KIST COMMUNITY IN THE PANKISI GORGE:
A DURKHEIMIAN STUDY OF SOCIAL CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

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The Kist community living in the Pankisi Gorge in the northeast of Georgia migrated to the region two centuries ago from present-day Chechnya. Ethnically they were of *Vainakh* origin. During the Soviet Union, the Kists preserved an eclectic understanding of Islam, intertwined with paganism, Christianity, and the customary law of the Kists (*adat*) through *Naqhsbandi* and *Qadiri tariqats*. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Chechen Wars, followed by an influx of Chechen refugees into the Pankisi Gorge and an increase in criminal activities, and the direct or indirect interventions of various regional and global actors in the region altogether had multiple effects on the Kist community. This study aims to examine the social change in the community with a Durkheimian approach, which emphasizes the notion change over order.

ÖZ

PANKİSİ VADİSİ'NDE KİST TOPLULUĞU:
SOSYAL DEĞİŞİMİN DURKHEIMCİ BİR İNCELEMESİ

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Vaynak etnik kökenine sahip olan Kist topluluğu, iki yüzyıl önce günümüz Çeçenistanı'ndan Gürcistan'ın kuzeydoğusunda yer alan Pankisi Vadisi'ne göç etmiştir. Kistler, Sovyetler Birliği dönemi boyunca paganizm, Hristiyanlık ve geleneksel Kist yasası olan 'adet' ile iç içe geçmiş eklektik İslam anlayışlarını Nakşibendi ve Kadiri tarikatları aracılığıyla korumuşlardır. Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılması, Çeçen Savaşları, Çeçen mültecilerin Pankisi Vadisi'ne akını, suçla ilintili faaliyetlerde artış ile doğrudan ya da dolaylı olarak gerçekleşen bölgesel ve küresel müdahaleler, Kist topluluğu üzerinde çoklu etkilere neden olmuştur. Bu çalışmanın amacı söz konusu topluluktaki toplumsal değişmeyi, düzen kavramından daha ziyade değişim kavramına vurgu yapan Durkheimci bir anlayış ile incelemektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kistler, Pankisi Vadisi, Durkheim, Toplumsal Dayanışma, Kolektif Coşkunluk

To My Family

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Study

In the second half of the 20th century, massive social and political changes occurred throughout the world. Foremost among these changes were the impacts of the trend of desecularization, the upsurge of religions, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The secularization thesis, which was the product of the Enlightenment and modernization, failed to a certain extent with the revival of Islam and Evangelical Christianity, and thereby the return of religion to the public sphere. In addition, the Soviet Union adopted secularism as an ideology under the name Scientific Atheism and this caused changes in the lives of its citizens during the Soviet period and afterward.

This thesis studies the case of the Kist community, who are settled in the threefold border-zone of Russia, Chechnya and Georgia and where all the above-mentioned changes can be observed. The Pankisi Gorge, located in the north-eastern part of Georgia and the south of the Georgian-Chechen border, has many peculiarities due to its social and historical characteristics. Almost all of its inhabitants have the same ethnoreligious identity, called Kists. The ethnic origin of the Kist community is widely accepted as *Vainakhs*. The term *Vainakh* is the common ethnonym for Chechens, Ingushes, Kists and Tsova-Tush (Bats). The distinction between these groups is mainly based on linguistic differences (Devdariani & Hancilova, 2002: 2; Jaimoukha, 2004: 14; Siprashvili, 2014: 4). The Kists are bilingual in Kist and Georgian (Kopeckova, 2012; Sedlarova, 2011: 295). In the first half of the 19th century, the Kists started to migrate to the Pankisi Gorge from Chechnya. During this period, it was economic, cultural, and religious factors that caused their migration to the gorge.

Previously, the Kists' faith was a synthesis of pagan, Christian, and Islamic beliefs and practices (Kopecek, 2011: 158; Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 26; Sanikidze, 2007: 266). A number of contemporary sources refer to the absence of religious fanaticism and the existence of religious tolerance among the Kists (Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 26; Tsutkiridze, 2012: 374). Throughout the Soviet rule, the Islamic religious practice known as parallel Islam due to its unofficial characteristic was followed outside the mosques and away from the surveillance of the Soviet authorities. The Kists' understanding of Islam relied on Sufi interpretations of Islam. The *Naqshbandi* and *Qadiri tariqats* had notable influences on the maintenance and strengthening of Islam among the Kist community members during this period (Sanikidze, 2007: 272). Despite the existence of religious diversity among the Kist community, they are mostly Muslims. Today, the Kists are considered to be one of the ethnoreligious minority groups in Georgia.

In the second half of the 1990s, the Kist community started to undergo structural changes triggered by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the inflow of refugees from Chechnya to the Pankisi Gorge in the wake of the Chechen Wars, the failure of the Georgian state structure, the growing socio-political instability and the spread of the Salafi movement in the region. Many Kists, known for their strict adherence to their traditions, adopted the Salafi understanding of Islam and this had significant repercussions on both the Kist community and on Georgia. Salafi Kists started to challenge the existing methods of religious observance, rituals, and traditions of the community because they were different from Salafism's puritan understanding of Islam, which demands strict observance of religious beliefs and practices just as they are mentioned in the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. They also challenged the community's customary law based on the principle of the elders' authority, which demanded respect for the senior members of the community and accepted the absolute authority of the Council of Elders. The reason why they challenged the customary law of the community is that Salafi understanding rejects national cultures, local forms of Islam and identification with tribe, ethnicity, nation or race. Salafism requires the unquestioning observance of the Sharia law and renouncing traditional and customary beliefs and practices originating from any source other than the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* (Roy, 2004: 243-245). After the Chechen Wars and the terrorist attacks

of September 11, and with the Russian Federation and the United States' interventions on Georgia's sovereignty to stand up against global terror, the state of affairs in the gorge and the Kists gained a global dimension. In addition to that, some Kists in several *jihadist* organizations were involved in the armed conflicts in Iraq and Syria and this heightened both national and global attention on the Kist community and the social and religious transformation taking place there.

1.2 Significance of the Research

There exist very few studies on the case of the Kist community. Most of the available studies lack a theoretical basis and mainly have descriptive approaches. The studies which do have theoretical grounds focus on the issue of identity. In this thesis, the case is not studied through the social identity theory. One reason behind this is the ambiguity of the term identity, which Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 1-8) divide into two categories: that of analysis and that of practice. While the category of analysis is a scientific concept and the category of practice is an everyday use of the term, there is no clear distinction between the two. This may, therefore, lead to misinterpretation of the examined social phenomena. Another reason for not doing so is to avoid the dominance of identity politics over the social identity theory, and thus to avoid the reification of identities. Otherwise, this may contribute to the already existing stereotypes about the Kist community, including associating the Kist community and Salafis with radicalization and terrorism. These stereotypes are, in fact, part of Russian narrative and are common in the media and academic community (Barkaia & Janelidze, 2018: 52). This issue is further explored in the Findings and Analysis Chapter where the Kist community's organization and reconfiguration within the community are discussed. Instead of examining the issue through the lens of social identity, this study focuses on the sameness in the Kist community, which displays itself through the solidarity, collective consciousness, and collective actions. The thesis aims to clarify the social transformation of the Kist community by depicting the dynamic, hierarchical and competing relationality of ethnic, traditional and religious solidarities. This can be seen as the concrete reflection of social change in the post-Soviet Caucasus region, explained by reevaluation of Durkheim's concepts.

As it is an application of a neo-Durkheimian perspective, this study is unique among the existing literature in sociological studies on the region.

1.3 Background of the Research

This research focuses on the Kist community after the dissolution of the Soviet Union until the end of 2010s, but the primary focus is on the Chechen Wars of the post-Soviet era and the following period, because it was during this time that the pace of social changes accelerated. In the latter half of the 1990s, a significant social transformation took place in the Pankisi Gorge. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, political instability produced a vacuum of authority in the region, but the greatest turmoil began with the First Chechen War in 1994. In this period, there was an increase in illegal activities, mainly drug trafficking and the smuggling of Soviet military equipment, and also, widespread kidnappings (Devdariani & Hancılova, 2002: 2; Tsulaia, 2011: 139). The conditions in the region had changed significantly by the beginning of the Second Chechen War in 1999. The impact of the second war on Pankisi was much more severe because thousands of Chechen refugees migrated to the Pankisi Gorge from Chechnya. This influx of refugees occurred between the end of 1999 and the beginning of 2000 (Devdariani and Hancılova, 2002: 3-4; Tsutskiridze, 2012: 376-377). After the inflow of migration, many Chechen refugees began living alongside the Kists (Siprashvili, 2014: 18; Tsutskiridze, 2012: 375). This wave of migration brought with it massive humanitarian problems and caused friction between the two communities who have historical and ethnic kinship ties. The large-scale migration of Chechens and their encounters with the Kists in Pankisi had profound consequences on the Kist community. Besides, militant activity around the gorge posed geopolitical security problems. The spread of the Salafi understanding of Islam, especially among the young Kists, started within that period and continued throughout the 2000s. The issue of national and regional security became a hot topic after the significant participation of Kists in foreign fighting in the 2010s. The changes experienced by the Kist community was attributed to religious radicalization in the area and within the community itself. Moreover, several conflicts among the members of the community led to social cleavage.

1.4 Research Question

The case of the Kist community embodies many sociological phenomena concerning power, religion, ethnicity, social order, and change. These can be seen in the social transformation and changes in the community, namely mass conversions, deculturation, and social cleavage. The dissolution of the Soviet Union caused changes in the existing power structures. All post-Soviet states experienced changes, but in different ways, depending on their socio-historical dynamics. These series of events are related to structural changes caused by the transformation from a socialist society into a capitalist one. In fact, this transformation process indicates the redistribution of power. Soviet governmental authorities withdrew, and new political bodies emerged from this chaotic state of affairs and started to reconstruct.

The Kist community's case is suitable for analyzing the changes in the power relations within the post-Soviet context and current dynamics of world politics at both the macro and micro levels. In order to trace these changes indirectly, this study focuses on the collective aspects of the community concerning solidarity, order, authority, religion, and ethnicity. This study aims to analyze the social change in the Kist community by trying to answer the question: 'How did the impact of 'collective shocks' experienced by the Kists affect the 'solidarity' of the Kist community?' Identifying the nature of the outcomes helps to comprehend the situation caused by collective shocks, whether they led to a reaffirmation of the solidarity of the Kist community or caused it to rupture. The research hypothesizes that the collective shocks which produce foundations for moments of collective effervescence with undesirable emotions bring about different types of solidarity to develop at the beginning. Afterwards, however, it changes its direction towards the reorganization of the community. In this case, the term 'collective shock' refers to the political and ideological vacuum caused by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the collapse of infrastructure, economic hardships and criminal activities both inside and surrounding the Pankisi Gorge, the wars and ethnic conflicts in neighboring regions and the massive influx of refugees.

The thesis studies the case of the Kists with a Durkheimian perspective by emphasizing the notion of change over order. The reason for choosing Durkheim is

that the changes experienced by Kists have reflections in many dimensions of Durkheim's works concerning solidarity production, crime, deviance, collective effervescence, and anomie. The decline of state authorities and the challenging governing authority of the Kist community can be studied with respect to solidarity production by employing religious and traditional beliefs and practices, laws, and governing authorities. These issues are examined through qualitative research methods, which include in-depth interviews and literature review.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

Durkheim, as one of the leading figures in the field of sociology, has provided a solid basis for comprehending social phenomena. His works are interpreted with over-emphasis on his ideas about stability and order concerning conservative understanding, but Durkheim's main aim was to make sense of the rapid transformations experienced by European societies in the 19th century. Although he tried to search for ways to preserve social order, Durkheim's works also have the capacity to include the theory of social change, which many neo-Durkheimian scholars acknowledge. Rereading Durkheim's theory with an emphasis on change may open up hidden potentialities in his theory (Pearce, 2001). Discovering new discourses may provide fruitful applications for the examination of social phenomena.

 In this study, the concept of solidarity is employed to trace changes in the pattern of social cohesion. According to Durkheim, solidarity as a social fact which does not lend itself directly to observation can be examined utilizing external indexes, but an eclectic approach as a way of catching social meaning is used in this research (Carithers, 1977; Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 20; Evans & Evans, 1977). Identifying objects that are considered to be important by the examined social group is helpful in comprehending social phenomena (Carithers, 1977; Evans & Evans, 1977). Solidarity is studied through the term 'collective consciousness', which is reevaluated with the notion of multiplicity, but the quality of social solidarity as a complex phenomenon in between the limit cases of mechanical and organic solidarities is also explained (Pearce, 2001: 62). As a result of this reevaluation, a hierarchal, layered and distributional structure of collective consciousnesses is

presented by referring to individuals' memberships to different collectivities and even different societies at the same time. In addition to that, variations in the extent and degree of collective consciousnesses are also described in the above-mentioned complexed relationality (Durkheim, 2013: 120).

The relationship between the governing authority and collective consciousness is utilized to show the power dimension in the solidarity production process. Furthermore, governing authorities, who are considered to be symbols of collective consciousnesses by Durkheim, are used to examine changes in solidarities as external indexes (Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 26). On the one hand, the demands for similarities and the discouragement of divergences to provide unity in collective consciousness is depicted (Wortman, 2007). On the other hand, changes in the observance of traditional and religious beliefs and practices, moral laws (customary or religious), and the attributions about the legitimacy of authorities are depicted as external indexes of collective consciousness. By referring to conflicts between different collective consciousnesses with respect to these indexes, the process of social change is traced through the development of new collective consciousnesses and their differences to existing ones. In order to understand the developmental process of new collective consciousnesses, changes in the conditions of the social existence of the studied community are expressed by the term 'collective shock', which shows rapid changes in the social sphere of life (Durkheim, 2008: 210-211). How collective shock produces a creative period whereby there is both an increase and a deregulation in the frequency of social interaction is examined (Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 91; Mauss, 2004: 76-80; Tiryakian, 2007). The term 'collective effervescence' is used to describe the state of affairs, but this concept is reevaluated as a complex of creative and re-creative effervescences (Olaveson, 2001: 101-103). Its distributional characteristic and twofold impact on individuals are shown by referring to the role of rituals in the times of collective effervescence (Barker, 1999:13).

Religion is also conceptualized through a Durkheimian perspective, which refers to the collective beliefs and practices, one single moral community, and sacred things (Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 88; Durkheim, 2008: 44). This conception also

allows classification of religions and different sects or interpretations within one religion. The reevaluation of collective consciousness and collective effervescence prepares the ground for further analysis of the formation of new collectivities and the reproduction of preexisting ones.

This research investigates the social conditions in different periods. The first period is the years between the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the beginning of the Chechen Wars. The second period begins with the First Chechen War and continues until the present day. The relation between authority and religion is examined through the term solidarity. In the case of the Kist community, the customary law (*adat)* and the Sharia law, and traditional and religious beliefs and practices (i.e., customs and rituals) are examined to understand the direct link between the governing authority and solidarity. Analyzing the characteristics of the state of collective effervescence and the transition experienced by Kists becomes possible through these comparisons. Change in the dominance of *adat* and practices of ritual and customs with respect to the decline of governing authorities provides further analysis of the transformation of norms and values. The cause of this transformation is the series of events that are previously categorized as collective shocks.

In this case, the critical factor is that Kists and Chechens have ethnic kinship ties and their languages and traditions are actually quite similar. All of these together are the reasons behind the production of solidarity which joins the Kist community and the Chechen refugees. Collective shocks and the varying degrees of differences and similarities between the Kists' and Chechens *adat*, customs, and religious practices generated creative collective effervescence. How new social relations tend to fix themselves and give rise to new collective consciousnesses and solidarities through the need for social meaning, religious education, and observance of rituals can be seen. Furthermore, it can be noted how all of this reflected on the political actions of the Kist community with the Georgian state and other political actors in the field. Collective political actions are observed through the practices of the political decision-making process of the group of Salafi Kists and the Council of Elders of the Kist community.

1.6 Methods

This study employs qualitative research methods, namely documentary and field research during which in-depth interviews were conducted. In the context of documentary research, besides the literature review, the analysis of the document concerning political decision-making processes was carried out. For instance, the document of the Kist' Law Code was studied in order to examine both existing and past traditions and codes of conduct of the Kist community. In-depth interviews were conducted with state officials, academics, NGOs and members of the Kist community. This research is based on two different fieldworks. The first fieldwork was conducted as part of the project entitled "Muslim Minorities in Georgia–Minority Rights, Identity and Politics" in 2016. In this work, fourteen in-depth interviews were conducted with state officials, academics, NGOs, and members of the Kist community in Tbilisi in 2016. The second fieldwork was conducted as part of a project on the Kists. In this second fieldwork, thirteen in-depth interviews were conducted with state officials, academics, NGO experts, and members of the Kist community in Tbilisi in 2017 and 2018. In total, twenty-seven in-depth interviews were conducted. Reviewing both the document analysis and field research, social solidarity can be observed in relation to social meaning with an eclectic approach. Semi-structured in-depth interviews provided the opportunity to obtain information on the perceptions of the respondents. In the fieldwork, the exploratory characteristic of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to discover unprecedented new information. In addition, the social meaning attributed by the Kist community members to certain beliefs and practices could easily be recognized. Thereby, any reactivity, falsification and misinformation can be prevented with the support of eclectic methodology which employs Durkheim's understanding of social solidarity.

1.7 Chapters of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters: Introduction, Historical Background, Theoretical and Conceptual Framework, Findings and Analysis, and Conclusion. In the Historical Background, the history of the Kist community and their settlement in Pankisi, the origin of the Kist Community, and social and political changes that were experienced by its members are briefly explained. In the Theoretical and Conceptual

Framework, the reevaluation of the Durkheimian perspective and conceptual relations to the case is presented. The concepts of solidarity, collective consciousness, collective shock, and collective effervescence are examined to depict the changes in the social solidarity production processes. In the Findings and Analysis chapter, research findings are clearly presented, and the analysis of the findings is carried out within the context of the methodology applied. This chapter includes four issues that the interviewees highlighted during in-depth interviews. These are political and social turmoil, conversion to Salafism, challenges to the traditional Kist way of life, and the Kist community's organization and reconfiguration within the community. Finally, in the Conclusion, the overall evaluation of the case study is conducted by referring to the theoretical and conceptual framework, with additional inferences about the case.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 History of the Kist Community

The Kist community mainly inhabits the Pankisi Gorge, which is located in the north-eastern part of Georgia, south of the Georgian-Chechen border in the historical region of Kakheti. It is nearly eight miles long and two and a half miles wide. The Pankisi Gorge is under the jurisdiction of the Municipality of Akhmeta. It is situated along the southeastern slopes of the Caucasus Mountains (Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 3, 13).

According to the 2014 General Population Census of National Statistics Office of Georgia (GEOSTAT), the population of the Kist community was 5.700 (GEOSTAT, 2016). The Kist population was 413 in 1897 and 1.094 in 1926, nearly 5.455 in 1989 and 7.110 in 2002, according to censuses (Jaimoukha, 2004: 241; Sarjveladze et al., 2009: 33). According to the demographic data of 1989, the breakdown of the different ethnic groups living in the gorge was: Kists 43 %, Georgians 29 %, and Ossetians 28 % (Sanikidze, 2007:264).[1] The towns in the gorge are Duisi, Birkiani, Jokolo, Dzibakhevi, Omalo, Dumastori, Khalatsani, Dedispureli, Sakabiano, Tsinubani, Bakilovani, Koreti, Kuthsakta, and Matani (Nazy's Guest House, n.d.). Eight of these (Duisi, Jokolo, Birkiani, Omalo, Khalatsani, Dumastori, Tsinubani, Omalo, and Dzibakhevi) are inhabited by the Kists (Siprashvili, 2014: 6). The income of the Kists is mainly based on agriculture, husbandry, artisanship, and rural tourism (Devdariani & Hancilova, 2002: 2; Jaimoukha, 2004: 241; Kopecek, 2011).

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[1] This demographic structure was changed under the impacts of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict and Chechen Wars. Due to that conflict, Ossetians left the gorge and migrated to the North Ossetian Autonomous Republic of the Russian Federation. Arrival of the Chechen refugees increased the ratio of *Vainakh* originated people in the gorge (Tsutkiridze, 2012: 374). Today, the Pankisi Gorge is nearly homogenous in terms of demography.

It is widely accepted that Kists are a community of ethnic *Vainakhs*.[2] The term *Vainakh* is the common ethnonym given to Chechens[3], Ingushes[4], Kists, and Tsova-Tush (Bats), and is primarily based on linguistic differences (Devdariani & Hancilova, 2002: 2; Jaimoukha, 2004: 14, 241-242; Siprashvili, 2014: 4). The Kists are bilingual in Kist (a dialect of the Chechen language) and Georgian (Kopeckova, 2012; Sedlarova, 2011: 295). The early history of the *Vainakhs* is a controversial issue that has not been fully explored. Although there is no consensus about where the *Vainakhs* originated, based on the available historical sources, there is a strong argument that the *Vainakhs* are one of the indigenous peoples of the North Caucasus (Aydıngün et al., 2016: 347-348). According to some scholars, the origins of the *Nakh* (*Vainakh*) people can be traced to a genealogical chain leading back to the Hurrians' descendants, and those of the Urartians to the modern *Vainakhs*, all as a result of the interactions and intermixing of different nation-tribes (Jaimoukha, 2004: 24, 28; Ilyasov, 2009: 10-14). It is claimed that the Armenians assimilated the Urartians to a certain degree. Still, a considerable portion of the Urartian tribe maintained their culture and independence. *Nakhchmateans*[5], and *Dzurdzuks*[6], who were the descendants of the Urartians, are thought to be the predecessors of the *Nakhs* (Jaimoukha, 2004: 30).

According to Georgian Chronicles by Leonti Mroveli, the legendary ancestor of *Nakhchmateans* is Targamos, who migrated from Assyria to the Caucasus with his

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[2] *Vainakh* means "Our People" or "Our Folk" in all dialects of *Vainakh* language (Zelkina, 1996: 240). *Vai* (our), *nakh* (people).

[3] The self-designation is *Nokhchii* (Jaimoukha, 2004: 13). Russians named them Chechen, which derives from the village of *Cecen-Aul*. (Jaimoukha, 2004: 13; Zelkina,1996: 240)

[4] The autonym of Ingushes is *Ghalghai* (Anchabadze, 2001: 1). Russians named them as Ingushes, which derives from the village of *Angusht* (Zelkina,1996: 240).

[5] The *Nokhchmekhkakhoi*, which is a Chechen tribe where the many Chechen ethnonyms and toponyms originated. They were mentioned as *Nakhchmateans* in the Georgian and Armenian Chronicles (Jaimoukha, 2004: 13).

[6] The name *Dzurdzuks* is derived from *Durdukha*, which is a town near Lake Urmia in present-day Iran (Jaimoukha, 2004: 13).

sons.[7] One of his sons, Kavkasos, who inherited the Caucasus from his father, gave rise to the Chechen tribes. According to Armenian Chronicles, the *Dzurdzuks*, who are the successors of the Kavkasos, gave help to the Georgian King Farnavaz. In addition to that, Farnavaz married a *Dzurdzuks* princess, and this also contributed to their alliance (Anchabadze, 2001: 2; Jaimoukha, 2004: 31). This can be seen as a sign of close relations between Kartvelians and *Vainakhs* (Aydıngün et al., 2016: 348; Savhelisvili, 1992: 5).[8] In the 15th century, the *Vainakhs* and the Tushians remained with the *Nakh* people in the Trans-Caucasus region.[9] Other *Nakh* people were assimilated by the Kartlians (Jaimoukha, 2004: 35). At present, there are people among Khevsurs, Pshavs, Tushes, and Georgians who attribute their origin to the mountainous tribes of Chechens and Ingushes (Aydıngün et al., 2016: 348; Aliroev & Margoshvili, 2006: 6-7).

It is important to note that the ethnonym Kist is an external designation. Georgians used this term to describe neighboring *Vainakh* tribes.[10] Chechens call the Kists who live in the Pankisi "Georgian Chechens". According to Margoshvili, the ethnonym Kist, which is an inclusive term, was used as a name for all *Vainakhs* by the Georgians of the mountains (Aydıngün et al., 2016: 348-349). Kists call themselves *Vaeppii*. Georgians use the terms *Kisti* or *Kisturi* (Jaimoukha, 2004: 241).

Based on the findings of this field research, ethnic diversity among Kists has not led to discrimination, nor disrupted their unity. In fact, a common culture is the factor that made social cohesion among these different ethnic groups possible. Interviews revealed that among the Kists are families of Avar and Dagestani origin who

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[7] Targamos (Togarmah) is the grandson of the Biblical person of Japheth, the son of Noah. This mythical character is also considered as the common ancestor of many Caucasian nations. (Sanadze, 2017: 208).

[8] It should be noted that relations between *Dzurdzuks* and Georgian also have a conflictual side during the reign of King Mirvan (Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 11).

[9] It should be noted that the elimination of feudal structure took place among the *Vainakhs* in that period. *Tukhum* and *teip* structure also began to emerge (Jaimoukha, 2004: 36).

[10] The name Kist derives from the name of the Kistinska River (Khede/Khdestskali River) (Blandy, 2002: 6).

migrated to Pankisi in the 19th century. This is another indication of the heterogeneous ethnic structure of the Kist community.[11]

In the first half of the 19th century, the Kists began to migrate to the Pankisi Gorge from Chechnya[12] The reasons for their migration were mainly economic, cultural, religious, and political factors. The economic difficulties were triggered by Russian operations aimed at conquering the north Caucasus, and the tradition of *baytalvaakkhar*, which was based on sharing pasture equally among tribes and preventing the excess accumulation of wealth. As for cultural issues, the tradition of blood feud among *Vainakhs* pushed some of them to migrate. Thirdly, religious factors, namely, Imam Shamil's strictly enforced Islamic rules and the resistance of the Kists against this exacerbated their migration (Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 3, 13). Finally, there was a political factor. The local ruler of that period of time invited the Kists to protect the territory (Kopeckova, 2012).

Before migrating to the Pankisi Gorge, Kists were temporarily settled in the town of Tianeti in Georgia (Sanikidze & Walker, 2004: 26). According to Sanikidze (2007: 266), Tsarist Russia directed them to Pankisi, in order to concentrate all the *Vainakhs* of Georgia together. Duisi[13] was the first village established by the Kists in the Pankisi Gorge (Sanikidze, 2007: 264; Siprashvili, 2014: 5). After that, Kists established other villages such as Jokolo[14], Omalo, Dzibakhevi, and Shua Khalatsani (Sanikidze & Walker, 2004:26). In the villages, Kists from the same *teip*[15] settled

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[11] The assimilation of people from different ethnic backgrounds is also a common characteristic of Chechen *teip* structure (Lieven, 1998: 340-341). There were also formations of new *teips* of which were named referring to the different ethnic origins of the members (Jaimoukha, 276).

[12] Another claim about the early migrations of the Kist to the Pankisi Gorge dated back to the 17th century (Blandy, 2002: 6).

[13] The village Duisi was established by a man whose name is Dui. While escaping the blood feud, he became a member of *Maisti* clan. Then, he left Chechnya and migrated to the Pankisi with his relatives and other members of that clan (Siprashvili, 2014: 5).

[14] The *Naib* of Imam Shamil, Sheikh Jokolo refused to subordinate to Imam Shamil and migrated to the Pankisi Gorge, and established the village Jokolo (Blandy, 2002: 6).

[15] A *teip* consists of a number of distinct families who are descendants of the same clan. It should be noted that the Kists used the term *goori* (families with different family names) to signify the consistent existence of the bloodline of the father. The members of the different *goori* can belong to the same *teip* due to their ancestors' sharing of the same village origin. (Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 14-15).

together in the same neighborhoods.[16] Although not always possible for geographical reasons, Kists mostly maintained their tradition of high-density living (Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 14).

Islamization of the North Caucasus started with the Arab expansions in the 8th century, especially with the conquest of Derbend. Later, Islam spread widely from Dagestan to the North Caucasus.[17] Islam took the form of Sufism, and it appeared first in Dagestan in the 8th century. In the 11th century, Sufism started to become the dominant form of Islam in the region.[18] The introduction of Islam to *Vainakhs* began in the 15th and 16th centuries (Ware & Kisriev, 2010: 5-6). After it was introduced in the lowlands of Chechnya, the expansion of Islam among the mountainous residents of the *Vainakh* tribes could not be achieved until the late 18th century. Previously, the religious beliefs and practices of these people were a mixture of pagan and Christian cults. Later, however, all the Chechen *tuqum*s adopted Islam as their official religion (Zelkina, 2000: 34).[19]

Besides being ethnically heterogeneous, the Kist migrants were also religiously diverse. One member of the Kist community who was interviewed stated that there were *Vainakhs* of both Christian and Muslim faith among the original Kist migrants with the following words:

> Those migrations started in 1826. My fifth great-grandfather was the first Kist who settled in Pankisi. He was already a Muslim before he came to Pankisi. My great-grandfather was a Muslim, and he made a pilgrimage to Mecca. In the middle of the

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[16] The term for it is *kup* in Kist language, *aul* in the Chechen language (Jaimoukha, 2014: 91; Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 14).

[17] In the 10th century, Derbend became an influential Muslim city. After that, Islam spread to the North Caucasus by the efforts of *mullahs* and Muslim merchants. Before and after the Mongol invasion, the gradual extension of Islam continued. After the 15th century, the Islamization process accelerated via the triumph of *Ghazi-Ghumuqs* (i.e., Muslim holy warriors) (Zelkina, 2000: 26-30).

[18] In the Dagestan region, the emergence of the members' of *Qadiri tariqat* was in the 11th century. The *Naqshbandi tariqat*, which came from the eastern part of Anatolia, was shown in the 15th century (Ware & Kisriev, 2010: 5-6).

[19] The dissemination of Islam among Ingushes began in the second half of the 18th century. Due to the geographical location of the Ingush land (hosting one the main passes between the North and South Caucasus, i.e., the Daryal Pass), they were subjected to the Georgian efforts of Christianization (Zelkina, 2000: 34).

18th century, there were also Christians among those who came to Pankisi. Of course, the state policies were also effective in this situation.[20]

The religious practices of Kists were composed of pagan, Christian, and Muslim beliefs and rituals (Kopecek, 2011: 158; Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 26; Sanikidze, 2007: 266). The absence of religious fanaticism and the existence of religious tolerance among the Kists were mentioned in several contemporary sources (Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 26; Tsutkiridze, 2012: 374).[21] The spread of Christianity and Georgian culture among the *Vainakhs* by Georgian Christian missionaries is considered to be a significant factor in establishing close relations between *Vainakhs* and Georgians in the 16th and 17th centuries (Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 26).[22]

The policies of Tsarist Russia and the missionary activities of Georgian religious authorities pressured Kists to adopt Christianity. So much so that in 1866, many Kists were forcibly baptized and given Christian names (Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 27; Sanikidze & Walker, 2004: 27).[23] A church was constructed in Jokolo in 1888. In addition, a number of elementary schools giving education in the Georgian language were opened in villages (Siprashvili, 2014: 6; Sanikidze, 2007: 267). These changes led to the Christianization of many residents of the Jokolo and Omalo villages (Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 27).[24]

In 1898, the construction of a mosque financed by Muslim members of the Kist community began in Duisi. At first, in order to prevent the potential re-conversion of Christian Kists to Islam, Tsarist authorities had refused permission for the

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[20] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 5, 2016.

[21] The North Caucasus culture is known for its historical tolerance towards many different spiritual or religious beliefs and practices (Jaimoukha, 2014: 111).

[22] In between the 10th and the 13th centuries, Georgian was the dominant power in the region and gave rise to the dissemination of Christianity among the peoples of the central and eastern Caucasus (Zelkina, 2000: 35-36).

[23] Between 1864 and 1910, there were many baptisms of Kists according to the records of the Society for the Revival of Orthodox Christianity in the Caucasus (Sanikidze, 2007: 267).

[24] By refering Margoshvili, Kurtsikidze & Chikovani (2002:14), states that Kists add Georgian suffixes to their family names after their migration to the gorge. This practice ensured them against to be subject of Soviet deportations (Blandy, 2002: 6).

construction of the mosque. Later on, Muslim Kists managed to obtain permission and opened the mosque in 1902 (Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 27). After the Bolshevik Revolution, the Sovietization of Georgia began. The church in Jokolo and the mosque in Duisi were closed. The mosque was not opened again until 1969 (Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 29). At the beginning of the 19th century and throughout the Soviet era, as a result of the efforts of local mullahs, Islam continued to be the prominent belief system in the Kist community (Sanikidze & Walker, 2004: 27). Moreover, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, two Sufi *tariqat*s began to spread in the Pankisi Gorge. The *Naqshbandi tariqat*, following its increasing recognition in Dagestan, Chechnya, and Ingushetia, and with the arrival of Isa Efendi to the gorge in 1909, was established in Pankisi (Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 28; Siprashvili, 2014: 7). Likewise, the *Qadiri tariqat*, which is based on the teachings of Kunta Haji (Kishiev), became influential among members of the Kist community through the efforts of another Sufi authority, Machig Mamaligashvili (Sanikidze & Walker, 2004: 29).[25] The main distinction between the two *tariqat*s in the gorge is their *zikr*[26] practices.[27] *Naqshbandi tariqat* practices *al-dhikr al-khafi* (silent *zikr*) and *Qadiris* practice *al-dhikr al-jahrı* (loud *zikr*) with dance-like movements (Gould, 2011: 364; Sanikidze 2007:272).

During the Soviet period, the Islamic practice known as parallel Islam, which was sustained outside the mosques and away from the scrutiny and surveillance of the Soviet authorities, increased in influence. Both the *Naqshbandi* and *Qadiri tariqat*s played a significant role in Islam gaining prominence among the Kists (Sanikidze, 2007: 272). Today there is no significant division between those two *tariqat*s. A Georgian scholar from Ilia State University pointed to this during an interview:

> What Shamil tried to create was somewhat parallel to that of Salafis'. Our Islam is the true Islam, and the others are deviations. Shamil was *Naqshbandi*. *Qadiriya* was

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[25] Sanikidze (2007) claims that Shamil's *Muridism*, which is centered on the asceticism and the idea of self-sacrifice had no significant marks among the Kists community.

[26] A Sufi Islamic practice, in which believers come together in a circle and rhythmically repeat the name of God.

[27] Imam Shamil was against the Kunta Haji's opposition to *gazawat* and the practice of loud *zikr*. Shamil persecuted Kunta Haji and forbade that practice (Albogachieva, 2014).

in a prominent position. Now the situation has changed because today's Chechen leader is *Qadiri*. There is not much difference between those two *tariqat*s in the gorge. They are all traditionalists who have two separate mosques but no clashes between them.[28]

In the 1970s, many Kists who lived in Jokolo and Omalo villages converted to Islam (Sanikidze & Walker, 2004: 28). During this period, economic difficulties forced a number of Kists to migrate to Chechnya and Ingushetia to seek job opportunities.[29] Members of the *Naqshbandi tariqat* were able to go to Dagestan and come together with a *Naqshbandi murshid*[30] who provided knowledge and guided them spiritually (Siprashvili, 2014: 31).

The disintegration process of the Soviet Union and the following period triggered economic, social, and political changes in the surrounding regions of the Pankisi Gorge. Political tension started between South Ossetian autonomous oblast and Georgia at the end of 1989. Later, this tension turned into ethnic strife between Georgians and Ossetians (Devdariani & Hancılova, 2002: 2; Zurcher, 2007: 115-116). In addition, Abkhazia demanded a union republic status within the Soviet Union, which refers to its disputable status in 1921. After its declaration of independence as a unitary state, the Georgian government abolished the autonomous status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Cornell, 2005: 135-136, 152). This resulted in ethnic unrest and wars. Moreover, the power struggle at the center of Georgia between the supporters of the Gamsakhurdia administration and its opponents led to the Georgian civil war. This chain of events weakened the state authority, caused the collapse of the economy and the interruption of the infrastructure services (Baev, 2003: 131-132; Zurcher, 2007: 126). While these events unfolded in Georgia, the tension that escalated between Russia and Chechnya in the North Caucasus resulted in Chechnya's unilateral declaration of independence. The conflict between Russia and Chechnya escalated and turned into war in 1994. At the end of the two-year war, Russia suffered a heavy defeat, and Chechnya became *de facto* independent (Hughes,

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[28] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 13, 2018.

[29] These migrations also had impacts on ethnic and religious understandings of the Kists. They started to be aware of their common *Vainakh* roots with Chechens. The Kist who migrated at that time had no trouble integrating into *Vainakh* society (Tsulaia, 2011: 128-129).

[30] A Sufi spiritual guide.

2007: 82-83; Russell, 2007: 73). Throughout this period, Russia supported Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In return, Georgia tried to balance the situation by supporting Chechnya. Thus, during the period of Gamsakhurdia government, Georgia and Chechnya enjoyed a period of the highest level of peace and reconciliation (Gharton, 2010: 24).

In the period between the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the outbreak of the First Chechen War, Kists experiencing economic hardship, went to Chechnya and Ingushetia to search for employment or to obtain an education. Also, the ravages of the first war forced some Kists and Chechens to go to the Pankisi Gorge. However, they returned to Chechnya when the war ended (Tsulaia, 2011:128; Tsutskiridze, 2012: 374). The increasing instability in the North Caucasus with the Second Chechen War also manifested itself with a surge towards the Pankisi Gorge.

During this period, criminal organizations emerged in Pankisi. These organizations acted together with corrupted state officials and Pankisi became a drug route. (Kupatadze, 2007: 41). Russia's blockade of the borders during the war was another reason why Georgia and the gorge gained significance for Chechnya (Skakov, 2000).

After the First Chechen War, the nationalist and secular approach adopted in the days of the post-Soviet independence struggle of Chechnya transformed into Islamist and *jihadist* approaches. In fact, one of the significant Chechen commanders, Basayev, and his accompanying groups, who also took the Islamist approach, declared *jihad*. These groups further engaged in an assault in Dagestan. The Russian Federation retaliated by initiating the second war against Chechnya.

During this long and devastating war, international *jihadist* organizations and their members gave full support to pro-independence Chechen militants (Hughes, 2007: 103-106). The Pankisi Gorge became even more important for the region as it was utilized as the logistic support area. Also, there were reports of the existence of training camps in the gorge (Wakizaka, 2019: 55).

Following the tragedy of September 11, the motto 'the global war on terror' was also adopted by Russia. It was during this time that Russia declared its war in Chechnya as a fight against international terrorist networks (Russell, 2007: 91-95).

During and after the Second Chechen War, the Pankisi Gorge also served to host the refugees from Chechnya. In fact, the refugee population in the gorge was said to be nearly twice that of the Kists.[31] The refugees depended solely on the Kists for their survival and with this further burden, the Kists' socio-economic situation worsened.

It was at this time that many international humanitarian aid organizations started operating in the gorge. In addition to humanitarian aid, these organizations provided religious training and education. According to various sources, Salafi organizations were also present among the operating organizations. After the Spring of 1997, the Salafi understanding of Islam started to spread in the gorge. Then, some of the young Kists went abroad to receive religious education. When they returned to the gorge, they had all adopted Salafism. They then participated in the propagation of Salafism among the Kist community. It should be noted that, the significant number of refugees who adopted this belief then contributed to the spread of Salafism among the Kist community. In the same way, Chechen militants, *jihadists* and other Arabs coming to the region had an impact on the spread of Salafism (Wiktor-Mach, 2009: 65).

Russia claimed that there were militants and *jihadists* among the refugees in the gorge and warned Georgia about the militant activity there. The Russian government called on Georgia to take action, or to allow Russia to secure the area. Georgia rejected Russia's request, stating that this would be violating its sovereignty. Russia's support for Abkhazia and South Ossetia was another underlying reason that influenced the decision. In 2001, Russian air forces violated the Georgian border and bombed certain areas in the gorge. In retaliation, Georgia's president, Shevardnadze, admitted the presence of Chechen guerillas in Pankisi (Devdariani, 2002). The USA soon became involved and the Equipped and Train Program was conducted in 2002. Following this program, special operations took place in order to secure the gorge.

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[31] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 5, 2016. Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 4, 2016.

Russia repeated its accusation of terrorist activity in the gorge, two more times, 2009 and 2012 (Devdariani & Hancılova, 2002: 6; Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 6; Tsutkiridze, 2012: 377-379).

After the Rose Revolution of 2003, important political changes took place in Georgia. The conduct of the Georgian government towards the Pankisi Gorge changed. (This will be explained in detail in the following chapter.) To secure the gorge area, special operations were carried out. (Amashukeli, 2019: 6). Salafism expanded further, with new followers mainly among young Kists. As the numbers of Salafi Kists grew, tensions emerged between the young Salafi Kists and the elderly. The traditional Kist Islam formed the structure of the Kist community. This conflicted with Salafism's demand that the Sharia law govern all aspects of the lives of Muslims (Wiktor-Mach, 2009: 64-65).

In the 2010s, many militants joined ISIS (ISIL)[32], which originally emerged and developed in Iraq, Syria and from the Caucasus. The participation of Kists and other people associated with Pankisi in the two-wave of foreign fighting gave rise to deep concern in national and international circles. Young Kists joined ISIS during its growth period, but their numbers diminished in parallel with the weakening in the power of the organization. All across Georgia, the Pankisi region was linked to terror groups and activites. Today, the Kist community is still struggling against the stereotypes attributed to them. (Amashukeli, 2018: 6-10).

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[32] The name of this organization was referred to as ISIS during the in-depth interviews. Therefore, this name is used throughout the thesis.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The main aim of this thesis is to trace the social changes in the case of the Kist community. Social change is observed through the changes in the patterns of social cohesion in the community. Although some studies about the Kist community adopt the term identity to explain the changes in the community, this study follows a different path for a specific reason. Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 4-5) assert that the term identity has two aspects: the category of practice and the category of analysis. The category of practice refers to a popular category used in everyday language by lay actors to attribute meaning to their life. This term is also used by politicians to manipulate people to their political ends. The category of analysis, on the other hand, refers to its scientific conceptualization to be used for analysis. There is a risk of reification of identities caused by using the lay term without expounding on them. Therefore, this study does not adopt the identity theory as a framework so as to avoid ambiguity of the term identity and of identity politics. Like Durkheim says, sociology is concerned with the popular notions which are ambiguous, and the sociologist has to avoid classifying different things under the same category to prevent limitless confusions (Durkheim, 2013: 42-43).

Searching for a suitable theoretical framework for the analysis of the pattern of the changes experienced by the Kist community members, one can develop an insight into the parallel exhibitions of Durkheim's concepts with this pattern of the changes. Although Durkheim's works do not involve an explicit study of social change, his main aim is to make sense of the impacts of the rapid transformations on the social order in the 19th century European societies. Moreover, Durkheimians address the potentialities of his works in terms of social change (Tiryakian, 2007). Additionally, tracing the changing patterns of social cohesion from outside can be achieved through Durkheim's methodological way of studying internal facts by attributing external indexes to them (Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 20). The Kist

community's case includes different sensitive dimensions because of the related issues of regional and global security. These issues also structured the choice of an eclectic methodology with the Durkheimian one by attributing external indexes for the sociological phenomena as an attempt to eliminate the possible reactivity, falsification, misinformation which can be encountered in the fieldwork. The Kist community's case is examined through qualitative research methods, which include in-depth interviews, observations, and literature reviews. In this study, the potentialities of Durkheim's work, which is defined as hidden discourses of the text by Pearce (2001: 6-8), are unlocked by using the reevaluation of his concepts.

3.1 The Concepts of Solidarity and Collective Consciousness

Cited from Hindess, Pearce infers that "the analysis of discourses is an activity of discovery — of stumbling upon, or unveiling what is already latent in the texts, thereby underplaying the intertextual nature of reading."(Pearce, 2001: 6). By benefiting from the different texts of an author, intertextual reading allows one to notice hidden discourses in the examined works.

> The original texts will be displaced by the theoretical work expended upon them, producing conceptual systems with significantly different substantive implications. Once different discourses (signifying chains) have been identified and their relationship to each other specified, it is possible to discard those aspects of each that are fundamentally incoherent, and retain and synthesize those that are coherent and compatible with each other, supplementing this, at times somewhat fragmentary conceptual system, with other (equally compatible) concepts: drawn from elsewhere — thereby achieving a nonsyncretic synthesis. It is important to note that to utilize a signifying chain or set of concepts is also to be constrained by its logic — one is not free simply to pick and choose when to use which element of which argument (Pearce, 2001: 8).

In this chapter, a set of concepts of Durkheim's is reevaluated by taking the notion of change and multiplicity to the forefront. This facilitates understanding social change on a meso-level by utilizing qualitative methods. In order to answer the research question of how the impact of 'collective shocks' affects the 'solidarity' of the Kist community, this chapter provides conceptual relations with the above-mentioned approach. Firstly, 'solidarity' and its relationship with 'collective consciousness' are evaluated. Then, the connection between social change and 'collective effervescence' is presented. Durkheim's conceptualization of religion is used concerning solidarity.

The consequence of a change in the density of social interaction upon social cohesion is described. In addition to that, the interaction between different collective consciousnesses is explained.

Social solidarity is a bond that unites individuals. It is a process (Carithers, 1977; Evans & Evans, 1977). Durkheim defines social solidarity with the following words:

> … the social solidarity is a completely moral phenomenon which in itself does not lend itself to precise observation nor indeed to measurement. In order to carry out a classification and comparison we have to substitute for this elusive, internal fact, an external index which symbolizes it, and then study the former by means of the latter (2004: 20).

According to Durkheim, social solidarity as a social fact should be examined through its effects. He utilizes laws as the external index of social solidarity because social relations are inclined to take an exact form. This fixation of social relations as a source of order is the law for Durkheim.[33] He believes that "law reproduces the principle forms of social solidarity" (Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 22). By classifying essential types of law, Durkheim establishes two corresponding types of social solidarity. His classification is based on sanctions. These sanctions differ according to the attributed severity of the rule of conduct. He defines repressive and restitutive laws according to their sanctions. Repressive law demands the suffering of the offender. On the other hand, restitutive law deals with restoring the previously disturbed order. Repressive law represents 'mechanical solidarity'. Restitutive law represents 'organic solidarity' (Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 21-23; Pearce, 2001: 94). The primary binding forces of these two types of solidarities are collective consciousness and labor division, respectively. In mechanical solidarity, collective consciousness is the individuals' link to each other through their resemblances. In organic solidarity, on the other hand, the division of labor links individuals to society through their differences and, thus, their interdependence (Carithers, 1977; Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 6). According to Durkheim's early works, collective

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[33] Anthropologist Stanley Diamond states two social orders based on the rule of law and the rule of custom, which are employed by civilized political society and primitive society, respectively (Pearce, 2001: 94). Durkheim also states the function of custom. He says that custom and law express different types of solidarities. He believes that custom symbolizes an only secondary type of social solidarity, not an essential type (Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 21).

consciousness weakened and became vague through the transformation from mechanical to organic society.[34]

Durkheim's primary aim was to make sense of the rapid transformations that were experienced in 19th century Europe. His main focus was on the long-term social change with a non-linear social evolutionist perspective. For this purpose, Durkheim examines the transition from repressive law to restitutive law in order to explain this long-term structural change, which indicates a shift from mechanical solidarity into an organic one (Sheleff, 1975; Tiryakian, 2007). Durkheim's concepts of mechanical and organic solidarity are pure forms, limited cases of social solidarity. In social reality, the boundary between them is not clear. They are analytical abstractions, like ideal types in the Weberian sense. Social solidarity exists as a combination of these two in varying degrees for different societies because there exists an elementary form of division of labor in every society (Pearce, 2001: 62). This study focuses on a specific community that has visible traditional characteristics. According to Evans (1977), social solidarity should be studied with respect to social meaning. This approach provides the opportunity to grasp the empirical reality by allowing the researcher to identify objects that are regarded as important by the examined social group (Carithers, 1977). In this study, the concerned group's solidarity is studied with more focus on its mechanical aspect, utilizing shared beliefs and practices, tribal and religious laws, and collective political action.

The mechanical aspect of solidarity can be traced through collective consciousness formed by collective representations and sentiments. Collective consciousness is "the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of a society forms a determinate system with a life of its own." (Durkheim, 2013: 63). It is a *sui generis* phenomenon. Collective consciousness does not vary from one generation to another; instead, it connects them. Moreover, it is unattached from individualistic states. Although collective consciousness is realized through individuals, it is totally different from individual consciousness. "It is the same in the north and the south, in large cities and small towns, and in different professions." (Durkheim cited in

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[34] In his later works, Durkheim gives up that view and declares the importance of collective beliefs and sentiments with respect to religion and morality in all types of societies (Lukes, 1972: 5).

Thompson, 2004: 24). Nevertheless, one can argue that the degree of commonality of collective consciousness can vary because the state of sharing features and attributes differ, even fluctuate.[35] Durkheim points out the conditions of change in the strength of social bonds in mechanical solidarity by referring to collective consciousness:

> 1) The relationship between the volume of the common consciousness and that of the individual consciousness. The social bonds are stronger the more completely the former overlaps with the latter. 2) The average intensity of the states of collective consciousness. The relationship between the volume of the common and individual consciousness assumed to be equal, the degree of intensity has more effect upon the individual the more energy it possesses. If, on the other hand, that intensity is only caused by a feeble impetus, its capacity to steer the individual in a collective direction can only be feeble. Thus, the more easily will he be able to go his own way, and solidarity will be less strong. 3) The degree of determinateness of these same states. Indeed, the more beliefs and practices are clear-cut, the less room they allow for individual divergences. They act as uniform moulds in which we all cast, in a uniform fashion, our ideas and actions. *Consensus* is therefore as perfect as possible; every consciousness beats as one. Conversely, the more general and indeterminate the rules of conduct and thought, the more individual reflection must intervene in applying the rules to particular cases. But such reflective thinking cannot be aroused without disagreements breaking out. For, as it varies in quality and quantity from one man to another, all that it generates has the same character. Centrifugal tendencies thus continue to multiply at the expense of social cohesion and harmony in the workings of society (Durkheim, 2013: 120).

One can infer that the weakness and vagueness of collective consciousness refers to the weakness of the mechanical aspect of solidarity. In addition to a potential change in the fluctuating aspect of collective consciousness, one can argue that there exist several collective consciousnesses in a given society. Durkheim examines the individual as a member of only one society to simplify its analysis. In social reality, an individual may belong to more than one society. Thus, as a member of different collectivities, she or he shares several collective consciousnesses. Durkheim asserts that by saying that "In order to simplify this explanation we are assuming that the individual belongs to only one society. In fact, we participate in several groups and there is in each of us several collective consciousnesses..." (Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 28). The attempt to comprehend the Kist community's case using a Durkheimian conceptual framework requires considering solidarity and collective consciousness as many instead of one. Therefore, using solidarities corresponding to

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[35] Hechter (1987: 35) defines group solidarity function with two independent factors which are the extensiveness of collective obligations and the degree of observance of these obligations.

collective consciousnesses helps understand the different clustered similarities (resemblances) and differences in the formation of social solidarity. Durkheim clarifies the relation between authority and collective consciousness by saying that:

> … wherever a governing authority is established, its first and main function is to create respect for collective beliefs, traditions, and practices; that is, to defend the common consciousness against all enemies, both internal and external. It thus becomes the symbol of the collective consciousness, its living expression in everyone's eyes. Thus, the vitality of the common consciousness is transmitted to the governing authority, in the same way that affinities of ideas are communicated through the words which express them. This is how the governing authority acquires a character which puts it in a paramount position. It is no longer one among many important social functions; it is the collectivity incarnate. It participates in the authority that the latter exercises over individual consciousnesses, and it is from the collective consciousness that it derives its power. But, once this power is established, without becoming independent of the source from which it flows and from which it continues to draw sustenance, it becomes an autonomous factor in social life, capable of spontaneous actions not determined by outside forces, precisely as a result of its acquired supremacy (Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 26).

Collective consciousness gains its power from collective sentiments, and it determines whether actions are criminal or deviant. The quantity and significance of criminal or deviant activities are assessed by the governing authority. The amount of punitive sanctions the authority imposes demonstrates its power. Through sanctioning crime and offenses, collective consciousness reproduces, reaffirms itself. Crime injures the collective sentiments and moral rules in society. Punishments can be seen as a process that generates solidarity through repairing offended collective sentiments, but the degree of criminality does not directly correlate to the impact on the collective sentiment (Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 24-26; Pope & Ragin, 1977: 365). It can be argued that the degree of authority that is exercised correlates to the degree of collective consciousness. Viewing through this perspective, one can benefit from using the degree of authority exercised to evaluate the extent of collective consciousness. In order to sustain the corresponding collectivity's unity, collective consciousness requires consistency in reactions to variations in the individual level (Wortman, 2007). Durkheim points out the divergent acts concerning collective consciousness as follows:

> … since there can be no society in which the individuals do not diverge to some extent from the collective type, it is also inevitable that, among these divergences, there are some which appear as criminal in nature. What gives them this nature is not

their intrinsic importance, but the importance attributed to these divergences by the common consciousness. If the latter is stronger and has enough authority to make these divergences absolutely minimal, it will also be more sensitive and exacting (Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 56).

Collective consciousness varies according to its extent and intensity or degree. From this point of view, one can argue that different types of collective consciousnesses exist in a hierarchical, layered, and differential distributed structure which is open to change. In this study, ethnic and religious types that force individuals to interact through and with collective representations[36] and attributes are examined.

Religion is "an outstanding form of collective consciousness..." (Durkheim, 2013: 224). Its representations are collective representations. Durkheim defines religion with respect to sacred and profane dichotomy with the following words:

> A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them. The second element which thus finds a place in our definition is no less essential than the first; for by showing that the idea of religion is inseparable from that of the Church, it makes it clear that religion should be an eminently collective thing (Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 88).

Sacred things are isolated from profane things. Prohibitions set a boundary between them. These two categories radically oppose each other. Although they are mutually exclusive, something profane can become sacred under certain circumstances, which will be explained later in detail. The essential qualities of sacred things, their relations with each other and with profane things are determined by religious beliefs, collective representations. In addition to that, rituals, as the rule of conduct, defines the attitudes towards sacred things (Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 87).

The categorization of religions into sects and cults are essential issues concerning the reevaluated concept of collective consciousness. Durkheim asserts that "… these particular religions are ordinarily only special forms of a more general religion which embraces all; these restricted Churches are in reality only chapels of a vaster Church which, by reason of this very extent, merits this name still more" (Durkheim, 2008:

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[36] Collective representations can be defined as the states of collective consciousness (Lukes, 1972: 6).

44). This understanding can be used to support the argument that a collective consciousness can vary according to the extent and intensity of its collective representations and attributes.

3.2 The Concepts of Collective Effervescence and Collective Shock

Collective consciousness also has moral dimensions. Durkheim exemplifies this by indicating the contribution of education to the maintenance of society. A crucial function of education is the socialization process. According to Durkheim, morality, which is based on socialization by the internalization of collective beliefs and practices, refers to discipline, attachment to the group and autonomy (Kantzara, 2012: 89). Durkheim (cited in Thompson 2004: 57) also states that both law and morality can change according to different social types. In addition to that, he points out that change can occur in the same social type if there are modifications in the conditions of collective existence. He continues by saying that:

> But for these transformations to be possible, the collective sentiments which form from the basis of morality have to be open to change, and must therefore be only moderate in intensity. If they were too strong they would no longer be malleable. Any arrangement is, in fact, an obstacle to a new arrangement, and more so when the original arrangement is very strong. The more strongly a structure is articulated, the more resistance it offers to any modification; this is so for functional as well as for anatomical arrangements (Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 57).

The strength of the reproduction of a structure defines its capacity to resist modifications (Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 57). To trace the changes in the collective consciousness, one should consider the frequency of social interaction in a definite spatiotemporality (Tiryakian, 2007). Heightened social interaction generates alterations in the collective consciousness. Durkheim exemplified this by showing the distinct phases of Aborigine society. In the first phase, the frequency of social interaction is low. In that phase, secular activities of ordinary life take place. In the next phase, individuals assemble at certain intervals and places. In this phase, their concentration increases, and religious activities are realized (Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 91). These cycles of assemblies produce extraordinary moments. According to Durkheim, the genesis of sacred and religion emerge from this state of heightened interaction. The transformation of profane things into sacred can be

observed in this process (Tiryakian, 1988: 45). Change in the frequency of social interaction generates qualitative changes in social solidarity. In the phase of high frequency, a state of continual excitement and hyperactivity are observed (Mauss, 2004: 76-80). These extraordinary moments of assemblies are depicted by Durkheim as follows:

> There are occasions when this strengthening and vivifying action of society is especially apparent. In the midst of an assembly animated by a common passion, we become susceptible of acts and sentiments of which we are incapable when reduced to our own forces; and when the assembly is dissolved and when, finding ourselves alone again, we fall back to our ordinary level, we are then able to measure the height to which we have been raised above ourselves (Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 90).

This collective state is defined as collective effervescence. This state can be defined as an estrangement from the self and the transformative state of affairs (Weiss, 2012: 94). Durkheim points this out with the following words:

> …if collective life awakens religious thought on reaching a certain degree of intensity, it is because it brings about a state of effervescence which changes the conditions of psychic activity. Vital energies are over-excited, passions more active, sensations stronger. There are even some which are produced only at this moment. A man does not recognize himself; he feels himself transformed and consequently he transforms the environment which surrounds him. In order to account for the very particular impressions which he receives, he attributes to the things with which he is in most direct contact, properties which they have not, exceptional powers and virtues which the objects of everyday experience do not possess. In a word, above the real world where his profane life passes, he has placed another, which, in one sense, does not exist except in thought, but to which he attributes a higher sort of dignity than to the first (Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 94).

Durkheim says that individuals have a higher tendency to assemble during the times that collective shocks occur. It is general effervescence that causes humans to perceive and act differently than usual. He gives examples of the Crusades and the French Revolution (Durkheim, 2008: 210-211).

> There are periods in history when, under the influence of some great collective shock, social interactions have become much more frequent and active. Men look for each other and assemble together more than ever. That general effervescence results, which is characteristic of revolutionary or creative epochs. Now this greater activity results in a general stimulation of individual forces. Men see more and differently now than in normal times. The passions moving them are of such an intensity that they cannot be satisfied except by violent and unrestrained actions, actions of superhuman heroism or of bloody barbarism. This is what explains the Crusades, for

example, or many of the scenes, either sublime or savage, of the French Revolution (Durkheim, 2008: 210-211).

One can argue that the creative epochs generated by collective shocks may refer to a collective effervescence characterized by undesirable emotions because the emotions experienced collectively in the state effervescence can alternate between two opposites (Cariton-Ford, 1992: 368). Durkheim explains this by saying that:

> While the feelings placed in common vary from extreme dejection to extreme high-spiritedness, from painful anger to ecstatic enthusiasm, the result in all cases is communion among individual consciousnesses and mutual calming. While the fundamental process is always the same, different circumstances color it differently. In the end, then, it is the unity and diversity of social life that creates, at the same time, the unity and the diversity of sacred beings and things (Durkheim, 1995: 417).

The variation in collective effervescence depends on the degree of emotions and of the collective sharing of these emotions. The degree of the collectivity of emotions indicates the ability of the collective effervescence to spread, which means that not all individuals experience collective emotions (Cariton-Ford, 1992: 368). The indefinite characteristic of collective effervescence is stated by Olaveson (2001). He identifies two types of collective effervescence in Durkheim's work. These are creative effervescence and re-creative effervescence. Creative effervescence indicates intense emotion in which uncertainty emerges. From this uncertainty, new moral ideas, ideal conceptions, and collective representations may appear. It refers to "a dissolution of regular social and normative structure." (102). On the other hand, re-creative effervescence refers to an intense emotion that bonds the community and reaffirms moral and spiritual life. New religious sentiments and moral codes are generated in the state of creative effervescence. In contrast, revitalization of existing religious beliefs and moral norms are reproduced through re-creative effervescence (101-103). By assembling a society to become conscious of itself.[37] Durkheim explains it with the following words:

> For a society to become conscious of itself and maintain at the necessary degree of intensity the sentiments which it thus attains, it must assemble and concentrate itself.

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[37] The other way of becoming conscious itself is realized through the state. However, it is a specific form of consciousness because the state judges the behalf of society (Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 109-110). One can infer that governing authorities can be seen as a particular form of consciousness in relation to the collective consciousness.

> Now this concentration brings about an exaltation of the mental life which takes form in a group of ideal conceptions, where it portrayed the new life thus awakened; they correspond to this new set of physical forces, which is added to those which we have at our disposal for the daily tasks of existence. A society can neither create itself nor recreate itself without at the same time creating an ideal (Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 94-95).

In the temporary period of collective effervescence, one can argue that creative and re-creative effervescence can emerge at the same time. Similar to types of solidarity, types of collective effervescence can co-exist in the social reality because these are limit cases. The individual can be affected by the complexities of creative and re-creative effervescence caused by collective shock. Whether the effects of collective effervescence are creative or re-creative varies because "…individuals and sub-collectivities do not simply act out pre-given positions but can also transform the signifying systems to which they are subject. The differential distribution of individuals and groups within social relations determines (albeit in a mediated way) their experience and understanding and their capacity to develop their own complex and possibly alternative interpretations of discourses" (Pearce, 2001: 29). The source of uncertainty of collective effervescence can be explained with respect to this understanding. Barker (1999:13) expresses the idea that creative epochs in history are generated by extreme social and political struggles, by citing Hunt. In this state of effervescence, the sacred symbols of society are reinforced. At the same time, these sacred symbols may become objects of discussion. Moreover, collective effervescence may result in both the strengthening and weakening of individuals. One can argue that collective effervescence, which is caused by collective shocks, can also produce this twofold effect on a community.

Durkheim declares that the relation of the individual with society may be polarized in terms of the degree of integration and moral regulation. The state where there is too little moral regulation is named an anomie (Thompson, 2004: 7). "This is the reason for the excitement which predominates in this part of society, but which has spread to all the rest. A constant state of crisis and anomie exists there. From the top to the bottom of the scale, covetous desires are aroused without it being known where they might level out." (Durkheim cited in Thompson, 2004: 80). This state of deregulation expresses a parallel feature to the state that is caused by collective shocks. Hidden

potentialities may emerge, or the structure of society may be reaffirmed, as in the case where collective religious effervescence is produced and consumed. The relationship between collective consciousness and collective representations has been previously emphasized. Religious representations should also be considered in relation to rituals. Religious representations and rituals are in direct correlation with the psychological well-being of believers. The reason why rituals have enhancing effects on individuals is that collective effervescence in such a setting is attributed to the ritual itself and to the sacred objects. Rituals can influence individuals in two ways: through participation in the collective activity and through the meaning of the ritual. Collective rituals enhance self-esteem by allowing participants to be involved in collective effervescence (Cariton-Ford, 1992: 367-368). Collective effervescence provides moral empowerment for the individual. It gives a sense of power to the individual through belonging to a moral community (Tiryakian, 1995: 273-274). "Collective effervescence, as a transgressive, dedifferentiating, creative, and liberating force, is a counterbalance to normal, structured, and morally regulated social existence" It has a dialectic relationship with social structure (Olaveson, 2001: 110). In the moments of creative collective effervescence, individuals' attributes to everyday life may be transformed (Tiryakian, 1995: 273). With this moral empowerment, the transformation of attributes may lead to different production and reproduction processes of collective consciousnesses.

3.3 The Conceptual Relations within the Case of the Kist Community

In the case of the Kist community, social change is traced utilizing the change in the pattern of social solidarity, which is seen as a process. In this study, solidarity is examined through collective consciousness. By understanding that collective consciousnesses are multiple, the points of similarities are used to indicate the relationship between the different collective consciousnesses in the domains of religion and ethnicity. The external indexes of these collective consciousnesses and solidarities are, correspondingly, religious and traditional beliefs and practices, customary law and religious law, governing authorities, and collective political actions. The political and ideological vacuum caused by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the collapse of infrastructure, high unemployment rates, criminal activities

that had transnational links, wars and ethnic conflicts in neighboring regions and a massive flow of refugees all contributed to the collective shocks in this case. The reason behind the collapse of the governing authorities affected the collective consciousness. In addition to that, the high increase in the interaction among *Vainakh* people due to the influx of refugees produced alterations in the collective consciousnesses of the Kist community. Thus, the Kist community became self-conscious. Furthermore, newly established relations with other Muslim collectivities are also noted in the analysis of the case. The twofold impact of collective effervescence originated by collective shocks is examined with respect to the mass conversion of young Kists to Salafi Islam. The emergence of a new type of religious and moral consciousnesses in the period of collective effervescence produced by collective shocks is explained through their observance of beliefs and practices and its opposition to the existing moral and religious order in the Kist community. Additionally, transformations in sacred things and religious rituals, the traditions and law, are all examined through particular challenges in the community. Also, the relationship between governing authorities in the community (existing or emerging) with the Georgian state is used to comprehend the changes in the social solidarity production processes through collective political actions. The outcomes of the challenges from the opposition between existing and emerging collective consciousnesses in the Kist community and negotiations between these consciousnesses answered the question of how the impact of collective shocks affected the solidarity of the Kist community, whether it led to a reaffirmation of the general solidarity of the Kist community or led to its destruction.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

During the second part of the 20th century, the accelerated development of the global production system, commonly termed globalization, reinforced significant changes in the production relations. The intervention of the nation-state in the economic sphere tended to decrease in amount; thus, weakening the power of the nation-state in general. The Soviet Union had a socialist-planned economy that demanded the distribution of products according to the directions of the state authority, rather than the market forces.[38] The arms race during the Cold War put extra pressures on the Soviet economy and compelled it to enter the world market. Production in the Soviet Union necessitated a readjustment of the world market, and this demanded a new economic organization. It should be noted that capital-oriented economies were less affected by this development because global market forces offered more freedom to the capital-oriented system. Also, overcoming national trade barriers was less complicated for these economies. However, a highly centralized and controlled Soviet economy could not meet the demand to produce a new political structure that was entailed by the global turn of events. The failure to solve the problem of the reorganization of the political structure brought about the changes that ended the existing communist one-party system in the Soviet Union. As a consequence, the split of the Soviet elite resulted in the dissolution of the Soviet Union itself. The divided elite could not manage to reunite. This led to political instability, and the collapse of the Soviet economy and, finally, the collapse of the sovereignty of the Soviet state (Lockwood 2000: 1-4, 127-128, 143).

Krasner (1999, 3-4) defines four types of sovereignty in relation to authority and control issues. These are international legal sovereignty, Westphalian sovereignty,

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[38] The Soviet economy is a mixture of formal and informal formations and exercises. That informal part of the economy is expressed in many names like the second economy, black economy, or shadow economy (Grossman, 1977).

domestic sovereignty and interdependence sovereignty. The first two types of sovereignties are based on authority and legitimacy. The first, international legal sovereignty, refers to territorial entities' mutual recognition of their self-legislation rights. The second, Westphalian sovereignty, is the exclusion of an external actor from the authority structure of the state in a specified territory of a political body. Domestic sovereignty, on the other hand, entails both authority and control. Finally, interdependence sovereignty is only concerned with control, namely control of transborder issues. Drawing upon these conceptualizations, one can argue that the authoritative decision-making structure of the Soviet Union, domestic sovereignty, failed at the same time as the sovereignty claims of new political actors and legitimacy crises appeared. Accordingly, in this process of dissolution, interdependence sovereignty, which is related to border control issues, was also lost. Together with the disappearance of supreme Soviet authority and control, which used to be exercised over the previous Soviet territories, this loss of sovereignty in many levels generated an ideological vacuum. This caused many changes and problems in different areas of the lives of the former Soviet citizens. They started to question the existing ideological beliefs and practices with greater conviction.

Being a totalitarian state, the Soviet Union had implemented a reinforced modernization project under its socialist ideology. In the religious realm, the secularist ideology of the Soviet Union was scientific atheism, which held highly negative assumptions about religion. One can argue that the modern, urbanized, and profoundly secular construct of Soviet man refers to a very organic type of social solidarity among the citizens of the Soviet Union. However, due to the outcomes of the dissolution, the hegemonic authority of the Soviet state fell apart. Soviet collective consciousness, which had previously provided social cohesion based on a socialist ideology of modernism and secularism, was degraded. Therefore, the Soviet solidarity disintegrated. The loss of sovereignty of the Soviet state meant that there was no overarching authority to implement the constitution of the Soviet Union. The state authority, which was a high-level and palpable form of consciousness, became incapable of demanding respect for the collective beliefs, traditions, symbols, and practices of the Soviet Union.

This environment led to the loss of, first, the power and, then, the existence of the modern social organizations of the Soviet period. Rapid changes generated deregulations because "the state order falls into anomie, beset by such violently imposed dynamics as to fall into social disintegration." These sudden changes led to the increased recognition of traditional and religious social organizations, in place of the previous, modern ones. Tishkov (2004: 12-15) depicts this phenomenon as demodernization. According to him, demodernization is "a radical transformation of social links and institutions that undermines the otherwise universal capacity of human communities for self-organization."

After 1991, Georgia, one of the former Soviet republics, started to experience a transition process from a socialist and highly secularized state to a capitalist one. Despite its multi-ethnic societal structure, post-Soviet Georgia used a titular nation and its associated religion, namely Georgian ethnicity and Georgian Orthodox Christianity, as the basis of its state- and nation-building process. During this time, Georgia became involved in the process of desecularization, which points to the global trend of religious revival. The reculturation, that is the re-formation of the connection between culture and religion, and the ethnoreligious nationalism of the Georgian state- and nation-building process brought about the exclusion of ethnic and religious minorities from the state structure. This resulted in the alienation of minority groups from Georgian society and diminishing their attachments towards it. Thus, in post-Soviet Georgia, ethnoreligious nationalistic solidarity replaced the modernist and secularist Soviet solidarity. This new understanding of solidarity was not able to substitute the functions of the previous Soviet one. It mostly contributed to the process of demodernization of minority groups. Traditional and religious solidarities were pushed to the forefront to assist those seeking protection and security.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many crises mushroomed throughout the ex-Soviet regions. Economic hardships, the breakdown of infrastructures, an increase in crime, ethnic conflicts, and wars became widespread, especially in the Caucasus region. Georgia declared independence and started to establish its sovereignty. In that period, ethnic strife in the South Ossetia region escalated. Between the years 1991

and 1993, a civil war broke out, and this prompted the overthrow of Gamsakhurdia. Then, war erupted between Georgia and the formerly autonomous Soviet Republic of Abkhazia (Devdariani & Hancılova, 2002: 2; Zurcher, 2007: 115-116). Destabilization further increased in Georgia. During this time, Chechnya, which had started its own struggle for independence, fought two successive wars with Russia (1994-1996 and 1999-2009). In the neighboring areas of the Pankisi Gorge instability increased.

Throughout the region, political turmoil caused social disruptions. One of them was among the Kist community in the Pankisi Gorge. The fieldwork conducted in Georgia demonstrated that several essential themes characterized the post-Soviet experience of the Kist community, as expressed by the interviewees during in-depth interviews. These are political and social turmoil, conversion to Salafism, challenges to the traditional Kist way of life, and the Kist community's organization and reconfiguration within the community. These themes are discussed in this chapter.

4.1 Political and Social Turmoil in the post-Soviet Pankisi Gorge

Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Georgia experienced a period of civil wars. During that period, crime and corruption became widespread. The Georgian state authority failed to provide the public necessities. Criminal actors seized control of many areas of the public circles of life (Shelley, 2007: 3-4). The Pankisi Gorge became a route for organized crime in the midst of wars and ethnic conflicts (Curtis, 2002: 4-7). Drug trafficking and arms smuggling activities in and near the gorge area took place (Devdariani & Hancılova, 2002: 2; Shelley, 2007: 3-4; Tsulaia, 2011: 139). Due to the Russian blockade of *de facto* independent Chechnya, the Pankisi Gorge became a convenient area for the Chechen forces who fought for independence. Chechen militants started to utilize the gorge as a logistic support and training base (Curtis, 2002: 4-7, Sanikidze, 2015: 506).[39] Kupatadze (2007: 41) asserts that until 2003, as a consequence of the Chechen conflict and the corruption among the Georgian law enforcement officers, the Pankisi Gorge was a lawless territory.

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[39] According to Curtis (2002: 7), there were also nearly a hundred militants who had Arab origin.

Due to the gap in authority caused by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, instability in the area increased, but the great disturbance was triggered by the First Chechen War (Devdariani & Hancılova, 2002: 2; Tsulaia, 2011: 139).[40] After the break out of the Second Chechen War, many Chechens and some Kists who had earlier gone to Chechnya in search of job opportunities came to the Pankisi Gorge as refugees (Tsulaia, 2011: 126).[41] The influx of refugees struck the community in many dimensions. A Kist inhabitant of the Pankisi depicted the situation in the gorge with the following words:

> They were ten thousand when they arrived. According to official figures, it is eight thousand. In 2000, there were many other people among them: Arabs, Turks, agents, intelligence officers, and so on. There were not only Chechens. When they arrived, the situation in the gorge was very different. There were drug traffickers, kidnappers, and robbers among them. Those things caused a bad situation.[42]

Kists provided shelter and food to the refugees (Tsulaia, 2011: 136; Tsutskiridze, 2012: 375). According to the claims of some Kist families, many of them hosted ten or more Chechen refugees (Siprashvili, 2014: 18). Almost %85 percent of the refugees were hosted by the Kists (Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 4; Sanikidze, 2015: 506). An expert from Caucasian House in Tbilisi said that "The circle of friendship was located in houses at the gorge. Kists gave them shelters, beds, and pillows for 6 months".[43]

In terms of the economy, the situation was hopeless, and many young people remained unemployed. Due to the political instability caused by wars, young people could not go to Chechnya to search for jobs (Prasad, 2012: 12). The conditions in the gorge attracted Russia's attention. Russian authorities demanded that the Georgian state perform a joint operation with them to eliminate terrorist activities in the gorge. A senior expert from Caucasian House mentioned that by saying:

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[40] Ethnic tension arose between Georgian, Ossetian inhabitants of the gorge, and Chechen refugees (Tsulaia, 2011: 136).

[41] The number of refugees was estimated at 7.000 (Devdariani &Hancilova, 2002: 3; Prasad, 2012: 12). In 2016, 230 refugees who live in the gorge with official refugee status were well-integrated into the Kist community (Caucasian House, 2016: 16).

[42] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 5, 2016.

[43] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 4, 2016.

> Russian media declared that Pankisi is a place like Afghanistan. 12.000 Kists were in Pankisi. Refugees were mostly women and children. They were afraid of Russians. The border has no fence. There is a natural borderline, and only sheep can cross. There were some militants there.[44]

Many international humanitarian organizations arrived in the Pankisi Gorge to provide aid to the refugees. Some of these were religious organizations. Salafi organizations were widespread among them. To illustrate, the organization called *Jamaat* provided monthly humanitarian assistance to both refugees and the local people of the gorge (Devdariani & Hancılova, 2002: 4). The role of Salafi organizations like *Jamaat* was explained by a senior expert from Caucasian House as follows.

> Refugee children had health problems. … Some Salafi organizations came from Saudi Arabia. I cannot say that Salafi organizations had only religious purposes. Chechen refugees asked for humanitarian help from Saudi Arabia.[45]

The political and ideological vacuum, the failure of the Georgian state, the collapse of the infrastructure, high unemployment rates, criminal activities that had transnational links, wars and ethnic conflicts in neighboring regions, the massive flow of refugees and the influence of transnational religious organizations all combined to create an unprecedented situation for the inhabitants of the gorge. In this study, these events are categorized under the concept of collective shocks. It is argued that the impact of the collective shocks caused a general effervescence to be produced, in which human perception and actions deviated from 'normal' ones. These collective shocks lead to the creation and maintenance of collective effervescence. This collective effervescence inspired individuals to get together. In a continuous state of collective effervescence, and with the frequency of interaction increasing, the Kist collective consciousness started to experience a sense of self-awareness. Under these circumstances, social change was brought about, and the interaction of different solidarity types generated new solidarity production processes.

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[44] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 4, 2016.

[45] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 4, 2016.

4.2 Conversion to Salafism

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, religious revival accelerated in many republics, especially in Central Asia and the Caucasus. This revival was also observed in Pankisi. The ideological vacuum, the influx of Chechen refugees, a lack of religious knowledge[46], the reintegration with the international Muslim society and fear of assimilation triggered the young Kists' conversion to Salafi Islam. Under the impact of the previously defined collective shocks, the relatively isolated setting of the Kist community generated the state of collective effervescence. Social interaction increased in frequency and with the efforts of external actors like Chechen refugees, Arabs, Salafi organizations, Chechen militants and *mujahids,* there was interplay between manifested or latent solidarity types among the Kists. In order to comprehend this phenomenon, one can look at the variety of solidarity types among *Vainakhs*. Jaimoukha (2004: 15) defines the identity complex of Chechens as a web which consisted of many other sub-identities. From supra-national to subnational, these are "Caucasian, Mountaineer, North Caucasian, Northeast Caucasian, *Nakh, Vainakh, Nokhcho* (Chechen), member of *tukhum, teip, aul, vaer, gar, neqe* and *dooezal*". These categories are different types of solidarities which are referred to among the *Vainakhs* and the Kists. In religious terms, there are other divisions of the identity complex: "Muslim, *Sunni*, *Shafii*, *Sufi*, *tariqat*, *adept*, *vird* follower". One can interpret those categories as types of specific solidarities under the collective consciousness. In times of turmoil, which is defined as the state of collective shocks in this study, the search for order and security causes people to challenge the existing traditional order because of its inadequacies in providing substantial religious knowledge and a respected social and moral authority.

Salafi understanding emphasizes being a member of the *ummah* (the whole community of Muslims). According to Islamic understanding, people are divided into two categories: believers and non-believers. In its pure form, this religious and

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[46] Throughout the Soviet times, Islam in the gorge has continued its existence outside of the public sphere via Sufism known as parallel Islam. *Naqshbandi* and *Qadiri tariqats* of the gorge, which are intertwined with the traditions and customs of the community, was one of the major determinants of the Kist solidarity. This fact can be seen by observing the situation of Christian Kists who tended to define themselves as Georgian. A small Kist community lives in Kakheti region of Georgia. They adopted Orthodox Christianity and define themselves as Georgian (Sanikidze, 2007: 269, 273).

ideological approach demands the eradication of other categories of solidarity, namely those based on nationality, ethnicity and Sufism. These different types of solidarities caused several confrontations among the Kist community members.

The conversion of the majority of the young Kists to Salafism is one of the outcomes of the Chechen migration to the gorge. The Pankisi Gorge was relatively isolated from the Soviet influence. The Kists of the gorge also had limited connection with Chechnya during the Soviet period (Siprashvili, 2014:13). On the other hand, the relationship between the Georgian society and the Kists was different. Georgians, Ossetians and Kists lived together in Pankisi. However, the Kists' interaction with people in other regions of Georgia was limited.[47] Living together with Georgians had different effects on the Kists. This circumstance was pointed out by a Turkish expert. He said that "Pankisi was relatively isolated from Soviet influence as opposed to Chechnya. The Kists who converted to Christianity were assimilated into the Georgian society".[48] Before the 20th century, Kists experienced the forceful Christianization policy of Tsarist Russia. During the Soviet period, there were conversions to Christianity among them. In addition, many of Christian Kists converted back to Islam through the efforts of *mullahs*[49] until 1970s. The effect of religion on the Kist solidarity is also expressed by Sanikidze (2007: 267, 269-270). Sanikidze says that Christian Kists tend to define themselves as Georgian. However, Muslim Kists emphasized their *Vainakh* roots much more. Thus, religion has ethnonational significance in terms of solidarity. He also noted that Islam was never a key factor in uniting the Pankisi community, in contrast to Chechnya and Dagestan (2007: 263). A follower of the traditional Kist Islam mentioned the degree of religiosity in the Soviet and post-Soviet period:

> They wanted to close the mosque, which was the only one in Pankisi during the Soviet era. However, the people were meticulous about this, and the mosque was not closed. My mother and father always continued to fast and pray. My mother had a headscarf. The Soviets' requests to lift the headscarf did not materialize. As you know, there were pressures in different regions after Georgia gained independence.

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[47] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), March 31, 2016.

[48] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), March 31, 2016.

[49] Religious functionary.

A difficult period has passed. However, I sincerely point out that there was no pressure on us by the Georgian state because of Islam.[50]

An expert from the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS) stated a different interpretation about the degree of religiosity of the Kist:

> The tradition was strong, but religion was not strong. Among all the Chechen groups, Kists were Islamized the latest. Even during the Soviet Union, they did not strictly follow the Muslim beliefs and rituals. Also, if the Chechens had not come in the 1990s, they could even be Christians. At Easter, they would paint eggs and light candles. They allowed girls to marry Georgians. The difference between Georgians and Kists was getting smaller and smaller. If there was a difference, they did not care. When the Chechens came, they influenced them, and religion started to spread.[51]

A counterargument to that explanation can be the Kist's perception about the intertwined nature of tradition and religion. A Kist woman who follows the traditional Kist Islam pointed this out by referring to the resistance to prevent the closing of the first mosque of the gorge in Soviet times. She said that "This first mosque of the Pankisi Gorge, the Soviet authorities tried to close it down, but people did not stand back, and they stuck with tradition".[52] A Kist expert stated that their religious tolerance led to the spread of Salafi understanding in the gorge and led to participation in the Syrian civil war:

> *Wahhabi* understandings were common in our region. We did not react very much to this. Anyone can observe the belief he wants as long as it is not radical. We had developed an attitude that values freedom of conscience until the war broke out in Syria. Our children went to war in Syria and 14-15 of them died there.[53]

According to a Turkish expert, one of the reasons for the adoption of Salafism was the need for religious knowledge. He pointed out that the Georgian government at the time also supported the Kists' lack of contact with other forms of Islamic understanding. He said:

> Young people want religious education ... There is the danger of joining ISIS. That's why, people go to Saudi Arabia; and when Salafis carry their faith here, the contact

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[50] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 5, 2016.

[51] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 14, 2018.

[52] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 13, 2018.

[53] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 5, 2016.

of the Salafi Kists with the remaining Muslim communities of Georgia is weakened. Georgia favors a radical, always vulnerable social structure in Pankisi in order to intervene when the situation deems it necessary.[54]

The process of the spread of Salafism among the Kist community is categorized in three waves by Barkaia and Janelidze (2018: 55-56). According to them, the activities of the short-term appointed *imams* and foreign scholars were significant in the first wave (1997-2007). Salafis, especially foreigners, harshly criticized the existing traditional, religious beliefs and practices during that period. This conduct of the Salafis even caused high tensions between them and some of the elderly Kists because the Salafis' were not familiar with the traditional social order. In addition to that, inadequate Islamic knowledge in the community was noteworthy. In the second wave (2007-2017), there were two active Salafi imams in a ten-year period. Local religious institutions were established. A *takfiri*[55] group emerged in line with the developments in Syria and Iraq. There was a disparity between Salafis, which is discussed in the fourth theme. The third wave refers to the period after 2018, during which the civil initiatives of Salafis come to the frontline.

In the 1990s, there were also some Arabs who had relations with international humanitarian organizations and Salafi groups which settled in the gorge (Wakizaka, 2019: 89-90; Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 6). Between 1996 and 2001, those religious organizations established four mosques, a madrasa and a school that taught Arabic language (Tsutkridze, 2012: 375-376). According to Devdariani and Hancılova (2002: 4), a private school offered scholarships to hardworking students to study in Arabic countries.

The first impression of the Kists about Arabs was that they were different in terms of dress. Later, the local Kists understood that this style of dress was not related to ethnicity, but to religion.[56] Among the refugees, there were many Chechens who had previously converted to Salafi Islam. Since the Salafi Chechens were the Kists' first

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[54] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), March 31, 2016.

[55] A Muslim who accused another Muslim of being heretic and declared that her or him is no longer a Muslim.

[56] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 4, 2016.

encounter with this religious understanding and because of their lack of Islamic knowledge, they perceived the Salafi form of Islam as the original one. Young Kists, due to their fear of assimilation and under the impact of collective shocks, leaned towards religion.[57] A Kist who is a follower of traditional Kist Islam asserted that during the 1990s, the young Kists knew only Georgian as a second language. Moreover, they did not have access to the Georgian translation of the *Qur'an* at that time. Young Kists were afraid of losing their Kist consciousness because they were surrounded by Christians.[58] Realizing that they lacked religious knowledge, Kists and especially the young ones, looked for further religious knowledge.

Another consequence of the disintegration of the Soviet regime was an ideological vacuum. An expert from Caucasian House cited this vacuum, together with the economic hardships in the Pankisi Gorge, which were exacerbated with the arrival of the Chechen refugees, as reasons that influenced the young Kists to convert to Salafism.[59] According to a Kist expert, the Salafi organizations benefited from this difficult situation:

> One of the most critical points was that the *Wahhabis* were financially very strong. The young people were in a predicament. This proved to be advantageous for the *Wahhabis*. They converted the young ones. As such, those who are intelligent among them turned this into an ideological act. The Saakashvili administration and *Wahhabis* collaborated. They took advantage of this situation by giving and receiving money. They did not care about the circumstances of the people. Whomever you ask in the Soviet period, there are many educated people in the region. Nevertheless, the socio-economic situation after the 1990s decreased the opportunity for people to receive a good education. It is not easy to indoctrinate a knowledgeable and educated person. It is hard to impose something to such people. These young Kists were not educated, and it was easy to indoctrinate them. In this way, it was effortless for them to recruit young people.[60]

The demodernization trend in Georgia, which started with the disintegration of Soviet solidarity because there was no proper and inclusive substitute to fill the void, led to economic distress and ideological confusion, which in turn paved the way for

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[57] The influence of Chechen militants and *jihadists* on the young Kists should also be considered.

[58] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 5, 2016.

[59] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 4, 2016.

[60] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 5, 2016.

the spread of Salafi Islam. One of the main reasons for the demand for religious education was the lack of religious knowledge among the Kists. This was explained by a Georgian expert from the Center for Social Sciences (GSS). She said:

> Nobody was able to read the *Qur'an*. They can only give answers to yes, no questions, not to why questions. The official imam could not read an Arabic text. His religious knowledge was weak. He wrote prayers with Georgian letters and read.[61]

In contrast, the Salafis among Chechen refugees and members of Salafi organizations demonstrated full religious authority. The confrontation of Salafi and traditional Islam may be understood by referring to the low level of religiosity among the Kists. An expert from the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies pointed out the degree of religiousness of the Kist community by referring to the Soviet deportation of Chechens:

> During the Soviet period, the deportation of the Kists was prevented by a letter from Simon Janashia to Beria. Janashia was a historian, linguist, and a friend of Beria's. He said that those people are different, they have the same language, but they are different from Chechens. It is not right to deport them. In the population census, they were identified as Kistines. There was not much pressure on them because they were not very religious.[62]

In the second half of the 1990s, a few young Kists had the opportunity to receive religious education abroad. This opportunity was provided by both Salafi organizations and an Arab person who had married a Kist woman and settled in the gorge. In an interview, a Kist pointed this out as follows:

> In the 1990s, an Arab man came to the gorge and married a Kist woman. Soon after, he offered to help some young Kists to go to Saudi Arabia for religious education. Thus, with the approval of the elderly, some of the young ones went there.[63]

The Pankisi Gorge was isolated from the other regions of Georgia, both in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Therefore, the Kist community had no significant relations with the other Muslim communities in Georgia. This was another reason why they

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[61] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 11, 2018.

[62] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 14, 2018. The absence of religious fanaticism and the existence of religious tolerance among the Kists were mentioned in several contemporary sources (Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 26; Tsutkiridze, 2012: 374).

[63] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 13, 2018.

were not able to acquire any religious knowledge from the neighboring areas.[64] According to a Kist interviewee, going to study abroad originated from the lack of such an opportunity elsewhere in Georgia. She said:

> Arabs have no direct influence on us. Only our young people receive religious education in Arab countries. Unfortunately, the problems we encounter in religious education cannot be solved within the country. Therefore, it is crucial to study in Arab countries. They learn Arabic, and then they learn the Sharia.[65]

The eclectic religious understanding which also included Christian beliefs and practices correlates malleable characteristic of religious collective consciousness of the Kist community. This caused the Kist solidarity to weaken, and it also brought about assimilation. The young Kists' fear of assimilation into Georgian society with their lack of religious knowledge heightened the demand for religious education. This chain of events was pointed out by a Georgian scholar from Ilia State University during an interview. He said:

> The beginning of Arab activity was in the late 1990s. They had a lot of money. They started the construction of a Salafi mosque. Some youngsters had the chance to go to Saudi Arabia to have education in theological universities. Their number was not significant, but when they returned, they became very active. […] Traditionalists do not know the Arabic language. The young ones know Arabic and how to pray.[66]

After receiving education, the young Kists converted to Salafi Islam. When they returned, they started to spread their religious understanding among the Kist community members. The young Salafi Kists began to challenge the traditional religious understanding and customs of the Kist community by referring to their extensive religious knowledge. This provoked confrontations in the community. The next theme focuses on these problems.

4.3 Challenges to the Traditional Kist Way of Life

The religious practices of Kists are composed of a synthesis of pagan, Christian, and Islamic beliefs and rituals (Kopecek, 2011: 158; Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 26;

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[64] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 11, 2018.

[65] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 5, 2016.

[66] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 13, 2018.

Sanikidze, 2007: 266). The traditions of the Kist community are intertwined with their religious beliefs and practices. It is difficult to distinguish one from the other. In stark contrast, Salafism may be seen as a text-based puritan interpretation of Islam. According to the Salafis, the exclusion of culture is "a way of salvaging the purity of their faith" (Roy, 2014: 137). This difference made Salafi Kists question their existing religious beliefs and practices related to Sufi forms of Islam, namely the branches of the *Naqshbandi* and *Qadiri tariqats* of the gorge. This questioning led to several challenges. The young Salafi Kists explained the difficulties of introducing a new religious discourse in a communal structure that was under the hegemony of the elders. In their perspective, involvement in the *dawat* (Islamic preaching) activities required great courage because it meant that these young people would question the traditional religious structure.[67]

The various factors mentioned above prepared the ground for Salafism gaining prominence among young Kists. Even those Kists who were engaged in criminal activities ended such involvement after adopting Salafism. This fact, as put forward by many interviewees, became the reason why the Salafi movement gained so much respect within the Kist community.[68] On the other hand, the adoption of Salafism caused tension between young Kists and the elders in the community. This tension was caused by the main contradictions between the Salafi and Sufi forms of Islam in the gorge. Salafis denied the inner link with God, as opposed to the followers of Sufi understanding (Sanikidze, 2007: 276). In addition, the Salafis' attempt to reach the pure form of Islam necessitated the elimination of externally originated traditions and customs from religious beliefs and practices because such elements are perceived as *shirk* (divergence from monotheism, or polytheism) (Gould, 2011: 348). A Turkish religious expert stated the approach of Salafi understanding towards Sufism and the traditional Kist Islam by referring *madhhabs*:

> Search for meaning, education… There was a division within the community. The tradition was weakened as a result of the split that had taken place between the elderly and the youth. *Hanbalis* are stricter. The background of *Wahhabism* is

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[67] Interviews conducted within the scope of the project of "Muslim Minorities in Georgia– Minority Rights, Identity and Politics" headed by Ayşegül Aydıngün.

[68] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 4, 2016.

Hanbali madhhab. An understanding that explains religious texts more literally is more stringent. *Shafiis* are more textual than *Hanafis* but softer than *Hanbalis*. *Wahhabism* rejects the Sufism brought by tradition, as it is more textual with a *Wahhabi* understanding. Social controversy creates conflict against the Sufi culture. If the traditionalists do not take a position against this, they predict that the situation will pose a public danger. This understanding feeds the discussion.[69]

The reason behind the reaction of the traditionalists may be understood by considering the attitudes of the young Salafi Kists towards the traditional structure of the community. In the gorge, Salafi understanding challenged the traditional structure of the Kist community. *Adat,* the customary law of the *Vainakhs* based on the principle of the authority of the elders, requires respect for the senior members of the community and provides absolute authority to the Council of Elders of the Kist community. The Council of Elders had maintained the order in the community without being questioned or challenged directly over many decades (Tsulaia, 2011: 136-138; Devdariani ve Hancılova, 2002: 2). During and after the spread of Salafism in Pankisi, however, some young Salafi Kists had the opportunity to go to Arab countries and to Turkey to receive theological education (Prasad, 2012: 13). When they came back to the region, this education was based on a Salafi understanding and allowed them to challenge their elders, as they had become more knowledgeable in Islamic matters. The knowledge of the elders of the community, who were followers of traditional Islam, had no chance of competing with the theological knowledge of the Salafis. The advanced religious knowledge of Salafi Kists was expressed in detail by a Turkish expert in Tbilisi, 2016:

> Older people do not have sufficient religious knowledge, but young people do. This controversy affects social attitudes toward the elderly. This situation has its consequences. The advantage of the educated youth is that they speak Arabic in Pankisi and are able to read the *Qur'an* without falter. Hence, Salafists can make their arguments clear. They can say that something is not true and give reference to it from the *Qur'an*. The elders, on the other hand, fall into ignorance, and their authorities are shaken. In the old tradition, old values were accepted as precious. In the current state, young people seem to be very knowledgeable, and at the same time, they rebelliously say they are not listening to the elderly. One step further, and they can demand the elderly to follow them. The elders feel psychologically worthless. They have withdrawn into their shells, thinking that their existence does not make sense. This conflict is not healthy. There is no transaction between the older generation and the younger generation.[70]

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[69] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 11, 2018.

[70] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), March 31, 2016.

The conflict of generations originated from the religious aspect of life. Soon, this conflict became pervasive in other areas due to the requirement of Salafism that Islam should rule every aspect of life. The elders' authority was challenged mainly because of their lack of religious knowledge. In addition, this situation reflected on the way social problems are solved in the gorge. Social disputes are solved by tribal law within the traditional structure. Tribal law also regulates other aspects of life. The application of tribal law represents the authority of the Council of Elders. However, the religious conflict further manifested itself as a conflict between tribal law and Sharia law[71] to a certain degree (Siprashvili, 2014: 50-51). Accordingly, there was a power struggle between the two authorities: the Council of Elders and the Sharia Court.[72] A senior expert from Caucasian House explained how the authority of the Council of Elders weakened following the expansion of Salafism in Pankisi:

> There is a decrease in the power of the Council of Elders. Because people who have minor problems like land issues find that consulting the Salafi leaders to solve their problems is beneficial. They go to Salafi imams or religious leaders to seek solutions about different issues. According to Salafi, any restriction related to heritage …[73]

The challenges to the traditional Kist way of life can be categorized under religious beliefs and practices, and customs and traditions. The conflicting issues were mostly about religious and spiritual beliefs and practices (cult of saints and ancestors, cult of holy places and *zikrs*), life events which are also carried out according to religious beliefs (wedding and funeral ceremonies), family matters (marriage, divorce, custody and inheritance), and about the customs and traditions (respect for elderly, blood feud, avoidance practice, dance and music). These challenges to the traditional way of Kist life led to strife in many areas of the lives of community members. Tsulaia (2011) classified them as the generation gap, the conflict of Kist and Chechen identity, the conflict of *adat* and religion.

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[71] The Sharia law started to be practiced in the first half of 2010s (Siprashvili, 2014: 59).

[72] The Sharia Court of Pankisi consists of the active followers of Salafism who got Islamic religious education in abroad started (Siprashvili, 2014: 50).

[73] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 4, 2016. In terms of the inheritance issue, women are mainly not permitted to inherit wealth in Chechen society (Jasutis, 2015: 132).

One can trace social change by benefiting from the conceptualization of collective consciousness referring to its connection with solidarity. By rephrasing Durkheim's term of collective consciousness as multiple, hierarchical and dynamic, relations between different types of solidarities among the Kists may be examined. The different types of solidarities disagreed with each other in the domains of religion, ethnicity and modern-traditional dichotomy.

In this study, the concept of collective consciousness is operationalized through its external indexes, which are laws, customs, religious beliefs and practices. By tracing changes in collective consciousnesses through those indexes, the examination of solidarities become possible. It should be noted that the differentiation among different types of solidarities are analytical. In their natural form they show complex and intricate characteristics. In Durkheimian sense, they are average types. Challenges related with those indexes provide an understanding for reaffirmation or ruptures in the relationships of collective consciousnesses.

After converting to Salafi Islam, the young Kists started to challenge traditional religious beliefs and practices, tribal law and the customs of the community. This was mostly because the elderly, who represented the sole authority in the structure of the Kist community, lacked sufficient Islamic religious knowledge. These challenges were seen in many aspects of the lives of the Kists and led to conflicts in the community, namely between the followers of traditional Islam and Salafi Islam, between Kist and Chechen solidarity, and between tribal law and Sharia law. It can be noted that, the Council of Elders and Sharia Court are symbols of different solidarities which became self-conscious about themselves. Examining the changes in the external indexes, provides a way to understand whether the solidarity of the Kist community regained its strength or was weakened.

At the beginning of this period, young Salafi Kists rejected the traditional way of life of the community. They started to question existing beliefs and practices. As a result, different solidarity productions emerged by internalizing new understanding of religion and renouncing the existing traditions and religious beliefs. At the beginning, the groups belonging to different solidarities were hostile towards each other and refused any interaction. Excluding others seemed to be the result of a break

in Kist solidarity in the Pankisi Gorge by gravitating towards other solidarities like Chechen solidarity and Muslim solidarity, referring to Muslim *ummah*.

Salafis mainly reject Sufism. They are against the mystical relation between *murshid* and *murid*[74] because of their rejection of the inner link with God. Salafis do not accept the role of saints and *sheikhs*[75] as mediators between Muslims and Allah. Excessive praise for Islamic saints is seen as a *shirk*. Moreover, Salafis do not recognize mystical knowledge which can only be acquired by *sheikhs*. For this reason, they object to the practice of praying to the saints for help. Salafis also reject the *baraka* blessing, which can be transferred through saints, *sheikhs* and objects related to them, like shrines. Thus, Salafis are against the cult of saints and holy places (*ziyaret)*, reading the *Qur'an* at cemeteries, and *mawlid*[76]. Salafis demand the strict observance of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* concerning religious ritual and the virtuous social practices of Muslims (Yemelianova, 2002: 187-188).[77] They perceive Sufism as a distorted form of Islam. Likewise, *zikrs*, *ziyaret*, and burial ceremonies are strictly rejected by Salafis. They are also against the practice of sacrifice on the evening before the burial in the traditional funeral ceremony (The Initiative Group of the Kist Elders, 2018: 149).[78] Salafis declare themselves to be the *Ahlus Sunnah*, which is supported by the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah.* They state that people's religious knowledge was inadequate in the past. Nowadays, the increasing number of Kists who receive formal religious education allows them to reject traditions which were hitherto seen as a part of their religion, but are actually not accepted by Salafi Islam. Some of the religious practices that are called historical contain many elements as *bid'ah.*[79]

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[74] An adept of a Sufi order.

[75] A leader in a Muslim community or Sufi order.

[76] The annual celebration of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad.

[77] Yemelianova gives that information while explaining the approach of Dagestani Salafis. However, that information can be used to describe the general approach of Salafis among the Kists by referring the data collected during the fieldwork.

[78] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 1, 2016.

[79] Interviews conducted within the scope of the project of "Muslim Minorities in Georgia– Minority Rights, Identity and Politics" headed by Ayşegül Aydıngün.

The conflicting approaches of the two solidarities are seen in various aspects of everyday living. Foremost among these are related to life events like wedding and funeral ceremonies (Jasutis, 2015: 131-133). When a marriage is to take place, first, the families of the bride and groom reach an agreement, then the two sides start planning for the wedding. It is possible for a wedding to take place without any celebration. However, if there are to be celebrations, then a certain procedure is followed. The groom visits the bride's family home with his close relatives and brings a sacrificial animal and other treats as presents. The wedding feast is prepared in the bride's family home and the relatives of the groom also attend. Later, the bride is taken to the groom's family home, where the celebration continues. The groom's family holds the right to decide whether the bride's family and her relatives are invited to the continued celebrations (The Initiative Group of the Kist Elders, 2018: 134-135). The traditional wedding ceremony is influenced by the Georgian culture. For example, the *tamada* (toastmaster) makes the toast in Georgian (Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 19). In contrast, Salafis observe Arabic customs and make use of Arabic symbols in wedding ceremonies (Jasutis, 2015: 131-132).

As for funerals, the traditional ceremony is conducted by men. They practice "a loud *zikr* while carrying the body to the cemetery" (The Initiative Group of the Kist Elders, 2018: 148). Women do not accompany them. Praying also takes place during the ceremony. In the traditional Kist Islam, the ritual of offering condolences is very common (Sanikidze, 2007: 276). The traditional funeral meal, which consists of bread and meat, is served to the men of the family and the guests after their return from the cemetery. The Kists prepare a different table, which includes wine, for their Christian guests. The dead are often buried on the third or fourth day, after the arrival of their relatives (Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 20-21; Sarjveladze et al., 2009: 35). Making a financial contribution to the family of the deceased is a common practice and is considered a kind of charity (The Initiative Group of the Kist Elders, 2018: 148).

The followers of traditional Kist Islam do not consider their rituals and other religious practices to be against Islam. The funeral ceremonies are conducted within the framework of Islamic rules, which have been carried out for many years. During

the ceremony, *dervishes* perform *zikr* in the home where the funeral is taking place. In return, a funeral meal is served for the *dervishes*. There are also remembrances, prayers, and readings from the *Qur'an* during the burial part of the funeral.[80] In total contrast with that, the young Salafi Kists oppose praying, the practice of loud *zikr*, sacrifices and funeral meals. The ritual of offering condolences is perceived as needless. Salafi Kists believe that the traditional funeral ceremony is against religion. According to them, the *Qur'an* was sent to those who are alive. Thus, the practice of reading the *Qur'an* during a funeral is not right. Besides, the tradition of serving funeral meals, and causing a frenzy in the family home of a deceased person is entirely contrary to religion. Instead, Muslims should help the families of the deceased.[81]

The conflicts between the two solidarities are seen in many other areas of life, too, notably in issues related to marriage, divorce, custody and inheritance (Jasutis, 2015: 131-133; Siprashvili, 2014: 64). According to Kist tradition, marriage between close relatives like cousins and their children is not permitted. In addition, one cannot marry a member of her or his *teip* because members of the same *teip* are considered to be brothers and sisters, according to the traditional structure of the Kist community ("*Teipan-Vezharii-Yezharii*") (Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 15; The Initiative Group of the Kist Elders, 2018: 134). In Islamic understanding, on the other hand, marriage to first-cousins is allowed. In the Salafi Kist understanding, however, consanguineous marriages have not been permitted for centuries. The failure of this tradition is not against the Sharia. They believe that this tradition can continue to be practiced if it does not disrupt social peace.[82] According to the tribal law, the marriage of under-aged girls is strictly forbidden, regardless of the consent of the girl and her parents, as stated by the Kists' Law Code. On the contrary, Islam does not prohibit the marriage of under-aged girls. Religious rituals for this type of

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[80] Interviews conducted within the scope of the project of "Muslim Minorities in Georgia– Minority Rights, Identity and Politics" headed by Ayşegül Aydıngün.

[81] Interviews conducted within the scope of the project of "Muslim Minorities in Georgia– Minority Rights, Identity and Politics" headed by Ayşegül Aydıngün.

[82] Interviews conducted within the scope of the project of "Muslim Minorities in Georgia– Minority Rights, Identity and Politics" headed by Ayşegül Aydıngün.

marriage are not carried out by the imams who follow the traditional Kist Islam. These religious leaders are held responsible for the execution of this prohibition by the code. The code calls the Salafi imams to take this as an example to follow (The Initiative Group of the Kist Elders, 2018: 138).

Divorce is another family issue which creates conflict between the two solidarities in the region. It is generally deemed undesirable among the community members, especially if the woman wants the divorce. *Adat* favors a consensual divorce. Islam, on the other hand, gives the right to seek divorce to both the man and the woman. Following the divorce, under-aged children are put in the custody of their mothers, and their fathers are responsible for their upbringing (The Initiative Group of the Kist Elders, 2018: 138-140). If their mothers remarry, however, fathers are given custody of their under-aged children (Siprashvili, 2014: 64). As Salafism spread in the Kist community, the young Salafi Kists started to change their approaches to the above-mentioned practices. A senior expert from Caucasian House provided a general picture of the issues related to women, with an example about the practices of the young Salafi Kist:

> Covering the body is decorative and not obligatory in the traditional Kist community. In the Salafi case, on the other hand, it is mandatory. Another issue related to family is that Salafi husbands provide for the care of children, and this is also different from traditionalists. As for the education of girls ... Salafis marry well-educated and prestigious girls and convert them to Salafi Islam. The traditional ones do not even touch their child. In the traditional way of life, the mother has no right to seek divorce. In the event that a divorce does take place, she has no right to raise her child.[83]

During the Soviet times, after a divorce had taken place, claiming the custody of her children was a practice that led to the social exclusion of the woman in the Kist community. Looking for a solution from the Soviet law was also unacceptable (Siprashvili, 2014: 64). Today, *adat* does not allow women to appeal to law enforcement agencies directly if there is a violation by the husband. *Adat* demands that the problem be solved with the help of the husband's relatives. If they fail to solve the problem, the woman can inform her parents and brothers. If the abuse continues despite the warnings of the relatives, she can return to her father's family

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[83] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 4, 2016.

home. If the woman then makes a legal claim, the husband can avoid possible legal consequences by negotiating with the law enforcement agencies. In the case that the differences are still not resolved, then the clans of the husband and wife become enemies. Moreover, the woman is excluded from the Kist community (The Initiative Group of the Kist Elders, 2018: 141).[84]

According to the law, daughters cannot inherit wealth from their parents, but the parents are responsible for providing a dowry for their daughter. In the absence of parents, these daughters are dependent on the brothers, nephews, uncles and cousins respectively. On the other hand, women have a right to their share of the inheritance from their husbands, parents and relatives, according to the Sharia law. It is important to note that, while solving disputes, the Sharia Court takes current economic changes into consideration. These are some of the reasons why significant number of Kists prefer to ask for the application of the Sharia law on issues related to inheritance (Siprashvili, 2014: 59).

Among the peoples of the North Caucasus, the traditions of avoidance and seniority are the building blocks of the traditional structure which is prescribed by *adat*. Smirnova (1986) defines four types of avoidance customs among the peoples of the North Caucasus. These are avoidance between spouses, between children and parents, between a wife and her husband's relatives, between a husband and his wife's relatives. In addition to that, Smirnova also talks about the nuptial concealment, which is avoidance between the bride and groom in arranged marriages. The custom of avoidance which takes place between parents and children, especially the relation between father and child should be considered with regard to the case of the Kists'. In the presence of an elder, a father cannot express paternal feeling such as touching his child, calling the child by name, speaking about his child or showing signs of sorrow after a child's death. A father can only express such

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[84] If the involvement of law enforcement can realize without the complaint of the woman, she is not be the subject of exclusion (The Initiative Group of the Kist Elders, 2018: 142). In collaboration with the Council of Elders, The Committee of Women tries to solve issues related to the rights of woman especially after divorce. The committee is secular and modern oriented. Its members are the women who educated in the Soviet times. Moreover, their view about the young Salafi Kists (Siprashvili, 2014: 66). The functions of this committee can be seen as an external index of modern-secular solidarity among the Kists.

feelings and show signs of care in the narrow circles which consist of his wife and children, or just him and his child. *Vainakh* people also embrace this code of conduct. Likewise, children are expected to be silent in the presence of their father. In the same line of reasoning, obedience to seniors is compulsory. Elders always have the right to speak first and without any interruption. Talking back to elders, or smoking and drinking in the presence of an elder are considered inadmissible behavior. If an elderly person enters a room, the younger ones stand up immediately and continue to wait in that position until the elderly responds with a gesture or sign that tells them to relax (Smirnova, 1986: 1-2, 10-12; Jaimoukha, 2005: 136; Layton, 2014:76-77). Subordination of the younger to the older is maintained by *adat*.[85] Such subordination is considered to be a sign of respect. It is believed to lay the foundation for renewing the existing social interaction, for increasing socialization and for strengthening the bond between generations. As Smirnova quotes from Chomaev, a cult of seniority and customs of avoidance which indicate patriarchal structure is a manifestation of undeveloped social relations.[86] These traditional "… clan and kinship relations produce the hegemony of an authoritarian power of elders, which was reinforced by a moral law of respecting seniority which developed under these circumstances" (Smirnova, 1986: 25). The traditions of respect for elders and of avoidance between father and child among the Kists are also challenged by some of the young Salafi Kists. This originated from the challenge of the religious authority of the Council of Elders. In 2016, a Turkish expert emphasized the difficulty of maintaining a connection between the generations in the community by saying that:

> We receive information about the psychological situation of the old and young. Disrespecting all the authority of the elders is not right for human nature. When they are in the same situation tomorrow, the chain will break. An existing perspective in Islam … Young people believe that living in accordance with the Islam that they know is a solution. However, the solution can be found by following the traditional methods and making use of the wisdom of those methods.[87]

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[85] The Sharia law, religious rituals and the code of behavior also have influence on the maintenance of that traditional structure (Smirnova, 1986: 25).

[86] One should note that this view appears ethnocentric.

[87] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), March 31, 2016.

The social change related to the traditions of respect for elders and avoidance were mentioned by a Kist woman:

> For instance, the relationship between father and son is changing. […] I can give an example from my brother and my father. My brother does not even talk to my father, nor keep his head up while talking. How was such a sheltered and strict social structure damaged? [...] I will give another example, but it may sound brutal. My brother could not show love to his child while with my father or even take him into his lap ... Once his little boy fell to the ground, and instead of taking him into his lap, he pushed him with his foot so that it would not be seen as a disgraceful behavior. In other words, in such a society, the relationship between father and son is complicated.[88]

Another widespread tradition among the peoples of the North Caucasus is that of blood feud. It differs, though, according to the social conditions of the communities. To illustrate, the Chechen practice of blood feud may take place inside the circle of the same *teip.* Kists do not have blood feud within the same *teip.* If murder takes place among people in the same family, *teip* or kin, it is resolved through negotiations. In such cases, payment as a substitute for blood revenge is prohibited. Among the Chechens, retribution for murder can only be paid by blood. By contrast, Kists make use of financial payments during negotiations for reconciliation, without any act of revenge. The blood price for the murder of a man is generally 60 cows. Although it is prohibited to murder a woman, if it happens, the blood price is 30 cows. Revenge can only be taken after blood hostility has been declared through the mediation of an impartial family. In response to this, the family of the accused can accept or deny the accusation. In case of a denial, the traditional tribal court gathers at the request of the accused person's family to discuss the accusation. If the tribal court supports the accusation, the family of the victim can seek revenge. Generally, both sides of the dispute agree to taking only the blood of the killer (*meeri*). In the case of the death of the murderer, the responsibility is traditionally transferred to the close relatives of the murderer (brothers, father, father's brothers, father's nephews, cousin's sons) (Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 23-24; The Initiative Group of the Kist Elders, 2018: 112). This type of collective punishment is rejected by the young Salafi Kists. They emphasize that such punishment should only be inflicted on the

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[88] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 5, 2016.

individual who actually committed the murder.[89] According to the tradition, the murderer is either killed or a reconciliation is reached with a ritual of oath-taking. During the course of this time, the murderer cannot leave the village or the gorge. Actually, Kists avoid taking an oath, even if it is based on truth. They swear on the *Qur'an*. In order to establish the innocence of the suspect, sixty people are required to take an oath (Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 23-24; The Initiative Group of the Kist Elders, 2018: 116). The ritual of reconciliation and the custom of blood feud are followed by *adat,* under the supervision of the Council of Elders. The ritual of reconciliation aims to restore order by lowering the existing tension and avoiding future conflicts among the members of the community (Siprashvili, 2014: 55-57).

In the *Vainakh* culture, traditional music and dance have integral roles. They express their understanding of community, namely the essence of *Vainakh* existence. The traditional folk dances of the people of the North Caucasus are performed without any physical contact between men and women. Salafis, however, do not take part in the gatherings where there is singing and dancing, such as traditional dance parties. Their understanding of *haram*[90] forbids music, dancing and singing in addition to alcohol and tobacco consumption (Barkaia & Janelidze, 2018: 57-59; Jaimoukha, 2005: 176, 187-189; Siprashvili, 2014: 69; Souleimanov, 2015).

Although there is a dispute of authority concerning the various disagreements among the community members, cooperation between the young Salafis and the followers of traditional Islam seems likely. The followers of the traditional Kist Islam perceive that not all traditions are religious. They are in favor of continuing traditions that do not contradict religion. To illustrate, loving and protecting minors, respecting elders, hosting guests, endangering one's own life, if necessary, to defend someone who has taken refuge in them are considered to be the particularly important Caucasian traditions. In their view, these traditions are not against religion. Therefore, they

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[89] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 13, 2018.

[90] Forbidden by the Sharia.

should be preserved.[91] A Kist described the overall impact of the Salafi understanding of the traditional way of Kist life:

> The fact is that they did not prevail. As a result, we cannot say that it has destroyed the traditions of the family. Respect for the elders and customs ... In Georgian society, it is possible to see a case where a child shouts at his father, but we do not have such issues. Rare. Again, if his father says something to him, he will not make a sound. But still, he does what is in his own mind. However, if he does not listen to what his father says, he will be excluded from the community.[92]

The relationship between these two groups in the Kist community changes under the influence of external circumstances like international politics related to the Syrian Civil War and the community's relationship with the Georgian state. The following theme describes the changes among the approaches of young Salafi Kists concerning the issue of foreign fighting. In addition, existing organization of the Kist community and reconfiguration within the community are presented.

4.4 The Kist Community's Organization and Reconfiguration within the Community

The participation of Kists in the armed conflicts in Syria and Iraq as members of numerous *jihadist* organizations became a regional and global issue in media, politics, and academic spheres. The reason behind this social and political attention is that the majority of Georgian citizens who participated in those wars were Kist people. Some of them became high ranked *emirs* (commanders) in different organizations (Amashukeli, 2018: 21). While evaluating this issue, one should take into account the post-Soviet settings in general. The participation of Muslim ex-Soviet citizens in armed *jihad* took place as a result of both external and internal factors. The dissolution of the Soviet solidarity led to the process called demodernization and this brought traditional organizations to the forefront, with emphasis on customary and religious norms. In addition to that, both governmental and non-governmental organizations of Muslim countries supported the Islamic revival in the post-Soviet Muslim regions by providing ideological and financial

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[91] Interviews conducted within the scope of the project of "Muslim Minorities in Georgia– Minority Rights, Identity and Politics" headed by Ayşegül Aydıngün.

[92] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 4, 2016.

assistance. During this period, foreign *imams* were actively involved in religious activities in mosques, *madrasahs*, and other Islamic institutions. In such an atmosphere, Salafism spread because it was welcomed as the solution for the ideological and political vacuum, socio-economic difficulties, and lack of religious knowledge. In the beginning, the reactions of the post-Soviet government were shaped by a lack of concern or indistinct approval, as in the cases of Russia and the Central Asian states, respectively. These attitudes changed after Salafi organizations started to gain power, especially in the second half of the 1990s. And especially after the tragedy of September 11, most of the post-Soviet states that have a Muslim majority changed their attitudes towards Salafi organizations and adopted new laws related to Salafism (Yemelianova, 2010: 26-29). Contrary to the situation in the Ukraine and Georgia, Salafi organizations began to experience direct adverse reactions from states. To illustrate, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan banned the activities of Salafi organizations after the incidents in the Ferghana valley and the civil war in Tajikistan between 1992 and 1997. In Russia, the followers of Salafism became the subjects of persecution as they were seen to be sources of potential security threats (Falkowski & Lang, 2015: 17). It is important to note that, during this time, the Russians went further and encouraged conflicts among Chechens by differentiating traditional Islam and Salafism as harmless and harmful, respectively. This approach contributed to the spread of Salafism (Barkaia & Janelidze, 2018: 48).

The external impact of the Chechen-Russian conflict had a decisive effect on the social change in the Kist community. The transformation of the nature of the Chechen independence movement had influences on the Chechen refugees and militants who came to the Pankisi Gorge. In the beginning, the Chechen struggle for independence was secular and nationalistic. Islam was used instrumentally as a supportive dimension to urge Chechens into motion. Between 1996 and 1999, though, the gradual Islamization of the Chechen movement took place because of their need for international support and because there was deterioration into disorder in the territory of Chechnya. At the end of this period, the struggle for independence of a secular Chechnya was replaced by the idea of the establishment of a caliphate in the Caucasus (Falkowki & Lang, 2015: 20-21). The dual radicalization of the Russian and Chechen approach accelerated and resulted in the initiation of a war by

Russia, sparked off with the assault of Chechen militants in Dagestan (Hughes, 2007: 94-97). A Georgian scholar from Ilia State University explained the radicalization process in Chechnya in the following way:

> The struggle for Chechnya … Dudayev was a hero for Chechens and a Soviet General. He did not know anything about Islam. He even said Muslims must pray four times a day, but economic problems occurred. After that, Arab volunteers and missionaries became involved in the struggle for independence from Russia. The struggle started to contain Islamism. Thus, Islam was utilized. Salafism became popular at the end because Russians are perceived as infidels. They are not only Russians but also infidels. The Assad regime became a part of their struggle against Russia.[93]

This transformation in Chechnya also affected the religious affiliation of the Chechen refugees and militants who came to Pankisi after the outbreak of the Second Chechen War. Thus, the religious affiliation of the Chechen militants, of the *mujahids* who supported them and that of the refugees, whose majority internalized Salafism, altogether influenced the Kist community's religious sphere of life (Barkaia & Janelidze, 2018: 48; Amashukeli, 2018: 4; Wakizaka, 2019, 54-55). As mentioned earlier, the impact of the collective shocks caused by the refugees, militants, Islamic humanitarian organizations and with the external effects of the Georgian, Chechen and Russian states' power play all combined to give rise to the spread of Salafism among the Kists.

The common religion in the region led people from the North Caucasus to participate in the wars that took place in Syria and Iraq. Especially in the Syrian civil war, several militants of Caucasian origin became high ranked commanders in various *jihadist* organizations. Foreign fighting in these wars was categorized under two waves. The first wave was between 2011 and 2013. In this wave, the majority of the foreign fighters consisted of mostly ordinary Chechens from Europe and some commanders who were associated with the *Imarat Kavkaz* (Caucasus Emirate)[94], based in the Pankisi Gorge.[95] The profile of the foreign fighters is often

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[93] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 13, 2018.

[94] An Islamic state which is an underground network organization that operates in the Caucasus region. It was established in 2007 (Falkowski & Lang, 2015: 22).

[95] After the 2012 incident between Russia and Georgia they forced to leave Georgia.

depicted as ones who were previous war veterans, but who were not able to continue in the armed combat in the North Caucasus, especially in Chechnya. There were several reasons why these foreign fighters joined the battles in the region. First, they saw fighting in Syria as a means to gain experience for future battles. Helping the oppressed Muslim community under Assad's regime in Syria was another reason why they were recruited to participate in these conflicts. The final and most important reason was to fight against Russia in the Caucasus. Among these fighters were high ranked commanders of Kist origin or with a background story related to the Pankisi Gorge.[96] These foreign fighters from the Caucasus concentrated in two major groups, namely *Junud as-Sham* and *Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar* (JMA). Three Kist commanders joined the side of ISIS. In this first wave, the foreign fighters from Georgia were mostly men who were over thirty years old and associated with Al-Qaeda related non-ISIS groups (Amaushkeli, 2018: 21; Barkaia & Janelidze, 2018: 100-101; Canadian Security Intelligence Service, 2015: 69-71; Cecire, 2016: 286-287).

The second wave of the foreign fighting escalated due to the expansion of ISIS over the Iraqi region, especially after 2014 (Canadian Security Intelligence Service, 2015: 71-72). The people who joined the second wave consisted of young Salafis from various parts of the Northwestern Caucasus. The number of Georgian citizens who participated in the Syrian War in 2015 was 50 and in 2017, it was 30 (Amaushkeli, 2019: 6). Most of them were young men who were around 25 years of age (Amaushkeli, 2018: 21). These were idealistic young men who were eager to live under the banner of the Caliphate and the Sharia law. In this second wave of foreign fighting, participation in ISIS was a way to join the *ummah,* in their perspective (Canadian Security Intelligence Service, 2015: 71-72). It is believed that the first wave had a stronger ethnonationalist orientation compared to the second wave, whose participants were primarily motivated by the opportunity to join the

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[96] Nearly eight Kist foreign fighters became high ranked commanders in the different *jihadist* organizations. Some of them are ISIL, *Jeish al-Muhajirinwal-Ansar*, *Junud al-Sham*, *Jabhat al-Nusra*, *Ajnad al Kavkaz* (Amaushkeli, 2019: 6; Clifford, 2017: 5). Tarkhan Batirashvili (Omar al-Shishani) was in the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). Ruslan Machalikashvili (Seyfullah al-Shishani) has participated in the *Jabhat al-Nusra*. Murad Margoshvili (Muslim al-Shishani) was in the *Jund al-Sham*. Giorgi Kushtanashvili/Feyzulla Margoshvili (Salahuddin al-Shishani) participated in the *Jaish al-Usro*. Al Bara Pankiski was in the ISIS (Cecire, 2016: 285).

transnational Muslim community. In the case of Pankisi, another difference between these two is the reactions of the family members and relatives of the participants. In the first wave, the families and relatives were aware that the fighters would be traveling to Syria to fight. Some of them even supported this. In contrast, the families of the youth who joined the second wave were upset by the participation of their sons in the foreign fighting without first asking for the approval of their families. Some of these families even reacted with anger (Cecire, 2016: 287-288).

There are various factors that led young Kists to become involved in foreign fighting. An admixture of ideological affinity, ethnonationalist views, religious understanding, socio-economic hardships, the frustration of young Kists, and generational clashes probably all pushed them to become involved in the armed conflicts in Syria and Iraq (Falkowski & Lang, 2015: 35). In addition to these, there were other significant reasons that were mentioned during the interviews. A combination of these factors, in varying degrees, may provide a perspective to comprehend the issue. A Georgian expert from the Center for Social Sciences explained the process of participation of Kists in the foreign fighting, during an in-depth interview:

> In Georgia, two waves of foreign fighting occurred. Some of those who joined were professionals. These professionals also participated in the Georgian-Abkhazian and the Russian-Ukrainian wars. When ISIS became a hot topic, they went to Syria, but some religious people did not even go there. Before 2014 there was propaganda that drew attention to a Georgian foreign fighter, Batirashvili, who went to Syria. He was like a bright star. It was perceived as a good opportunity for a better life. Young people did not want to feel guilty by not doing anything while staying in Pankisi. Most of those who went were killed very quickly. They were mainly made to fight on the frontline. The narrative or the idea of young people joining ISIS has never been supported by Salafis or non-Salafis. When they found out what was going on there. Not a holy war. When they realized there was a US-Russian conflict, they spoke out loudly. It was not easy for them.[97]

In the first wave, participants consisted of professionals who perceive the war as a way of life. They likely saw the fighting in Syria as a survival option.[98] Others, however, were inspired by ideological factors, namely, ethnonationalist sentiments

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[97] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 11, 2018.

[98] Enclosing Russian-Georgian border and 2012 border incidents should be noted as an elimination of continuing armed struggle in Chechnya (Canadian Security Intelligence Service, 2015: 70; Cecire, 2016: 286; Falkowski & Lang, 2015: 35).

and Islamic faith. Ethno-nationalistic solidarity, which also involves Islam, is a dimension of the *Vainakh* character, and most likely encouraged some fighters to get involved. Religious factors did play a crucial role in the participation of many young Salafis. The spread of Salafism is a vital development that paved the way for the participation of young Kists in *jihad*. Still, it is not a sufficient motive by itself because there is a diversity among Salafism, as mentioned by the interviewees. Many Salafi groups have similar understandings in terms of religious beliefs and practices, yet, they differ in their approaches towards politics and armed *jihad*. Thus, although there are some Salafi understandings that maintain that armed *jihad* is the responsibility of the members of the *ummah,* Salafism cannot be equated with militancy (Barkaia & Janelidze, 2018: 52-54; Falkowski & Lang, 2015: 9, 16). As the narrative above illustrates, one of the reasons that propelled young people to join armed groups was effective propaganda. This propaganda utilized the solidarity based on ethnonationalist and religious collective consciousness and manipulated young people into feeling responsible for its preservation and guilty if they did not join forces. A Kist expert explained what fighting in Syria meant to the community with the following words:

> A Chechen teenager cannot go to war without his mother's permission. Families had previously allowed their sons to go to Chechnya. There were Chechens in Syria before the war. They migrated during the Tsarist period. For a Chechen here, fighting in Syria means fighting against Assad, fighting Russia. If you fight there, you fight against Russia. I have been to Syria several times. The attitude of the Russians is not only to destroy ISIS, but also to eliminate threats such as Chechens, Dagestanis, and FSA (Free Syrian Army), which they see as a potential threat. Ten thousand Chechens live in Ras al-Ayn near Aleppo. They speak Chechen and keep their traditions. What matters to a Chechen is that he or she can be anything, an Arab or something similar, but the most important thing is not to turn into a Russian. Russians should not win. This is what matters to a Chechen. Considering the connection between *Wahhabism* and terrorist approaches, the most significant damage to Islam comes from radical movements. Furthermore, actors like Russia, without any distinction, launch campaigns that declare Islam and *Wahhabism* as one.[99]

The approval of families is an important issue related to the traditional social structure of *Vainakhs*.[100] Individuals participating in the war may be categorized

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[99] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 5, 2016.

[100] This issue is sometimes addressed by referring to Islam (Amashukeli, 2019: 23).

according to whether they have their family's approval or not. Despite the tradition of seniority, which demands obedience to one's elders, choosing to join the foreign fighting without the permission of family elders may show a tendency to seek liberation from the existing social structure. In addition, wanting to avoid generational confrontation, which developed from religious confrontation, may be considered an additional factor to made some of the young Kists take action (Falkowski & Lang, 2015: 35). The historical conflict between Chechens and Russians is stated as another factor. Fighting the Russia-backed Assad regime meant the continuation of the Chechens' historical independence for struggle against Russian dominance. In addition to that, the link between Caucasians and *muhajirs* (Caucasian emigrants who were exiled by Russia during the 19th century) in Syria and Iraq was a driving force for getting involved with the armed conflict in that region. Thus, fighting in Syria meant being against global and regional injustice, in particular, the disadvantageous conditions experienced by all Muslims and Chechens, respectively (Barkaia & Janelidze, 2018: 100-101; Falkowski & Lang, 2015: 30-313). Among the Kist community, the fear of Russification is greater than the fear of assimilation into Georgian or Arab solidarities because of historical, ethnonational, and religious reasons. The old generation has a fear of Arabization. On the contrary, the young generation's fear is the assimilation into Georgian society (Jasutis, 2015:131; Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 38).[101] The effectiveness of the combination of *Vainakh* and Muslim solidarities emphasized in an interview with a Salafi Kist. He explained their position related to the Syrian civil war. Some of the young Salafis think that they are fighting in Syria today. Then, they will fight in Chechnya tomorrow. In their perspective, Chechnya is the homeland, but the administration of today's Chechnya is an infidel.[102]

There are several factors that have led people to enlist in the war in Syria. First, the role of propaganda is crucial. Both online and offline propaganda techniques were

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[101] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 5, 2016.

[102] Interviews conducted within the scope of the project of "Muslim Minorities in Georgia– Minority Rights, Identity and Politics" headed by Ayşegül Aydıngün.

influential on the young Kists (Amashukeli, 2018: 22). A Turkish religious expert mentioned this issue by referring to the influence of Batirashvili on the young Kists who participated in foreign fighting said:

> I do not believe they have a business with Russia. Salafists did not have such statements. Russia is not their primary concern. I think they went to Syria under the influence of that Chechen figure rather than ethnicity.[103]

Second, recruitment through one's social groups or family networks to join in armed *jihad* is another important factor (Barkaia & Janelidze, 2018: 102). Third, there were personal factors that led the Kists and Chechens to participate in foreign fighting. In the literature, these are the desire to gain glory and the need to show one's courage. One should note here that bravery is one of the keystones of the *Vainakh* code of chivalry. The notion of self-sacrifice provides the maintenance of communal solidarity and ideologies (Jaimoukha, 2015: 138). The issue of a role model should also be considered in relation to the notion of bravery. As stated by a Georgian scholar from Ilia State University, the impact of a charismatic figure on the young Salafi Kists was significant:

> I cannot say how many people support a radical interpretation of Salafism. Nearly a hundred people went to Syria from Georgia. Most of it was from the gorge. Shishani [Batirashvili] was a former soldier, an officer in the Georgian military. Then, he became very popular among young Kists.[104]

The foremost reason that drove the young Kists to participate in foreign fighting, though, was most probably economic difficulties. The unemployment rate is high among the young Kist in the Pankisi Gorge.

A lack of education might also be an influential factor that led them to join extremist organizations (Amashukeli, 2019: 11; Amashukeli, 2018: 22; Barkaia & Janelidze, 2018: 71-72). In fact, superimposing religious issues over socio-economic difficulties should be avoided in order to reach more accurate conclusions. However, according to a Kist expert, the influence of economic reasons in engaging in the foreign fight was not of primary importance:

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[103] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 11, 2018.

[104] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 13, 2018.

> Young people participated in the Syrian War and saw the truth. Those who came back and those who want to return had a hard time economically. Those in the upper rank always had money in their pockets. Therefore, I say, the economic situation is not that important for Chechens. The money accumulated is somehow distributed by the commanders in the upper group up to a certain amount.[105]

Economic difficulties may have been compelling, but it is important to note that the abovementioned statement interprets the situation from a point where the participation actually took place. By evaluating periods prior to the participations, one can state socio-economic conditions as driving factors.

Before 2013, JMA was the main combatant group among the North Caucasian participants. In 2013, tensions rose among various extremist organizations in Syria due to increased competition. The ideological and theological conflict between ISIS and JMA emanated from such competition. This led to an important division among the North Caucasian participators. After one of the JMA leaders (Omar al-Shishani) sided with ISIS, Salahuddin al-Shishani remained a leader of JMA and claimed his allegiance with the *Imarat Kavkaz*. Following this, *takfirist* and more extremist groups joined ISIS. In this conflict, ISIS accused the commanders who allied with *Imarat Kavkaz* of being Chechen nationalists. Instead of supporting the idea of being a member of the transnational Sunni Islamic community or *ummah*, ISIS claimed that these commanders and their followers highlighted the ethnonationalist path. (Canadian Security Intelligence Service, 2015: 70-71; Cecire, 2016: 287).

Outcomes of the abovementioned division had reflections on the young Salafi Kists in the Pankisi Gorge. It led to a transition among them, and a decline of participation in foreign fighting.[106] This originated from the belief that *jihad* is a duty of members of the *ummah*. Some Salafi groups define refusing to join *jihad* as a sin for Muslims. In this context, declaring armed combat a *jihad* becomes an important issue (Falkowski & Lang, 2015: 31-32). According to the Report of the State Security Service of Georgia published in 2018, there was no new incident of Georgian citizens traveling to Syria and Iraq (Amushkeli, 2019: 6). This drop in the

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[105] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 5, 2016.

[106] Diminishing ISIS power in Syria and Iraq and its damaged recruitment network in Georgia were some of the reasons behind the decline of participation in foreign fight especially after 2015 (Barkaia & Janelidze, 2018: 91).

participation of young Salafi Kists in foreign fighting was explained by an expert from the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies in the following way:

> They do not go to Syria anymore. There was *fitna*[107] between ISIS and the other groups. Then, participation in foreign fighting stopped. Some Salafis came to believe that they [Islamic groups in Syria] are not fighting against Assad, but are killing each other instead. The Salafi group was divided into two, saying that this is not true *jihad*. There remain 30 people or something. The brother of Batirashvili and others have become *takfiri* and do not support ISIS.[108]

Concerning the Salafi perspectives on armed *jihad*, the Kist community members can be categorized according to their various understandings of unity. The concept of *jihad* as a duty of the believer and the practice of *takfir* make it possible to bring together different solidarities as one single moral community that isolates itself from other religious solidarities and the wider Kist solidarity. Categorizing people as believers and non-believers tries to eliminate other forms of solidarities. Moreover, with such categorization, these believers manifest themselves to be a distinct entity by defining other Islamic understandings as non-legitimate. Although Salafis were perceived and presented as a monolithic entity in the media and other sources, the data from the fieldwork revealed that they are not homogenous. A senior expert from Caucasian House stated a diversity among Salafis in 2016 by saying:

> Among those Salafis, there are radicals and combiners of Salafism and traditional Islam. There are only 300 pure Salafis among them. Those are the ones who are sending their children to Syria. The Salafi community declares that it is not their war.[109]

A Georgian scholar from Ilia State University drew attention to the deviation among the Salafi Kists concerning the issues of foreign fighting and the Islamic State. "Some Salafis, a small group, are very peaceful. In one village, Salafis reject the Islamic State, and in another they support it. ... It is tough to understand what they think."[110] Among the Kist residents of the Pankisi Gorge, a certain Salafi group

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[107] Unrest or rebellion in Islamic understanding.

[108] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 14, 2018.

[109] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), April 4, 2016.

[110] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 13, 2018.

known as *takfirist* support the idea of the Islamic state. This group is called marginal (Barkaia & Janelidze, 2018: 56). A follower of the traditional Kist Islam mentioned a transformation of the young Salafi Kists. She pointed out a shift among them as follows:

> Now they are not Salafist, but Muslim. That is the case. They first started with *Wahhabism*. Now they are neither *Wahhabi* nor Salafi. They say that they are Muslims. The majority of them are like that. Nobody goes to Syria. Fortunately, no one among our young people goes to Syria. There is a shift, even some disunity among the Salafi wing, due to their approaches to the Syrian War.[111]

It should be noted that Salafi Kists always declared themselves to be Muslims. The terms *Wahhabi* and Salafi are not their self-definitions. They are external designations commonly used to associate them with terrorism in the Russian narrative, which also emerged in the world of academia and in the media (Barkaia & Janelidze, 2018: 52). They call themselves Muslims who are followers of the *Ahlus Sunnah*. In addition to that, the claim that there was no significant return to the traditional Islamic path among the young Kists was pointed out by experts during the interviews. After the major shift in foreign fighting, the religious affiliation of young Kists and their attitudes towards the traditions is noted by an expert from the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies as follows:

> 60-70 % of the young Kists go to Salafi mosques. There are no Sufis among young people. Besides, there are non-religious young Kists. Young Salafi Kists say that traditions are important to them if they do not contradict the Sharia. If an elderly person comes, they stand up. They continue to do it because it is not against the Sharia.[112]

A Georgian expert from the Center for Social Sciences commented on the issue of labeling among the Salafis in the following way:

> We have the impression that they want to distance themselves from *Wahhabis*. *Wahhabis* was a name used in the North Caucasus countries. Sometimes they do not call themselves Salafis. They call themselves Muslims. They do not want to have a stigmatized identity. Ethnoreligious minority, and an additional *Vainakh*...[113]

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[111] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 13, 2018.

[112] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 14, 2018.

[113] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 11, 2018.

The same expert emphasized that there was no radicalization among the Kists. Converting to Salafism originated from lack of religious knowledge in the Kist community. According to the same expert, the situation in the gorge was manipulated by several NGOs in order to obtain research funds for their organizations:

> The situation in the Pankisi Gorge is not related to religious radicalization. There is no evidence for this. A massive conversion to Salafism arose from the need to gain in-depth knowledge of religion. The situation is dramatized by NGOs to conduct projects and earn money.[114]

According to the research conducted by Amashukeli (2019: 12), 80 percent of Kists who prefer to go to the Salafi mosques explain that they do so because they want an opportunity to learn Islamic theology and 57 percent to acquire a knowledge of following Islamic rules in their lives as the primary reasons for their preference. On the whole, the transition brought about by *jihad* led to a permanent division among the Salafi Kists. This division is can be seen in different concepts of *jihad*. A case in point is a marginal *takfiri* group who refuses to practice religious rituals with other Kists who have adopted Salafi understanding, demonstrating that a distinct Salafi solidarity likely exists. In addition to that, there are many young Salafi Kists who maintain the main pillars of traditional customs that do not contradict the Sharia law. The collaboration between the Council of Elders and Salafi imams in this issue strengthens a wider Kist solidarity.

In the time of political and social turmoil, the Kist community was severely hurt by the collective shocks, as previously mentioned. Under the impact of these shocks, search for selfhood, security, and order began, on both individual and collective levels. In the meantime, the weakness of state authority and negligence of the government caused an increase in criminal activities. The traditional structure of the community could not provide order and security, despite all the efforts of the Council of Elders. This shattered the sense of unity and paved the way for the spread of Salafism among the young Kists. After the adoption of Salafism, the young Salafi Kists started to question the religious beliefs and practices of the older generation.

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[114] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 11, 2018.

This produced generational conflicts among the Kists. The religious conflicts previously mentioned added to the challenges in the traditional Kist way of life. The tradition of seniority was questioned through the questioning of religious beliefs and practices. The lack of Islamic knowledge of the elderly was challenged by the young Salafi Kists. Accordingly, the authority of the elderly weakened. After the establishment of the Sharia Court, clashes over moral and religious authority took place between the Council of Elders and the Sharia Court. These events led to the emergence of another dispute, that between the tribal law and Sharia law. These conflicts created tension in the community.

The growing number of Kists who adopted Salafi understanding and the pragmatic approach of the Sharia Court directed the Council of Elders to collaborate with Salafi imams to solve some disputes among the community (Siprashvili, 2014: 60). The degree of tension between the elderly and the young Salafis changed due to the emergence of a marginal *takfiri* group following the decline of foreign fighting. The tension between the followers of traditional Kist Islam and Salafi Kists was reduced. A Kist who follows the traditional Islam pointed out the change in the degree of tension between Salafis and the elderly:

> There have been improvements in this tension. Without the elderly, young Salafist Kists cannot make crucial decisions. The government and the majority work with elders. That made problems for Salafis, but now there is cooperation with them.[115]

In the past, conflicts in the Kist community were resolved through the traditional structure, the village council (*mehq khiel*). This procedure was performed by the village council based on tribal law. The council, which was responsible for making decisions about the issues of war and peace, and of trade, enforced the tribal law by imposing sanctions (Siprashivli, 2014: 51). The Council of Elders was the political authority in the past (Kurtsikidze & Chikovani, 2002: 22). This council was revived and officially registered under the name the Council of Elders in 2004 (Barkaia & Janelidze, 2018: 76-77).[116] However, the authority of the Council of Elders is not

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[115] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 13, 2018.

[116] The Council of Women and the Council of Elders are non-profit organizations that are registered by the Georgian state. The Council of Elders aims to conserve and promote Kist traditions and culture (Caucasian House, 2016: 57-58). The Council of Women aims to defend the rights of women related

perceived as equal to the authority of the traditional *mehq khiel* by the young Salafi Kists (Siprashvili, 2014: 55). The reasons behind those abovementioned conflicts were the relations between the Council of Elders with the Georgian state and the status of the council as a registered organization rather than elected one, as was *mehq khiel* (Barkaia & Janelidze, 2018: 76-77).

The tribal regulations are named the Codex of the Kist community (The Kist' Law Code – *Mekhk Bart*) and have been in use for nearly 200 years. In 1965, the Kists changed some of their customs following a meeting in the gorge. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the elders of the community gathered and adopted new laws in the times of political and social turmoil to prevent criminal activity within the community. The attempt of the Council of Elders failed due to the restrictions of the laws of the Georgian state. Later, the issue of crime in the Pankisi Gorge ended. However, "an internal process that violates socially established practices in the Kist society for centuries, which leads to the Kist ethnic unity collapse, the confrontation between the older generation and the younger generation about the religion and customs" (Khangoshvili, 2018: 108-109). As an illustrative example of Kist solidarity, the Council of Elders initiated a process that brought revisions and modifications of some Kist customs so that they would conform to the Sharia law. In addition to the previously mentioned collaborations between the Council of the Elders and the Salafi imams, the young Salafi Kists stated their eagerness to preserve traditions and customs which do not contradict the Sharia law. In this context, the Council of Elders made announcements and distributed draft amendments to the heads of the families and clans. They asked for opinions, remarks, and objections to the draft. This process took four months. Then, a public discussion took place. The revised amendments were added to the proposal after the discussion. Seventy-one representatives from all villages gathered and voted for the amendments on October 13th in 2017. The new version of the Kist Law Code, which is declared as mandatory for all Kists, was approved. Changes in the Codex consisted of the issues related to murder, blood feud, property damage, drug use, marriage,

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to social problems and domestic violence, tries to generate responses to everyday problems of the women of Pankisi (Jasutis, 2015: 132).

divorce, inheritance, funerals, and the duties of the traditional union of judges (The Initiative Group of the Kist Elders, 2018). A notable Kist commented on the change in the Codex which was made by the Council of Elders so as not to contradict with the Sharia law:

> The Codex is used only by Kists, not by Chechens or any others. The elders conducted a significant study, and thereby decided to make some modifications in the Codex. They asked for the opinions of the whole community. The elders then regulated the changes with the approval of the community, including the Salafis, who had some objections but no rejections. The Codex is basically about the regulations related to daily living (e.g., money, marriage). Various factors had brought about the need for change. With regard to the blood feud ... For instance, if someone kills somebody, the relatives of the murdered kill not only the murderer but also members of the murderer's family, or even the members of the *teip*. With the new Codex, only the murderer pays the price. These changes are also related to increased clarity in Islamic knowledge. It made them necessary.[117]

The interviewee also explained the use of the Codex in this way:

> Most people go to the elderly, at first, individually. From early in the morning into the night, everyone consults them on various matters. In general, problems are solved through counseling, but if a problem is severe, then the local code gathers the Council of the Elders, and they decide. Before the elders make a decision, the Codex is applied directly. The last three incidents were resolved in 4 years. The elderly have succeeded in preserving the peace.[118]

The collective punishment prescribed by the tribal law was changed into individual punishment, in accordance with the Sharia law (The Initiative Group of the Kist Elders, 2018: 112-113). In the issue of consanguineous marriage, the prohibition is sustained. Thus, the young Salafis believe that this prohibition does not contradict with the Sharia law. In the issue of divorce, the Kist Law Code states the need for revisions on the rights of the husband. The Codex also refers to the necessity of adopting amendments to resolve the issue of the lack of inheritance rights of the daughters to be consistent with the contemporary social conditions. According to Sharia law, a woman has the right to share the inheritance of the parents and the husband. Based on that, the Codex proposed the election of a commission to determine the share of inheritance. In the Codex, the challenges related to the funeral are resolved by referring to both the religious approach and by to the

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[117] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 13, 2018.

[118] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 13, 2018.

outcomes of previous generational conflicts. Cooperation with the elderly and the Salafis is also mentioned by an expert from the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies:

> Nobody returns to the traditional path, but there was an interesting development when they were studying the Codex, they asked three Salafi imams about it.[119]

In addition to this, it should be noted that the protests against the construction of a hydropower station and the incident in which a young Kist was killed by Georgian law enforcement made the community respond collectively (Mutoshvili, 2019; Pankisi Times, 2018). A Kist stated the impact of the latter incident with the following words:

> The tragedy of the killing of the young boy brought the entire community together. Young people are together with the elderly. My perception of the issue is negative. There is still no proof that he had involvement in any activity. Even if he had, the way, the operation was wrong. To go there in the middle of the night, kill him instead of taking him into custody. Not only Pankisi, but the entire country does not believe he had a grenade or something. No one believes it. The family and neighbors were there. We knew Temirlan. He was a kind, gentle guy, and we still cannot believe this happened to him.[120]

The reestablishment of harmonious relations and cooperation between the traditionalists and the Salafis can be explained by several reinforcing factors. These are the need for Islamic knowledge in the Kist community, the need of Salafis' desire to be relieved from their stigmatized identity and their stereotypes, the changes in the Georgian State's approach towards the community, and international political dynamics. The community's need for religious knowledge is based on their wanting to preserve their selfhood and prevent assimilation into Georgian culture. Due to the Islamic dimension of *Vainakh* solidarity, change in religious affiliation has a direct effect on the people's selfhood. To illustrate, the Kists who adopted Christianity define themselves as Georgian. In addition to that, people who have different ethnic origins in the Pankisi Gorge have defined themselves as Kists throughout history. Changes in self-definition among the Kists is explained by an expert from the

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[119] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 13, 2018.

[120] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 13, 2018. For detailed information about the issue, see (Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, 2018).

Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies with the following words:

> They call themselves Kists in Georgia, but outside of it, they call themselves Chechens. Due to their Georgian surnames and their fluency in Georgian, some people in Georgia think that Kists are Georgian.[121]

It should be noted that the young Kists define themselves as Chechens. The reason behind this can be evaluated by referring to the relation between Chechen and Salafi solidarities that were faced by the Pankisi Kist after the second half of the 1990s. Interaction with a certain combination of Chechen and Salafi solidarities was due to the religious composition of Chechen refugees. As a result of all of these, the Kist community fills the gap generated by a lack of Islamic knowledge by consulting Salafi members. The young Salafis and, in fact, the whole community wants to remove the stigma of the extremists. This stigma and stereotypes about the community are widespread among the public and academic spheres owing to the media.

International political relations are another factor that brought changes to the community. A coalition against ISIS, the positions of USA and Russia against the *jihadist* organizations in Syria and Iraq together gave rise to the decline of ISIS. Global operations against terrorist organizations and the arrests of key figures damaged the process of recruitment into these organizations. This strengthened the perception of the existing stereotypes towards Muslim communities and also produced social pressure against the groups associated with extremism in the perception of societies. The transformation of the approach of the Georgian state is also noted during the interviews. In 2016, a Turkish expert explained the situation by referring to the issue of reculturation in Georgian Orthodox faith:

> Georgia itself needs to strengthen the traditional understanding [of the Kists]. As an independent state, it has done this in Orthodoxy. As opposed to the world trend, Georgia has achieved this. It can renew and strengthen the understanding of religion by reviving its own culture. It is a way to solve the problem of the religious radicalization crisis in the world. However, the Georgian state leaves minority religions to the initiative of global powers. … They want to turn the crisis into an opportunity. It is correct and natural to develop a culture in their own basin.

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[121] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 13, 2018.

> Emotional togetherness for the establishment of social peace … After a massive influx of refugees, uneasiness, distrust towards the environment, internal social conflict … The US wants to secure itself against potential threats of Al-Qaeda.[122]

The change in the Georgian governments' approach towards the Kist community was also a decisive factor that led to an increase in collaboration with the Kists. Until 2008, the Georgian government had declared the Salafis in the Kist community anti-Georgian. In 2012, operations were conducted against Salafi groups. The new government adopted a different policy and started to cooperate with the followers of the traditional Kist Islam in the Pankisi Gorge (Barkaia & Janelidze, 2018:73-76). It was after the war between Russia and Georgia that the Saakashvili government started to collaborate with them (Caucasian House, 2016: 19). The Council of Elders became the only legitimate mediator between the Georgian state and the Kist community. In 2018, an expert from the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies depicted the general picture of the community's transformation by saying:

> The power of the elderly had weakened. In the Shevardnadze period, there were arms and drug trafficking, and kidnapping was widespread. Between 2012 and 2013, an operation was carried out. As a result, some Arab men were arrested. One of them was sent to Guantanamo. The state had two choices: to join forces with drug traffickers or with Salafis. Saakashvili chose to work together with Salafis. The Salafis said that they could make Pankisi a crime-free area, but they would be grateful if the State did not interfere with their religion. They promised not to spread Salafism to any other place. Indeed, drugs and other criminal activities have disappeared. When Ivanishvili came to power, he needed a new group and chose the elderly. He has started to support them.[123]

Another critical element that led to the transformation of the traditional Kist solidarity can be traced to the changes in the Codex. In addition to that, the existence of a marginal *takfiri* group that isolated itself from the wider community shows that there are no mutually exclusive collective consciousnesses concerning the traditionalist-Salafi conflict. An expert from the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies depicted the general picture of the transformation of the internal dispute in the community with these words:

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[122] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), March 31, 2016.

[123] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 14, 2018.

Nobody had controlled Salafis in the gorge. Then, the radicalization process began. They began to participate in the Syrian civil war. There were two waves to Syria. First, people who had gained experience in Chechnya were related to *Imarat Kavkaz*. They went to Syria during Saakashvili's period. Second, people associated with the Caliphate and ISIS between the years 2014 and 2015. Many young people went there in the second wave. Now the government is against Salafis. Machalikashvili was killed. Then, Salafis and the elderly united.[124]

All of these factors together led the Kist community to establish an inner dialogue. The changes in the Kist Law Code, which covers the issues of religious beliefs and practices, customs, and traditions, enabled the transformation of the Kist collective consciousness. As an external index, modifying the Codex in accordance with the Sharia law indicates the existence of a wider Kist solidarity, which surpasses the collective consciousness represented by the Council of Elders.

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[124] Interview, Tbilisi (Georgia), June 14, 2018.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis aims to examine social change in the Kist community in the years following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. As mentioned in the introduction, it employed a Durkheimian perspective to trace the changes through the social solidarity production process. Reformulating the concept of collective consciousness to produce a complex structure of collective consciousnesses with hierarchal, layered, and distributional aspects made it possible to examine changes in the patterns of social cohesion among the Kists. The changes in the conditions of the social existence of the Kist community demonstrate the social transformation experienced by the Kists and are exemplified with respect to regional and global dynamics. The impact of the transformation of the Kist community's social existence is witnessed through the collective shocks which produced states of collective effervescence. Borrowing from other scholars, creative and re-creative conceptualizations of collective effervescence as a complex notion made it possible to observe the social solidarity production processes. This allowed for a way to grasp the quality of the social occurrence being studied. At the beginning of the thesis, it was argued that the collective shocks that laid the foundations for moments of collective effervescence with undesirable emotions led to the formation of different types of solidarity production. Afterwards, however, the solidarity production processes changed their direction towards the reconfiguration of the community. By utilizing traditional and religious beliefs and practices, laws, and actions of the governing authorities as external indexes, tracing the changes of the pattern of solidarities in the community supported the main argument, thanks to a reevaluation of Durkheim's concepts.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union caused the decline of Soviet sovereignty. Consequently, the modern and completely secularized Soviet collective consciousness, which was highlighted in the Soviet authority structure and laws,

faded away. Economic hardship became much more severe all over the post-Soviet territories. In addition to that, wars and ethnic strife escalated in the Caucasus region. In line with these developments, Georgia's state authority was lost and crime became widespread, especially in the border regions. The emergence of Pankisi as an illegal trade route and militant activity in the gorge produced a state of deregulation. In this state of deregulation, the effectiveness of traditional and religious social solidarities and their corresponding organizations was enhanced. This process is defined as demodernization. Latent versions of collective consciousnesses came to the forefront in the hierarchical aspect of collective consciousnesses. As the research data reveals, the ideological vacuum generated by the collapse of the Soviet worldview was tried to be filled by traditional and religious substitutes in both Chechnya and Pankisi. In Georgia, ethno-religious nationalism rose. Its path of reculturation in the religious sphere excluded minority groups from the state structure. The Georgian state is considered to be a symbol of Georgian collective consciousness, in line with the conceptualization of its governing authority throughout the thesis. These demodernization processes in both the Georgian and Kist sides fed each other as two sides of the same phenomenon.

The research findings reveal that the Kist community, living in the relatively isolated Pankisi Gorge, was disturbed by the outcomes of the Chechen Wars. The conditions of the social existence of the Kist community were re-shaped by numerous factors, most notably : the decline of the Georgian state authority which had previously been under the influence of the overarching Soviet authority, the wars between Chechnya and Russia, the militant activity in the gorge, the increase in crime among many ethnic groups and the mass flow of Chechen refugees. What is more, many humanitarian and religious organizations started to conduct activities in the region.

The arrival of the refugees had a profound impact on the Kist community because the Kists shared their limited sources by hosting refugees in their houses, thereby nearly doubling the household populations. The outcomes of this can be grasped by adhering to the Durkheimian view on the relationship between the frequency of interaction and solidarity. The interaction between these two *Vainakh* groups was greater than ever before. Both the abovementioned circumstances and the *Vainakhs'*

greater involvement with each other gave rise to, first, collective shocks, then collective effervescence, in which the Kist community experienced both estrangement from the self and heightened self-consciousness. In this state of collective effervescence, which is a creative period, not a temporary condition, new social relations were also established. For example, many other groups and agents, like Arabs, militants and *jihadists,* directly or indirectly contacted the Kist community members. In accordance with the *Vainakh* collective consciousness, the Chechens and Kists interacted with each other. In these chains of interactions, both similarities and differences became clarified by the members of these two groups. The common historical and cultural characteristics, including a common language, allowed both the Chechen and Kist collective consciousnesses to converge under the extensive *Vainakh* solidarity. In this period, the members of the two groups became aware of the differences between the observance of traditions and religion. They could perceive the variations of the impacts of the Soviet rule and its modernization project on Chechnya and Pankisi.

A significant number of Chechen refugees were followers of the Salafi understanding of Islam. The traditional Kist Islam, however, was oriented to Sufi Islam through the *Naqshabandi* and *Qadiri tariqats*. Besides, the traditional Kist Islam included pagan and Christian elements. The differences in the observance of the religious beliefs and practices, together with impact of collective effervescence gave rise to discussions and even conflicts. Based on the data obtain in the fieldwork and utilizing conceptual relations, one can argue that social and political struggles developed through the emergence of different collective consciousness within the Kist community. This collective consciousness firstly developed in the religious domain. Consistent with the Muslim collective consciousness, both Salafi refugees and Arabs interacted with the Kists. Since the Kists who converted to Christianity define themselves as Georgian due to the absence of a language barrier between Georgians and Kists, the fear of assimilation in Georgian society was heightened. This was another outcome of collective effervescence, which leads to estrangement from the self and becoming conscious of the self through deregulation and assembling, respectively. The fear of Russification was also an important factor because of the ongoing war between Chechnya and Russia, but this fear was more

influential in the ethnic domain of social solidarity. In this sense, the search for self and security pushed the young Kists to become involved with religion. It should be noted that moral and economic needs were crucial in shaping this tendency.

The answer to the question of why the young Kists mostly adopted the Salafi understanding of Islam as opposed to the traditional understanding of the elderly can be found in the high-ranking position of the elderly in the community. This position refers to both the distributional characteristics of society and the Council of Elders as a symbol of the traditional Kist collective consciousness. Moral empowerment could not be provided through the rituals of traditional Kist Islam because Kist Islam's collective consciousness was insufficient. Although Sufi rituals, namely *zikrs,* are capable of providing a direct way of attachment to the group through the collective effervescence generated, the dimension of meaning in the rituals was low in intensity. It can be argued that reaching these answers may indicate a high potential of the conceptual framework. The research findings demonstrated that the young Salafis and Salafi experts highly emphasized the lack of religious knowledge among the followers of the traditional Kist Islam. This situation clearly indicates the relationship between the strength of collective consciousness and the degree of determinateness. Less clear-cut moral and religious beliefs and practices mean less articulation of the structure. It should be noted that this lower intensity is more peculiar to religious collective consciousness than the ethnonational or traditional ones. Besides, in the late 1990s, the criminal environment of the gorge damaged the collective sentiments and led to insecurity. Furthermore, the legitimacy of the traditional governing authority degraded in terms of both morality and religion during this period. Under these circumstances, the Salafi understanding easily spread.

According to the research findings, the effect of collective effervescence on the solidarity of the community was twofold. On the one hand, the creative aspect of collective effervescence made it possible to adopt new moral and religious understandings through the newly established social relations with Chechen refugees, militants, *jihadists*, and Arabs. On the other hand, the existing traditional and religious beliefs and practices were reproduced. These two developments took place

because under the state of collective effervescence, it became possible for the sacred concepts of the community to be open to discussion.

The emergence of a new collective consciousness, which was named the Salafi collective consciousness among young Kists, became possible through the religious education of some young Kists. As a vessel of socialization, education had a critical role in the morality of the young Kists who went abroad to receive religious education. By adopting a new moral and religious understanding, they became the means to communicate this collective consciousness to add to the extensive Kist collective consciousness. The observance of new religious beliefs and practices may also have contributed to their psychological well-being, primarily through performing religious rituals. The high degree of determinateness of the Salafi collective consciousness strengthened with ever-increasing moral empowerment and generated more and open resistance to the traditional Kist collective consciousness. This resulted in conflicts in the community and the young Kists' challenging the traditional way of life.

At first, religious beliefs and practices were challenged due to the contradictions between Sufi and Salafi understandings of Islam. Salafism's rejection of the inner link with God and of transferring of blessings led to disagreements by the cult of saints and ancestors, and the cult of holy places, in addition to *zikrs*. Moreover, ceremonies of life cycle events also became challenging. Some of the important customs and traditions of the Kist community (respect for elders, avoidance practice, dance, and music) became sources of conflicts.

Based on research data, one can argue that new social relations developed following the incarnation of Salafi collective consciousness through the establishment of the Sharia court among the Kists. The Sharia court's claims of moral and religious authority challenged that of the Council of Elders and manifested itself in the moral and religious dimension, namely in the dispute between the Sharia law and the tribal law. Such disputes between them were observed in the subjects of blood feud, marriage, custody, and inheritance. For a certain period, these disagreements continued in the Kist community without any resolution.

At first, the Salafi collective consciousness was a divergence from the general Kist collective consciousness, but later, the growing number of young Salafi Kists and the rising authority of the Sharia court as a symbol of Salafi collective consciousness prompted the Council of Elders to take action to revitalize the traditional Kist collective consciousness. The increase in the intensity of Salafi collective consciousness led the Sharia court to claim its authority all over the community. The demands of Salafi understanding generated a fear of Arabization among the elderly generation of the Kists. Political developments were also a significant source of friction between these collective consciousnesses.

The increase in the extent and intensity of the Salafi collective consciousness might have caused some young Kists to search for an ideal Muslim society in Syria and Iraq.[125] In its purest form, Salafism demands the eradication of solidarities other than the *ummah*. In the first wave of foreign fighting, ethnonational sentiments and religious sentiments were connected much more, or at least there was no clear demarcation line between them. However, the development of *fitna* among the armed groups in Syria separated the ethnonational collective consciousness and religious consciousness by distinct boundaries. This can be seen in ISIS accusing *Imarat Kavkaz* commanders of being nationalists. By referring to the field data, one can argue that the fears of assimilation (Georgianization, Arabization, Russification) play a significant role in the boundaries of social solidarity processes among the Kists. Islam has a crucial role in defining both *Vainakh* and Kist collective consciousnesses. Being Muslim allows people from different ethnic origins to unite. In this sense, Kists converting to Christianity from Islam undergo dissociation from the Kist collective consciousness and define themselves as Georgian.

Dividing people into two categories, believers and non-believers, can be seen in the Salafi understanding of Islam. The level of collective consciousness determines the intensity of the manifestation of this categorization. The abovementioned *fitna* illustrates the exclusionist Salafi collective consciousness that had reflections on the Caucasian people and the Kists. In the Pankisi Gorge, the

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[125] One can argue that the impact of collective effervescence in producing acts of heroism might be the case for some young Kists to participate in the foreign fighting in Syria and Iraq regions.

emergence of a *takfiri* group isolated itself from both the followers of the traditional Kist Islam and the other Salafi Kists by declaring them to be non-believers. This development is a domain in which the collective consciousnesses of the Salafi and the traditional Kist Islam interact and communicate. This relationality indicates the layered structure of the extensive Kist collective consciousness. The separation of *the takfiri* group can be seen as one single moral community rather than a small community under the vaster banner of Islam by referring to Durkheim's definition of religion. Due to its exclusionist attitude, this collectivity cannot be categorized as a 'chapel' under the vaster 'Church'.

Based on the interviews, it is possible to argue that, the Council of Elders' call to change the Kist' Law Code (*Mekhk Bart*) can be seen as an attempt to resolve the ongoing conflicts and disagreements in the community. The successful negotiations between the Salafi Kists and the followers of traditional Kist Islam were best evident when Salafi imams were consulted while preparing the drafts of the codex. Changing the Kist Law Code, which is an index of traditional Kist collective consciousness, signifies the revitalization of the traditional Kist solidarity. The process of reforming the codex with a high rate of participation demonstrated the need for legitimacy. Because of its purpose of resolving disputes in the Kist community and assembling people in the community for them to contribute, this process may be interpreted as a ritual of reconciliation. Although the religious and moral authority of the Council of Elders has weakened in the community, the strength of the traditional Kist collective consciousness reflected itself in the modifications undergone.

The research data reveals that some beliefs and practices have changed. However, an important number of practices and rules of conduct were preserved. Moreover, some alternatives were recognized as legitimate while, at the same time, traditional ones were maintained. The main intention was to ensure that the tribal law was in accord with the requirements of the Sharia law. It should also be noted that both laws were not in conformity with the Georgian state law. The codex changes also indicate an attempt to make the tribal law compatible with the state laws of Georgia. The Kist Law Code addresses the traditions of the Kist community while resolving disputes in the community and declares the Sharia court as undesirable. The Council of Elders

tried to manage an alliance with the young Salafi Kists and the Georgian state by taking advantage of national and international developments. The Council of Elders, as the only legitimate governing authority in the Kist community according to the Georgian state, is the instigator of this alliance.

The Salafi collective consciousness emerged as a result of the loss of the overarching Soviet authority as well as the collective effervescence produced by the collective shocks experienced in the Kist community. This collective consciousness started to show the features of a rupture from the extensive Kist solidarity through the manifestations of the abovementioned conflicts and disagreements in the community. However, the strength of the traditional or ethnonational collective consciousness among the *Vainakhs* and Kists reflected itself through the appearance of a shift in the Salafi solidarity under the influence of regional and global developments. In the community, the Council of Elders were able to carry out a reconfiguration, which revivifies both the traditional Kist collective consciousness and the extensive Kist solidarity by reforming the Kist Law Code, which is a scripted form of the Kist *adat*. The research question 'How did the impact of 'collective shocks' experienced by the Kists affect the 'solidarity' of the Kist community?' is answered. Collective shocks led to a reaffirmation of the solidarity of the Kist community instead of producing a destruction. The moments of collective effervescence with undesirable emotions brought about different solidarity productions and caused divergences at the beginning. However, eventually, the solidarity production processes developed in the direction towards the reorganization of the community.

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APPENDICES

A. TÜRKÇE ÖZET / TURKISH SUMMARY

Bu çalışma, Gürcistan'ın Pankisi Vadisi'nde yaşayan Kist topluluğunda toplumsal değişmeyi incelemektedir. Bu incelemede değişim kavramını düzen kavramına önceleyen Durkheimci bir yaklaşımın kullanılması hedeflenmiştir. Toplumsal değişmeyi, toplumsal bağlılık (İng. *social cohesion*) örüntülerindeki değişme üzerinden analiz etmeyi amaçlamış olan bu tezde Durkheim'in kavramlarının yeniden yorumlanarak ele alınmasıyla ortaya çıkan kavramsal bir çerçeve kullanılmıştır. Bu tez, Kist topluluğundaki toplumsal değişimi, "Kistlerin yaşadığı 'kolektif şoklar'ın etkisi, Kistlerin 'dayanışmasını' nasıl etkiledi?" sorusunu cevaplamaya çalışarak anlamlandırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bahse konu gelişmelerin yapısını belirlemek, kolektif şokların etkisiyle ortaya çıkan durumun, Kistlerin dayanışmasının yeniden üretilmesine veya bu dayanışmada kopmaya neden olup olmadığını anlamaya yardımcı olmuştur. Araştırmanın iddiası, istenmeyen duygularla ortaya çıkan ve kolektif coşkunluk anları için temel oluşturan kolektif şokların başlangıçta farklı tipte sosyal dayanışma biçimleri ortaya çıkardığıdır. Ancak bu gelişmeler daha sonra toplumun yeniden örgütlenmesine doğru yönünü değiştirmiştir. Bu vakada kolektif şok terimi, Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasının neden olduğu siyasi ve ideolojik boşluk, altyapının çöküşü, ekonomik zorluklar, Pankisi Vadisi'nde ve çevresinde suç faaliyetleri, komşu bölgelerdeki savaşlar ve etnik çatışmalar ile büyük çaplı mülteci akını şeklinde ifade edilmektedir.

Bu çalışmada, derinlemesine görüşmelerin yapıldığı belge araştırması ve saha çalışması gibi nitel araştırma yöntemleri kullanılmıştır. Belge araştırması bağlamında, literatür taramasının yanı sıra, Kist topluluğunun karar alma süreçlerine ilişkin kodeksin analizi de yapılmıştır. Örneğin, Kist topluluğunun örfi hukukunun yazılı hali olan *Mekhk Bart*, Kist topluluğunun hem mevcut hem de geçmiş geleneklerini ve davranış kurallarını anlamlandırmak için incelenmiştir. Devlet yetkilileri, akademisyenler, STK'lar ve Kist topluluğunun üyeleri ile derinlemesine

mülakatlar yapılmıştır. Bu araştırma iki farklı saha çalışmasına dayanmaktadır. İlk saha çalışması 2016 yılında "Gürcistan'daki Müslüman Azınlıklar- Azınlık Hakları, Kimlik ve Siyaset" adlı projenin bir parçası olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu çalışmada devlet yetkilileri, akademisyenler, STK'lar ve Kist topluluğunun üyeleriyle Tiflis'te 2016 yılında on dört derinlemesine mülakat yapılmıştır. İkinci saha çalışması, Kistler üzerine bir diğer projenin bir parçası olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu ikinci saha çalışmasında 2017 ve 2018 yıllarında Tiflis'te devlet yetkilileri, akademisyenler, STK uzmanları ve Kist topluluğunun üyeleri ile on üç derinlemesine mülakat gerçekleştirilmiştir. Toplamda, yirmi yedi derinlemesine mülakat yapılmıştır. Yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşmeler, katılımcıların algıları hakkında bilgi edinme fırsatı sağlamıştır. Saha çalışmasında, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerin keşif özelliği yeni verilerin tespit edilmesine olanak sağlamıştır. Ayrıca, Kist topluluğunun üyelerinin belirli inançlara ve uygulamalara atfettiği toplumsal anlam da anlaşılabilir hale gelmiştir.

Bu tez beş bölümden oluşmaktadır. Bunlar; Giriş, Tarihsel Arka Plan, Teorik ve Kavramsal Çerçeve, Bulgular ve Analiz ile Sonuç kısmıdır. Tarihsel Arka Plan bölümünde, Kist topluluğunun tarihî ve Pankisi Vadisi'ndeki yerleşimleri, Kist Topluluğunun kökeni ve üyelerinin yaşadığı sosyo-politik değişimler kısaca açıklanmaktadır. Kuramsal ve Kavramsal Çerçeve bölümünde, yeniden ele alınan Durkheimci bir yaklaşımla vaka ve kavramsal ilişkiler sunulmaktadır. Toplumsal dayanışma üretim süreçlerindeki değişiklikleri tasvir etmek için dayanışma (İng. *solidarity*), kolektif bilinç (İng. *collective consciousness*), kolektif şok (İng. *collective shock*) ve kolektif coşkunluk (İng. *collective effervescence*) kavramları incelenmiştir. Bulgular ve Analiz bölümünde araştırma bulguları açıkça sunulmuştur ve bulguların analizi uygulanan metodoloji kapsamında gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu bölüm, derinlemesine görüşmeler sırasında görüşmeciler tarafından ifade edilen dört tema içermektedir. Bunlar; Siyasal ve Sosyal Karışıklık, Selefiliğe Geçiş, Geleneksel Kist Yaşam Biçimine Karşı Çıkışlar, Kist Topluluğunun Organizasyonu ve Topluluk İçinde Yeniden Yapılanma şeklindedir. Son olarak, Sonuç bölümünde vaka çalışmasının genel değerlendirmesi, vaka hakkında ek çıkarımlarla birlikte teorik ve kavramsal çerçeveye atıfta bulunarak sunulmuştur.

Kist topluluğuyla ilgili mevcut çalışmaların çoğu kuramsal bir temele sahip olmayan ve genel olarak tanımlayıcı yaklaşımlara sahip çalışmalardır. Bu alandaki kuramsal temellere sahip olan çalışmalar ise kimlik konusuna odaklanmaktadır. Bu tezde, kavramsal açıklık eksikliği nedeniyle Kist topluluğu vakası toplumsal kimlik teorisi ile incelenmemiştir. Bunun nedeni, Brubaker ve Cooper'ın (2000) analiz kategorilerine ve uygulama kategorilerine ayırdıkları kimlik teriminin belirsizliğidir. Terimin günlük kullanımı, uygulama kategorisi ve bilimsel kavramsallaştırması, analiz kategorisi arasındaki bulanık çizgi, incelenen toplumsal olguların yanlış yorumlanmasına yol açabilir. Bunu kavramsal çerçeveyi kullanmamanın bir başka nedeni ise kimlik politikasının sosyal kimlik kuramı üzerindeki baskınlığından kaçınmak ve böylece Kist topluluğu ve Selefileri radikalleşme ve terörizmle ilişkilendirmek de dahil olmak üzere Kist topluluğuyla ilgili mevcut klişelere katkıda bulunabilecek kimliksel çağrışımlardan kaçınmaktır. Bu klişeler, medyada ve bilimsel alanda da yaygın olan Rus anlatısının bir parçasıdır. Bu konu, Kist topluluğunun organizasyonu ve topluluk içindeki yeniden yapılandırma teması altında Bulgular ve Analiz bölümünde daha ayrıntılı olarak ele alınmaktadır. Konuyu toplumsal kimlik çerçevesinde bir perspektifle incelemek yerine, bu çalışma Kist topluluğunda, dayanışma, kolektif bilinç ve kolektif eylemlerle kendini gösteren aynılık olgusuna odaklanmıştır. Tez, Sovyet sonrası Kafkasya bölgesindeki toplumsal değişimin kristalleşmesi olarak görülebilen Kist topluluğunun toplumsal dönüşümünü netleştirmek için etnik, geleneksel ve dini dayanışmaların dinamik, hiyerarşik ve rekabet eden ilişkiselliğini tasvir etmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

20. yüzyılın ikinci yarısında dünya çapında önemli sosyal ve politik değişiklikler meydana gelmiştir. Bu değişikliklerin başında sekülerleşmenin karşıtı eğilimlerin etkileri, dinlerin yükselişi ve Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılması yer almaktadır. Aydınlanma ve modernleşmenin ürünü olan sekülerleşme tezi, İslam'ın ve Protestan Hristiyanlığın yeniden canlanması ve dolayısıyla dinin kamusal alana dönüşüyle bir ölçüde başarısız olmuştur. Buna ek olarak, Sovyetler Birliği laikliği 'bilimsel ateizm' (İng. *Scientific Atheism*) adı altında bir ideoloji olarak benimsemiştir. Bu durum, Sovyet döneminde ve sonrasında Sovyetler Birliği vatandaşlarının yaşamlarında değişikliklere neden olmuştur.

Bu çalışma, yukarıda da belirtildiği gibi, Gürcistan'ın Pankisi Vadisi'nde yaşayan Kist topluluğunda sosyal değişmeyi incelemektedir. Gürcistan'ın kuzeydoğu kesiminde ve Gürcistan-Çeçenistan sınırının güneyinde yer alan Pankisi Vadisi, sosyal ve tarihi özellikleri nedeniyle birçok özelliğe sahiptir. Neredeyse tüm sakinleri, Kists adı verilen aynı etnik-dinî kökene sahip grubun üyeleridir. Kist topluluğunun etnik kökeni Vaynahlar olarak kabul edilmektedir. Vaynah terimi Çeçenler, İnguşlar, Kistler ve *Tsova-Tush* (*Bats*) için ortak etnonimdir. Bu gruplar arasındaki ayrım esas olarak dil farklılıklarına dayanmaktadır. Kistler, Kist ve Gürcüce olmak üzere iki dilli bir topluluktur. 19. yüzyılın ilk yarısında, Kistler Çeçenistan'dan Pankisi Vadisi'ne göç etmeye başlamışlardır. Bu dönemde vadiye göç etmelerinde ekonomik, kültürel ve dini faktörler önemli rol oynamıştır.

Daha önce, Kistlerin inancı pagan, Hristiyan ve İslami inanç ve uygulamaların bir sentezi olmuştur. Bazı çağdaş kaynaklar, dinî fanatizmin yokluğuna ve Kistler arasında dinî hoşgörünün varlığına atıfta bulunmaktadır. Sovyet yönetimi boyunca, gayri resmî özelliği nedeniyle paralel İslam olarak bilinen İslam uygulaması, camilerin dışında ve Sovyet yetkililerinin gözetiminden uzakta sürmüştür. Kistlerin İslam anlayışı, İslam'ın tasavvufî yorumlarına dayanmaktaydı. Nakşibendi ve Kadiri tarikatlarının, bu dönemde Kistler arasında İslam'ın korunması ve güçlendirilmesi üzerinde dikkate değer etkileri olmuştur. Topluluktaki dinî çeşitliliğin varlığına rağmen Kistler çoğunlukla Müslümandır. Bugün, Kistler Gürcistan'daki etnik-dini azınlık gruplarından biridir.

Kist topluluğu, 1990'ların ikinci yarısında Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılması, Çeçen-Rus Savaşları'nı takiben Çeçenistan'dan Pankisi'ye Çeçen mültecilerin göçü, Gürcistan devlet yapısının başarısızlığıyla tetiklenen yapısal değişiklikler sonucu artan sosyo-politik istikrarsızlık ve Selefi hareketinin bölgedeki yayılması gibi olayların sonucunda yapısal değişim yaşamaya başlamıştır. Geleneklerine sıkı bağlılıkları ile bilinen Kistlerin önemli bir kısmı, Selefi İslam anlayışını benimsemiştir. Bu durumun hem Kist topluluğu hem de Gürcistan üzerinde önemli yansımaları olmuştur.

Selefiliğin Kur'an ve Sünnet'te yer alan dinî inanç ve uygulamalara harfiyen uyulmasını gerektiren püriten İslam anlayışı nedeniyle Selefi Kistler, topluluğun

mevcut geleneksel örf ve adetleri ile dinî inanç ve pratiklerine karşı çıkmaya başlamıştır. Ayrıca, topluluğun yaşlı üyelerine saygı gösterilmesini talep eden ve Yaşlılar Konseyi'nin (İng. *the Council of Elders*) mutlak otoritesini kabul eden yaşlıların otoritesi ilkesine dayanan topluluğun geleneksel yasasına da itiraz geliştirmişlerdir. Topluluğun geleneksel hukukuna (*Adet*) meydan okumanın nedeni Selefi anlayışın millî kültürleri, İslam'ın yerel biçimlerini ve kabile, etnik köken, ulus ya da ırka dayalı özdeşleşmeleri reddedişidir. Selefilik, Şeriat yasasının sıkı bir şekilde uygulanmasını ve Kur'an ile Sünnet'in dışından kaynaklanan geleneksel ya da dinsel inanç ve uygulamaların ortadan kaldırılmasını öngörmektedir.

Çeçen-Rus Savaşları ve 11 Eylül terörist saldırılarının ardından ve Rusya Federasyonu ve ABD'nin küresel teröre karşı yürüttükleri operasyonlar ile Gürcistan'ın egemenliğine müdahaleleri, Kist topluluğu vakasına küresel bir boyut kazandırmıştır. Buna ek olarak, bazı Kistlerin çeşitli cihatçı örgütlerin bünyesinde yer alarak Irak ve Suriye'deki silahlı çatışmalara karışması, Kist topluluğuna ve geçirdiği sosyal ve dinî dönüşüme hem ulusal hem de küresel ilgiyi arttırmıştır.

Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasından 2010'ların sonuna kadar Kist topluluğuna odaklanan bu araştırmanın birincil odak noktası, Sovyet sonrası dönemin Çeçen-Rus Savaşları ve sonrasıdır. Bu süre zarfında topluluğun tecrübe ettiği sosyal değişimler hızlanmıştır. Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasının ardından, siyasi istikrarsızlık bölgede bir otorite boşluğu yaratmıştır, ancak en büyük kargaşa 1994 yılında Birinci Çeçen Savaşı ile başlamıştır. Bu dönemde özellikle uyuşturucu ve Sovyet askeri teçhizatının kaçakçılığının yanı sıra yaygınlaşan insan kaçırma vakaları gibi yasadışı faaliyetlerde önemli bir artış olmuştur. Bölgedeki koşullar 1999 yılında İkinci Çeçen Savaşı'nın başlangıcında önemli ölçüde değişmiştir. İkinci savaşın Pankisi Vadisi üzerindeki etkisi çok daha şiddetli olmuştur, çünkü binlerce Çeçen mülteci Çeçenistan'dan Pankisi'ye göç etmiştir. Göç akınından sonra Çeçen mültecilerin çoğu Kistler ile birlikte yaşamaya başlamıştır. Bu göç dalgası beraberinde büyük insanî sorunlar getirmiştir. Çeçenlerin büyük çaplı göçünün ve Pankisi'deki Kistlerle karşılaşmalarının Kist topluluğu üzerinde derin sonuçları olmuştur. Ayrıca, Pankisi Vadisi çevresinde ortaya çıkan militan faaliyetler, bölge aktörleri açısından jeopolitik güvenlik sorunları yaratmıştır. Selefi İslam anlayışının, özellikle de genç Kistler arasında yayılması bu dönemde gerçekleşmiş ve 2000'li yıllar boyunca da sürmüştür.

Ulusal ve bölgesel güvenlik meselesi, Kistlerin 2010'larda Irak ve Suriye'de yürütülen savaşa önemli oranda katılımlarının ardından gündeme gelmiştir. Kist topluluğunun yaşadığı bu değişiklikleri açıklamak için bölgeye ve Kist topluluğuna atfedilen dinî radikalleşme tanımlamasının çeşitli çevrelerce kullanıldığı da ifade edilmelidir. Bu gelişmeler, topluluk üyeleri arasındaki çeşitli gerilimlere ve toplumsal yarılmaya (İng. *social cleavage*) da yol açmıştır.

Kistlerin durumu güç, din, etnisite, toplumsal düzen ve değişim ile ilgili birçok sosyolojik olguyu somutlaştırmaktadır. Bunlar, toplumdaki kitlesel dinî inanç dönüşümleri, kültürün etkilerinden sıyrılma ve sosyal yarılma gibi toplumsal dönüşüm ve değişimlerdir. Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılması mevcut güç yapılarında değişikliklere neden olmuştur. Bu durum, tüm Sovyet sonrası devletleri sahip oldukları sosyo-tarihsel dinamiklerine bağlı olarak farklı şekillerde etkilemiştir. Bu dönüşüm süreci gücün yeniden dağıtılmasına işaret etmektedir. Sovyet devlet otoritelerinin lağvedilmesi, bu kaotik durumdan yeni siyasi yapılar çıkmasına ve yeniden inşa süreçlerine yol açmıştır.

Bu çerçevede, Kistler, Sovyet sonrası dönemdeki güç ilişkilerindeki değişiklikler ile dünya siyasetinin mevcut dinamiklerini hem makro hem de mikro düzeylerde analiz etmek için uygun bir örnektir. Bu değişiklikleri dolaylı olarak izlemek için bu çalışma, toplumun dayanışma, düzen, otorite, din ve etnisite ile ilgili kolektif yönlerine odaklanmıştır

Bu çalışmada, toplumsal bağlılık örüntüsündeki değişiklikleri izlemek için dayanışma kavramı kullanılmıştır. Durkheim'e göre bir toplumsal olgu (İng. *social fact*) olarak toplumsal dayanışma (İng. *social solidarity*) kendisinin doğrudan gözlemle anlaşılmasına müsaade etmez. Bu nedenle toplumsal dayanışma dışsal endeksler kullanılarak incelenebilir, ancak bu araştırmada toplumsal anlamı yakalamanın bir yolu olarak eklektik bir yaklaşım kullanılmıştır. İncelenen topluluk tarafından önemli olduğu düşünülen nesneleri belirlemek, sosyal olguları anlamada yardımcı olmuştur. Dayanışma, çokluk kavramıyla yeniden değerlendirilen kolektif bilinç terimi üzerinden incelenmiştir, ancak toplumsal dayanışmanın niteliği, sınır vakaları olan mekanik ve organik dayanışmaların (İng. *mechanical solidarity, organic solidarity*) arasında karmaşık bir fenomen olarak açıklanmıştır. Bu yeniden

değerlendirme sonucunda, kolektif bilinçlerin hiyerarşik, katmanlı ve dağılımsal yapısı, bireylerin farklı kolektivitelere (İng. *collectivity*) ve hatta farklı toplumlara üyeliklerine atıfta bulunarak sunulmuştur. Buna ek olarak, yukarıda bahsedilen karmaşık ilişkide kolektif bilinçlerin kapsam ve derecesindeki değişimler de tanımlanmaktadır.

Yönetici otorite (İng. *governing authority*) ile kolektif bilinç arasındaki ilişki, dayanışma üretim sürecindeki güç boyutunu göstermek için kullanılmıştır. Ayrıca, Durkheim tarafından kolektif bilinçlerin sembolü olarak kabul edilen yönetici otoriteler, dış endeksler olarak dayanışmalardaki değişiklikleri incelemek için kullanılmıştır. Bir yandan, kolektif bilinçte birlik sağlamak için benzerlik talepleri ve sapmaların caydırılması tasvir edilmiştir. Öte yandan, geleneksel ve dinî inanç ve uygulamalara, ahlakî yasalara (geleneksel veya dinî) ve otoritelere meşruiyet atfetmedeki değişiklikler, kolektif bilincin dış endeksleri olarak tasvir edilmektedir.

Bu endekslerle ilgili olarak farklı kolektif bilinçler arasındaki çatışmalara atıfta bulunarak toplumsal değişim süreci, yeni kolektif bilinçlerin gelişimi ve onların mevcut kolektif bilinçler ile olan farklılıkları yoluyla izlenmiştir. Yeni kolektif bilinçlerin gelişim sürecini anlamak için, incelenen topluluğun toplumsal varoluş koşullarındaki değişiklikler, toplumsal yaşamda hızlı değişiklikleri gösteren kolektif şok terimi ile ifade edilmiştir. Kolektif şokun, sosyal etkileşim sıklığında hem artış hem de nizamsızlaşma (İng. *deregulation*) yaratarak nasıl yaratıcı bir dönemi ürettiği incelenmiştir. 'Kolektif coşkunluk' kavramı, olgu durumunu tanımlamak için kullanılmıştır, ancak bu kavram yaratıcı ve yeniden yaratıcı coşkunlukların (İng. *creative and re-creative effervescences*) bir kompleksi olarak yeniden değerlendirilmiştir. Dağılım özelliği ve bireyler üzerindeki iki yönlü etkisi, kolektif coşkunluk zamanlarında ritüellerin rolüne değinilerek gösterilmiştir.

Bu çalışmada din, kolektif inanç ve uygulamalara (İng. *collective beliefs and practices*), tek bir ahlakî topluluğa (İng. *one single moral community*) ve kutsal şeylere (İng. *sacred things*) atıfta bulunan Durkheimci bir perspektif ile kavramsallaştırılmaktadır. Bu anlayış aynı zamanda dinlerin ve farklı mezheplerin ya da yorumların bir din içerisinde sınıflandırılmasına da izin vermiştir. Kolektif bilincin ve kolektif coşkunluğun yeniden değerlendirilmesi, yeni kolektivitelerin

oluşumunun ve önceden var olanların çoğaltılmasının daha ileri analizini mümkün kılmıştır.

Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılması, Sovyet egemenliğinin çözülmesine neden olmuştur. Sonuç olarak, Sovyet otorite yapısı ve yasalarında vurgulanan modern ve yüksek raddede sekülerleşmiş Sovyet kolektif bilinci ortadan kaybolmuştur. Ekonomik zorluk, Sovyet sonrası bölgelerde çok daha şiddetli hale gelmiştir. Buna ek olarak, Kafkasya bölgesinde savaşlar ve etnik çatışmalar artmıştır. Bu gelişmelere paralel olarak, Gürcü devlet otoritesi zaafa uğramış ve özellikle sınır bölgelerinde suç yaygınlaşmıştır. Pankisi Vadisi'nin yasadışı bir ticaret yolu haline gelmesi ve vadideki militan aktiviteleri bölgede bir nizamsızlaşma yaratmıştır. Bu nizamsızlaşma durumunda, geleneksel ve dinî sosyal dayanışmaların ve bunların karşılık gelen yapıların etkinliğinde artış meydana gelmiştir. Bu süreç modernlik dışılaşma (İng. *demodernization*) olarak tanımlanmıştır. Kolektif bilinçlerin örtülü versiyonları, kolektif bilinçlerin hiyerarşik yapılanmasında ön plana çıkmıştır.

Araştırma verilerinin ortaya koyduğu gibi, Sovyet dünya görüşünün çöküşünün yarattığı ideolojik boşluk, Çeçenistan'da olduğu gibi Pankisi'de de geleneksel ve dinî ikamelerle doldurulmaya çalışılmıştır. Gürcistan'da ise etnik-dinî milliyetçilik yükselmiştir. Dinî alanda Gürcistan tarafından takip edilen yeniden kültürleşme (İng. *reculturation*), azınlık grupların devlet yapısından dışlanması ile sonuçlanmıştır. Gürcü devleti, tez boyunca yönetim otoritesinin kavramsallaştırılmasına paralel olarak Gürcü kolektif bilincinin bir sembolü olarak kabul edilmiştir. Hem Gürcü hem de Kist taraflarındaki bu modernlik dışılaşma, aynı fenomenin iki tarafı olarak birbirlerini beslemiştir.

Araştırma bulguları, nispeten izole Pankisi Vadisi'nde yaşayan Kistlerin Çeçen-Rus Savaşları'nın getirdiği sonuçlardan etkilendiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Kistlerin toplumsal varlık koşulları çok sayıda faktör tarafından yeniden şekillendirilmiştir. Bunlardan en önemlisi ise daha önce kapsayıcı Sovyet otoritesinin etkisi altında olan Gürcü devlet otoritesinin gerilemesi, Çeçenistan ile Rusya arasındaki savaşlar, vadi ve çevresindeki askerî militan hareketliliği, birçok etnik grubu da içine alan şekilde bölgede suçun artması ve Çeçen mültecilerin bölgeye kitlesel göçüdür. Bunlara ek

olarak, birçok insanî yardım kuruluşu ve dinî kuruluş bölgede faaliyet göstermeye başlamıştır.

Mültecilerin gelişinin Kist toplumu üzerinde derin bir etkisi olmuştur, çünkü Kistler sınırlı kaynaklarını evlerinde mültecileri barındırarak paylaşmışlar ve böylece hane halklarını neredeyse ikiye katlayarak önemli bir süre yaşamlarını devam ettirmişlerdir. Bu durumun sonuçları, etkileşim sıklığı ve dayanışma arasındaki ilişkinin söz konusu Durkheimci görüşe bağlı kalarak kavranabilmektedir. Bu iki Vaynah grubu arasındaki etkileşim hiç olmadığı kadar büyük hale gelmiştir. Hem yukarıda belirtilen koşullar hem de Vaynahların birbirleriyle daha fazla etkileşime geçmeleri, önce kolektif şoklara, daha sonra kolektif coşkunluk haline neden olmuştur. Bu olgu, Kist topluluğu tarafından hem kendine yabancılaşma hem de kendinin bilincine varma şeklinde deneyimlenmiştir. Bu vakada bahse konu edilen esas yapısıyla geçici bir koşul değil, yaratıcı bir dönem olan bu kolektif coşkunluk durumunda yeni toplumsal ilişkiler de kurulmuştur. Örneğin, Araplar, militanlar ve cihatçılar gibi diğer birçok grup ve aktör, Kist topluluğu üyeleriyle doğrudan veya dolaylı olarak temasa geçmiştir. Vaynah kolektif bilinci altında Çeçenler ve Kistler birbirleriyle etkileşime girmiştir. Bu etkileşim zincirlerinde, iki grubun üyeleri tarafından hem benzerlikler hem de farklılıklar belirginleşmiştir. Ortak bir dil de dahil olmak üzere ortak tarih ve kültürel özellikler hem Çeçen hem de Kist kolektif bilinçlerinin geniş Vaynah dayanışması altında yakınsamasına izin vermiştir. Bu dönemde, iki grubun üyeleri, geleneklere ve dine uyma arasındaki farklılıklarının farkına varmıştır. Sovyet yönetiminin ve onun modernleşme projesinin Çeçenistan ve Pankisi Vadisi üzerindeki etkilerinin varyasyonları da bu iki grup tarafından algılanabilir hale gelmiştir.

Önemli sayıda Çeçen mülteci, Selefi İslam anlayışının takipçileriydi. Ancak geleneksel Kist İslam anlayışı, Nakşibendi ve Kadiri tarikatları aracılığıyla tasavvufi İslam'a yönelmişti. Ayrıca geleneksel Kist İslam anlayışı, pagan ve Hristiyan unsurları da içermekteydi. Dinî inanç ve uygulamaların gözetilmesindeki farklılıklar, kolektif coşkunluğun etkisi ile birlikte ihtilaflara ve hatta çatışmalara yol açmıştır. Saha çalışmasında elde edilen verilere dayanarak ve kavramsal ilişkilerden yararlanılarak, Kist topluluğunda farklı bir kolektif bilincin meydana gelmesiyle sosyal ve politik mücadelelerin de ortaya çıktığı iddia edilebilir. Bu kolektif bilinç ilk

olarak dinî alanda gelişmiştir. Müslüman kolektif bilinçle tutarlı olarak hem Selefi mülteciler hem de Araplar Kistlerle etkileşime girmiştir. Gürcüler ve Kistler arasında bir dil engeli bulunmamasının da etkisiyle Hristiyanlığa geçen Kistlerin kendilerini Gürcü olarak tanımlamaları, Kist topluluğunun üyelerinde Gürcü toplumuna asimile olacakları korkusunu arttırmıştır.

Bu durum, nizamsızlaşma ve bir araya gelme yoluyla topluluğun kolektif bilincinde kendinden yabancılaşmaya ve kendinin bilincine varmaya yol açan kolektif coşkunluğun bir başka sonucu olmuştur. Ruslaşma korkusu Çeçenistan ile Rusya arasında devam eden savaş nedeniyle de önemli bir faktör olarak öne çıkmıştır, ancak bu korkunun toplumsal dayanışmanın etnik alanında daha etkili olduğu ifade edilebilir. Bu anlamda, benlik ve güvenlik arayışı genç Kistleri dinî alanda arayışlara yöneltmiştir. Bu eğilimin şekillenmesinde ahlaki ve ekonomik ihtiyaçların çok büyük etkileri olduğu unutulmamalıdır.

Genç Kistlerin, neden yaşlıların geleneksel İslam anlayışının yerine Selefi İslam anlayışını daha çok benimsediği sorusunun cevabı, yaşlıların toplumun mevcut yapısını doğrudan temsil eden baskın bir konumda yer almalarıdır şeklinde ifade edilebilir. Bu konum, geleneksel Kist kolektif bilincinin bir sembolü olarak hem toplumun dağılımsal özelliklerini hem de Yaşlılar Konseyi'ni ifade eder. Geleneksel Kist İslam anlayışının ritüelleri aracılığıyla ahlaki güçlendirme sağlanamamıştır, çünkü Kist İslam anlayışının kolektif bilinci bu anlamda yetersiz kalmıştır. Tasavvuf ritüelleri, yani zikirler, üretilen kolektif coşkunluk yoluyla gruba doğrudan bir bağlanma sağlayabilmesine rağmen, ritüellerdeki anlam boyutu yoğunluğu düşük olmuştur. Bu yanıtlara ulaşabilmenin tezin kavramsal çerçevesinin açıklayıcılığındaki yüksek potansiyele işaret ettiği söylenebilir. Araştırma bulguları, genç Selefiler ve Selefi imamların geleneksel Kist İslamı'nın takipçileri arasında dinî bilgi eksikliğini büyük ölçüde vurguladıklarını göstermiştir. Bu durum, kolektif bilincin gücü ile kararlılık derecesi arasındaki ilişkiyi açıkça göstermektedir. Daha az açık ahlaki ve dinî inançlar ve uygulamalar yapının daha az dile getirilmesi anlamına gelir. Bu düşük yoğunluğun; etnik, millî veya geleneksel kolektif bilinçlere oranla dinî kolektif bilince daha çok mahsus olduğu unutulmamalıdır. Ayrıca, 1990'ların sonlarında, Pankisi Vadisi'ndeki suç ortamı kolektif duygulara zarar vermiştir ve Kist toplumunun üyelerinde güvensizliğe yol açmıştır. Ayrıca, geleneksel yönetim

otoritesinin meşruiyeti bu dönemde hem ahlak hem de din açısından bozulmuştur. Bu koşullar altında Selefi anlayışın yayılımı kolay olmuştur.

Araştırma bulgularına göre, kolektif coşkunluğun topluluğun dayanışması üzerindeki etkisi iki yönlü olmuştur. Bir yandan, kolektif coşkunluğun yaratıcı yönü Çeçen mülteciler, militanlar, cihatçılar ve Araplar ile yeni kurulan sosyal ilişkiler yoluyla yeni ahlaki ve dinî anlayışların benimsenmesini mümkün kılmıştır. Öte yandan, mevcut geleneksel ve dinî inançlar ile pratikler çoğaltılmıştır. Bu iki gelişme, kolektif coşkunluk durumu altında toplumun kutsal kavramlarının tartışmaya açılmasının mümkün olması ile gerçekleşebilmiştir.

Genç Kistler arasında Selefi kolektif bilinç olarak adlandırılan yeni bir kolektif bilincin ortaya çıkması, bazı genç Kistlerin din eğitimi yoluyla mümkün olmuştur. Yurtdışına din eğitimi almak için giden genç Kistlerin ahlak anlayışlarında ve uygulamalarında bir sosyalleşme aracı olarak eğitim kritik bir rol oynamıştır. Yeni bir ahlaki ve dinî anlayışı benimseyerek, geniş Kist kolektif bilincine katkıda bulunmak için bu kolektif bilincin etkileşim ve iletim aracı haline gelmişlerdir. Yeni dinî inanç ve uygulamalara uyulması, öncelikle dinî ritüelleri yerine getirerek psikolojik refahlarına da katkıda bulunmuştur denilebilir. Selefi kolektif bilincinin yüksek derecede kararlılığı, giderek artan ahlaki güçlenme ile sağlamlaşmış ve geleneksel Kist kolektif bilincine daha fazla ve açık bir direnç yaratmıştır. Bu, toplumdaki çatışmalara ve genç Selefi Kistlerin, geleneksel Kist yaşam tarzına meydan okuyabilmeleri şeklinde olmuştur.

Başlangıçta tasavvuf ve Selefi İslam anlayışı arasındaki çelişkiler nedeniyle dinî inanç ve uygulamalara itiraz edilmiştir. Selefilik tarafından tasavvufta yer alan Allah ile içsel bağlantıyı, kişi ve nesnelere kutsallık atfını, zikirlere ek olarak dervişler ve atalar kültünün yanı sıra kutsal yerler kültünün de reddedilmesi anlaşmazlıklara yol açmıştır. Ayrıca geleneksel adet ve törenlerin birlikte icrası da zorlaşmıştır. Kist topluluğunun önemli gelenek ve göreneklerinden bazıları (yaşlılara saygı, kaçınma pratiği, dans ve müzik) çatışmaların kaynağı olmuştur.

Araştırma verilerine dayanarak, Selefi kolektif bilincinin Kistler arasında Şeriat mahkemesinin kurulması yoluyla vücut bulmasından sonra yeni sosyal ilişkilerin geliştiği iddia edilebilir. Şeriat mahkemesinin ahlaki ve dinî otorite olma iddiaları

Yaşlılar Konseyi'nin iddiasına meydan okumuştur. Bu durum kendisini ahlaki ve dini boyutta yani Şeriat yasası ile topluluğun geleneksel yasası arasındaki anlaşmazlıkta da göstermiştir. Kan davası, evlilik, velayet ve miras konularında anlaşmazlıklar gözlenmiştir. Belli bir süre boyunca, bu anlaşmazlıklar Kist toplumunda herhangi bir çözüm bulunmadan devam etmiştir.

İlk başta Selefi kolektif bilinci genel Kist kolektif bilincinden bir ayrışma halindeyken, daha sonra genç Selefi Kistlerin sayısı artmış ve Selefi kolektif bilincinin bir sembolü olarak Şeriat mahkemesinin artan otoritesi, Yaşlılar Konseyi'ni geleneksel Kist kolektif bilincini yeniden canlandırmak için harekete geçmeye itmiştir. Selefi kolektif bilincinin yoğunluğundaki artış, Şeriat mahkemesinin tüm topluluk genelinde otorite talep etmesine yol açmıştır. Selefi anlayışın talepleri, Kistlerin yaşlıları arasında Araplaşma korkusu yaratmıştır. Siyasi gelişmeler de bu kolektif bilinçler arasında önemli bir sürtüşme kaynağı olmuştur.

Selefi kolektif bilincinin kapsamı ve yoğunluğundaki artış, bazı genç Kistlerin Suriye ve Irak'ta ideal bir Müslüman toplumu aramasına neden olmuş olabilir. İlk sınır ötesi savaş dalgasında, etnik-milliyetçi duygular ve dinî duygular birbiriyle çok daha bağlıydı ya da en azından aralarında net bir sınır çizgisi yoktu denilebilir. Bunula birlikte, Suriye'deki silahlı gruplar arasındaki kırılmanın gelişimi, etnik-milliyetçi kolektif bilinç ve dinî kolektif bilinci farklı sınırlarla ayırmıştır. Saha verilerine atıfla, asimilasyon korkusunun (Gürcüleşme, Araplaşma, Ruslaşma) Kistler arasındaki toplumsal dayanışma süreçlerinin sınırlarında önemli bir rol oynadığı söylenebilir. İslam, Vaynah ve Kist kolektif bilinçlerinin tanımlanmasında çok önemli bir role sahiptir. Müslüman olmak, farklı etnik kökenlerden gelen insanların birleşmesini sağlamaktadır. Bu anlamda İslam'dan Hristiyanlığa geçen Kistler, Kist kolektif bilincinden kopmuş ve kendilerini Gürcü olarak tanımlamışlardır.

Selefi İslam anlayışında insanların inananlar ve inanmayanlar olmak üzere iki kategoriye ayrılması söz konusudur. Kolektif bilinç düzeyi, bu kategorilendirmenin tezahürünün yoğunluğunu belirlemektedir. Yukarıda zikredilen kırılmanın Kafkas halkları ve Kistler üzerinde yansıması olan dışlayıcı bir Selefi kolektif bilincin varlığından söz edilebilir. Pankisi Vadisi'nde hem geleneksel Kist İslam anlayışının hem de diğer Selefi Kistlerin takipçilerinden onların İslam dışı olduklarını

söyleyerek kendisini izole eden ve tekfirci olarak tanımlanan bir Kist grubu ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu gelişme, Selefi ve geleneksel Kist İslam kolektif bilinçlerinin etkileşimde bulunduğu ve iletişim kurduğu bir alanın varlığına işaret etmektedir. Bu ilişki, geniş Kist kolektif bilincinin katmanlı yapısını göstermektedir. Tekfirci grubun ayrılması, Durkheim'in din tanımına atıfta bulunarak geniş İslam bayrağı altında küçük bir topluluktan ziyade ayrıksı tek bir ahlaki topluluk olarak görülebilir.

Mülakat verilerine dayanarak, Yaşlılar Konseyi'nin, Kistlerin geleneksel yasası olan *Mekhk Bart* üzerinde değişiklik çağrısı yapması toplulukta devam eden çatışma ve anlaşmazlıkları çözme girişimi olduğunu söylemek mümkündür. Selefi Kistler ve geleneksel Kist İslam anlayışının takipçileri arasındaki başarılı müzakereler, Selefi imamlarına değişiklik taslakları hazırlanırken danışılması olgusunda belirgin olarak gözlemlenebilmektedir. Geleneksel Kist kolektif bilincinin bir göstergesi olan geleneksel Kist yasasını değiştirmek, geleneksel Kist dayanışmasının yeniden canlandırıldığını göstermektedir. Yüksek bir katılım oranı ile gerçekleştirilen yeniden biçimlendirme süreci meşruiyet ihtiyacına işaret etmektedir. Kist topluluğundaki anlaşmazlıkları çözme ve katkıda bulunmaları için topluluktaki insanları bir araya getirme amacı nedeniyle bu süreç, bir uzlaşma ritüeli olarak yorumlanabilir. Yaşlılar Konseyi'nin dinî ve ahlaki otoritesi toplumda zayıflamış olsa da geleneksel Kist kolektif bilincinin gücü, yapılan değişikliklere kendini yansıtmıştır.

Araştırma verileri bazı inanç ve uygulamaların değiştiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Ancak, önemli sayıda uygulama ve davranış kuralları korunmuştur. Dahası, bazı alternatifler meşru kabul edilirken, aynı zamanda geleneksel alternatifler de korunmuştur. Asıl amaç, geleneksel Kist yasasının Şeriat yasasının gereklerine uygun olmasını sağlamak olmuştur. Ayrıca her iki yasanın Gürcistan devlet yasalarına uygun olmadığı da belirtilmelidir. Kodeks değişiklikleri, geleneksel yasayı Gürcistan devlet yasalarıyla uyumlu hale getirme girişimini de göstermektedir. Geleneksel Kist yasası, Kistler arasındaki anlaşmazlıkları çözerken Kist toplumunun geleneklerini ele almaktadır ve Şeriat mahkemesini hoş karşılanmayan bir yapı olarak ilan etmektedir. Yaşlılar Konseyi, ulusal ve uluslararası gelişmelerden yararlanarak genç Selefiler ve Gürcistan devletiyle bir ittifak kurmaya çalışmıştır. Gürcü devletine göre Kist topluluğunda tek meşru idarî otoritesi olan Yaşlılar Konseyi bu ittifakın merkezinde konumlanmaktadır.

Selefi kolektif bilinç, kapsamlı Sovyet otoritesinin ve Kist topluluğunda yaşanan kolektif şokların ürettiği kolektif coşkunluğun bir sonucu olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu kolektif bilinç, geniş Kist dayanışmasından kopuşun özelliklerini, toplulukta yukarıda belirtilen çatışmaların ve anlaşmazlıkların tezahürleri aracılığıyla göstermeye başlamıştır. Ayrıca, Vaynahlar ve Kistler arasındaki geleneksel veya etnik-milliyetçi bilincin gücü, bölgesel ve küresel gelişmelerin etkisi altında Selefi dayanışmasında bir değişimin ortaya çıkmasıyla kendini yansıtmıştır. Toplulukta, Yaşlılar Konseyi, Kist adetinin yazılı bir biçimi olan *Mekhk Bart*'ı yeniden düzenleyerek hem geleneksel Kist kolektif bilincini hem de geniş Kist dayanışmasını canlandıran bir yeniden yapılandırma gerçekleştirebilmiştir. Kistler tarafından yaşanan 'kolektif şokların' etkisi Kist topluluğunun 'dayanışmasını nasıl etkiledi?' sorusu bu şekilde yanıtlanmıştır. Kolektif şoklar, geniş Kist topluluğu dayanışmasında bir kopma ya da yıkım üretmek yerine bu dayanışma biçiminin yeniden doğrulanmasına yol açmıştır. İstenmeyen duygularla kolektif coşkunluk dönemi farklı dayanışma üretimlerini beraberinde getirmiş ve başlangıçta ayrıksamaya neden olmuştur. Ancak, nihayetinde, dayanışma üretim süreçleri topluluğun yeniden örgütlenmesi yönünde gelişmiştir.

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