

Turkey.<sup>8</sup> They practice Judaism hidden in their homes and go to mosques to pretend Islam. What good are they to Turkey? Kemal Yalçın, speaking about hidden Armenians in an interview with Ruben Melkonian, had this to say: “Only those who can freely maintain their identity can truly love the state, the country they live in.”<sup>9</sup>

Sultan, a third-generation Islamized Armenian, an interviewee of Yalçın, talks about her grandfather who was forced to give his daughter in marriage to a Kurd. He cried and grieved for his daughter, saying, “I sacrificed my daughter by giving her to a Kurd.” Fearing for the fate of his 12-year-old daughter, he married her off to a 30-year-old Islamized Armenian. This was Sultan’s mother. Hajji Ibrahim tells a similar story about his beautiful sister. Their father hastily married her off to a poor, ugly, and bald orphan boy, one of the *merinner*, because the Kurdish agha had set his eyes on her (Yalçın, p. 350).

Vahram speaks of the grief and indomitable pain of compunction, of eating his heart out for relinquishing his true faith. The truth is that, contrary to their expectations, these people did not find peace after conversion. They were never trusted by Muslims and were called *dönmes*. And although Muslims themselves might neglect their religious rituals and practice, they kept the Islamized Armenians under continuous scrutiny to see that they followed the religion of Islam punctiliously. Muslim or Christian, an Armenian was a *gâvur*,

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<sup>8</sup> Gutman, “The Secret Jews of Remote Turkey” (2003). Based on the findings of American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

<sup>9</sup> See the daily newspaper *Asbarez* (November 30, 2007), pp. 2, 12.