The Construction of Minorities in Kurdish-Ottoman Journals
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Literature on minorities in Ottoman and post-Ottoman contexts is abundant and growing. Yet, while the larger body of works on identity politics has become more nuanced and recognizes the multiple ways in which social identities are constructed and not sui generis or age-old, the literature on minorities remains problematic. In works on Ottoman history, non-Muslim and non-Turkish groups continue to be seen and written about as minorities in contexts in which the concept of “minority” was nonexistent and before it even existed.

This paper builds upon my growing interest in the construction of minorities and the process through which certain groups began to be minoritized in the late Ottoman period—a process that continued in the post-Ottoman states. While elsewhere I have focused more on the process through which Armenians became the first significant “minority” in the Ottoman Empire, the present paper addresses ways in which Kurds observed the larger minoritization process and wrote about it (often indirectly) in their journals. While I continue to research the more official ways that the concept of “minority” came into being in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and how the concept was “practiced,” the present study focuses more on the larger process of minoritization, and how Ottoman Kurds at the turn of the 20th century observed—and sometimes participated in—their own minoritization.