who were once an integral part of this community. There were those among us who were not from Western Thrace but believed in our cause and showed us support in various ways. We would like to thank all for supporting the existence of this community and association.

The Western Thrace community is a peaceful community that has lived and will live in harmony among other ethnic groups. Our aim is to raise respectable community members who can introduce and share our wonderful culture with the general Australian public and to function within the guidelines of Australian Government policies for multiculturalism.

Dear guests, this is the story of the Western Thrace Turkish community who are very hopeful of their future in Australia. Thank you for listening.

**Speech by Mr Tony Lupton MP, state member for Prahran,
Cabinet Secretary**

It is real honour and privilege to be here with you to celebrate this wonderful opening this afternoon and as I was introduced, and also I am pleased to be here to represent the Premier of Victoria Mr John Brumby. Before I make some remarks of my own, I do have a personal message from the Premier which he has asked me to read out to you on today's occasion.



‘On the occasion of 38th Anniversary of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association, I send my warm regards to your association for the official opening of the community centre. The opening is a time of celebration. I commend everyone who has contributed to the building's construction whether it is by raising money or offering professional design or building services. I am sure the association and other community groups will benefit greatly from the facilities. I also commend the association for their achievements over the past year and the services they have provided for their members.

The Victorian Government remains committed to improving understanding amongst our culturally diverse communities to built trust, harmony and strengthen our cultural ties. We encourage more community groups to maintain, develop and share their cultural heritage and this is evident in this centre's opening.

Turkey's position in the cross of Europe and the Middle East has made it a nation renowned for rich and vibrant diversity. Australia and Victoria especially has been fortunate enough to share in this diversity with our own Turkish

community making a prominent and lasting contribution in all areas of society.

I commend the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association for organising the opening event. The range of age groups and numbers of people attending are attribute to the work of the organisers and is a reflection of the strength and engagement of Victoria's Turkish Community. I hope the afternoon is memorable occasion for all.

John Brumby MP,
Premier of Victoria'

Tony Lupton continued his own speech:

As your local member for Prahran I have been here many times over the years. I often come and share a pleasant cup of Turkish coffee on Friday, have a good chat and talk about local issues and politics and it is a wonderful feeling. It is a great community and great members. I have always enjoyed my visits here and look forward to have many more in the future as we go forward.

One of the things that I reflect on today, standing in this beautiful hall, is over those many years coming to this building, every time I have been here there have been members of the association working on making what was an old warehouse into this wonderful vibrant community centre that we see here today. And so, it is a great pleasure as your local member to have been able to make some contribution and work with you towards what we now see. In that regard I would like to pay great tribute to my friend and colleague Mr John Pandazopoulos from the state government and I am very glad that John is here today. Because in his formal role as minister assisting the premier in multicultural affairs, he and I worked so closely together to make sure that we can provide some funding assistance for the association to help with great work you have been doing. I am delighted that John and I are able to be here today to celebrate this wonderful event. The way in which

community centres are, they are often regarded as centres for communities. I think this centre here is a bit different. This centre is a community centre in many more ways than that. It is not just for the use of the community, even though that is important, it is a centre that has been built by the community and it is for the community. You worked so hard over the years to make this a reality and your contributions to it are embodied now in this great centre that you as a wider community will be able to use in the future. So it is a great compliment to you all that you have this wonderful facility. It is a compliment to your community, to your endeavours, to your enthusiasm and that really does embody the work you have done in those 38 years since that first Western Thrace Turkish family arrived here in Prahran.

I think we are very fortunate that the Western Thrace Turkish community decided to settle in Prahran. You have made a wonderful contribution to our local area, given your experience and you have shared that with our community in a very broad way. You have enriched our community because of it. You have made our community a diverse place and a more vibrant and more cosmopolitan place. Because of all those things I congratulate you for your work. I look forward to working with you again for many years in the future. You are doing a great job. This wonderful centre that is now opened today is a great tribute to all of that work. I look forward to coming here many times in the future to celebrate that with you.

Speech by Mr John Pandazopoulos, State Member for Dandenong (former minister assisting the premier in multicultural affairs)

John addressed everyone and talked about how the government works to support all communities. He mentioned how important it is for local and state governments to work together in supporting communities who have a vision, how hard Tony Lupton and himself worked to get some financial



support for our building and the handicraft exhibitions which our women's group put together. He continued by saying:

'I was very pleased to see the wonderful work you have done when I came through the door. Working together we can achieve nice facilities like this one. It is important to share ideas also. We support the women's group because they need to pass the culture to next generation. We are happy to support communities like you who worked very hard and achieved a lot.'

He talked about multiculturalism and migrants, how everyone should be proud of who they are, and the government making facilities available so that future generations will know what their ancestors went through. He continued:

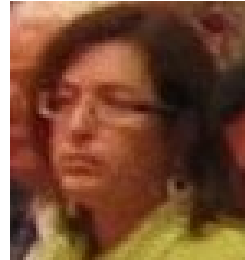
'I want to support you because I think you are wonderful people. Our cultures have a long, shared heritage and we need to remember those and the things that we have been successful at together, and that's what the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association is all about. It is knowledge of struggle, of survival and also knowledge of hope and the future. So thank you very much for inviting me to be here today. Thank you for the wonderful work you are doing. I had great pleasure working with you ... You keep supporting your committees,

you keep supporting your community and this community will keep growing in the future. The young people also grow up as Australian, also grow up as Turks and Western Thrace Turks. Thank you very much.'

Speech by Commissioner Ms Marsia Pinski, Victorian Multicultural Commission (representing Mr George Lekakis, Chairperson VMC).

'Consul General, Mr Tony Lupton, Mr John Pandazopoulos, distinguished guests and most importantly president, committee and members of the association.

I'd like to begin with congratulating you on the big achievements you celebrate at your centre today.'



Marcia explained the role of the Victorian Multicultural Commission and picked up on what previous speakers had said about how much the Victorian Government is doing for individual ethnic communities. Her response to that was:

'What might a country such as Australia have been like without the enormous contribution that our ethnic communities are doing around Victoria? When we are looking at communities such as the one gathered in the room here today, and all we have been hearing is what the Victorian Government has done. Really the benefits are not what we made available to go out to the communities but the benefits of our many communities coming back to the State of Victoria; making us richer, more able and providing a better quality of life for every individual of our community. So, I would like to thank you and congratulate you on your own achievements.

Just briefly before I finish: as a woman, I would particularly like to acknowledge the achievements of the women in the community throughout Victoria. And the work of your community and association, I would like to acknowledge that also.

My most sincere congratulations, and the Victorian Multicultural Commission looks forward for the future to continue to support you. Thank you.'

The publications of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association – by Sihem İmam-Hüseyin

'Honorable Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,
This is truly a great day for the Australian Western Thrace Turkish community. It is a great day for marking our 38 years in Australia as well as the official opening of our community centre.

It also gives me great pleasure to congratulate the Turkish people who have migrated from Turkey on their 40th year and Turkish people who have migrated from Cyprus on their 60th year anniversary.

The Australian Western Thrace Turkish community is proud of its history. The displays around the hall are some of their works and achievements. It is our job to make sure that the hard work of every Western Thrace Turk who contributed to the establishment of this association, the community centre, its development and who brought it to this stage is known. It's our responsibility to pass that on to the next generation and hopefully to the generations after that.

As we all know the best way to preserve history, events, literature, music or anything is by writing and documenting them. One of the Turkish proverbs says 'Hatırda kalmaz, satırda kalır' which means We can't remember everything but the lines of writing can. For this reason, the Australian Western Thrace Turkish community started writing their events from the day they arrived in Australia. Since 1993 the association has published a few magazines, three books and one literature anthology.'

Sihem talked about the publications and the importance of having the book *Avustralya'da Batı Trakya Türkleri* (Western

Thrace Turks in Australia) translated in to English for the benefit of all Australian communities, future generations and researchers. She added that the third book *Turkish Proverbs and Idioms* in Turkish and English was compiled by her and just published by the association. Sihem continued by saying:

‘I want to take this opportunity to thank our members, specially the seniors who have been contributing to this community for the last 38 years, to friends, sponsors who have supported the publication of this book and the official opening of our community centre together with the celebration of our 38th year in Australia. I would also like to commend our young members who took responsibility and supported this opening event with their ideas and hard work.

Last but not least, I would like to thank our main sponsor for the book, the City of Stonnington, and invite Councillor Chris Gahan to launch of our book *Turkish Proverbs and Idioms*.’

Speech by Councillor Chris Gahan, City of Stonnington

‘It is a great honour to receive this book, thank you, Sihem.

A lot of work went into this book and I was lucky to receive a copy last night for preview. The proverbs and idioms commence in Turkish but then go into English. Some of them are close to home.’ (Chris read a few proverbs and continued.)



‘Once you start reading the book, it is hard to take your eyes from it. I believe it is a book for all and not only for the Turkish community. You will enjoy reading the proverbs and idioms.

It has been an initiative of Sihem and her group to produce this book and the City of Stonnington was very happy to fund it and assist in making sure it is available for the public at large. I thank you, Sihem, for the great job you done producing this book, which will be enjoyed and will be around for long time. I also acknowledge the effort put in by the group Sihem mentioned before. I now officially launch the book *Turkish Proverbs and Idioms*.'

Chris Gahan joined the Prahran Council in 1966 and since then he has met most of the community members at school, meetings, other functions and when he started visiting us at our first building in Kent street and enjoyed drinking Turkish coffee. He also said that as a community we really participate in activities, meetings and specially the women ask questions and put their ideas across and do a lot for the community by attending the festivals and organizing handicraft exhibitions in order to share the culture with general Australian public. He concluded his speech by saying:

'I would like to thank and congratulate the president and all the members of Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association for their great achievements.'

Interviews

At the conclusion of the program, our camera operator conducted evaluation interviews with our guests and members. We present some of them here.

Interview with the Melbourne Consul General of the Republic of Turkey, Mr Aykut Sezgin

I am extremely pleased to be here today for the opening ceremony of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association's hall. I am honoured to have been invited to perform the opening. This facility is one of a kind, established

by a population of about 600 or so of our Western Thrace countrymen who have come to this country and worked with their 'hearts and nails' for 38 years to give themselves and their children a better life. I have been in Melbourne for one year now. I passed by here 10 months ago when the facility was in planning and hoped that this building in the heart of the city would soon be completed and utilised for a range of purposes by the Turkish community in Australia. I am very pleased today to see that this has eventuated. I congratulate all our Western Thrace Turkish countrymen with all my heart for providing us with such a wonderful facility.

Interview with Mr John Pandazopoulos, state member for Dandenong

Congratulations to the Australian Western Thrace Turkish community and what a wonderful celebration ... They came out here in 1969, settled in Prahran and now they have a new building.

Congratulations to everyone who has worked so hard and we in government have been inspired by you. Thanks to so many wonderful people in the community with so much passion and vision that made this happen and as a government we been pleased in the last few years to offer financial support to the community and building of \$50,000.

We wish you well, we thank you very much and it is a wonderful country, multicultural Australia. We intent to make sure we preserve it as multicultural country. It is a place where we can be good Turks, and be good Greeks. Keep up the good work and congratulations.

Interview with the president of the Australian Turkish Cultural Platform, Mrs Hilkat Özgün

I congratulate the Western Thrace Turkish community with all my heart. It's a fantastic hall. It has been completed with

enormous effort. We have been following news of its construction since the beginning. In fact, this place is very special to me because during 2003 we stored the toys here when we ran the toy campaign. We separated the toys here in this store room, packed them and sent them to Turkey. Toy libraries were established in Turkey as a result and so this building is very special to me. I congratulate all friends who worked here with all my heart. I know the Western Thrace Turks to be a very close-knit community who accomplish things in this country. I genuinely want them to be an example to other Turkish clubs. If we work together in harmony as a Turkish community, I believe we can achieve anything and again I would like to congratulate everyone.

Interviews with members of the association

Belkız Türyan: ‘It was a great day. Truly, having come this far after 38 years of work is very rewarding and makes one feel proud. Thanks, to the Western Thrace Turkish community.’

Perihan Hafız Hüseyin: ‘It was a very good opening. We had a greater turnout than we expected. The fact that our guests are happy with the service we provided has made us proud.’

Caide Haliloğlu: ‘A very nice day ... It’s been 38 years since we arrived. We are very happy with our lives, our friends and our association, and it will get even better. Australia has become our homeland. We got used to living here for our children’s future; we are happy and comfortable.’

Epic and poems

Three texts from guests invited to the opening of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association building on 3 November 2007:

A WESTERN THRACE EPIC

The views on the Australian Western Thrace Turks of Yılmaz Gürsoy, who was an invited guest at the Official Opening Day of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association community centre on 3 November 2007:

After the First World War, when the Greeks began to massacre the Turks, my grandfather and grandmother abandoned their home in Serez and headed towards İstanbul in mid-winter. My older uncle was a baby in those days. They trudged along snowy, muddy mountain roads for days and nights, during which my uncle froze to death in my grandma's arms. They left him alongside a road and continued their journey. They first arrived in İstanbul and then went to Bergama and settled there. Before the Turkish Fight for Independence, my grandfather moved to a region near Ankara where he began making leather shoes for the soldiers in the army. After the Fight for Independence, my grandfather and my grandmother returned to Bergama and had three sons and a daughter.

Years later, when I migrated to Australia as a grandchild of the suffering Serez immigrants, the first thing I did was to seek the Western Thrace Turks here. In the 1970s they would gather to pray and to socialise in a house they had bought in Prahran. During Bayram prayers, the congregation would spill out into the garden. For some reason, all of them followed each other and settled in the suburb of Prahran. It is a monumental coincidence that they selected one of the best suburbs of Melbourne. Their homes in this area are now worth millions. The few hundred Western Thrace Turks have held tightly to each other and worked hard to preserve their cultural and religious heritage for 38 years.

The community sold the small association building and the house they had bought for the hodja (religious teacher of Islam) and bought a ruined depot and began working towards turning it into a cultural centre. All this was built mainly by community volunteers in nine or so years; first they built the café and then

their prayer room. Later they completed the administration and meeting rooms, and then the classrooms for the school. Eventually they had an opening ceremony on the 3 November 2007 for the magnificent hall they had completed.

I am not exaggerating when I say ‘magnificent’. This hall has a capacity to hold 400 people. It has high ceilings; is tastefully designed; has carpets and parquet floors and a multimedia system. It is a fully functional hall. This hall which was admired by all the guests in the opening ceremony is the best facility available in the Turkish community. Our countrymen from Cyprus who came to Australia before us have a building on Ballarat Road. The Australian Western Thrace Turkish community hall in the centre of the city has become our second monument. It is possible to hold all types of conferences, weddings, circumcision parties, meetings and concerts here. Of course all activities will need approval by the committee members of the association. During the building of this hall there was perhaps a working team of 20 or so people here. The rest of the community showed their support through donations and moral support. There are lessons to be learnt from this small but determined community that has a population of a few hundred.

Yılmaz Gürsoy

THE BROTHERHOOD OF DESTINY AND WESTERN THRACE

According to Hüseyin Ziya, a Turkish Cypriot who lives in Australia, the brotherhood of destiny between Western Thrace Turks and Turkish Cypriots is a known fact. By meeting and joining with each other in Australia, they have strengthened this brotherhood. Moved by being invited to participate in the opening ceremony of Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association, Hüseyin Ziya wrote a poem –titled ‘The Brotherhood of Destiny and Western Thrace’ on 29 October 2007.

This poem consisting of nine quatrains was published in *Avustralya'da Elele*, no. 39.

Hüseyin Ziya compares Western Thrace Turks with Turkish Cypriots, and writes that they have the same destiny. With this poem he aims to assert that the Greek Government has been trying to intimidate and eliminate Western Thrace Turks by oppressing them, although they are dutiful and cooperating, respectful of the state's authority. He aims to express their resistance against this injustice.

He also emphasises that Western Thrace Turks will courageously keep struggling to protect their rights and will succeed in winning their liberty one day, like the resolute Turkish Cypriots. In the last quatrain of the poem he praises and congratulates the Western Thrace Turks who live in Australia on their community and social work.

Salah Nevres, although he was unable to attend our Official Opening Day, nevertheless contributed to it with the following poem:

INVITATION

When you cordially invite once
A caravan loaded with passionate love comes from Kirkuk
As the Silk Road bends in Bishkek
 The road of hope reaches the Danube,
 Komotini, Skopje and Sarajevo

I want to halve an apple in Samarkand
And to sit a bride from Tashkent on the saddle
And to weigh anchor from Ashgabat to Baku
 If I can pitch a tent for my bride in the Taurus
 Mountains
And wave my hand to beautiful Northern Cyprus ...

Salah Nevres,
Iraqi Turkoman Poet, Melbourne, 2007

7 Official opening of the association



*Members and guests at the opening ceremony
during and after the program*



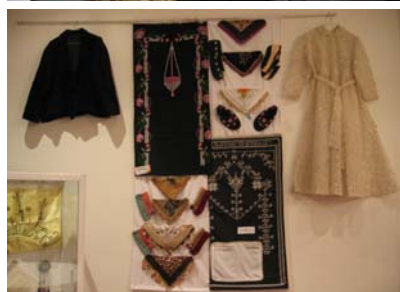
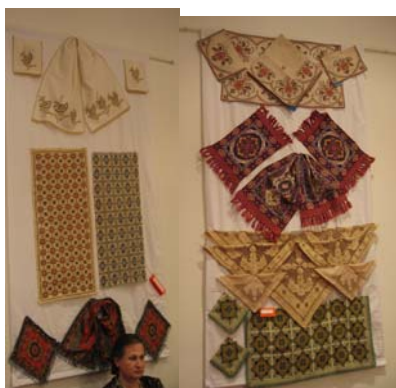
Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association Classical Turkish Music Ensemble directed by Nadir Celil



Australian Western Thrace Turkish Community Centre officially opened by Mr Aykut Sezgin, Consul General, Republic of Turkey, 3 November 2007

The association's opening day plaque

7 Official opening of the association



Some images from the Opening Day Exhibition

Western Thrace Turks in Australia



Photographs of association activities in 2007–08

7 Official opening of the association



*City of Stonnington
Viva Festival
2007*



Photographs of association activities in 2007–08



Dr Sadık Ahmet

7 January 1947 – 24 July 1995

*The leader of
Western Thrace Turks*

*He was elected as MP
to the Greek Parliament
in 1985 and 1989.*



At a court 1990



In his office 1993



At Alan field fair 1993

Chapter 8

Commemoration of Dr Sadık Ahmet

Australian Western Thrace Turks commemorated Dr Sadık Ahmet on the 14th anniversary of his death

On 25 July 2009, more than one hundred guests and association members participated in the commemoration of Dr Sadık Ahmet on the 14th anniversary of his death at a reception of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association in Melbourne. Among the guests were: a representative of the Turkish Consul General in Melbourne, Administrative and Social Affairs Attaché Mr Hüseyin Koç, board member of the Advisory Board of Turks Living Abroad, Mrs Hilkat Özgün, and Victorian Council of Turkish Associations President Yusuf Vanlıoğlu. Various association presidents, representatives and businessmen were also present.

‘The aim of our commemoration ceremony as the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association was to emphasise that the struggle Dr Sadık Ahmet initiated towards gaining rights for the Turkish minority is continuing in accordance with his wishes,’ said Sihem İmam-Hüseyin, who invited the guests to stand for one minute in silence in honour of Dr Sadık Ahmet to begin the program.

The association’s secretary, Ayşe Erten, first invited Alara Öz to recite a poem called ‘Trakyam’ (My Western Thrace) written by our member Feriha Reşitoğlu.¹ Then she called on the President, Hüseyin Meyzin, to give his opening speech.

In his speech, the President said that Western Thrace Turks are still struggling to obtain the rights that were given to them at the end of the fight for independence with the signing of the Lausanne Peace Treaty when Western Thrace Turks were left to Greece. He thanked guests and members for attending the ceremony.

A member of the association, Nadir Celil, in his speech ‘From Lausanne to This Day’, discussed the formation of the

Lausanne Treaty and clarified the rights given to the minority Western Thrace Turks who were handed over to Greece:

- The Western Thrace Turkish Minority is free to practise their religion, language and culture
- They will be able to teach Turkish using Turkish teachers in schools they have established
- They are free to elect their religious leaders and administrators
- They are free to practise their culture in any way they desire
- In conjunction with these minority rights they also possess all rights as citizens.

Nadir Celil also expressed that these rights given to the Western Thrace Turkish minority have been slowly taken away from them to this day. He gave some examples:

- The closure of establishments containing the word 'Turkish'
- Having no right to employ Turkish teachers for their own schools
- Restricting Turkish language instruction time
- Having no right to elect their own mufti
- Lately, a new policy has emerged where the imams have to be elected and employed by the Greek Government.

In conjunction with their minority rights, Western Thrace Turks have also had many of their citizens rights denied to them. The prominent ones include article 19, which allows the government to withdraw citizenship, denial of rights for Turks to obtain motor vehicle licences and denial of the right of Turks to buy and sell property. Now that Greece is a member

of the European Union, the Western Thrace Turks recently obtained citizenship rights but the article 19 issue still prevails.

Nadir Celil emphasised that the reason we are unable to retain our rights is due to the low standard of education attained by our people. He concluded by saying: ‘Today, the new generation of educated youth consciously observe the Western Thrace issue and the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe defends the rights of Western Thrace Turks internationally.’

After this speech, a documentary sent to the association by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe called *Western Thrace Turkish Minority ‘from Past to Present’* was viewed with interest.

Mr Hüseyin Koç congratulated the Australian Western Thrace Turkish community for commemorating Dr Sadık Ahmet in a ceremony and for continuing to pursue their minority rights. He also relayed the message that the Republic of Turkey is always on side with and supportive of the Western Thrace Turkish community in any problems they may face and matters they may pursue.

Our student Evren Haliloğlu then recited a poem called ‘Sadık Ahmet Ölmüş Dediler’ (They said Sadık Ahmet died) by Western Thrace poet and author İbrahim Baltalı.²

‘Who is Dr Sadık Ahmet?’ Association member Memet İmam-Hüseyin began his speech by stating that the Western Thrace minority’s struggle for their cause has not ended with the death of Dr Ahmet. He continued by giving succinct information about Dr Ahmet’s life. He explained that on completing his education, Dr Ahmet returned to Western Thrace and, realising that the education, economic and religious rights of the minority had been completely eradicated, he began his struggle to pursue these rights and Memet İmam-Hüseyin then gave examples of these rights.

Mr İmam-Hüseyin spoke of Dr Ahmet's signature campaign, where he had collected ten thousand signatures related to 'complaints and proposals' from the Turkish minority, which he handed out to participants of a meeting on 'Democracy and Human Rights' in Salonika in 25 September 1987. After this event, the Greek Government accused him of 'spreading false news and forgery'. He was given a 30-month jail sentence and fined 100,000 drachmas.

Mr İmam-Hüseyin then went on to talk about the protest that took place on 29 January 1988 in Komotini. The Turkish minority took to the streets protesting the Greek Government's decision, which stated: 'There are no Turks in Greece.' This protest in which the minority seeking their rights was seen as a revolt by the government and the police used severe force on the crowd. Mr İmam-Hüseyin ended his speech with Dr Ahmet's message to the crowd of protestors while he was being taken to jail:

I am being taken to jail because I am a Turk. If it is a crime to be a Turk, then I am reaffirming this here. I am a Turk and I will always remain one. With this message I am reaching out to the Western Thrace Turkish minority and telling them not to forget that they are Turks.

After this talk, a short documentary of Dr Ahmet's speech to the community at the Rodop Mountains during the traditional 'Alan Panayırı – yağlı güreş' (Field Fair – oil wrestling) was screened. A short extract from his court case in 1990 followed on the screen.

Siheem İmam-Hüseyin stated that the speeches and documentaries reflected the injustices inflicted upon the Western Thrace Turks in their own country, Greece, and as a result they have sought a better life for themselves and for their children by migrating to other countries including Australia. She concluded by saying that the Western Thrace Turks who

migrated to their new country Australia have all their rights and are free and contented with their lives.

A poem reflecting this happiness was read by Meriç Öz. This poem called 'Avustralyam' (My Australia) was written by Feriha Reşitoğlu, an association member.³

Towards the end of the day's program, the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association's Turkish Classical Music Group performed by singing some Rumelia/Balkan Turkish folk songs.

Siheem İmam-Hüseyin ended the day's program by thanking all who were involved in preparing for the ceremony and thanked the guests for participating. She then invited everyone for a feast of Western Thrace Turkish food and some friendly chatting to officially end the program.

Some photographs from the day appear below.



The students and their teacher Duran Öz



Hüseyin Meyzin, President



Alara Öz



Sihem İmam-Hüseyin



Ayşe Erten



Nadir Celil



Meriç Öz

8 Commemoration of Dr Sadık Ahmet



Evren Haliloğlu



Memet İmam-Hüseyin



Hüseyin Koç



AWTTA Turkish Classical Music Group



Guests, members and students at the commomeration



Management committee members of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association in Parliament House as guests of the state MP, Tony Lupton, 12 December 2004

Chapter 9

The Future of Australian Western Thrace Turks

The Western Thrace Turks who arrived in Australia as 'migrant workers' but became 'permanent Australian citizens' are generally happy with their lot. They live in peace and affluence in this country. There are of course human issues such as missing the homeland, relatives and friends left behind. However, it would be helpful to examine the way Western Thrace Turks view Australia, where they have migrated and been living for 40 years. Western Thrace Turks generally regard well the country that has welcomed them. The human feelings such as missing the homeland are understandable. The Australian Government and administration have, of course, no part or role in these difficulties. It would help to document the approach the Australian Western Thrace Turkish community takes towards the country in which they live. Here is the text of the handout Western Thrace Turks distributed during the cultural festival in Prahran on 19 March 1995.

Brief History of Western Thrace and the Thrace Turks

Western Thrace Turks, who inhabit the Thrace region of Greece, presently constitute a population of approximately 145,000.

Thrace has obtained its name from the Trak Tribe who settled in this region between 2000 and 1200 BC and despite the fact that it covers a larger territory geographically, Western Thrace lies within the Thrace section of Greece.

The history of the Western Thrace Turks began with the conquest of the region by the Ottoman Empire in 1364. After unsettled disputes in its political history, the Lausanne Peace Treaty, which was signed in 1923, recognised the Western Thrace Turks as a minority in Greece.

Until this very day, Western Thrace Turks who have longed for freedom, have sought consolation by migrating from their homeland. We, who have joined

this immigration, are currently residing in Prahran. By doing so, we have chosen Australia as our homeland and, having escaped the ‘minority’ status, we are proud and pleased to be living as free citizens in Australia.¹

Apart from this, it would also be beneficial to read carefully the sincere views of two Western Thrace Turkish women living in Australia. These two semi-literary texts, one called ‘Australia’ by Rukiye İbrahim and the other, ‘Oh! My Australia’ by Feriha Reşitoğlu, are interesting studies presenting the Western Thrace Turks’ perspective of this country and their difficulties. What needs to be stressed in these two articles is not their literary merit, but their perspective.

AUSTRALIA

One day I found myself in the middle of a beautiful garden in the likeness of the Garden of Eden. I didn’t even know why I had come here. After a long and exhausting trip, this enchanting beauty made my head spin. So this heavenly place, which I hadn’t even seen in my wildest dreams, was Australia.

This garden was so different that the babbling waters created a melody. What about the greenery? Dazzling greenery, diverse flowers with elaborate colours, chirping birds and dancing butterflies ... How different this garden was ... Were our gardens like this back home? They were small but our birds spoke the same language. They would understand each other’s woes.

While wandering in deep thought, I fell asleep. I had no idea how long I had slept but when I woke up and opened my eyes I was astonished to find how vastly everything had changed. That beautiful Garden of Eden was unrecognisable. The greenery had faded, the trees had grown old, the running waters had dried, the birds had increased in number and new black and white birds

had come here. The yellow and red coloured birds that were chirping and talking to each other caught my attention. AMAZING! They were all talking in the same language and were now sharing each other's grievances.²

Rukiye İbrahim

OH! MY AUSTRALIA!

In Australia
I boosted my earnings day by day.
I invested my money in banks
Due to the risk of theft
I insured everything
Against various dangers.
I set up a security system
Surrendering my house.
As I thought I was protecting everything
I got my children caught in you,
My Australia,
You made me sell my moral values
One by one.
You broke up many households
In the name of freedom.
You made me swallow my yearning for my homeland
Bit by bit.
You reduced me to silence with your dollars and
comforts
When I wanted to shout.³

Feriha Reşitoğlu

Despite such a rosy picture, there are some points that need to be made in terms of the future of the Western Thrace Turks living in Australia.

a) Migration (or asylum seeking) from Western Thrace to Australia is no longer on the agenda. And this results in a decline in the Western Thrace Turkish population in Australia. In the second and third generations, it is not uncommon to see inter-cultural marriages. Also, young people place less emphasis on marriage and more on higher education and their careers. The number of children for married couples is low.

b) Starting with the second generation, Turkish is no longer spoken well. The intense direct and indirect pressure of English affects Western Thrace Turks like all Turks in the country. It is pleasing to see that recently Turkish TV broadcasts (TRT and private channels), Turkish newspapers and magazines and theatre productions have been on the increase. Bilingualism is a reality for the Western Thrace Turks as well. Greek, which was spoken by the first generation, is forgotten by the second and third generations.

c) Western Thrace Turks do, of course, keep alive and develop their Turkish identity and culture freely in this country. The ‘multicultural’ policies in effect in this country form a positive support for the Western Thrace Turks culturally. This is the main reason for the frequency of cultural activities as represented in *Avustralya’da Elele*. Second and third generations, being educated in Australian schools, grow up being familiar with Anglo-Saxon culture as well. From the point of view of the future of the Western Thrace Turkish community, it is important that this cultural diversity be kept in balance.

d) Australian Western Thrace Turks are now generally quite well off economically. The difficulties experienced by the first generation to migrate have been greatly overcome and once the people realised they were here to stay, economic improvement occurred. The level of affluence here is not reached by Western Thrace Turks in other countries. There are unemployed people among the Western Thrace Turks living in Germany. This occurs rarely in Australia.



*Australian Western Thrace Turks community
leaders gathering, August 2004*

Part Three

PROFILES



*Australian Western Thrace Turks – Three generations together
11 January 2009*

Chapter 10

Profiles of Australian Western Thrace Turks

Every individual, every family in the Australian Western Thrace Turkish community has a story of their own. While mingling with them, I spoke to a great many of them, conducted interviews and listened to their stories. It is impossible to include all of these in this book. However, it was felt to be useful to present the biographies of some individuals in the Western Thrace Turkish community as they told them. As the book *Avustralya'da Batı Trakya Türkleri* was being prepared for publication, a letter was sent to all the members of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association, requesting their biographies and photographs. Also, in the 36th issue of the association's publication *Avustralya'da Elele*, a notice and a news item were published about this. Unfortunately, the response was less than we anticipated. The book in Turkish is unfortunately lacking in this respect. In fact, we delayed publication of that book to allow for a richer content for this section.

While our book in Turkish was being updated for translation into English, we once again approached our members asking for their biographies. Finally, we had some positive responses which allowed us to include here a total of 22 biographies of Australian Western Thrace Turks.

Our purpose in including the biographies of these members was to present their way of life in their homeland, their migration to Australia, the difficulties and hardships they experienced while learning to live with communities of different cultures. We also aim to show the reader how they have been successful in community life through personal sacrifice, while preserving their culture, and the comfortable life they lead as part of the Australian story. These biographies are the footprints the Western Thrace Turks have left in Australia over the last 40 years.



Nadir Celil

Nadir Celil was born in the Meşe village of Gümülcine in 1943. He was the first son of a farming family. After finishing primary school in his village school, he won entry into the free boarding teachers college and enrolled in the Hasanoğlu Atatürk Primary Teachers School in Ankara in 1958. Upon graduation, he returned to his homeland in Western Thrace in 1964. He served in the Greek Army between 1964 and 1966. He started teaching in the village of Bayatlı, close to his native village, in the 1968–69 school year. In 1971, his services were terminated by the Greek Government for unknown reasons. A short time later, he returned to his duties.

Nadir Celil already had the idea of going abroad while he was teaching in Bayatlı. He searched for ways of going to Australia as a migrant. Towards the end of 1972, he completed the immigration procedures and migrated to Australia with his family.

He first set foot in Melbourne on 30 December 1972. He was now in an overseas country thousands of kilometres away from his homeland. Although he initially found it difficult to adapt to this country, he got used to it with the passing years. He had difficulties especially with the language.

First, he started to work in the General Motors Holden car plant in Melbourne. Then he left that plant to work in the

‘Nylex’ plastics factory. While working in this factory, he attended the three-month full-time English classes that the government had established for foreigners.

In 1975, he left the factory, bought himself a fruit shop, and ran this business with his wife. In 1983, he sold this shop and bought a bigger fruit shop with a partner. They ran this shop for a year, and then sold that, too.

Nadir Celil endeavoured to establish an association with some of his friends while he was working in factories in the initial years. While he worked as a teacher in the first weekend Turkish school with three of his teacher friends, he continued his efforts to set up an association. Finally, after long efforts, the ‘Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association’ was established on 3 April 1976. This was one of the happiest days of his life. He was constantly involved in the association’s work and was a three-time president and secretary of the association. His longest term as president was between 2001 and 2006. During that period and afterwards, he put in a great effort to have the association community centre completed and renovated. As at various times in the past, he is currently on the Auditing Committee of the association.

Nadir Celil, who is also a musician, set up the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association ‘Classical Turkish Music’ group under the auspices of the association. He plays the ‘ud’ and has composed six songs. Also having a literary bent, Nadir Celil has published articles and poems in *Avustralya’da Elele* and more than 10 song lyrics.

There were 160 poets from 20 countries in the *KIBATEK International Anthology of Poetry* published in İzmir in 2008 and Nadir Celil, an Australian Western Thrace Turk, was included, with his biography and selected poems.



İrfan Hafız-Hüseyin

İrfan Hafız-Hüseyin was born in the town of Gümülcine in July 1946. Due to his father's occupation, he spent his primary school years in various places in Western Thrace. He completed his junior high school and trade education in Gümülcine. He studied to be a mechanic and electrician. However, being a Turk, it was impossible for him to find employment in Western Thrace. Because of that, he thought it was appropriate for him to go abroad to work after his training. He arrived in Melbourne on 11 February, 1971 as part of the sixth Western Thrace Turkish migrant group. It was thus that his life struggle here started.

İrfan's first job was in the Volkswagen repair shop in St Kilda. Some time later, he started working in the garage of a petrol station in Port Melbourne. Life alone without a family was hard. He decided to get married and married Perihan who was from Cyprus. They had two sons, Timur and Taşkın. In the meantime, he endeavoured to start his own business. He ran his own petrol station and garage for nine years. Then it was time for him to visit his family in Western Thrace. In 1985 he sold his business and went for a holiday with his family. Upon his return, he ran only the garage for two years. After that, he decided to try a completely different business.

In 1988, he started a bedding factory and is still operating it together with his older son Timur. He has been a member of

the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association since his arrival and contributes bedding to raffles in many functions organised by the association.

He has been a member of the association's Audit Committee since January 2008 and currently lives in the suburb of Oak Park in Melbourne with his family.



Memet İmam-Hüseyin

According to his mother, Memet İmam-Hüseyin was born as the Bulgarians were leaving Western Thrace at the end of the Second World War. The records show 14 February 1944. He was born in the village of Domruköy, on the slopes of the Rodop Mountains and where the best tobacco in Western Thrace is grown. He is the son of a family of farm workers.

When he finished primary school in 1959, prompted by his father he sat for the teachers boarding school exams run by Turkey. Being successful, he enrolled in the Hasanoğlu Atatürk Primary Teachers School in Ankara. In 1966 he graduated from the İstanbul Ortaköy Primary Teachers School specialised in teaching Greek to the Western Thrace students.

Upon his return to Western Thrace, he completed his two-year military service in the Greek Army. Like all young Western Thrace teachers, he was keen to teach in Turkish

schools. However, the oppression that applied to the minority generally was also applied to schools. Despite all his efforts, he was unsuccessful in finding a position. Saying ‘Australia, give me a hand’, he left Western Thrace. On 29 November 1970, he took a plane from Athens to Djibouti. From there, he continued his journey on the ship *Patris* and arrived at the port of Fremantle in Australia on 12 December 1970. Four days later, the ship dropped anchor at Station Pier in Melbourne, where he eventually settled.

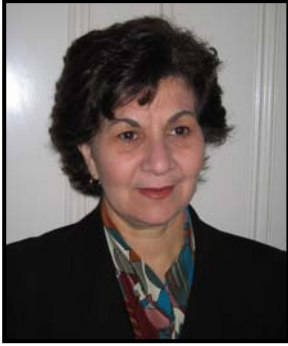
A short while later he married Sihem Mehmet, a Turkish Cypriot whom he had met on board. He had two sons, Özgür and Tolga.

In January 1971, he started working in the General Motors Holden plant. After working there for 14 years, he attended an electronics course. He started work in the Ericsson factory as a technician repairing telecommunications equipment and worked there for 15 years. Since 2001, he has been enjoying his casual work at the Polaris Communications Company, which specialises in the sales and repair of telephones and headsets.

Since his arrival in Australia, Memet has been active in the establishment and the activities of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association. He was the vice president of the management committee of the association in 2001–05 and as the education officer in 2005–06. In 2007, he was active in important Turkish festivals and the opening ceremony of the association, playing a great part in the promotion of Western Thrace Turkish culture.

He and his wife Sihem also intermittently publish *Avustralya’da Elele*, which is the publication of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association. He is currently a member of the Audit Committee of the association.

Memet İmam-Hüseyin’s ambition is to ensure that the Western Thrace Turks are recognised in Australia in a manner they deserve.



Sihem İmam-Hüseyin

Sihem İmam-Hüseyin was born in the Turkish village of Kurutepe in Cyprus in 1948. She finished primary school in the village of Yeşilırmak, and then graduated from the Nicosia Turkish Girls High School. Although appreciating what her family had been giving her, she came to the view that there was no future for her in Cyprus. Based on the information she obtained from relatives living in Sydney in Australia, she decided to migrate to Australia. She undertook the journey on 29 November 1970 with the support of her family.

Arriving in Sydney after a four-hour flight and a 20-day sea voyage, she started her life in Australia, initially living with her uncle and his family. She was aware that she would be able to overcome many difficulties easily, because she spoke English. She was happy to be able to meet her own expenses by starting work in the Arnott's Biscuit factory in January 1971. She moved into a better job soon after that and, marrying a Western Thrace Turk, Memet İmam-Hüseyin, whom she had met on the ship, she settled in Melbourne.

During her initial years, she worked in a number of places for short periods, so that she could look after her children. Then, completing a one-year typing and accounting course, she worked as a clerk and interpreter at St Vincent's Hospital for two years. During her working life of 23 years at Ericsson Australia she completed various courses, worked hard and with determination to improve her prospects. She worked in

different management positions. In her last four years as a manager, she successfully managed a unit of 15 people in the Customer Services Department. Since the closure of the department in which she worked in 2001, she has worked as the customer service coordinator in the Polaris Communications Company, which specialises in the sales and repair of telephones and headsets.

As well as having an intense and successful working life, she placed great importance in her family and enjoyed a quality life with them. As she passed on Turkish culture to her two sons Özgür and Tolga, she created every opportunity for them to be successful.

In 1994, she took part in the publication of *Avustralya'da Elele* through the Media and Publications Subgroup of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association. Since 1998 she has been the editor of the magazine. With the support of her husband Memet, she published the 41st issue of *Avustralya'da Elele* in July 2009.

During the years 1994–2006, she acted as a secretary, event organiser, document management and as an active member of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association Women's Subgroup/Women's Association. She was the vice-president in the 2001–05 period, and acting president between September 2005 and August 2006. Also active in the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association, she was a member of the Audit Committee in 2006 and the vice-president in 2007.

Sihe'm's aim through the activities of the association has been to pass on the identity, culture and history of the Australian Western Thrace Turks to future generations in a permanent way as well as to show the positives of the Turkish community in Australia to other communities. The many activities that carried her signature since 1995 can be given as examples of this effort:

- In 2008–09, she updated and expanded the 192-page book *Avustralya'da Batı Trakya Türkleri* that was published in 2006, and on behalf of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association achieved the publication of the 320-page book in English that is in your hands now.
- Commemoration of Dr Sadık Ahmet on the 14th anniversary of his death , 2009 – event organiser
- The dictionary of *Turkish Proverbs and Idioms* – she compiled, edited and published in Turkish and English, in 2007. This book constitutes a major contribution to multicultural Australia.
- The association's 'Official Opening ceremony and the celebration of 38 years in Australia', 2007 – she organised and managed the event
- The four 'Handicraft' exhibitions she organised as part of important Turkish festivals during 2007–08.
(Turkish Tulip festival and the 40th year celebration of Turks in Australia)
- Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of *Avustralya'da Elele* and Cultural Day, 2003 – member of event organiser committee
- An anthology of Stories and Poetry from Western Thrace Turks in Australia –she compiled and published in 1998
- From past to present Western Thrace Turks Cultural Day, 1998 – member of event organiser committee
- The Celebration of 25th Anniversary of Western Thrace Turks in Australia, 1996 – member of event organiser committee
- Prahran Cultural Festival 1995 – organised and run the project.

Despite having reached retirement age, Sihem enjoys her eight hours a day office work at Polaris. She said: 'Our life in

Australia has been better than we expected. I am gratified that I have been able to make the Western Thrace Turkish identity known to the Australian public.' Sihem currently lives in the suburb of Greenvale in Melbourne with her husband Memet.



Feriha Reşitoğlu

Feriha Reşitoğlu was born in the village of Büyük Sirkeli in Western Thrace on 17 September 1962.

She married Salih Reşitoğlu in 1979 and came to Australia in 1980.

She studied sewing at the Melbourne College of Textiles for three years and later established her own of clothing workshop business.

She was a founding member of the Women's Subgroup of the association in 1990. She was a founding member of the Media and Publications Subgroup in 1993 and in collaboration with friends, she started the publication of *Avustralya'da Elele*.

In 2004 she was awarded the 'Daughters of Atatürk Prize' for her services.

Between 2001 and 2005, she was president of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Women's Association.

She represented Australia in the KIBATEK 17th International Literature Festival held in İzmir on 3–5 December 2005.

She currently lives in the suburb of Prahran in the city of Melbourne, is married and has two children, Emrah (b. 1980) and Kevser (b. 1986).

In her spare time, Feriha Reşitoğlu enjoys reading and doing handicrafts, occasionally writing poetry, plays and short stories. She is in the process of compiling and publishing her poetry in a book entitled *Vatansız Kuşlar* (Birds without a homeland).

There were 160 poets from 20 countries in the *KIBATEK International Anthology of Poetry* published in İzmir in 2008 and Feriha Reşitoğlu, an Australian Western Thrace Turk, was included in it, with her biography and selected poems.



Salih Reşitoğlu

Salih Reşitoğlu was born in the village of Sirkeli, Gümülcine, in Western Thrace in the winter of 1957. After finishing primary school, he came to Australia in 1971 at the age of 14, with his family, who had decided to migrate. They settled in Prahran in Melbourne. He attended the Prahran Technical High School and sold evening papers after school in Chapel Street.

During this period, he became interested in music with the encouragement of his elder brother and within a short time learned to play the 'bağlama', which was a present from his father. He had tuition from two 'bağlama' teachers. In 1975, he and his elder brother Şerafettin Reşitoğlu formed the band Bozkurtlar, with some friends.

Salih left school to work at a printer's. In November 1978 he travelled to Western Thrace for a holiday. This turned out to be a long holiday, as he fell in love with the girl who was later to become his wife. During the fourth month of his holidays, they were engaged and six months later, got married. During this period, he was involved in music with the Gümülcine Turkish Youth Association. He performed on stage in various celebrations and functions and conducted 'bağlama' classes for the village youth.

Around the beginning of 1980, he returned to Australia with his wife Feriha Reşitoğlu. Their son Emrah was born in August of the same year. He went back to his work at the printer's. From time to time he performed with various bands in Melbourne. He performed in functions at the request of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association. He spent more of his time with his wife and his son. Following the long holiday they had in 1984 in Western Thrace, he and his wife started their own business. During this period, he did a course on sewing machines in the Melbourne College of Textiles.

In 1986 his daughter Kevser was born. In 1987, when his son started school, he worked as the education officer in the management committee of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association and continued in this function uninterrupted for eight years (1987–94) until his son finished school.

Between 1995 and 1998, he assisted the Media and Publications subgroup with the publication of *Avustralya'da Elele* and with the 3ZZZ Cypriot Turkish Radio program, collecting news from Western Thrace and assisting with the

broadcasts at the control booth. In the same period, the music subgroup of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association was established and he continued to perform classical Turkish music at cultural functions and festivals, replacing his 'bağlama' with the 'kanun'. He played volleyball in the association team, goes on occasional walks and cycles.

In 1997, he was chosen as Father of the Year by the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association Women's Subgroup.

In 1999 and 2000, he was elected a member of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association's auditing committee.

He was the treasurer of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association in 2001–02.

During 2003–04, he continued his social activities in the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association.

While involved in making music Salih became interested in Turkish Sufi music. He took part in the Australian 'Mevlevi Sema' group as a musician. This style of music, which became very popular in Melbourne, soon became very well known. He imparts information about Sufism within the context of the Inter-faith Dialogue supported by the Australian Government and Amnesty International. For the first time in 2003 during Ramadan, he and his friends gave a concert of Sufi music at Parliament House in Canberra and at Parliament House in Melbourne in 2004 at the breaking of the fast meal.

To be able to concentrate more on outside activities, he ceased his musical activities within the association in 2007.

He, his friend Peter Daverington the naï player, his elder brother Şerafettin and four musicians of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra formed the NEFES Ensemble to introduce Turkish music to Australia, with their first trial CD coming out in August 2008 and their first concert being on 20 October 2008. They have introduced Turkish music and

musical instruments in some public and private schools in Melbourne. This project is ongoing.

With his friends, he presented examples of Sufi music in a seminar at Monash University in 2008 and during the breaking of the fast meal at Government House in Melbourne.

The group gave a one-hour live broadcast during the morning program of Radio 3MBS FM, broadcast in English in Melbourne on 10 October 2008. Their efforts continued in a serious vein during 2009.



Halide Boca

I was born in the town of Gümülcine in Western Thrace on 26 June 1959. My mother, father, brother and I came to Australia as migrants on 16 December 1970. The things I remember as an 11-year-old child are the train travel from Gümülcine to Athens, the air travel from Athens to Djibouti and the sea voyage from Djibouti to Melbourne. After that, it was the new life in Australia.

My father, the carpenter Mehmet Arifoğlu who brought us here, passed away on 14 December 2001. My mother is Maide, the daughter of Küçük Mümin. I also have a brother, Halit.

I attended primary school at the Osmaniye Turkish School in Gümülcine. I started high school in 1971 in Australia at the Prahran High School. While I was studying at school, I worked in a shoe shop to earn some pocket money.

The initial years were very difficult. My mother always wanted to complete the two years and return to Western Thrace. My father was of the view that life would be better for us in Australia. I spent my youth in Prahran and Richmond in Melbourne. Currently, I live in Prahran. I have worked for an interpreting agency since I was 17. I interpret for Turks and Greeks. Interpreting allows me to better understand people.

I got married when I was 21 years old. My husband is Nurettin from the village of Sofular in Western Thrace. I have two sons, Nuri and Dilhan. I have a happy family life and this happiness is the basis for my success. One of my hobbies is reading coffee cups. When I sit down and have coffee with my friends, I end up being their fortune-teller. I use this hobby to contribute to our association's budget in festivals involving our association by reading coffee cups.

My children love soccer. My husband and I enjoy going to the matches of the teams they play in. I like colourful clothes with glitter and sequins.

As for community activities, I enjoy not just being an ordinary member, but helping my friends in their tasks in our association and the Women's Subgroup and contributing as much as I can.



Fatma Hüseyin

I was born in the village of Bayatlı in Western Thrace on 20 March 1945. I left my village where I spent my childhood and youth when married on 18 April 1965. I went to the village of Sarıca with my husband Ahmet Hüseyin. During the fifth year of our marriage, we came to Australia as migrants seeking a better life. Come we did, but as someone who was born and raised in a village, I found city life very boring. I also found myself in an environment that was different from my native tongue and culture.

My first job in Australia was as a seamstress. However, because of low pay, I left this job very soon. I started working in the Red Tulip chocolate factory in Prahran where other Western Thrace women worked. My husband and I worked very hard and bought our first home within the second year of our arrival. While we were working very hard to pay off our mortgage, our first son Özcan was born on 16 August 1974. As most migrants did at the time, my husband worked nights and I worked during the day to be able to look after our child. Our second son Tezcan was born on 18 March 1976.

Following the birth of our second child, I started sewing at home. My husband and I worked day and night to be able to give our children the educational opportunities here that we were unable to have back in Western Thrace. I believe that we have succeeded in doing this. Both our children graduated from

Monash University in Melbourne. My older son Özcan graduated in electronics and my younger son Tezcan graduated as a computer engineer as well as gaining a diploma in psychology.

Alongside all this hard work, I willingly worked and I still work in all the activities of the association that we established when we arrived here as well as the Women's Subgroup. Due to my interest in the theatre, I have played lead roles in theatre productions about Western Thrace staged by the Women's Subgroup.

In 1995, I was the president of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association Women's subgroup. I was pleased to be able to organise trips and entertainment that our women requested and so make them happy. I have always undertaken duties in cultural activities and festivals organised both by the Women's subgroup and our association. Cooking traditional dishes such as 'gözleme', 'çörek', 'nohutlu pilav' and 'aşure' has to be on top of my list. I started work as the president of the Women's Subgroup in August 2006 and I am still in this position. As the president of the Women's Subgroup, I organise entertainment, trips, mother's day and father's day activities to please our community. We, as a group of woman members, attend the dinner organised by our local council twice a year and assert our existence.

My sons Özcan and Tezcan both got married. I have two grandsons and a granddaughter. When I look back on our 40 years in Australia, I can say that despite all the difficulties, we are pleased with the outcome and happy as a family.



Hüseyin Meyzin

This journey started 64 years ago. I was born with my twin in the village of Küçük Doğanca of Gümülcine in 1945 as the second son of the family. When another child arrived two years later, we were four children.

My childhood years in the village were enjoyable. I was so hard to manage that those memories would fill pages. Unfortunately, responsibilities increased as I grew older. As I got older, I had to work in the fields. I didn't have much to do with schooling. After finishing primary school, I did not attend high school. And in those days we were not really encouraged to do so, anyway. What I loved most was being in nature and I found my niche in life in the fields and raising sheep.

After completing my military service, I was introduced to a girl from the village of Sofular who was to share everything sweet and mostly bitter things with me until this day. When our two hearts felt the same, we got married in 1969 and our daughter was born in 1971. In 1972, I made a crazy move and went to Germany on my own as a labourer. However, this adventure did not last longer than two months. I desperately missed my family.

In 1974, we decided to join my elder brother, who lived in Australia. Our intention was to work for a few years, save some money and go back to our country. We are still here thirty-five years later.

Our initial years here were not easy. I found not speaking the language especially hard to take. However, as years passed, we grew roots and it became harder to move from where we were. Settling in Turkey did cross my mind, but the idea did not persist for long. We were Australians now. There was no return.

I started work as soon as I arrived in Australia; after all, wasn't this why we had come here? I worked in foundries (metal and steel industries) generally. I cannot say I liked these sorts of jobs but the aim was to earn money. Without education, we could not be selective in the jobs we accepted. With the closure of the factory I worked in, I retired in 1998. It was not at all hard to say farewell to foundries.

Being in a new country, we were yearning for an environment to share our problems, our past and most importantly, our future. We did not know about other cultures and did not understand them. These thoughts prompted us to set up our first association in my elder brother's bungalow. From that point on we spread our wings.

Let us go back to 1981 now. This was a year that changed my family's life in every way. My son was born – together with his bad fate. He was diagnosed as autistic when he was four. Initially we thought, there must be a mistake, but eventually had to accept the truth. This darkened our lives. What kind of illness was this that we had to suffer? It was as if the whole family lost the will to live. But God gives one the strength in every case.

To become a member of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association and its management committee was a kind of psychological therapy for me. I enjoy association and community work – it is very important to belong to a community. The advantages of this may not be obvious now but they will become clearer in the coming years. We strive to provide an identity for our children. My duties in the management committee have been: treasurer in 2004 and 2005,

Auditing Committee member in 2006, president in 2008 and 2009. I also enjoyed working hard to complete the internal construction work of our association community centre together with the management committee and the members.

In 1995, my daughter married a young man she had met in Turkey. In 1998, I was fortunate enough to become a grandfather. In 2002, my second grandchild was born.

This way or that, we have lost our youth in this country. Days spent away from friends and relatives. However, we found new friends among our countrymen at this end of the world – friends with whom to share our past and our future. Now a holiday back in the homeland feels very nice, but coming home to Australia feels even better.



Mustafa Mustafaoğlu

I was born in 1961 in the village of Ircan (Arizvi), in Komotini (Gümülcine), Greece. When I was in Grade 4 in primary school in the village, my father applied to go to Australia as a migrant and he decided we would go as a family. We travelled to Australia from Athens in 1971 and our voyage lasted 33 days. We arrived in Melbourne on 14 June 1971 and settled here with the help of families who had arrived previously. In those days, everyone came with a couple of suitcases and two

families shared a house because they were new in the country. My father started working in a car factory and my mother in a chocolate factory. My elder brother and I started school. We could speak no more English than 'yes' and 'no'. I cannot forget my first day at school. I found out later that the teacher had asked the pupils to stand up and say a few things. But not knowing more than two words, I remember crying.

I attended high school in 1974–80, worked in a supermarket for three years to earn some pocket money, and then was retrenched because I had turned 18. In 1981, I did some interpreting work. In 1982–87, I worked as a clerk and assistant in an organisation.

In 1985, I married my wife Semra. In 1986, our daughter Melek was born. In 1988, I got into business by opening a take-away shop. In 1994, I sold the business and we went to Turkey as a family. A year later, we returned to Australia.

In 1996–2000, I worked in a petrol station. When the business changed hands, the workers were sacked. Since 2000, I have again been working in a supermarket.

I was elected the secretary of the Western Thrace Turkish Association in 1982. Since that time I always tried to serve our association and our community as the secretary a number of times and twice as the president. In the annual general meeting of 13 January 2008, I was elected to the management committee. And the management committee appointed me as the association secretary, a position I still occupy.



Ayşe Aday

I was born in the village of Kalender near the town of Gümülcine in Greece in 1964. I migrated to Australia with my family in 1971 when I was not yet seven years old. Although I have spent most of my life in Australia, I see myself primarily as a Turk.

I spent most of my life in Australia in the suburb of Prahran in Melbourne where Western Thrace Turks concentrate. My high school period was spent at the Richmond Girls High School. Both in the weekend Turkish school of our association and in the mainstream schools, most of my close friends were Turkish. I gained entry to the Faculty of Education of Deakin University in 1983. It was said that at the time there were only two Turkish students in that university, and I was one of them. In the meantime, I had to interrupt my university education for a long time after getting married and only returned to it in 1993 and completed it. This time I took Turkish classes on top of my teaching classes in the Toorak campus of the university. I kept running between the two campuses. In 1997 I graduated as a teacher of Turkish and English.

I had completed this course under difficult conditions, with two young children. While attending university, I also worked as an interpreter in lawyers' chambers, in hospitals and in courts for three years.

In 1995, soon after completing my teaching qualifications, I was appointed to my first job as a teacher. I taught Turkish to Year 11 and Year 12 students at the Geelong Weekend Language School for two years. Later, I taught Turkish to Grade 5 students for one year and to Year 11 students for two years at the Dandenong Weekend Language School. I also had the opportunity to work for the Turkish oral exams of the state of Victoria. In the meantime, I was also employed as a full-time primary school English teacher at the Minaret College. Since 1998, I have been teaching English at primary and secondary levels at the Minaret College.

In 1999, I started teaching Turkish to Year 9 and Year 10 students at the Australian Western Thrace Turkish School. The next year, in 2000, I became the principal of the school. This was the small but cosy Turkish school of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association. In this school in Windsor, I taught Turkish to different classes as well as being the principal for nearly six years.

Before starting to work at the Australian Western Thrace Turkish School, I had various duties in the Women's Subgroup of the association for three years. These were enjoyable duties affording me the opportunity to get to know our women and our community better. I had started as the assistant president of the Women's Subgroup in 1994. I was the secretary in 1995 and was elected the president in 1996. The Women's Subgroup aimed at meeting the social needs of our women first of all, be they young or old. The subgroup organised activities such as excursions, dinners, entertainment, plays, handicrafts, Qur'an classes and information classes about female illnesses.

For about 10 years, I have been living with my husband Salih and my sons Cihan and Oktay in our own home in Springvale in Melbourne. It must be because Springvale is a multicultural area that I feel very much at ease here. Our next-door neighbour to the right is an Italian. My neighbour to the left is Greek and across the road, one is a Serb and one is

Asian. We all get along well. Two streets away lives my Indian friend Kurat, who is our school's librarian. We both work at the Minaret College in our neighbourhood. The Greece Turkish Association of Australia is also within walking distance.



Emrah Reşitoğlu

Emrah Reşitoğlu was born on 25 August 1980 in Melbourne to first-generation Turkish migrants Salih and Feriha. He had the opportunity to observe, live, experience and grow under both Turkish and Australian cultural influences. By keeping the best of what both traditions have to offer he has been able to maintain his uniquely multicultural identity.

He completed his Victorian Certificate of Education in 1998 at Hawthorn Secondary College and soon after went on to study a double degree in Commerce and Arts at Deakin University. While studying towards his degrees, he volunteered for the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind and commenced a part-time sales position at David Jones, where he remained until his graduation. This provided him with the means to pay his university tuition fees and taught him valuable people skills that would prove useful in any career. Balancing work and education commitments proved to be no easy task, however he quickly learned how to deal with competing demands.

Emrah graduated from Deakin University in 2004 with majors in Economics and International Relations. Soon after, he embarked on a six-month holiday to Turkey and Western Thrace where he had the opportunity to find out more about his heritage first-hand and spent time with his close relatives, some of whom he had not seen in more than 13 years.

On his return to Australia he commenced his professional career, working for one of the world's leading insurance providers American International Group (AIG). Within a couple of years, he was promoted to the position of subject matter expert.

In early 2005, he was appointed to the executive committee of the Western Thrace Turkish Association of Australia, and actively volunteered in secretarial and administrative duties until January 2008.

In 2007, Emrah commenced his studies for a Graduate Diploma with the University of the Sunshine Coast. Currently he is furthering his studies in the field of financial planning and continues to work at AIG. He married his college sweetheart Esra Öz on 23 January 2009.



Feyiz Mehmet

According to what my mother told me, my father left to do military service at the end of November 1940 on a winter day. During the war years, I was born in the village of Küçük

Müsellim, which is one of the plane villages of the township of Şapçı, in Western Thrace, in Greece. When I was in Grade 2 in primary school, my mother told me that my father was coming back from the army. The next day my father came with some white town bread. The aroma of that bread is still with me.

There were no schools in our village during those years. As far as I can remember, we were 25 pupils in a room in the mosque. Our teacher was Hafız Osman from Şapçı. We studied using the old alphabet (Arabic script). We started on the Turkish alphabet (Latin script) when I was in Grade 3. In a Turkish book printed in Greece were short segments of Greek history, poems and short stories. That little book had made us all so happy. However, we all had to restart our education from Grade 1 using the Turkish alphabet. While the school continued in a room in the mosque, a new teacher called Salih came and told us ‘I have good news for you, children.’ We all stood up. We turned to our teacher Hafız Osman who said, ‘Our new school building will be built soon and we will all have desks and chairs to study.’ We were all smiling. I attended this new school and finished it in 1955. This school is still functioning in the village of Küçük Müsellim.

I started doing farm work with the older people in my family. I left to do my military service on 13 April 1962. On 6 April 1964 I completed the service and returned home to my village.

I married my fiancée Nafiye from the village of Evren on 14 December 1964. I had always wanted to go abroad. In agreement with my wife, we strove to achieve this aim. On 6 December 1966, our son Necati was born. When a relative returned from Turkey, he brought back a 50-page booklet about Australia in Turkish, full of nice pictures. The photographs of flocks of sheep, herds of cattle and of horses were very interesting to us. We became curious about this country. We found out that the first group from Turkey went to Australia in

1968 and got information about the consulates and about applications.

I went to Salonika, the closest city. There were big crowds at travel agencies. When it was my turn, the employee asked me where I was from. I said 'from Gümülcine'. The old employee who spoke Turkish, said, 'The roads are closed for Thrace; don't waste your time or money.' I got the application forms nevertheless, filled them out and sent them to Athens. Some time later, I had a reply from Athens. It said, 'We don't take workers from Thrace.' At the end of 1969, I filled out the forms again and sent them to Athens. The letter telling us that we had been accepted into Australia as migrants made us very happy. On 3 February 1970 we took the train from Gümülcine to Athens. Two days later, we were taken to the airport. The passengers' names were read from a list and their passports handed out. The passengers were flown to Djibouti and accommodated in the ship *Patris*. It took two days to bring the passengers from Athens.

After a long sea voyage, we arrived at the port of Fremantle in Australia on 3 March 1970. After wandering around a little, we continued our journey and arrived at Port Melbourne two days later. We settled with the first family that had come to Prahran. In our second week in Australia, I started work in the General Motors Holden plant and my wife Nafiye in the Red Tulip chocolate factory. We saved a little money and rented a house on our own. We took in some relatives who had just arrived in Melbourne to live with us.

Our daughter Müzeyen was born on 10 August 1976. After working for 25 years and my wife working for 20 years, we retired. We came as migrants, stayed as citizens. Being an Australian citizen means living in harmony with all the ethnic communities in this country.

I have been a member of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association since it was first established. It makes me happy to support the development of the association in material

and non-material ways. I am also proud to be part of the second family to have come from Western Thrace to Australia. It is the duty of all of us to take part in the activities, to be an integral part of the community and to sustain our existence.



Sabriye Abdurrahman

Sabriye Abdurrahman was born in the village of Ircan in Gümülcine in Western Thrace on 20 December 1957. She was the first child of the family. In 1970, at the time she finished primary school, her father suddenly made the decision to migrate to Australia. Despite her mother's protestations, her father was adamant.

The family started their journey around the end of November. The train journey between Gümülcine and Athens took 24 hours. In Athens, they met with many Western Thrace Turkish families on their way to Australia. The plane took them to Djibouti in four or five hours. Then there was the third stage of the journey, a sea journey from Djibouti on board the ship *Patris*. Sabriye was amazed how big the ship was, even scared. Although it was an old ship, it was nice and orderly. It had a pool, a school, cinema, and a nightclub that helped the passengers relax and have a good time. There were classes for those who did not speak English. The first sentence to be

taught was ‘What is your name?’ There was nothing but the ocean throughout the voyage. They first arrived in the city of Perth in Australia. The sea voyage concluded with the ship arriving in Melbourne on 16 December 1970. Sabriye talks about her new life in Australia:

They took us to the Broadmeadows migrant hostel in buses. It was calm and desolate everywhere. It felt like we had come to a village. One day, when my father went to the city, my mother took us children to the park with her friends. We ran around and played, but I fell off a swing and had a cut eyelid. It was bleeding a lot. My mother was crying, saying, ‘The things we have to put up with!’ Due to lack of English, we were confused and did not know what to do. We ran to the hostel and found Osman, the garbage man. They took me to the hostel’s first aid clinic and stitched my eyelid.

In the third week after our arrival, we moved into a house that my father rented in Prahran. The landlord had thought my father was Greek. When he found out that we were Turks, he told us he wouldn’t rent to us and that we should move out. He helped us find another house and we moved out.

After the Christmas holidays my parents started work and my sister started school. I was home, looking after my 15-month-old baby brother and five children of friends. (I was a 13-year-old child, looking after children). After a year, my sister quit school and started to look after my brother. Our aim was to make money as quickly as we could and go back to our country.

My first job was cutting threads in a textile factory. On the third day, I got sick and could not go to work. The employer complained to the police that I got sick because I was too young to work. The police came to our place and asked why I went to work instead of going to school. They tried to assert that my family was forcing me to work. I said, ‘Nobody is forcing me. I want to work myself.’ They said ‘okay’ and left.

My second job was at a fruit cannery, working together with my mother. It was a seasonal job and we worked there for a short time. After that, my mother and I started working at the Red Tulip chocolate factory where many Western Thrace women worked with good pay and plenty of overtime. We worked there for two and a half years.

In 1974, my family decided to go back to Western Thrace for good. My father tried to buy agricultural land in Western Thrace. The Greek Government did not allow it. Around this time, I became engaged. My father's affairs were not going well. He made the decision to go back to Australia. Although my fiancé had completed his military service, it was extended due to the Greek-Turkish war in Cyprus. We had our wedding when he managed to get some leave. After the engagement of my sister, the family returned to Australia. I stayed in Greece with my husband's family. (As a young bride, I watched the road for the soldier to come back.) After my husband completed his military service, we decided to go to Australia. On 1 August 1976 we arrived at my parents' house in Prahran. I started working at the Red Tulip chocolate factory again.

In 1977, my first daughter Sibel was born. My mother looked after her. In 1980, my second daughter Semra was born. I left the factory and started doing sewing work from home so I could look after my children and work at the same time. In 1984, my daughter Ayşe was born. Sibel is now a high school teacher, Semra is a beautician and Ayşe works as an administrator. I have three grandchildren from my older daughters. In 2004, I stopped working to be able to look after my grandchildren and enjoy my time with them.

One thing I had always wanted but been unable to was to study. The one thing I am very happy to have done is to have had an arranged marriage at a young age and have children and grandchildren.

Sabriye Abdurrahman became a member of the Women's subgroup of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish

Association in 1993. In the many activities she took part, she contributed to the women's subgroup and the association in material and non-material ways. She is currently a member of the association and she continues to contribute through her active participation in cultural activities such as the Turkish Tulip Festival in 2007 and 2008, the Viva Festival, the association building's opening ceremony, Turkish Cypriots 60th year festival, Turkish 40th year festival.

She lives in the suburb of Moorabbin in Melbourne with her husband Yaver.



Mustafa Hasanoğlu

I was born in the village of Satı in Gümülcine in Western Thrace on 13 September 1945. When I was two years old, I lost my father who worked in the Makıf (Vakıf-Trust) flour mill, as a result of a massacre. My stepfather raised me.

In 1964, I married a girl called Fatme from the village of Basırlı. I left to do my military service in 1965. In January 1966, my son Hüseyin was born. I completed my military service in 1967 and in January 1968, my second son İsmet was born.

Our occupation in the village was growing tobacco. But we were a large family and the money earned was not enough. For this reason, I started working on ships. I had two sea voyages.

Later, the ship *Ellinis* on which I worked docked in Melbourne on 26 September 1977. I got off the ship with my friends, and went to the city centre. But I did not return to the ship. Two days later I started working in the Gadik foundry in Brunswick. After working there for two years and saving some money, I started feeling very lonely away from my family.

I went to the Immigration Department with the Scottish general manager of the factory I was working at and surrendered. I told them I wanted to bring my family who lived in Greece over to Australia. They told me I had to return to Greece and only then could I bring my family over here. On 26 September 1979, I bought my ticket and went back to my country. Thanks to the general manager's sponsorship, I came to Melbourne with my family on 26 September 1980. He arranged a house in Brunswick for us and I got back into my old job right away.

In January 1982, we bought the house at 24 Gray Street, Yarraville, Victoria. Now we had our own house, we were a happy family. The boys have grown up and have families of their own. My wife and I look after the grandchildren as much as we can. In 1998 I had a workplace accident and had to quit work. I am retired now and spend my time at home, with my four grandchildren and involved in association activities.

I have been a member of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association since 1980. I was the president in 2007. Throughout that year, I worked with my friends on the management committee to have the renovations to the association building completed. On 3 November 2007 we had the opening of our association building and put it to the use of our community. This was one of the happiest moments of my life.

I still occupy the position of deputy president I accepted on the 2008 management committee.



Aysel Firincioğlu

Aysel Firincioğlu was born in the village of Sarica in Gümülcine in Western Thrace on 8 January 1954. She has two older brothers. She had a happy childhood playing in the beautiful streets with the neighbours' children. She completed primary school in the Sarica.

At the time, a girl going on to secondary and tertiary education was not well regarded. Her family sent her as an apprentice to a dressmaker in Gümülcine. Because a farming family is very busy during summer months, she could only do the apprenticeship for two years, seven months at a time. The dressmaker was a very good one and taught her really well so she started working as a dressmaker in the village right away.

On 7 May 1972, at the age of 18, she married İbrahim Firincioğlu and went to Gümülcine as his bride. She occasionally worked in her husband's haberdashery shop. But she and her husband came to Australia on 14 May 1974 for a better life. Although they stayed with her elder brother, Aysel faced the same difficulties as everyone else who did not speak English.

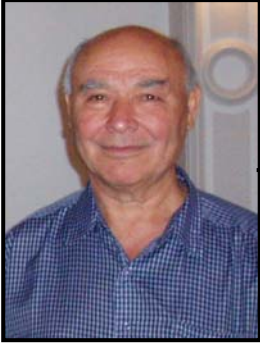
On the third day after her arrival, she started work in the Red Tulip chocolate factory where many Western Thrace Turkish women worked. She was assigned the difficult job of collecting the chocolates and placing them in little boxes. When the supervisor saw that she wasn't going to be able to do it, she got angry and sent her to the packaging section.

However, in time, she started doing everything in the best possible way, like everyone else.

Her son Seymour was born in 1975 and her daughter Ümran in 1981. With her parents looking after the children, she was able to continue working in the factory. But when her parents returned to Western Thrace, she started doing sewing from home. In the 1990s, with many clothing manufacturers moving to Asian countries, there was a reduction in work available. This situation forced her to look for work elsewhere. She completed a six-month 'Personal Care Attendant' course and started working as an assistant nurse at the Alfred Hospital. She is very happy working at this hospital and being able to help people. Her son Seymour works as a nurse at the same hospital. Her daughter Ümran is a secretary.

She became a member of the Women's Subgroup of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association in 1994 and contributed to the association in material and non-material ways. She is still a member of the association and contributes by undertaking duties in many festivals (such as the Como Turkish Day in 2002, the Viva Festival in 2007 and the opening ceremony of the association building in 2007)

Although she has made Australia her home, she still misses the places she came from. Aysel Fırıncıoğlu lives in the suburb of St Kilda in Melbourne with her husband İbrahim and daughter Ümran.



Mehmet Haliloğlu

I was born in the village of Büyük Doğanca in Western Thrace in 1939. My mother passed away when I was not even three years old. I don't remember my mother at all. My father remarried 22 days after my mother died. It must have been because I needed to be looked after at such a young age. I vaguely remember that two of our neighbours were showing some interest in me. One of them said to me: 'Your dad is going to get you a mum with tinsel.' The other one said: 'A mum with tinsel would have a stick with tinsel.' (It is quite traditional in Western Thrace that brides put thin strips of tinsel on their heads as part of their wedding dress.)

In 1962, I married my wife Caide. In 1963, our son Hüseyin was born. When my father died in 1964, we divided the fields left from my father among the brothers. My share was seven acres. Germany was accepting guest workers at the time and considering that it would be very hard to look after a family with a field this size, I decided to go to Germany and earn enough to look after my family. I worked for two years in Germany and returned with 10,000 marks. I thought this money would be enough to look after my family. I spent some of this money to buy three cows. I soon realised that three cows and the seven acres of land I inherited from my father was not going to be enough to sustain us. If I fed the cows what we grew in the fields, what would we eat? If we ate it, what would

those animals eat? I thought there was no solution to this and decided to go back to Germany. When I applied to go to Germany, I was told: 'Germany does not need male workers. They are accepting female workers. But if you like, you can go to Australia with your family as migrants.' I asked the officer who told me this: 'Where is this Australia?' The official looked back and said: 'You'll find out when you get there.' I said: 'All right then, put my name down.' Six months later, we received the news that we had been accepted by Australia as migrants.

On 21 August 1970 we left Athens on board the ship *Patris* bound for Australia. I had my friend Halil Ahmetoğlu and his family from my village. The ship finally arrived in the port of Fremantle in Australia after Yugoslavia, Spain and South Africa. We still had to travel to Melbourne. The 15-day journey from Africa to Fremantle had made us all very sick. Our journey ended on Station Pier in Melbourne on 27 September 1970. Mehmet Mehmetali from Taşkınlar met us at the port and took us to the house of Mehmet Hacıoğlu and his family, who were the first to arrive in Australia.

After being their guests for four days, we moved out to the house we and Halil had rented together. We rented a large house, mindful of the two other families who were due to arrive in three months from our village. We four families shared that house for a period, helped and supported each other as we all had young children.

I first started working at the General Motors Holden car plant, then moved on to the Ford car plant, to Allen's Confectionery (this was a factory close to the city centre in Melbourne, which is now Southbank). Finally, I worked in the Metalex factory for 22 years and then retired.'

Mehmet Haliloğlu has been a member of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association since the day it was first established. He always contributed as much as he could at every stage of the association's history. Since his retirement he has been preparing meals for the students in the association's

weekend Turkish classes together with a few of his friends. He and his family always take on tasks in the association activities, in festivals and make other contributions. He worked throughout the restoration of the association building and helped his tradesman friends. In view of his services to the community, he was chosen as Father of the Year in 2001.

Mehmet Haliloğlu likes being in and working in the community and lives happily in the suburb of Chadstone in Melbourne with his wife, son, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren.



Efrahim Güler

Efrahim Güler (born Efrahim Hasan) was born in the village of Küçük Doğanca in Western Thrace on 9 July 1939. His family were natives of that village. He finished primary school there. In 1959, he married his betrothed Sabiha from the same village. In 1960 their first son İsmail and in 1963 their second son Naim were born. The family used to sustain themselves by farming and raising animals. This was no longer sufficient. He wanted to go to Germany to work, but his wife disagreed, so he had to give up. Later, the topic of going to Australia as migrants started being discussed widely. Efrahim Güler relates the story of the decision to come to Australia and their arrival:

During dinner one night, I mentioned the topic of Australia to my cousin Hasan and he was positive about it. We said, 'if you go, I'll come too' to each other in a joking manner, then made the serious decision to come to Australia there and then. Our fathers did not want us to go to such a far and unknown continent like Australia, but who cared? We gathered a fair amount of information from neighbouring villages and towns and a short time after we applied, we were accepted as families. It was hard to leave the village, but we got on our way for a better living in November.

We flew to Djibouti from Athens. That night there were 16 families and two single people on the ship *Patris*. The following night the sea voyage began and crossing the Indian Ocean, we arrived in the port of Fremantle near Perth on 12 December 1970. Not being used to sea travel, this was a journey that shook us all. Nevertheless, we were anxious to reach Melbourne. Finally, after four days, the ship *Patris* arrived at Station Pier in Melbourne. Our friends Halil Ahmetoğlu and Mehmet Haliloğlu, who had arrived three months earlier, met us at the harbour. They took us to their rented accommodation in the suburb of Prahran where we now live and put us up there until we found accommodation for ourselves. The long voyage and the uncertainty involved in coming to a country of which we knew nothing had demoralised us. Nevertheless, these two friends warmly embracing us, helped our morale and added a smile to our faces. After staying with these friends for four or five months, we rented the house at 12 Newry Street, Windsor, with my cousin Hasan and moved out.

Ebrahim Güler's children were aged 10 and seven at the time. He enrolled them in the Windsor Public School. The first few years were hard for the children because they did not speak English, but they adapted. Today they live happily in Australia with the memories of all the difficulties they experienced. Something that made this family very happy was having their

house used every weekend as a weekend school for Turkish children who had arrived from Western Thrace. When the number of students who wished to attend the classes started by Ahmet akirođlu increased, the weekend Turkish school moved to the Prahran College and Turkish education was continued there.

They were the first family to return for a holiday in Western Thrace, in 1973. Ebrahim tried various jobs during his early years in Australia, then found a job at the General Motors Holden car plant and worked there for 24 years. His sons are married and he has two granddaughters and a grandson. After he retired in 2000, he went on the Haj. He spends most of his time happily in Prahran where he lives with his family.

He was active during the establishment and growth of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association and the construction work in the association building as well as in the management committee from time to time. Ebrahim Gler, was chosen as Father of the Year in 2008 in appreciation of his services to his family and the Australian Western Thrace Turkish community.



Beyda Memiř

Beyda Memiř was born in the town of Gümölcine in Western Thrace on 25 August 1956. She married Halilibrahım Memiř from the same town at the age of 16. Her first child Hüseyin was born on 10 January 1973. Her parents being in Australia was what prompted her to migrate.

The family arrived in Australia on 11 July 1974. Because they stayed with her parents, their settlement in Australia was relatively easy compared to the experience of many Western Thrace Turks.

Beyda started work at the Red Tulip chocolate factory and her husband in the Rosella food-manufacturing factory. After living with her parents for one year and not paying rent, they moved into a rented house of their own. They worked and saved for two years and bought their own house. On 21 October 1976 Beyda's daughter Yasemin was born.

When Beyda's son Hüseyin turned five, her husband and father wanted a circumcision party in a hall. Nobody had held a circumcision party until then. They found out how that was to be done from a friend of theirs who had been to a circumcision party in Sydney.

This first circumcision party to which all Western Thrace Turks were invited was held in the Prahran Town Hall on 14

January 1978. There was food and a band playing folk songs and dance music and everyone had a good time. This led to other circumcision parties being held similarly in halls.

In 1979, her father got sick and had to have a kidney transplant in Melbourne. The operation was successful; however, she lost her father on 26 February 1980 due to a lung infection. Beyda's father Hüseyin Dominik was the first Western Thrace Turk to die in Australia.

Beyda Memiş has one granddaughter and two grandsons from her son who married in 1994 and a granddaughter from her daughter who married in 2004. Beyda currently works in a retirement home and spends time with her grandchildren as often as she can.

She became a member of the management committee of the Women's Subgroup of the association in 1993 and worked hard as the treasurer, assistant treasurer and as an active member. During the Viva Festivals in which the association participated, she opened up her own house and helped the women to knead the dough, to wash and prepare the ingredients, provided everything that was required. During the festivals, she also contributed greatly, preparing and selling 'gözleme' (traditional homemade pastry with filling, cooked on a hot plate on the spot). She was chosen as the Mother of the Year in 2008 in recognition of her contribution to the community.

Beyda Memiş, who loves community work, currently lives in the suburb of Lalor in Melbourne with her husband Halilibrahim close to her children who also live in the same suburb.



Sali Mustafaoğlu

Sali Mustafaoğlu was born on 26 October 1931 in the village of Ircan (Arisvi)-Komotini in Western Thrace, Greece. He was the youngest child in the family and he lost his mother at the age of two. He then was looked after by his older sister. He went to the local school in the village. In his teen years, he looked after the herd of bulls, the buffalo and the sheep until he went serve in the military at 22. He served in Naplion and in Kavala for two years. After returning from the service, he married a girl named Bedriye from a village called Ambarköy (Pamforon). After the marriage, Sali gained his livelihood from farming tobacco, wheat and corn. He also operated a coffee shop in the village for three years.

In mid 1970 a notice issued by the local council stated that Australia was accepting migrant workers for settlement. About 10 families had already applied to migrate. Sali also applied. His application was approved. Sali, his wife Bedriye and his sons Ali and Mustafa arrived in Australia by ship, on 14 June 1971. This journey took 33 days. When he arrived in Port Melbourne, several countrymen met him at the port and took him to their place. After a couple of days, Sali started work at General Motors Holden. He worked at GMH for five years. He had never seen a factory before. It was very difficult for Sali as he did not speak or understand the English language. After returning from a holiday, Sali worked for a confectionery

company for seven years. Sali and his countrymen came to Australia with the intention of earning money and return home in around two to five years. As time went on everyone started to establish themselves. They were talking about going back but no one dared because they all worked and saw that their way of life in Melbourne was economically better.

Sali has been a member of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association since he arrived to Melbourne. He was a member of the Executive Committee in the 1980s. He was also an honorary Imam for about four months. He ran the coffee shop at the association for 10 years. He also wrote some articles for *Avustralya'da Elele* magazine, which is published by the association. Due to his contributions and his status as a respected member of the community, he was chosen as Father of the Year in 1995.

Sali is pleased to have lived in the suburb of Prahran in Melbourne for 30 years, but always remembers his village, and his roots.

A memory of Sali Mustafaoğlu's regarding the death of Atatürk:

I started going to the Turkish school in the village of Ircan and I finished it. There was one Turkish and one Greek teacher in the school. Our Turkish teacher was from the village of Demirbeyli. The Turkish teacher taught all day and the Greek teacher taught until 12 noon. After 12, he went to the village of Hacı Mustafa one week and the village of Basırlı the next week, alternately.

Our classes started with the reading of the Qur'an every morning. The girls attended school too, and continued until Year 6. We used to read the Qur'an in the Latin script. I could not read the Arabic script. Our maths classes were also in Turkish.

We learnt to read and write in Greek.

It was 10 November 1938, a Thursday. The gendarme came during the second recess and said that Atatürk had died. The flags were lowered and the school was dismissed. We all felt very sad that day. During the Second World War, the Bulgars occupied Thrace and they made the Turks suffer a lot. In 1944, when the Bulgars fled, I was 13. There was a teacher called Şevki. My father wanted him to teach me. He did for one year and that was very good. I learnt to read in Arabic. I am glad I did, because when we were left without a 'hodja' (religious instructor) here, I took on the duties. Being able to serve my people in this way made me very happy. Unfortunately, my sight has deteriorated and it became rather hard for me to read and write.

Well, this is life; one has to be useful when one can. Life keeps flowing like water and every day that passes is left as a memory.



Recep Hasan

Recep Hasan was born in the village of Kargılısarica in Western Thrace on 3 September 1939. His father was Hasan and his mother, Fatme. He has one brother and two sisters. He left primary school at the age of 13 when he was in Grade 5 and started working as a farmer.

On 1 September 1960, he married Cayde from the same village. His daughter Nuray was born in 1963. To be able to better provide for his family he went to Germany in 1964 as a worker. He worked there for four years and returned to his village. He was very happy that his son Seyit was born on 28 October 1968. But he was also sad, knowing that he would have a hard time supporting a family of four through farming.

When he found out that Australia was accepting migrants, he applied and the family was accepted. Seven Turkish families flew to Djibouti from Athens on a French plane on 16 December 1970. The ship *Frideriki* took them to the Port of Fremantle in Western Australia and they reached their destination, Melbourne, on 3 January 1971 after a 19-day voyage. On board the ship at Station Pier they were given coloured badges showing which hostel they would go to. As they did not speak English, this was meant to make the process easy for the officials. Recep Hasan's family was given the badge for the Bonegilla Hostel. The official dealing with them

asked if they knew anybody in Melbourne. When Recep told the official that there were two people from his village living in Prahran and that they were going to meet them, the Bonegilla badges were taken back. His fellow villagers Ahmet Hüseyin and Erol Hasan were waiting outside and they took Recep and his family to their house in South Yarra and had them as their guests for a short time.

Recep Hasan started his life in Australia by sharing a big house in Prahran with three other families. His wife Cayde started work in the Red Tulip chocolate factory where Western Thrace women worked and he worked at the General Motors Holden plant. His wife earned \$30 a week and he earned \$50 a week. They paid \$10 rent per week for one room.

Once he realised that he was going to live in Australia permanently, he put together the American dollars he had brought and the Australian dollars he had saved working here, paid \$7000 deposit, and bought the house at 27 Osborne Street, South Yarra, next to Prahran, which was valued at \$15,000. Moving into his own house on 11 December 1971, he became the first Western Thrace homeowner in Melbourne.

Recep has been active in the establishment of the association from the day he arrived here and been involved in every activity of the Western Thrace community. After working for General Motors Holden for 30 years, he retired in 2000. Nevertheless, he was never idle and managed the coffee service at the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association until 2004, serving tea, coffee, drinks, sandwiches and snacks to members and visitors. After a two-year break, he has managed it since 2006.

Recep Hasan, who turns 70 in 2009, says he will spend the rest of his life after a long working life with his family in the house he bought back in 1971. He also says: 'I cannot thank the Australian Government enough for accepting me as a migrant to Australia and granting me endless rights.'



Şerif Mustafa

Şerif Mustafa was born in the village of Küçük Doğanca in Western Thrace on 10 November 1958 to a family of farm workers. He finished primary school in the same village and enrolled in the Gümülcine Celâl Bayar High School in 1970. After a year, between 1971 and 1976, he worked first as a metalwork apprentice, then in the Belarus tractor service station.

In the 1970s, there was a large number of Western Thrace Turks working on board ships. Greek ships were very advanced in transporting people and goods in international waters. Maritime companies put up ads in village coffee houses looking for people to work on ships.

The things Şerif heard from people who worked on ships about all the places and people they had seen all over the world, encouraged him to become a seaman. But he had to convince his parents first. After getting all the paperwork ready, it was time now to look for work in maritime companies.

In November 1976, he travelled 12 hours by land to Athens where all the maritime companies were, with a friend who had experience working on ships. Şerif was anxious to go to the port of Piraeus and see the ships as soon as possible.

His adventure on the seas began a few days later when he found a job on a ship belonging to the Calitsis Company. The ship set off from the port of Pilos and was to travel between the

port of Alexandria in Egypt and Rotterdam in the Netherlands. After working on this ship for three months, he returned to Piraeus.

He found a job on another ship right away. This was a bigger ship travelling between South America and Europe. He worked on this ship for a while and his last journey on this ship was from Argentina to Iran, and from there to Piraeus by plane. He was now of military service age, but the money he had saved was not enough to sustain him for 24 months. So he decided to return to the sea for one more year.

In 1978, he flew to Rotterdam to start his third job on board a ship. When the ship he worked on struck a wreck on the Niger River, it had to undergo lengthy repairs. Şerif returned to Greece in 1979 for his military service. During his military service, he kept thinking and talking about the sea and ships with his friends. A few months after completing his military service in 1982, he found a job with the Calistoga Company and travelled between Europe and North Africa for 18 months. Although he had short sojourns in his village from time to time, most of his time was spent working on ships.

Şerif's sea adventures came to an end with his ship coming to Australia in 1986. This ship had taken its load from Germany, France and Portugal and stopped in America, then came to the port of Brisbane in Australia. After unloading half of her cargo, the ship arrived in the port of Point Wilson in Melbourne. Şerif visited his friends and people from his village in Prahra and went sightseeing in the city. He found out through his friends and saw that the living conditions here were much better than in Western Thrace, where life was difficult, and that the rights denied to him in Greece existed in Australia. So, he made a decision to remain in Australia, waiting for the right opportunity. A month later, he had to return to Brisbane on the ship he was working on.

One night, after finishing his work on the ship, he said goodbye to his friend and left the ship, hoping never to return.

It was thus that Şerif's adventure as a refugee in Australia started. A Western Thrace Greek man he met in Brisbane helped Şerif to go to Melbourne by bus. In Melbourne, his friends and fellow villagers helped him settle in and find a job. Nine months later, on 6 March 1987, Department of Immigration officers took Şerif from his home to a police station and obtained a statement from him. Then they took him to the Maribyrnong Refugee Centre. After a very boring three and a half months, he was released on the basis of someone he did not know at the time – but who later became a good friend – acting as his guarantor. However, he had to go and report to the Immigration Department weekly until 1989 to prove that he was in Melbourne. With the legislation passed by the government of the day, Şerif was allowed to remain and work in Australia.

On 17 April 1992, he married a Turkish Cypriot, Şerife, and became an Australian citizen. They had two sons, Ali (b. 1993) and Serkan (b. 1998).

Living in the Melbourne suburb of Footscray with the memories of an adventurous life, Şerif is a member of the Australian Western Thrace Turkish Association. He and his wife Şerife were actively involved in the official opening project of the association building on 3 November 2007. He is currently involved in the parents group of the association's weekend Turkish school.

Conclusion

Many different ethnic groups, people with different religions and languages are able to live together in peace and affluence on the Australian continent. This country has attracted Turkish people as well. Turks in Australia currently number about 100,000. This number includes Western Thrace Turks. Western Thrace Turks, who have migrated to Australia as a result of the systematic multi-faceted oppression by the Greek Government, have lived in Australia in peace and freedom for 40 years. Western Thrace Turks, arriving here as ‘migrant workers’ with plans to return in a few years, have turned into permanent Australian citizens. Despite human problems such as ‘missing the homeland’ due to the geographic distance from Australia, they no longer consider returning there. They do not regret coming to this distant country.

Apart from the concern that their grandchildren will be assimilated, they live in peace and affluence. Australia, with her high standards of living, ensures the allegiance of the Western Thrace Turks, like any other migrant group. Those Western Thrace Turks who first went to Germany due to oppression, and then came to Australia, not finding the peace they sought in Germany, and those who left Australia, apparently for good, then came back to this country are an indication of this fact. The Western Thrace Turks are better placed than other Turkish groups. None of them are poor. In time, they came to own businesses in this new country, established their association, their schools, mosques and facilities, published their magazines. They have established their own cultural infrastructure through their own efforts. In this position and with their varied cultural activities, they have earned the right to be called a contemporary Turkish community.

The Australian Western Thrace Turks are a Turkish community with ongoing links to their homeland, Western Thrace, reinforcing their links with the mother country Turkey and being in good communication and solidarity with other Turkish communities in this country. They lobby for Western Thrace, Turkey and the Turkish world as much as they can in Australia. Especially with the Turkish Cypriot community, they are in intense and exemplary cooperation. The activities they conduct within their association are appreciated by local administrations and international organisations. The Western Thrace Turkish community is one of the ethnic communities in Australia that have been most productive in recent years.

Turkish Alphabet and pronunciation of letters

The Turkish alphabet is written in Roman script and has 29 letters. Eight of these letters are vowels (a, e, ı, i, o, ö, u, ü) and 21 are consonants. All letters are written in capital as well as lower case. The alphabet is phonetic as each letter retains its individual pronunciation at all times.

The letters q, w, x do not occur in Turkish alphabet, but includes six letters (ç, ğ, ı, ö, ş, ü) which we don't see in English. The following are the Turkish letters which differ from English and their approximate pronunciation. The remaining fifteen letters (b, d, f, h, k, l, m, n, p, r, s, t, v, y, z) are pronounced the same way as in English.

Letter English pronunciation

A a	as a sound in art , star
C c	as j in jam, jump
Ç ç	as ch in chili, cheese
E e	as e in net, wet
G g	as g in go, give
Ğ ğ	as w in growing, gh as in weight (soft g – lengthens the preceding vowel, it has no sound and never begins a word.
I ı	as er in porter, water – without any r sound
İ i	as i in big, ea in seat
J j	as j in azure, su in treasure
O o	as o in for, phone
Ö ö	as ir in bird or shirt - without any r sound
Ş ş	as sh in ship, show
U u	as u in book, soon
Ü ü	as ew sound in few or stew

Notes

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*W Class tram passing Prahran Town Hall on Chapel Street, 2009
(Courtesy of Memet İmam-Hüseyin)*

'It is as important to write history as it is to make it.'

M Kemal Atatürk

'If a people is great, it will be greater through a knowledge of itself.'

M Kemal Atatürk

Those who forget their ancestors are like a river without a source and a tree without roots.

Chinese proverb

The mind can't bear, but the lines can.

Turkish proverb

Western Thrace Turks live in various countries outside their homeland. Since 1969, Australia has been added to the list of countries of migration.

The book *Avustralya'da Batı Trakya Türkleri*, written by Feyyaz Sağlam, who has done research on the Western Thrace Turks and written fifteen books on the topic, was published in 2006.

Sihem İmam-Hüseyin spent more than a year expanding and updating the Turkish book with the aim of having it translated into English, which is the book you are holding.

This book tells the story of the last 40 years in the lives of Western Thrace Turks who have been forced to leave their attractive villages in Western Thrace and migrate to Melbourne.



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