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Sacralization of Politics in Turkey: Kurdish Case

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‘Turkey does not let its children to be concerned with anything else other than itself’

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar

For the ones who give us hope and do not give up the hope…

---

1 Ahmed Hamdi Tanpinar (1901-1962), Turkish prominent writer. Defined himself as a socialist but has been read mostly by Muslim sections of Turkey’s society. Among his works, “A Mind at Peace” (1949) and “The Time Regulation Institute” (1962) are the most well-knowns. Through his novels, Tanpinar’s modernity approach has been discussed in relation with the ideas of Henri Bergson and Walter Benjamin.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Like others of its kind, this dissertation has also been difficult and long in the writing. 12 years have passed between the time I first got the idea for this dissertation and when I finally finished writing it; a lot has changed in the world, in our country and in our personal lives during those 12 years but the initial reasons I had for deciding on this subject, or my curiosity about the subject never changed or went away. Life made me take some breaks from writing, and there were some who found the subject “crazy”, while other thought it was “unacceptable”. All of these meant that I lost time I did not have to lose. During this process, the courage and support given to me by Ümit Cizre, who really is one of a kind as both an individual and academic, helped me to not give up much more than did my persistence that I developed as a result of my curiosity repeatedly being denied. In 2012, meeting Hamit Bozarslan, someone whose works I had already read, and whose clarity and intellectual honesty I admired; and then being accepted by Sami Zemni, whose interest in and knowledge on Turkey is inspiring, as a doctoral student made it possible for me to restart everything. I cannot thank both of them enough for the attention, support and patience they have bestowed on me during the past 5 years.

My colleagues, friends and family have also supported me in bringing this dissertation into existence, and I am very much obliged to them for everything they have done. Cantekin Elmas, Mehmet Kırılganoğlu and Yavuz Güçtürk helped me with all matters technical, which has never been my strong suit. Sarper Durmuş and Esra Ercan Bilgiç accessed the databases I could not, and helped me out with my endless demands for articles. Eleanor Johnson and İpek Kotan Yiğit reviewed the text with great patience for purposes of proofreading. My work with the Democratic Progress Institute was a point of reference in reaching out to my interviewees and being safe within the field. Kerim Yıldız, Sevtap Yokuş and Mustafa Gündoğdu personally helped me to reach a wider audience. As my work with DPI went on at full speed, Ali Bayramoğlu helped me overcome my initial writer’s block and Kezban Hatemi asked me about my dissertation every time we met, thus helping me to stay grounded and focused amid the turbulence of daily life. I am also thankful to Beril Karaoğlan who I met at the beginning of my PhD in Ghent, and who opened the doors of her home to me, and to Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya, whose writings helped me very much as I wrote my dissertation, even if we did not find the chance to have conversations at length. Three people whose readings and criticism I trust very much are Alper Görüş, Yılmaz Ensaroğlu and Bahar Şahin Fırat; their reading some sections of the dissertation and sharing their opinions with me was priceless.

My parents have always been supportive of my sense of curiosity and my endeavours, and they have been generous with their support and affection during this process. My sister Esin Elmas Büyükada was by my side through all crises. Mehmet Ferda Balancar lived through these five years and the extraordinary conditions of writing a dissertation with me. He listened to me with patience, endlessly, and most importantly, asked the right questions --- if he hadn’t, this dissertation wouldn’t have become what it is today.

This is the first academic study to concern itself with Öcalan alone; as such, I hope it will inspire other studies and research. As I have made clear above, this study was shaped through
the suggestions and help of many people, but only I am responsible with the faults and mistakes it has.

As I could not help but remark at the beginning of this study, Turkey is a country which doesn’t allow its people to concern themselves with anything other than itself. When I started writing this dissertation, there was an ongoing resolution or peace process; it had started with the momentum created by the EU harmonisation process and as part of a process of democratisation, and even though its name had changed many times and there had been hesitations, it did exist. Back then, it was possible to see how real and tangible a thing hope could be even on the faces of the people on the street. Today we are living in a time when even hope is tired, and both the country and the world is under the influence of quite different currents. Still, I believe that people like me who have suffered minimal damage from all that has happened do not have the luxury of being tired or giving up hope. Looking at everything that has happened through the filter of a long rather than short memory will pave the way for a more responsible and constructive politics.
ABSTRACT

Abdullah Öcalan has become one of the most ‘popularized’ political figures in Turkey’s political sphere over the last forty years. While he has mainly been studied as part of works which focus on the PKK, as the leader of the first massified modern Kurdish movement, Öcalan has not himself been the sole subject of an academic study. More importantly, only a handful of national and international scholarship have engaged with analysing the ways in which Öcalan is perceived, internalized and hegemonized by his followers on the basis of a field study. Despite this absence of analysis, as being acknowledged as the ‘indisputable’ leader of the current hegemonic Kurdish movement in Turkey, Öcalan possesses a central political power and represents a strong axis within the Kurdish population today, not only in Turkey but also within the Middle East. For instance, besides Iraqi Kurdistan, the ‘Rojava Revolution’ that took place in Syria represents a live example of Öcalan’s impact beyond Turkey’s borders and the dedication that exists towards him among the Kurdish community in the region. Over a forty-year period, Öcalan’s power and impact have increased from the status of ‘comrade’ to that of ‘leadership’. It is significant that hegemonic Kurdish politics and its followers hold Öcalan above criticisms; they widely indicate that, if Öcalan and the PKK had not existed, nobody would have accepted the presence of the Kurdish identity in Turkey. Eventually, Öcalan became a cult of a personality who dominated all debates surrounding the Kurdish issue in Turkey and gradually within the Middle East, and today his ideas and philosophies strongly influence Kurdish society, which is divided across Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey as well as the Kurdish diaspora members who migrated from these countries to different parts of Europe. Besides this, in today’s world, when the Kurdish issue is raised, Öcalan is the figure that spontaneously comes to mind. It is clearly understood that the Öcalan cult seems to embody diversified – sometimes conflicting - hopes and ideals of Kurds as a nation. This is despite the lack of a nation state. In the eye of outsiders, the status of Öcalan is akin to that of owner of the Kurdish issue. Despite or maybe as a result of his significant role in the reformulation and popularization of Kurdish nationalist ideas in Turkey, during the extraordinary years of armed conflict especially in the 1990s and in its highly polarized social-political context, the perception of Turkey’s Kurds has been taken for granted as largely homogeneous one, and presumes two strict categories in which Kurds are defined as either ‘for’ or ‘against’ Öcalan. This ‘public script’ does not engage with the more complex reasons and content of such support or opposition and has consequently resulted in the creation of the ‘good’ and ‘bad’, or ‘friend’ or ‘enemy’ images of the Kurd in which the ‘good Kurds’ are seen as having an innate and natural potential to turn into ‘bad Kurds’. More importantly, the voice of Kurds that is embedded in the face of Öcalan has not been the subject of a public or academic curiosity. Therefore, the aim of this study is to discuss the sacralization of politics in the case of Öcalan through the perception of Kurds. While doing so, a comparative approach is employed by means of elaborating Öcalan’s discourse via the PKK as it is one of the primary sources of the sacralization of his own politics and by focusing on the motivations, meanings, place and the functions of the sacred narrative which revolves around Öcalan in the politics and realms of Kurds. This comparative approach is required due to examining the line of interaction between Öcalan’s discourse that is presented and realized via the PKK and its reflections on and reinterpretations in the worlds of Kurds. For these reasons, situating the topic in a historical context with its socio-political components is a requirement for this study as both the PKK and Öcalan perception of Kurds are socially and politically constructed through the particular historical context of Turkey. Therefore, based on the empirical research conducted with diversified Kurds, the study
argues that the Öcalan perception of Kurds in Turkey can be read in the context of a sacralization of politics. This refers to a path in which on one hand Öcalan has changing images/faces over his forty-year evolution from ‘comrade’, to the ‘president’ and ultimately to the ‘leadership’; on the other, he has been attributed in several ways such as a ‘modern Kurdish leader’, ‘Kurdish Charisma’, ‘Authoritarian Kurdish Father’, ‘Kurdish Revolutionist’ as well as ‘project of Turkish state’, ‘the enemy of Kurds’ or the ‘killer of Kurdistan’.

**Key Words:** Sacralization of Politics, Cult of Personalities, Political Religion, Civil Religion, Kurdish Modernization
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INTRODUCTION

“You are a good girl my sister, you are a good, white\(^2\) girl. Your state is also white but it is not as good as you. Now you want to build a playground in my neighborhood, for our kids. You will build it and our kids will destroy it. Then you will say “oh, these Kurds do not appreciate goodness”. But do you know, empty bullet shells are the first dolls of our children? We don’t want your playground. We don’t want any kindness from your state after all the things it has done to us... after all the mess and moral violence that we have gone through... We are against your state... But OK, we respect your leader, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. He ultimately saved his nation, so we respect him...”

These are the words of a young Kurdish man who used to be a member of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan-PKK) and was living in Tarlabası, a Harlem-like ghetto of Istanbul at the time, which is mostly populated with Kurdish people. The words were addressed to me in 2006 while I was carrying out field work for the Community Centre project of Istanbul Bilgi University Centre for Migration Research, which aimed to develop a model of social integration and multicultural coexistence to promote participation in urban life. The Community Centre was designed especially to provide social and educational support for women, children and youngsters, who comprise the most vulnerable groups struggling with problems resulting from migration and poverty in Tarlabası. Most of the population in this

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\(^2\) The ‘White and Black Turks’ as the terms that are referring to the imaginary and divided categories of people in Turkey entered the Turkey’s lexicon in the 1990s significantly following the government of the Motherland Party under the leadership of Turgut Özal. The terms were firstly used by the journalist Ufuk Gültemir and subsequently taken up by the sociologist Nilüfer Göle, popularized by Turkish columnists, journalists and political scientists by using it to refer to various social groups in Turkey. As being an analogous to the American White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, the term ‘White Turks’ was used to define the urban Republican elite who opposed the then-Prime Minister Turgut Özal because of his Kurdish origin, religiousness and lack of military service. So the term politically refers to the laic, urban upper class people who are often associated with state bureaucracy and the military. Therefore, ‘White Turks’ widely refers to ‘the ones who held the political power and also the power to determine what was to be considered culture. They see their political mission as to ‘modernize’ and ‘enlightened’ the rest of the society from the top. In cultural terms, the term ‘White Turks’ refers to the Turks who are believed to have a ‘Western’ outlook and ‘civilized’ manner. According to this, the so-called imaginary term ‘Black Turks’ emerged as the category which is positioned in contrast with and as the ‘other’ of the ‘White Turks’. In this regard, ‘Black Turks’ are all ‘those who the White Turks see as low-educated, lower-class and either still peasants or unable to have shaken off their peasant heritage’. See: Daron Acemoğlu& James Robinson, “Black Turks, White Turks”, 2013, available at: [http://whynationsfail.com/blog/2013/2/20/black-turks-white-turks.html](http://whynationsfail.com/blog/2013/2/20/black-turks-white-turks.html). Over time and according to the changing political climate, the term ‘Black Turks’ is used interchangeably to call Muslim and Kurdish sections of Turkey’s society; who are positioned as the ‘backward’ and ‘reactionary’ by the dominant official lexicon. On the other hand, the terms are widely acknowledged by the groups who have been discriminated and repressed due to being positioned as the ‘Black Turks’. For instance, ‘In this country there is a segregation of Black Turks and White Turks. Your brother Tayyip belongs to the Black Turks’ are the words of Erdoğan that he stated in 1998 just before he started his prison sentence. And as it appears in the quote above, the term ‘White Turk’ is also used by the Kurds in its pejorative meaning essentially as a way to criticize the Turkish state and its official ideology regardless of my particular case.
neighbourhood consists of Kurdish people who were forcibly migrate from their homelands during the armed conflict which took place in the Eastern part of the country from 1984 to 1999. It was during my conversation with a Kurdish woman in which I was telling her about the opportunities that would be provided by the Community Centre’s playground that the young Kurdish man joined our dialogue as quoted above.

This exchange took place at the time I was writing my master’s thesis on primary school children’s perception of the myth of Atatürk. The young Kurdish man pointed to the “embedded presence” of Abdullah Öcalan - the founding leader of the PKK, which defines itself as a movement to provide independence for the Kurds - in the depths of his imagination's concept of Ataturk. His revelation made me think for the first time about the remarkable parallels that exist between the perception of Abdullah Öcalan (the affectionate nickname used by his followers is "Apo" which is the shortened form of the name Abdullah Öcalan) by Kurds, and the Turks’ perception of Ataturk, and motivated me to focus on the Öcalan figure as the subject of this study.

A. The Relevance and the Aim of the Study
Abdullah Öcalan has become one of the most ‘popularized’ political figures in Turkey’s political sphere over the last forty years. While he has mainly been studied as part of works which focus on the PKK, as the leader of the first massified modern Kurdish movement, Öcalan has not himself been the sole subject of an academic study. More importantly, only a handful of national and international scholarship have engaged with analysing the ways in which Öcalan is perceived, internalized and hegemonized by his followers on the basis of a field study (White (2000), Bruinessen (2000), Bozarslan (2002), Özcan (2006), Çağlayan (2007), Marcus (2007), Westrhein (2008), Taşdemir (2013), Aydinoglu (2013), Ramazan Aras (2015), Mehmet Orhan (2017).

3 Tarlabası can be defined as a place which has been a home for the subaltern groups in Turkey. It used to be a neighbourhood populated by Greeks, Armenians and Jews in the Ottoman and early Republican era. After the dramatic demographic changes took place in the country, for a long time Tarlabası stayed as a dead centre of the city which many people refused to go. This is the reason that it has become a home to dissidents such as internally displaced Kurds, Alevi, Roma and migrants from African countries as well as LGBT people. So basically to all those who seek to evade the panoptical surveillance of the state and the discrimination of the mainstream society. Beginning from 1990s however, the Kurdish population in the neighbourhood significantly increased due to the forced migrations. One of the most striking consequence of this, is the African migrants who live in Tarlabası have widely learned to speak Kurdish before Turkish.

4 In the existing literature on Kurdish studies, “Apo” is taken in its literally meaning which is uncle in Kurdish.
Despite this absence of analysis, as being acknowledged as the ‘indisputable’ leader of the current hegemonic Kurdish movement in Turkey, Öcalan possesses a central political power and represents a strong axis within the Kurdish population today, not only in Turkey but also within the Middle East. For instance, besides Iraqi Kurdistan, the ‘Rojava Revolution’ that took place in Syria represents a live example of Öcalan’s impact beyond Turkey’s borders and the dedication that exists towards him among the Kurdish community in the region.

Over a forty-year period, Öcalan's power and impact have increased from the status of ‘comrade’ to that of ‘leadership’. It is significant that hegemonic Kurdish politics and its followers hold Öcalan above criticisms; they widely indicate that, if Öcalan and the PKK had not existed, nobody would have accepted the presence of the Kurdish identity in Turkey. Eventually, Öcalan became a cult of a personality who dominated all debates surrounding the Kurdish issue in Turkey and gradually within the Middle East, and today his ideas and philosophies strongly influence Kurdish society, which is divided across Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey as well as the Kurdish diaspora members who migrated from these countries to different parts of Europe. Besides this, in today’s world, when the Kurdish issue is raised, Öcalan is the figure that spontaneously comes to mind. It is clearly understood that the Öcalan cult seems to embody diversified – sometimes conflicting- hopes and ideals of Kurds as a nation. This is despite the lack of a nation state. In the eye of outsiders, the status of Öcalan is akin to that of owner of the Kurdish issue.

Despite or maybe as a result of his significant role in the reformulation and popularization of Kurdish nationalist ideas in Turkey, during the extraordinary years of armed conflict especially in the 1990s and in its highly polarized social-political context, the perception of Turkey’s Kurds has been taken for granted as largely homogeneous one, and presumes two strict categories in which Kurds are defined as either ‘for’ or ‘against’ Öcalan. This ‘public script’ does not engage with the more complex reasons and content of such support or opposition and has consequently resulted in the creation of the ‘good’ and ‘bad’, or ‘friend’ or ‘enemy’ images of the Kurd in which the ‘good Kurds’ are seen as having an innate and natural potential to turn into ‘bad Kurds’. More importantly, the voice of Kurds that is embedded in the face of Öcalan has not been the subject of a public or academic curiosity.

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5 It is also known that today Öcalan’s ideas are being followed among some international new left and anarchist groups.
In this study, after deciding to focus on the figure of Öcalan, carrying out a literature review and most importantly having several informal conversations with the Kurds in my social and professional environment who have diversified backgrounds, it was not hard to understand that contrary to the mainstream presumption of the ‘public script’ dominantly valid in Turkey, that is based on binary oppositions and totalizing narratives, the ‘Öcalan perception’ of the Kurds in Turkey is not homogeneous or monolithic. Additionally, beginning from 2013, the pre-field work period allowed me to gather views on Öcalan and to collected life stories by means of informal and unstructured conversations with approximately 60 Kurds from civil society, politics, media and academic backgrounds during my professional work in the field of conflict resolution at the Democratic Progress Institute (DPI). During this time, it became clear that there is a plural and conflicting repertoire and frames on Öcalan among Kurds which refers to the diversified meanings on Öcalan in the realm of Turkey’s Kurds and that is stemming from their subjective and collective experiences, in the particular socio-political and historical context of Turkey. However, the acceptance of Öcalan as a modern leader and the sacred tone that emerges with any talk of Öcalan - regardless of approving of disapproving him - was significant after the first set of feedbacks received. This was therefore how I approached the field work with the idea of discussing my subject in the context of the sacralisation of politics in 2013.

Consequently, the aim of this study is to discuss the sacralization of politics in the case of Öcalan through the perception of Kurds. While doing so, a comparative approach will be employed by means of elaborating Öcalan’s discourse via the PKK as it is one of the primary sources of the sacralization of his own politics and by focusing on the motivations, meanings, place and the functions of the sacred narrative which revolves around Öcalan in the politics and realms of Kurds. This comparative approach is required due to examining the line of interaction between Öcalan’s discourse that is presented and realized via the PKK and its reflections on and reinterpretations in the worlds of Kurds. For these reasons, situating the topic in a historical context with its socio-political components was a requirement for this study as both the PKK and Öcalan perception of Kurds are socially and politically constructed through the particular historical context of Turkey.
B. Methodology and Research Questions

This thesis overwhelmingly relies upon primary data that has been collected through field research. Since it focuses on the sacralization of politics through the perception of Kurds in the context of Öcalan, it was essential to have the first-hand reflections of Kurds on Öcalan by means of using the methods of basic qualitative research that are the participant observation and the in-depth interview.

Participant observation is a method that allows the researcher to take a close look at the lives of those being studied in their natural settings and to gain familiarity with their ‘worlds of meaning’. It is a way to increase the validity of the study too, as observations helps the researcher to gain a better understanding of the context and phenomenon under her study. However, it has a significant importance due to the controversial characteristics of the study topic. Although Öcalan is one of most debated figures even in the everyday life conversations of the Kurds, he is still a figure that can be easily recalled as a ‘Turkish’ and ‘Kurdish’ taboo. To put it differently, for the Kurds, defining Öcalan without considering ‘Turkish sensitivities’ is hard and the existing legal system is open to consider any neutral analysis as an appreciation of him which could easily be criminalized. Equally, on the PKK side of the coin, to dare to raise any criticisms of him could easily lead to accusations of being a ‘traitor’, a ‘spy’, or a ‘collaborator’ with the ‘enemy’. Therefore, having a real talk on Öcalan took building a trust - as much as possible - with the Kurds and the way to do it was using the participant observation method that allows the researcher to become a familiar figure in the eyes of potential interviewees instead of being perceived as an outsider threatening the community. Needless to say, most of my interviewees were connected via our shared connected Kurdish contacts.

However, the moderate type of participant observation was intentionally chosen to avoid the researcher associating herself with the real actors, replacing her interpretations with the ‘realities’ of people and to prevent her from losing a sense of objectivity which requires a degree of distance from the field and the actors. This stance was also a supported by the fact of being ‘a non-Kurdish researcher’ in the field. Therefore, during the study, I used the method of participant observation by means of participating in demonstrations, celebrations, conferences and gatherings in which it was possible to reach Kurdish figures with diversified social, economic, political and professional backgrounds.
The second method of the study is in-depth interviews through which I aim to have an in-depth understanding on the subjective and collective experiences of Kurds and the interaction between these experiences in relation with their impact on shaping the perception of Kurds with regards to Öcalan. In accordance with these principles, mainly from 2013 to 2016 and also during 2017, I conducted 28 semi-structured and open-ended in-depth interviews. The interviewees were diversified in terms of their political positions, age and gender. Therefore, these interviews constitute the main foundation for this study. Apart from the interviews that were conducted in the field, Müslim Yücel’s book which focuses on Öcalan’s biography with the title of ‘Abdullah Öcalan: From Amara to Imralı’ is acknowledged and used in this study as the 29th individual interpretation that was made on Öcalan. However, in accordance with the aim of having a deep understanding of the Öcalan perception among Kurds in Turkey, secondary sources of the study consist of Öcalan’s personal writings, PKK publications, testimonies, and letters written to Öcalan, in particular those written after his arrest. Additionally, as stated above, the views on Öcalan and the life stories that I collected during the pre-field work period, constitutes an important part of the secondary sources as well.

On the basis of first sets of feedback, the political position of the interviewees was prioritized during the design of the questionnaires used, as it constitutes the most significant reference to the fragmentation among Kurds in terms of their position regarding Öcalan and was a means of ‘testing the water’ in the field. The class divisions among Kurds were also considered but not taken as a prior criteria of group categorization, as when it comes to Öcalan and the PKK, the fragmentations are seen to originate from political positions, age and gender differences which appear as the stronger indicators than class divisions among Kurds. Therefore, since having an integrated idea on Öcalan requires reflections in the illegal and legal areas of Kurdish political sphere, while taking into consideration the differences stemming from age and gender differences, the field work was conducted with interviewees who were divided into the following four categories: illegal field actors (guerrillas, former/current PKK members), legal field actors (figures in Kurdish media, civil society and political parties), sympathizers (no party membership, vote for the mainstream Kurdish Party) and opposing actors (mainly religious Kurds and a small group of the Kurdish left).

The interviews were conducted in Istanbul, Ankara, Diyarbakır, Van, Yüksekova, London and Brussels. Among 28 interviews, 4 of them were with illegal field actors, 4 with legal field actors, 10 with sympathizers and 10 with opposing actors. Among these, 8 of the interviewees were
women and 4 were members of the Kurdish diaspora. The age of the interviewees ranged from 15 to 74. The minimum duration of a single interview was 1 hours 17 minutes and the maximum duration was 3 hours 27 minutes. Before the interviews, interviewees were asked which was their preferred language through which to conduct the interview. They all chose to give the interview in Turkish. The first reason for this was my ‘Turkishness’, as a non-Kurdish researcher who speaks very little Kurdish, although the interviewees were aware that interpretation would be provided if they chose to speak in Kurdish. Secondly, most of my interviewees were more confident and fluent in Turkish while talking about politics, since the ‘political literature’ for the majority of Kurds has been constructed in the Turkish language, and Turkish is even the official language used in guerrilla camps. Half of the interviewees speak Turkish in their daily lives, and some of them stated that they wanted to ‘contribute to an objective Turkish study on Öcalan’ - they wanted me to understand them as ‘clearly’ as possible through communicating in Turkish.

Bearing in mind the importance of the subjectivities that were received during the pre-field work period of the study, the first part of the four different questionnaires given to these four different groups, is based on the ‘subjectivities and life stories’ of the interviewees, and covers their family lives, childhood memories and everyday life practices from the past. Indeed, as Bozarslan defines it, ‘subjectivity regimes’ which refers to the micro histories and memories of the Kurds on the basis of ‘an experience of representations and sensations, as well as pain as a kind of social relationship’ was crucial for a study of this kind, in terms of examining the line of interaction between the subjective and collective experiences of Kurds as the constitutive component of their Öcalan perception. Therefore, the second part of the questionnaires was designed with the aim of having a deeper understanding the conjunction of the ‘personal histories’ of the interviewees with the recent history of the country, in order to look for any political, sociological, personal, regional or national events, days, figures or moments that bear relevance to the subject of the study. The third part however is directly based on ‘Kurdishness or Kurdish identity’ and the fourth specifically addresses questions concerning Öcalan, and which allows for his political presence to also be elaborated from a comparative perspective.

However, the use of an interdisciplinary method of analysis is inevitable for a study of this kind. In this study, ‘the political’ is understood not as a distinct domain or one which only appears in

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6 Hamit Bozarslan, Ortadoğu: Bir Şiddet Tarihi [Middle East: A History of Violence], İletişim Yayınları, 2010
7 Questionnaires are attached in the appendix.
the garb of institutions or their discourses, but instead as a phenomenon that exists in each and every domain as Foucault suggested. This means that it is produced, reproduced and transformed by every individual on subjective and collective levels. This approach is at the core of this study. Öcalan as a political figure, and his political discourse via the PKK - which has been shaped under the particular historical and socio-political context of Turkey - is on one hand and Kurds’ perception/understanding of Öcalan and his discourse - based on the narratives through the conducted field work - while on the other, makes it compulsory for this study to appeal more than one single approach while dealing with the topic. Therefore, the conceptual vocabulary and understandings of political anthropology and political sociology are frequently used in this study as methods of analysing.

‘Life and history have a meaning, as letters have in a word’ said Dilthey and Paul Ricoeur acknowledges human action by itself as a text. From this point of view and as it gives the opportunity to understand the ‘worlds/web of meaning(s)’ of a discourse or its interpretation in the realms of people, next to or beyond the ‘facts’; as it opens a path towards the multifaceted realm of the political and human being, a hermeneutic approach – politically sensitive hermeneutic approach- is significantly applied throughout the thesis. After all, political relations are discursive and in the Foucaultian sense “facts are inventions through the discursive practices”. In this regard, the political has to be understood and described in hermeneutical terms. Overall this study proposes to focus on its subject through the lenses of an interpretive political science following the plea of Charles Taylor:

‘... Categorical restrictions of mainstream science are a severe handicap and prevent us from coming to grips with important problems of our day which should be the object of political science. We need to go beyond the bounds of a science based on verification and prediction to one which would study the intersubjective and common meanings embedded in social reality.”

Consequently, despite its interdisciplinary character, this study primarily deals with ‘the political’ by means of placing Öcalan, as a modern sacred and political figure, in its central

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9 Quoted in Paul Rabinow, William M. Sullivan, *Interpretive Social Science: A Reader*, Univ of California Pr, June 1979, p. 128  
focus and through the conceptualization of the sacralization of politics. The politically hermeneutic approach however is supported with a detailed historical context with socio-political components. While doing so, defining itself as an attempt to ‘understand’ rather than to ‘know’ its subject, this study does not claim to speak of ‘absolute truths’ that are valid among all Kurds in Turkey but it tries to give a meaningful picture of the existing phenomena among the chosen diversified Kurdish group. Eventually, as Weber points out that human action is understandable but cannot be known\(^\text{13}\) or in other words society is not a knowable object, but it is only an understandable subject.

C. Arguments

The field work outcomes did not take me to an opposite or contradicting direction from the idea of discussing my subject in the context of the sacralisation of politics. There has been a triple validation in the understanding of the claim made in my hypothesis via three different readings of Öcalan regardless of age, gender and political differences among the interviewees: First, the corroboratory reading of Öcalan, second the reflexive/distant reading of Öcalan and third the critical reading of Öcalan. All of the three readings, are given by members of legal, illegal, sympathizer and oppositional groups.

Despite their heterogeneity however, interviewees agree first on the definition of Öcalan as a modern leader whose Kurdishness is of key priority. So his ‘modern Kurdishness’ constitutes the base for every attribution to him whether positive or negative. Secondly, all three readings, more or less refer to the phenomena of the sanctity/sacralization of Öcalan which revolves around a sacred political narrative in which he appears as a modern sacred figure who is interchangeably defined as a ‘charismatic leader’, ‘authoritarian figure’, ‘revolutionist’ or a ‘cult personality’, as a ‘father of the Kurds’ or conversely as their ‘enemy’. The imprisonment of Öcalan in 1999 however, is given by all interviewees as the landmark until which Öcalan has become a holy figure and turned into a cult of personality.

Among diversified readings of Öcalan however, not as an absolute factor determining the perceptions but as a noticeable trend among the interviewees, women and youth tended to perceive Öcalan’s sanctity more positively while the member of older generations were generally more critical of it. More importantly, the subjective and collective regimes that

resulted in such attributions, have significantly diversified sources of sacralization in which Öcalan appears as the ‘object/subject of the sacred’ because of different meanings, places and functions. That is to say, the field approved my hypothesis for every group, but the affirmation regimes of the interviewees are different, namely, the participatory affirmation, reflexive/distant affirmation and critical. Therefore, the field work outcomes provide a diversified perceptual story and repertoire on Öcalan among the Kurds with a wide variety of meanings and layers rather than two basic perceptions based on binary oppositions. This is where the interaction between the subjective and collective experiences of Kurds are clarified with regards to the meaning, place, function and relevance of Öcalan figure in their political and social realms.

Therefore, based on my empirical research conducted with diversified Kurds I argue that the Öcalan perception of Kurds in Turkey can be read in the context of a sacralization of politics. This refers to a path in which on one hand Öcalan has changing images/faces over his forty-year evolution from ‘comrade’, to the ‘president’ and ultimately to the ‘leadership’; on the other, he has been attributed in several ways such as a ‘modern Kurdish leader’, ‘Kurdish Charisma’, ‘Authoritarian Kurdish Father’, ‘Kurdish Revolutionist’ as well as ‘project of Turkish state’, ‘the enemy of Kurds’ or the ‘killer of Kurdistan’.

D. Theoretical Framework

In order to examine the argument that the Öcalan perception gradually revolves around a sacralised narrative in which he has changing faces and since this study's main premise is to focus on Öcalan as a modern sacred figure in the context of the sacralisation of politics, a number of theoretical notions are employed. In this regard, Emilio Gentile’s conceptualization of the sacralisation of politics primarily contributes to determine the theoretical approach of this study as seen below. With regards to the sacralization of politics, in this part, I will not follow a straightforward chronological path of political development history, but rather will focus on the historical experience of the ‘sacred’ from ‘divine’ to the ‘profane’ within the process of Western modernity and its manifestations in Turkey on the basis of the acknowledgement that modernity has already become a hegemonic paradigm that universally continue to shape the framework of ‘the political’ in non-Western societies too.
Turkey, in which ‘modernity has its own life and meaning’, is one of the significant countries of which, modernity ‘as a construct’ ‘is an intrinsic part of’ its political experience. Besides, the ‘Kurdish issue’ in Turkey, which is widely named as a ‘problem’, has emerged and gained its current content and components very much through the modernization history and experience of the country and the ‘syntax’ of the power that has been constructed in/through it. So the experience of sacred in Western context has its own manifestations and forms in Turkey’s case and Öcalan as a modern Kurdish figure is among the contemporary manifestations of the sacred in today’s Turkey.

E. Sacralization of Politics

The sacred in Western languages originates from the word sacer in Latin, which means anything that belongs to the world of Gods and is untouchable or taboo. It refers to anything which is ‘set apart’ from common society so directly refers to the distinction between the world of God and the world of man. However, sacer has the double meaning of both ‘hallowed/holy/pure’ and that which is ‘cursed/damned/impure’. ‘As a positive power it provides the possibility of transcendence and of transformation, whereas as a negative power it implies prohibitions and violations’15. The word ‘sacrifice’ however, is a derivation of sacer and means ‘to make sacred’. The sacred and the sacrifice are united phenomena because of both referring to the act of propitiation or worship, in other words ‘the act of killing’ as a ‘founding violence’, in particular within a religious, cultic context. ‘In its essential meaning, sacrifice is an act – of killing - which is dedicated to the divine world. For this reason, as a phenomenon, it belongs to and has a functionality in the space of Gods and religiosity’.16

However, sacrifice as referring to the sacred act, on one side underlines the distinction between the worlds of God and the man; and on the other, links these separate worlds with each other. The sacredness act itself is in the ‘interface area’. According to Agamben, being sacrificed for the sacred God under divine law, is based on the idea of ‘exception’ (may be killed but not sacrificed) and ‘exclusion’ (both from the profane and from the divine) so that it is an ‘act’ that implicates the ‘separation’ between the divine and the profane as well as the ‘sovereign’ of the

divine over profane. In this separation between the divine and profane, the mechanism of
sacrifice by itself, is the act that both produces the notion of sacredness and also establishes a
link between these two spheres in which the sovereign of the divine over the profane is
manifested through the act of sacrifice; which is of course the outcome of the decision of the
sovereign. However, the act of sacrifice, namely a transition from the profane to the divine
world by the decision of the sovereign, is employed according to definite rules, methods and
rituals. Rituals are therefore an act of sacrifice - sacrificial killing - referring to the symbolic
manifestation of sovereign power which is crucial in this relationship between the sacred and
the sacrifice. In this set up the sacred, so that the sovereign is the God and sacrificing the life
of man (or animal) is a sign of both divine’s sacredness and sovereign power. Therefore, this is
the point at which sacredness emerges in the sphere of the political since the processes of
sacredness and sovereignty are interrelated with each other and go hand in hand.

As times when primitive or religious societies and their hegemonic sovereigns claimed to be
exceeded, the 19th and the 20th century offer significant examples of modern sacreds which were
also destructive. In the secular world of the 21st century that was expected to be freed from
being suffused with the sacred however, the presence and manifestations of the sacred is solid,
thus is still alive and commonplace. Alongside the religious manifestations of the sacred, today
the secular manifestations of the sacred significantly emerges though diversified modern forms;
such as objects, concepts, ideals, institutions or political leaders. In other words, the sacred
forms - whether in ‘religious’ or ‘secular’ guises - continue to shape social life in the modern
world, giving rise to powerful emotions, polarized group identities; unifying them around the
claim of common goods, offering them new political and moral future ideals, and even the very
concept of moral society. Therefore, analyzing contemporary sacred forms and powers is an
essential part of Gentile’s concept of the sacralisation of politics and he acknowledges the
sacralisation of politics “as a modern manifestation of the sacred”:

‘... The experience of the sacred, in other words, has not been exhausted by
traditional religions, but has found its expression in the sacralisation of the human
through history, philosophy, art, and, not least, through politics. From this point of
view, the sacralisation of politics can be interpreted as a modern manifestation of
the sacred.’

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18 Emilio Gentile & Robert Mallet, “The Sacralization of Politics: Definitions, Interpretations and Reflections on
the Question of Secular Religion and Totalitarianism”, Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions, 1:1, 2000,
p. 32
In this regard, contrary to what might be thought, the sacralisation of politics cannot be understood as “theocracy or regimes governed by traditional religions” but is a ‘modern’ phenomenon which “is distinct from the politicization of traditional religions”. Although it has relation to the traditional religions, “it takes place when politics, after having secured its autonomy from traditional religion, by secularizing both culture and the state, acquires a truly religious dimension”. As it is understood in his emphasis on the ‘modern’ and the ‘secular’ features of the concept, in the way Gentile defines it, “sacralisation of politics refers to a post-Enlightenment dimension of the relationship between religion and politics” and its roots “to be found in the culture of the Enlightenment”.

F. Sacred(s) of Enlightenment

Although there is no agreement in the literature neither on the beginning nor the end of the Enlightenment, since it is a dialectical and heterogeneous movement, it is largely acknowledged as a process which dominated the world of ideas in Europe in the 18th century. Although there is no clearly shared definition of enlightenment either, due its diversified experiences in different parts of Europe, the ‘critical mind’ and significant change regarding the religious consciousness are acknowledged as the common characteristics of the diversified enlightenments. Therefore, the ‘process’ and the ‘idea’ of enlightenment are essential to understanding the ‘survival’ of ‘the sacred’ in modern societies.

19 Ibid.
20 Ibid, p.22
21 Ibid, p.34
22 The most frequently cited start point is 1688, the year of the ‘Glorious’ Revolution in England and a year after Isaac Newton published his scientific masterwork the Principia. While this may be convenient from an English point of view, it is not satisfactory from a European perspective, especially as the Scientific Revolution of the 17th century (although even this term is a source of scholarly dispute) had laid the foundations for Newton in England and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz in Germany to construct their natural philosophies’. See: Ralph McLean, The Enlightenment, History at the Higher Education Academy University of Warwick, 2010, p. 4
23 According to Gillespie ‘while the concept of the Enlightenment as a historical period only arose in the nineteenth century, the idea that reason could enlighten humanity had certainly been present in modern thought since at least the mid-seventeenth century’. Michael Allen Gillespie, The Theological Origins of Modernity, The University of Chicago Press, 2008, p.444
24 As it became the motto of the enlightenment, Immanuel Kant, in 1784, defined the phenomenon as follows: “Enlightenment is man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man’s inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is this tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. Sapere aude! [Dare to know!] “Have courage to use your own reason!” - that is the motto of enlightenment.” Immanuel Kant, ‘What is Enlightenment?’, Published in Berlinische Monatschrift, November 1784. In his seven page “declaration of independence” for the open mind–opens with the rallying cry for critical thinking’, enlightenment emerges as ‘an age of self-consciousness’ for Kant and for him, it was not “what the present had accomplished” but rather “what the future promised”. Immanuel Kant, having posed the question of whether his was an enlightened age, went on to give the prudent answer. “No, but we do live in an age of enlightenment.” Kant could maintain his faith in enlightenment
Once started as "the hope in man’s self-consciousness", over time, the enlightenment turned into a “faith in man’s reason” from where the enlightenment began to be called the “Age of reason”. When the trust in empirical testing - as a way to validate reason and discover the truth- and faith in reason as a driving force in the history towards progress and improvement became central to Enlightenment, the accepted codes of society dramatically changed. This refers to an epistemological/significant change in human history in which nature, scope and sources of knowledge shifted from the ‘world of Gods’ to the ‘world of humans’. Accordingly, “truth about the world was, no more, found in the Bible but via investigation of phenomena in the world with experiment and observation”, namely through modern science. This is also a change in which reason became the primary source of authority and legitimacy and was grounded in the capabilities of the human. ‘Indeed, Enlightenment thinkers repeatedly “discovered” powers and capacities in man and nature that had previously been ascribed to God’. “The idea of remaking people sprang directly from the Enlightenment. The main emphasis of the Enlightenment was the science of man – that is, finding what human nature is, how it is formed and the mutual influences between it and society”. The dominant idea among Enlightenment intellectuals was the “human mind as a mechanism determined by and responding to the environment”. According to this, “people could be refashioned and reformed through appropriate manipulation of circumstance” and the essential apparatus that would achieve this reformation was education. “The relationship between education, environment and human development were very influential in Europe at the time” and education became means of political socialization.

This was a path on which man was invented as (a form of) historical agency, namely ‘human’, through his reason, and he was imagined as the one who no longer needs to believe in spirits, by turning his gaze from what the present had accomplished to what the future promised”. James Schmidt, ‘Jürgen Habermas and the Difficulties of Enlightenment’, Social Research 49(1):181-208, 1982, p. 181

25 Figures such as John Locke, David Hume, Thomas Reid, Jean Jacques Rousseau and notably Kant, in his Critique of Pure Reason, consistently tested its boundaries. Nonetheless, reason remained a potent tool in the pursuit of knowledge and provided a basis for beginning to understand the underlying order of the universe. See: Ralph McLean, The Enlightenment, History at the Higher Education Academy University of Warwick, 2010, p.4


28 Yinghong Cheng, Creating the "New Man": From Enlightenment Ideals to Socialist Realities, University of Hawai’i Press, 2009, p. 8

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Foucault says "As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end.", Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences, Routledge Classics, 2012, p.422
myths, or magic, namely ‘ambiguous divinities’. Indeed, it was “the same critical inquiry and recourse to reason (that) was utilised in order to investigate religious doctrine and theological considerations”\textsuperscript{33} at the end of which the holy book began to be perceived as an historical source. “Mystery, in particular the mysteries of religion and folk magic, became unfashionable”.\textsuperscript{34} “In the Enlightenment, there was a broad and general shift in the accepted justifications of belief away from authorities and toward the individual, who was expected to take more responsibility for the beliefs he held”.\textsuperscript{35} That is how traditional sources of authorities such as God, the Bible and the King and their legacy was markedly reduced. To put it differently, enlightenment triggered a process in which a shift from the world of the divine to the world of profane took place.

This was the process which Weber called “disenchantment (\textit{entzauberung}) of the world”, thus referring to the process of secularisation. The disenchantment of the world refers to the consequences of the enlightenment in which the problem of “the ontological differences between an infinite (and radically omnipotent) God and his finite creation (including both man and nature)”\textsuperscript{36} was solved “by means of excluding the (God) divine from the equation”.\textsuperscript{37} In this new set up, all could and must be submitted in the court of reason, all could and must be arranged according to reason so that the social realm with its ethic, aesthetic and political components began to depart from the ‘fashion of divine’, that is, became secularized. At the political level, “historian Peter Gay asserts the Enlightenment broke through ‘the sacred circle’ which is a term he uses to describe the interdependent relationship between the hereditary aristocracy, the leaders of the church and the text of the Bible”.\textsuperscript{38} The broken “sacred circle” refers to the process in which “divine right of King to rule” began to be questioned and shattered\textsuperscript{39} in Europe. However, while the Enlightenment was providing the basis on which to break traditional sacred circles; reason, science, progress, nature and man began to be invented as the new sacred(s) of forthcoming centuries.

\textsuperscript{33} Ralph McLean, \textit{The Enlightenment}, History at the Higher Education Academy University of Warwick, 2010, p.7
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid, p.3
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., p. 476
\textsuperscript{38} This interrelationship manifests itself as kings invoking the doctrine "Divine Right of Kings" to rule. Thus church sanctioned the rule of the king and the king defended the church in return. See: Peter Gay, \textit{The Enlightenment: An Interpretation}, W. W. Norton & Company, 1996
\textsuperscript{39} In fact, the process was not objected to the religion and the positive function of religion was widely acknowledged as in the case of Voltaire. However, the critical mind that raised against the authorities/sovereigns which established themselves on the divine absolute evolved in the decline of religion.
According to Adorno and Horkheimer “enlightenment is the secularized form of monotheism” and the late 18th century – as the one in which disbelief became a dominant cultural voice- was the period of emergence of secular religions especially in the case of France, which became clear through the movement against religion and the clergy, and which formed its own saints, rituals and eschatology.

G. An “Enlightened” Modern Age and the Manifestations of the Sacred

“This period in western history is known as the Enlightenment and it has come to be identified as the epoch in which the foundations of modernity were established”. Modernity is identified as the belief in progress and the ideals of the Enlightenment and modern society refers to a post-traditional and post-medieval historical period in which the authority of religion over the political and social was declined. The most significant impact of the enlightenment however is the secularization of politics and the law which is acknowledged as distinguishing modern society from a traditional one.

The idea of social contract had a central place in this new and modern conception of society and the state. Accordingly, the historical and moral origins of sovereign power were no more the divine but ‘the will of people’ or the ‘general will’. Rousseau, in the Social Contract, writes:

’So long as several men united consider themselves a single body, they have but a single will, which is concerned with their common preservation, and the general welfare. ’

According to him, the authority lay in the will of the people, and not on the will of a king or a despot. That is to say, the ‘general will’ is the self-rule of the people and the state is an abstract entity or legal personality that reflects the will of the people. For Rousseau, however, the

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41 As Gillespie explains, “although modernity is broader, deeper, and older than the Enlightenment, for many today’s the Enlightenment is modernity, and modernity is or at least begins with the Enlightenment.” See: Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, University of Chicago Press, 2010, p.443. That said, ‘at the core of the project initiated by Descartes and Hobbes is a faith or self-confidence that an enlightened humanity can discover a ground for an apodictic or at least an effectual truth, and that this truth will provide the foundation for an unprecedented human flourishing. It was the recognition of this widespread and deeply held belief in the enlightening force of reason that led nineteenth-century scholars to characterize this earlier period as the age of Enlightenment’. Gillespie, p.257.

general will is not an abstract ideal. It is instead the will actually held by the people in their quality as citizens”. So that ‘making citizen’ was a crucial process in which individuals would be transformed into citizens according to the ‘collectives and responsibilities of the enlightenment’. Therefore, although ‘Man is born free’ the more important thing to Rousseau is that “he will be forced to be free” and education was the main tool by which to do so. The concept of the general will has had a deep and lasting influence on modern republican thought, particularly in the French tradition. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789 (article 6), a founding document of the current French Constitution, defined law as the expression of the general will.

As general will became the legitimate ground for any authority to have the right to rule, the source of power; the face of the sovereign therefore, shifted from God to the man. According to this, man is no more an object whose life can be sacrificed for a God – who is an outsider- but he is a subject whose life is sacred by itself. The sacred came back to the earth. In other words, the main theme in modern and modernising societies, was the detachment of the sacred from the divine, thus from organized religion. Therefore in modern society man was no more a “loyal follower” but rather a “selective consumer” of religion. According to Gillespie, to make humankind the master and possessor of a mechanistically-construed nature, and to defend and promote the cause of human freedom are two major goals of modern project. In the modern age, the heaven of God turned into man-led ‘perfect society’ in which ‘a good without God’ became rationally imaginable. This idea is clearly owned from ‘the cult of reason’ in which the older Christian doctrine of original sin was gradually diffused on the basis of the argument that “mankind was indefinitely improvable, or even perfectible, by deploying its reason effectively”. Technological and industrial developments were solid foundation for this confidence and optimism concerning man and his progress. In this regard, in the ‘Modern Age’ which defines itself as a clear departure from the past with a reference to the Enlightenment (which claimed to have brought light where previously there was darkness and replaced mystery

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43 André Munro, “General will: Philosophy of Rousseau”, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2013, available at: https://www.britannica.com/topic/general-will
44 Yinghong Cheng, Creating the "New Man": From Enlightenment Ideals to Socialist Realities, University of Hawai'i Press, 2009, p.11
46 Gillespie, 2008
with clarity49) the paradigm regarding the sacred changed but did not disappear. According to Habermas, “the Enlightenment has evacuated the place of the old religion, but it cannot overcome the new print models of the vacant place to be filled it by the pseudo-religions”.50 Modernity may also be described as the “age of ideology”51 and ideologies are the metanarratives constructed to fill the empty space left by religion. Thus, “ideologies are variable in content and intent but all imagine themselves delivering illuminating, and convincing “perspectives on the world (Weltanschauungen)”.52 In order to invent ‘reality’ from this imagination however, they must have ‘three constituent claim components: empirical, logical and normative.’53 According to this, by means of using science, ideologies make “empirical claims- descriptive and predictive prepositions about “material reality””.54 Some of their pronouncements which are verified and coherent establish the base for the ones which are not necessarily proven or justified, so that ideologies generally validate their claims by such a hypothetical logic. On the basis of this scientific framework however, the normative character of the ideologies constructs and disseminates qualitative judgments. In a Foucaultian sense this a “games of truth telling” in which “propositions are regulated in terms of formal criteria for the production of ‘true’ statements and efforts are made to formalize the knowledge of the discipline into a systematic framework”.55 Since “the principle purpose of the ideologies is to change the world rather than to understand it, their principle function is to inspire transformative behaviour- to prompt action”. 56 As the complicated artefacts, ideologies provide people a path of action in which the past, present and future are explained through a purpose. According to Hannah Arendt, “all ideological thinking as suffused with totalitarian elements”57 in the way they “purport to explain the past and future”58 in accordance with a total narrative. Levi Strauss however said that “mythical thought, that ‘bricoleur’, builds up structures by fitting together

49 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
58 Margaret Canovan, Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of her Political Thought, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p.26
events, or rather the remains of events…” and “in the modern age the place that we have to search for mythology is political ideologies”.  

In terms of mythmaking, nationalism are significant ideologies. According to Benedict Anderson, the decline of religion or "great religiously imagined communities", such as Christendom, made possible new conceptions of time, which in turn made it possible to imagine the nation as a political community. "The nation as an 'imagined community' however requires the construction of a national past". In this regard, the function of myths and symbols is crucial and common in nationalism which generally go back to antiquity by means of transfiguring or selective reading, so that they construct their Golden Ages and reinvent their national origins in the past for the use in the present and as a way of “attracting general public and driving it to mass political actions”. In this regard, the French Revolution is significant since it ‘created a tradition of political symbolism, which ritualized political ideologies and political agenda through public displays of revolutionary sentiments such as festival, parades, rallies, speeches, songs, music, collective recitation of the “Declaration of the Rights of Man” and burning evil symbols while venerating good ones”. Consequently, this is how nationalisms construct their sacredness and legitimacy on the basis of the ‘sacredness of the general will’ which “had a clear purpose of creating a new social and cultural environment to influence people’s political and ideological stand”.

Nations are generally imagined as ideal homogeneous unities which brings us to the point that Agamben reminds us of before; “all sacreds are based on a distinction” and in nationalism this primary rule has its face through the distinction between “we” – the ones who are believed to belong to the invented ideal nation- and “others” – who are not believed to belong to that nation. Education was at the core of creating the “we” and the “others”. However, most of the nationalisms, with a reference to the Enlightenment ideals, claims to be the pioneer of modern civilization or at least part of it. So the ones, who did not voluntarily become part of this national imaginations, were defined as the opposite of human, namely “inhuman”; and left outside of

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62 Ibid. 
63 Yinghong Cheng, *Creating the "New Man": From Enlightenment Ideals to Socialist Realities*, University of Hawai'i Press, 2009, p.12 
64 Ibid.
the privileged status of being part of the “high” civilization which was believed to be in a continuous progress towards the “happiness of humanity”.

Born of the French and American revolutions of the late 18th-century and as a 19th-century European phenomenon, the modern nation state—indeed as the creator of nationalisms—is the “home” of this sacralization transference through nationalization processes. In the process of modernization, sacredness departed from religion and the “King’s dual body”, but attached with the nation state through myths of “homeland” and “national flag”. Under its guardianship and through nationalism, the modern nation state began to construct a meta-narrative for people with the condition of becoming a nation, a meaning of past and future was provided for the masses. In this new set up, it is no longer acceptable for a man to be sacrificed for a God but it is acceptable and legitimate for him to die for his homeland, which is the new form of the older act of sacrifice, under the name of secular martyrdom. Therefore, violence as a founding theme was taken for granted to establish this nationalist paradigm while destroying the “temple of the past”. The double meaning and functionality of the sacred however also saved and the nation state which operates through its “janus face” by means of offering protection for its people while having the monopoly over the violence use against them if necessary. In other words, divine’s dual face was reflected in the features of the modern state, in which it appears both as a protector and punisher.

According to Foucault, “one of the characteristic privileges of sovereign power was the right to decide life and death” and in the modern time, the act of killing is packaged no more “in the name of a sovereign who must be defended” but is presented “on behalf of the existence of everyone, in the name of life necessity”. Therefore “to save some lives, some other lives are sacrificed” which clarifies the body as the target of the sovereign power. Foucault says that emerged from the seventeenth century onwards “for the first time in history, no doubt, biological existence was reflected in political existence”. However, in contrary to “the power of the sovereign under Medieval and early Modern times was the power to make die and to let

66 Saime Tuğrul, Ebedi Kutsal Ezeli Kurban: Çok Tanrılıktan Tek Tanrılığa Kutsal ve Kurbanlık Mekanizmaları, İletişim Yayınları, 2010
67 The phrase is used by Nietzsche in Genealogy of Morals Second Essay, Section 24, 1887
69 Ibid, p.137
71 Ibid. p.142
The power of the total state, which is the biopower state, is the power to make live and to let die.” Agamben sees a tight integration between sovereign power and biopower. For Agamben the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power and sovereign power relies on the ability to decide on whether certain forms of life are worth living. This results in the ‘production’ of an expendable form of life which Agamben terms “bare life”; a life banned from the legal and political institutions to which citizens have access, rendering life subject to exceptional sovereign power.” Consequently, in modern societies, the sanctity of human rights for instance, does not mean that every living person has the right to exercise these rights or freedom; modern man, who is regarded as the one who “looks like him”- as “we”- and as an agent that has the right to use the same holy human rights, but can sacrifice those “who do not look like him”- named as “others”- at the cost of protecting his rights.

In this regard, the “legitimization of death” is the crucial point that refers to the phenomenon of secular religion, and nation states as a modern form of the state “provides the individual with a recipe for a “correct death”” through nationalisms as secular religions. In Weber’s words, the modern state is based on a “human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.” Consequently, the “victory of the Modern” against the “Tyranny of God or the King” did not guarantee the “saving life” for the mankind but refers to “a transition from religious-politics to bio-politics.”

Apart from nationalism, in terms of myth making, Marxism is another significant example of secular religions which had a significant impact on 19th century German ideology and was realized as a revolution in 20th century Russia with Lenin. Very much inspired by Hegel, Marx acknowledged history as “the science of man” and believed in “the inevitable progress of history”. According to him, “all history is nothing but a continuous transformation of human nature” and the human characteristics were seen to be selfish and pleasure oriented and not natural but prevailed only in capitalist societies due to the misinterpreted bourgeois routine. For Marx, “the mode of production determines the general character of the social, political and

72 Ibid.
74 Giorgio Agamben (1998), Homo Sacer, Stanford University Press, p. 139
77 Saime Tuğrul, Ebedi Kutsal Ezeli Kurban: Çok Tanrılıktan Tek Tanrılığa Kutsal ve Kurbanlık Mekanizmaları, İletişim Yayınları, p. 17
spiritual process of life. It is not consciousness of man that determines their existence, but on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness”.79 So that the way to change people was to change the class conflict among them which according to Marx was built on binary structure, such as freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, and guild master and journeyman’.80 Therefore, for him, “the task of history... is to establish the truth of this world” which would be accomplished by communist society of classless people. According to this, the classless society – which was defined to appear in the sixth stage of history- refers to a natural and true state of being for the human kind which would also provide salvation for all. However, according to the scientific law of history, the path towards the salvation stage was defined to take place through five pre-stages before the revolution in which the working class would challenge the class oppression which stemmed from private property.81 Private property, as if the first sin, appeared at the core of human alienation in capitalist society in which people worked for the sovereign classes but possessed nothing. However, by realization of a working class “revolution” people would begin to work for themselves and they could become “human” again. Education as means of reshaping human nature was significantly appreciated by Marx because of its functionality “to replace “alienated man” with “well developed man””.82 For Marx, this linear path which would result in revolution and embodied in the classless society was the law and also the moral obligation of history.

Gellner, describes Marxism as having “many of the features of a religion. It offered a total vision of the universe and of society and a combined vision of the two, so that social order and social righteousness were seen as corollaries of the total vision. In brief, it offered a path of salvation to mankind”.83 In Weber's words, “Marx's work, whatever its undeniable merits, involves the commitment to the 'scientific' ethic of ‘ultimate ends’ and thus entails the acceptance of a 'total' conception of history”.84 And as Hobsbawm put it, apart from the supremacy that it provided, “the certainty that Marxism provided for the working class as the

79Yinghong Cheng, Creating the "New Man": From Enlightenment Ideals to Socialist Realities, University of Hawai'i Press, 2009, p.13
80 Ibid.
81 ‘For Marx, the conception of alienation is foundational in his work in that it establishes the terms under which we understand private property. The fact that the worker produces for a system that exploits him, and that his labor is not his own, is the reason that revolution is both inevitable and necessary’. See: Reith Thomas Funston, ‘All Communists go to Heaven: the Construction of a Marxist Kingdom of God on Earth’, International Journal of Zizek Studies, Volume Eleven, Number Two, 2017, p. 2.
82 Yinghong Cheng, Creating the "New Man": From Enlightenment Ideals to Socialist Realities, University of Hawai'i Press, 2009, p.14
religions did in the past” 85 seems to create a valid hope for the working class more than creating a rational conviction. Similar to Hobsbawm, Gramsci referred to “Marxism as ‘monism’ that was obliged to call the proletarian 'subaltern'” 86 Marx defined his philosophy in contrast to German philosophy and said that it “descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven”. 87 As clarified in his own words, Marxism was a secular religion which offering a heaven in the earth instead of the one which is promised outside of the world’s time and realm by traditional religions.

Both having the foundation of Enlightenment, Nationalism and Marxism as two secular religions, are primarily shaped by the notions of reason and change (which were understood absolutely as progress) in which “remaking people” mainly via education was at the core of their founding narratives. These refer to a process of departure of the sovereign power from the divine and were redefined on the basis of the profane. Throughout the diversified story of enlightenment and modernity however, it is not wrong to say that, these were the notions that made the Jacobin dictatorship of Robespierre in 18th century, the British colonizers who settled in India and the French Four Communes realized in West Africa in 19th century. Following the political experience of the 20th century however, these two ideologies -as secular religions- and the personality cults have been debated intensively in the literature of political science. Despite having significant differences among each other, Hitler in Germany, Lenin and Stalin in Russia, Mussolini in Italy and Mao Tse-tung in China were among the significant cult of personalities 88 who have been discussed in the literature and the primary aim of whom was to create a “new society” via a “new man”.

H. From Sultan’s Empire to State’s Nation: Turkey’s Modernization

The reflection of this process and transformation which took place in Europe had a significant impact on the Ottoman Empire which was both “inside” and “outside” of Europe at the time. As will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, beginning from the late 17th century, the Ottoman Empire, tended to lose its “great power” first in the war fields and gradually followed by economic, social and political challenges. In the early 19th century however, the “progress” of Europe had already reached the Ottoman’s borders. That is how ‘the ambiguous program of imperial reform- later called as Turkish modernization- launched by the Ottoman government in the mid-nineteenth century’ took place to prevent the losses, regain economic and political status and to hold the polyreligious, polyethnic and polylingustic Ottoman society together. Under the name of westernization, the modernization process in Turkey therefore, began as a political process that was applied by the state from “above” rather than being a social process stemming from “below” and it imposed itself on the Ottoman state as a necessity to deal with the changing climate of the era in which Western military, economic and ideological pressure significantly challenged the empire both within and beyond its borders.

The symbolic meaning of this compulsory step towards modernization however, indicated an awareness of the existence of modernity among Ottomans and as well as the fact that they were not modern. Therefore, modernization was “a reaction against modernity by the unmodern” in the Ottoman context. This “consciousness also stems from the inability to remain indifferent towards modernity once it was witnessed”. The West was perceived as one and the same as modernity; it was a “role model” and at the same time a threatening force along the borders of the Empire and therefore the “enemy” too. This love-hate relationship with the West was the defining characteristic of the “reorganization” era in the 19th century in which civilian bureaucracy was reformed and heavily influenced by the French model, the military was modernized according to the German-Prussian model and through which the fields of law and education became significantly secularized.

The 20th century however was a time of a “modern revolution” in terms of departure from old values and the invention of new ones. The War of Independence – which was defined as a war

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90 Besim Dellaloğlu, Modernleşmenin Zihniyet Dünyası: Bir Tanpınar Fetişizmi, Kadim, 2016, p.50
91 Ibid.
of liberation against imperialism - was the “founding violence” of the modern nation state in Turkey which was established as a Republic in 1923 and by which the legitimate source of the sovereign authority declared as the nation, namely the “general will”. That is how a year after the declaration of the Republic, the Caliphate was abolished and modern Turkey’s references gradually began to be searched in and invented through a pre-Islamic history. At the heart of the new sacralization process of the newly established nation state there was the invention of secular myths and traditions in which the traditional and religious symbolic environment of the past were cleaned from the public sphere. Mustafa Kemal who was later given the name Atatürk meaning “Father Turk”, was the founder and the charismatic face of this new sacralization process. His charisma turned into a “cult as the new symbol to unify the nation” which “began to be created and disseminated shortly after the foundation of the Republic”\textsuperscript{92} through which the name of the sovereign as “Turk” could be manifested and which also departed from the “corrupted Ottoman Muslim” identity. The official ideology of the state took his name too, Kemalism, and it was set to create the “New Man” of the Republic as the manifestation of the ideal of “remaking people”. According to this, the “vassal” of the Ottoman Empire would be transformed into the “modern, civilized citizens” of the Turkish nation state. Consequently, modernization as a process of secularising the political and the social, found its revolutionist, Turkish, profane face with Atatürk who is today one of the three leaders of the 21st century together with Humeyni in Iran and Kim Yong Il in North Korea, the memory and legacy of whom are revered and protected by law.

On the other hand, Atatürk is not the only modern sacred figure to be created by modern revolutionary nationalism in Turkey. Even though their names are not thought of in the same breath and indeed, it is even the case that such a co-occurrence would be frowned upon; as a movement that was shaped under the penetrating gaze of Kemalism and also as a response to it; Kurdish nationalism, which is embodied in the PKK has given birth to Öcalan as a modern sacred figure in the 21st century of Turkey. Led by Abdullah Öcalan, the PKK was established in 1978 with the aim of establishing a united Kurdistan and waging an armed struggle in 1984 against ‘imperialism’, ‘colonialism’ and its ‘Kurdish collaborators’. Like Kemalism, Öcalan’s discourse via the PKK, which can be named Apoism, was based on modern, secular, positivist and progressive notions of the Enlightenment idea with an emphasis on liberating and civilizing the Kurdish nation. That is to say, Öcalan’s PKK was a declaration and claim of departure from

a traditional Kurdish past in which the Kurd was defined as a “slave” and which was seen as a “corrupted” history. Therefore, the PKK searched its historical roots in the pre-Islamic Kurdish history and as in Kemalism, the goal of creating a “New Man” means “transforming the society as a whole” was included as the target of Apoism. During the course of forty-year period, Öcalan, first became a charismatic Kurdish figure, and later turned into a cult figure following his imprisonment in 1999 who is today referred to more than a person and is being called as “leadership”. Öcalan is the sole personality representing hegemonic Kurdish politics and for his followers, who also represents the embodiment of the New Kurdish Man. Just as Turks idolize Atatürk for liberating them from oppressors and Kemalism for creating a Turkish national identity and holding both above criticism; regardless of being sympathetic to Öcalan or the PKK, Kurds also widely indicate it as fact that, if Öcalan and the PKK had not existed, nobody would have accepted the presence of the Kurdish identity in Turkey.

Needless to say there is no direct cause and effect relationship between Kemalism and Apoism as there are significant differences between Öcalan and Atatürk caused by being the leadership figures of different historical periods and circumstances. On another level however, they have shared commonalities stemming from the spin of their modernity-reading which primarily refers to their political will to “become modern”. In a non-Western setting, they are the local constructs of modernity and they dependent on it each. Both Kemalist narrative and Apoist counter narrative carry the problematic relation to modernity which ‘can be interpreted as a continuous endeavour to overcome the lag in scientific, economic and political development’ and which is also a struggle for power. However, the perception of them by the masses is another shared commonality as they are the typical cases of the sacralization of politics which “takes place when politics is conceived, lived and represented through myths, rituals and symbols that demand faith in the sacralised secular entity, dedication among community believers, enthusiasm for action, a warlike spirit and sacrifice in order to secure its defence its triumph. The sacralization of politics […] has revolutionary, democratic and nationalist origins”. With reference to Micheal de Certau, these cults are the primary cornerstones of the strategy of the centralized power but are also the tactics used by average Kurds and Turks in order to express their needs and desires for being in the orbit of the power that rules them.

Among these two modern cults of Turkey however, this study directs its focus towards Öcalan through the perception of Turkey’s Kurds. As stated earlier, while doing so, a comparative approach will be employed by means of elaborating on Öcalan’s discourse via the PKK as it is one of the primary sources of the sacralization of his own politics. It will also focus on the motivations, meanings, places and the functions of the sacred narrative revolving around Öcalan in the politics and realms of Kurds. This comparative approach is required due to an examination the line of interaction between Öcalan’s discourse that is presented and realized via the PKK and its reflections on and reinterpretations in the worlds of Kurds. On the other hand, situating the topic in a historical context with its socio-political components was a requirement for this study as both the PKK and Öcalan perception of Kurds are socially and politically constructed through the particular historical context of Turkey. Therefore, modernization process in Turkey, the heritage of the Kurdish movements before the PKK and the impact of Kemalism on Öcalan’s PKK will constitute the significant components of this historical context.

Accordingly, from Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic, Chapter I will focus on the traditional and pre-PKK Kurdish movements since it is a history which shapes and feeds the PKK in several ways as a heritage. Although Öcalan defines his movement as a clear departure from the traditional Kurdish past, the early and the late pre-PKK Kurdish movements and their impact on Kurdish political imagination and collective memory will be traced in this chapter with regards to their use and of Kurdish perception that has been cumulated in Öcalan’s PKK. The invention of the Kurdish Question by the establishment of Republic of Turkey as a nation state, the exclusion of Kurdishness from the official Kemalist nationalism and Kurdish Uprising took place against this exclusion will be also taken as part of Chapter I. Chapter II however will start with the ‘Kurdish Awakening’ emerged in the 1960s on the way to the establishment of the PKK while relating them to Öcalan’s political position in that particular period and provide the history of PKK through the changes it has experienced. In this chapter, as the field research suggests, PKK is accepted as Öcalan’s discourse and his practice and its history will be analysed in two parts, before and after Öcalan’s capture in 1999. The period before his imprisonment until 1999 will be acknowledged as the ‘First Manifesto Era’ and the period until 1999 up today will be defined as the ‘Second Manifesto Era’. Subsequently, based on the in-depth interviews carried out, Chapter III will focus on the Öcalan perception of Turkey’s Kurds based on outcomes of the field work and via three themes: ‘The role of Violence’, ‘Kurdishness/Kurdish Cause’ and ‘Öcalan’s investment on Women and Youth’. These themes were repeatedly and
significantly put forward by the interviewees as the aspects and elements of the context which resulted in the emergence of a sacred political narrative surrounding Öcalan. However, all these themes will be discussed according to the continuities and changes that appeared in Öcalan’s First and Second Manifesto.

On the basis of the field work outcomes, Chapter IV will focus on the autobiography of Öcalan where he is present both as a narrator and a narrative; it will be also analysed the relationship between this autobiography and Öcalan’s discourse, which is embodied in the PKK. This will thus give this study the chance to be able to discuss Öcalan’s role in the construction of his own cult of personality. With regards to the sacralization of politics in particular, Chapter IV will also focus on the unchanged themes in Öcalan’s discourse via his First and Second Manifesto and analyses the Apoism as a form of secular religion which is more of a political religion than a civilian religion. In its last section however, it will focus on the place, meaning and function of Öcalan figure as a modern sacred in the diversified lives and imaginations of today’s Turkey’s Kurds. Finally, in the concluding chapter, some open-ended questions will be considered on the dialectical relationship between Western modernity and non-Western modernities in the 21st century, as well as the influence of this dialectical relationship on how the modern sacreds, here analysed in the context of the sacralization of politics through Öcalan's example, relate themselves to politics and democracy.
CHAPTER I
Heritage of Kurdish Movements from Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic

As stated earlier, the process through which the Kurdish identity gained its current political content and components is socially and politically constructed over history and very much interrelated with and shaped under the historical and the political context that Turkey - as the shared land- had gone through starting with the transition process from a multi-cultural and multi-religious empire, to becoming a nation state, as it constitutes significant landmark and decisive role in the politicization of ethnic identities including Turkishness and more recently Kurdishness.

To give an in-depth analysis on the topic, it is important to provide an historical overview on the changing dynamics in the shared land, in terms of both Kurdish-specific politics and larger hegemonic trends, beginning from the late Ottoman era in relation to its impact on both Turkish and Kurdish nationalist movements and the politicization processes of these ethnic identities.

Covering this particular political history through the interrelated dynamics will also provide this study to understand the components of the heritage including the frames and the repertoire that has been formed by Kurdish movements over time and transmitted to the current Kurdish political movement and social guise whether in different or similar forms, meanings and functions.

Section I: Kurds in Ottoman Empire
A. Ottoman Empire and the Millet System

Under the Ottoman rule, the framework of the millet system which had its origins in earlier Middle Eastern states, both Muslim and non-Muslim, was regulated and institutionalized as a method of governing the diverse religious, cultural and ethnic groups under the scope of the Empire. The term millet, which means ‘nation’ in English, however, corresponded both to a religion and a religious community in the Ottoman Empire, and referred to a structure that was based on autonomous self-governing of the religious communities, each organized under its own laws and headed by a religious leader, who was responsible to the central government.

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96 Essentially, in Arabic and Ottoman language, with a reference to the use in the Qur'an the term ‘nation’ was directly used in the sense of religion so that the term nation corresponds to a community which believes in a specific religion.
for the fulfilment of millet responsibilities and duties, particularly those of paying taxes and maintaining internal security. The system, with the condition of loyalty to Sultan as the head of the state and dependence on the given hierarchical structure\textsuperscript{97}, allowed various communities with distinct languages, cultures and religions to co-exist next to each other, exercising a certain degree of autonomy within its domain and following its own set of cultural and legal norms. The religious law of sharia was dominating the legal system which was supplemented by sultanate ordinances and customary law. The main non-Muslim communities were Greek Orthodox Christians, Armenian Gregorian Christians and Jews and they were subject in the field of private law to the rules of their own religions.

The term ‘Turk’ used during the time referred to the religious identity of communities in the Ottoman Empire, those of which were ethnically diversified but religiously Muslim. For instance, the term ‘Greek’ was used when referring to the Orthodox populations of the Empire including ethnic Turks who were Orthodox-Christians. The ‘Turk’ as a name originally given by the western world to define the ruling and guiding authority of the Ottoman Empire signified the Muslim who was different from the Arab Muslim and mainly referred to ‘the Muslim’ who was bordering, bridging and had the power to “challenge” Europe. It was because of the fact that the Ottoman state had dominated the Eastern Mediterranean for half a millennium, controlling vast swathes of Central Europe, Arab lands as far down as Egypt and had at one stage been about to conquer Vienna and Venice.

While Western contemporaries referred commonly to the Ottomans as Turks; it was actually only during the Empire’s decline in the late 19th century that the concept of Turkishness as a national identity gained popularity. Since the merging of the Sultanate and the Caliphate in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century, the Ottoman Empire had claimed its leadership of all Muslims in the world, rather than confining itself to any singular ethnic community. The social and political organization of the Empire was, therefore, notably heterogeneous. Moreover, the official language used among the ruling Muslim class of the Ottoman Empire at the time was the Ottoman language which was a variant derived from Turkish, Arabic, and Persian (written in Turkish with Arabic alphabet).

B. Kurds in Ottoman Empire: Self Autonomy and Emirate System

The Kurds during the time, as a member of the Muslim core\(^98\), were organised through the Kurdish emirates that were quasi-autonomous and partly de-centralised administrative structures of the Ottoman Empire. The semi autonomy of the Kurdish emirates was the result of the regional dominance struggle between the Ottoman and Iranian Empires and the Kurdish emirates had been empowered by the Ottoman Empire to secure their Iranian border.\(^99\) ‘Since the agreement in 1514 between Sultan II. Selim and İdris-i Bidlisi, the Kurdish emirates ruled Kurdish society and each one of these emirates controlled a Kurdish inhabited zone’\(^100\). As a political organization, the emirates provided a con-federative unity for Kurdish tribes.\(^101\)

From 16\(^{th}\) to late 19\(^{th}\) century, the term Kurdistan was freely used in Ottoman sources and ‘the flexibility with which the Ottomans ruled Kurdistan in a largely indirect and decentralized manner was successful from the points of view of the Ottoman state and of many local Kurdish emirates. The Kurdish notables negotiated a largely satisfactory arrangement for themselves, and the central Ottoman authorities displayed a pragmatic realism in their choice of ruling mode for the Kurdish regions’.\(^102\) Under the conditions of an empire system and in the absence of restrictions on cultural and linguistic differences, the hierarchal tribal belongings and Islam constituted two significant/defining characteristics of the Kurdish population which was under the Kurdish emirate system framework, as they were the ruling agency of Kurdish society. The emirates system in the 19\(^{th}\) century defined the politico-social space where ‘Kurdishness’ was constituted.\(^103\)

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\(^98\) In the Ottoman State system, Muslim core consisted of Turks, Kurds and Arabs. However, there was a hierarchy between the members of Muslim core. For instance, Muslim Kurds comes after Turks, Arabs and Persians in the distribution of the Muslim subjects. They differ from the founders of the Ottoman Empire, Turks, with their ethnic origin but they are tied to the society and the system because they are Muslims. See: Henri J. Barkey and Graham E. Fuller, *Turkey’s Kurdish Question*, Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998, p. 5.

\(^99\) The struggle between the Ottoman and Iranian Empires resulted in the separation of Kurds in Turkey and Iran which is still the case.


\(^101\) Mesut Yeğen, “The Turkish state discourse and the exclusion of Kurdish identity”, Middle Eastern Studies; Apr 1996; 32, 2; ProQuest, p.218


\(^103\) Mesut Yegen, “The Turkish state discourse and the exclusion of Kurdish identity”, Middle Eastern Studies; Apr 1996; 32, 2; ProQuest, p.218
C. Ottomans in Modernization: Administrative and Political Changes and Challenges

In the early 19th century, due to changing world dynamics, it was hard for the Ottoman Empire to manage the ethnic and religious diversity under its rule. The new world system that had started to be shaped after the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 through which the principle of popular legitimacy replaced the sovereign will of the monarch and which in due time referred to the growing hegemony of central nation states in Europe - and to their political stability, growing and connected economies - were challenging the Ottoman Empire. In particular, the effects of the French Revolution extended to, in the first half of the 19th century, to the Balkan communities of the Empire, and started nationalist uprisings against the Ottoman authority in their regions. Besides this, Russian nationalism and expansionism was one of the primary concerns of the Ottoman Empire, especially in its Eastern European provinces. With the national movements, which started with the Serbian uprising and continued with the formation of Greek, Romanian and Bulgarian independence, the Ottoman Empire started to lose its European lands and in the absence of its Orthodox Christian subjects, it became demographically a dominantly Muslim state. Additionally, on the political and social psychological level, the Ottoman Empire perceived the changing environment in a way in which it was being challenged by the states it had never considered as equals including the ones established by its former subjects. It was also being urged towards a conferral system that it was not accustomed to.

That is how modernization, which was designated as ‘Westernization’ by Ottoman bureaucracy, emerged as a political process in Turkey rather than being the result of a social demand and imposed itself as a necessity to meet the requirements of the changing dynamics of the era and also as a way for the Ottoman state to prevent the loss of lands, save the unity of its subjects and to regain political and economic power. For the Ottoman Empire, indeed, embracing modernization by the 19th century was a matter of survival and a way to re-assert its sovereignty over the centripetal power of the peripheral notables as well as to resist the expansion of the European state system at its borders. Therefore, Ottoman modernization was based on a state-driven modernization process and committed to a centralization move which resulted in administrative and political changes, and consequently transformed relations between the centre and the periphery; as well as among Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of the Empire who in

104 Mekin Mustafa Kemal Ökem, *Turkish Modernity and Kurdish Ethno-Nationalism*, PhD Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School Social Sciences of Middle Technical University, April 2006, p.172
due course became embodied in emerging nationalisms.

D. Ottoman Reform Era: Modernizing Military and Centralizing the State

In the Ottoman Empire, modernization was mainly understood in a militaristic sense and as a phenomenon of importing the (war) technology of the West as it was seen the main driving force behind the success and growing power of European states. The technology was seen as a magical tool to speed up the modernization process as a way to fulfil the gap of development between the Ottoman and the Western states since the “anxiety of being late” for modernization was a defining and shared sense among the Ottoman modernizers. As Halil Nalçaoğlu argues in the countries where modernization is attempted in a non-Western context … catching the train is a metaphor that signifies the destination of history to which the “latecomers” are always already late. Nalçaoğlu points at the “chronic anxiety” and the “universe of symbolic crises” thereby produced. Accordingly, during modernization process in Ottoman Empire from the 19th and early 20th centuries, the priority for the ruling elite was to build a modern military force with advanced weapons to prevent the loss of lands and save the state as a strong ruling authority among its borders which entailed changes in the administrative structure.

Correspondingly, with the start of the era in 1839 (namely the Reform Era, from 1839 to 1876) a modern conscripted army and navy, equipped with European hardware according to the Prussian model and a state bureaucracy along the Western, primarily French model, were created. The proclamation of the Tanzimat Verdict in 1829 (Rose Chamber Edict) was the first concrete step in the way of westernization/modernization in the Empire and it was highly inspired by the French Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen and Virginia Bill of Rights. Accordingly, the establishment of schools and academies for the training of new civil servants and soldiers resulted in the emerging intelligencia, alongside the growth of a feeling of national consciousness among them. During the Tanzimat era however, the state ideology was not Turkism but that of Ottomanism which was defined as an umbrella-identity for the different cultural, religious and linguistic communities contained within the Empire. Although

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105 Different European modernizations perceived as a uniform process. In Turkey, since the Ottoman era, the terms ‘Europe’ and ‘West’ are being used interchangeably as if they are synonyms.


107 M. Şükrü Hanioglu, A Brief History of the Ottoman Empire, Princeton University Press, 2008, p. 73
the politicization of Turkishness was one of the political formulas as a response to the changing and challenging dynamics of the time, it was not a hegemonic political formula during the Tanzimat era and ‘Ottoman elites actually used Turk; as a derogative term for the uneducated; uncivilized; peasantry in the hinterlands of the Ottoman Empire, while the term Ottoman; denoted the proper citizen of the Empire, irrespective of his or her belief, creed or ethnicity.\textsuperscript{108}

As stated earlier, one of the major aims of the Tanzimat reforms was to centralize the imperial administration in order to combat the ethnic separatism. The centralization was crucial and taken as a process that secured administrative, political and economic control over the state by means of applying centrally located law and policymaking. Tanzimat reforms were supplemented by a similar statute promulgated in 1856, named Islahat Verdict (Hattı Hümayun), promising equality in education, government appointments, and administration of justice to all members of society regardless of religion or race, and influenced by the modern European ideas of the time. The Islahat Verdict changed relations between Muslim and non-Muslim communities in the Empire with the introduction of the equal Ottoman citizenship for all.\textsuperscript{109} Following that, the Ottoman Nationality Law in 1869 declared all Ottoman subjects equal before the law and Ottoman citizenship was offered as a supra identity during the course of the Tanzimat reforms.\textsuperscript{110} By this way, ‘the legal term “Ottoman” replaced the old distinctions between Muslim and dhimmis and dhimmi was replaced by “non-Muslim Ottoman”.’\textsuperscript{111}

All these reforms are overall called Ottoman modernization and the motivation behind them was not based on popular public demand (neither from Muslim nor non-Muslim communities

\textsuperscript{108} Mustafa Saatçi, “Nation-states and Ethnic Boundaries: Modern Turkish Identity and Turkish-Kurdish Conflict”, Nations and Nationalism, 8 (4): 549-64, 2002, p. 555

\textsuperscript{109} Although Ottoman millet system provided coexistence among different religious and social groups, there was no equality between Muslims and Non-Muslims. First, Muslim and non-Muslim communities were both considered as subjects/teba, but Non-Muslims were called dhimmis – meaning protected person- and not equal subjects with Muslims. Muslims were the founding class and non-Muslims were the second class. They lived under certain legal and social disabilities. For instance, they could not bear arms or testify in a Muslim court against a Muslim. They could repair or rebuild existing churches but not build new ones on new sites. Christians could not proselytize. A Muslim could marry a Christian woman but a Christian could not marry a Muslim woman unless he converted. A Christian or a Jewish life cost less than a Muslim one in blood money. In their daily life dhimmis were expected to be respectful of Muslims and not to be offensive or provocative. When the liberal Tanzimat were passed in the 1800s, the millet system was abolished, in favor of a more European-style secularist government. The Ottomans guaranteed rights to religious minorities, which in fact brought other challenges. The secular laws introduced by the Tanzimat Era had been reacted by non-Muslim religious communities too and this actually ended up causing more religious and ethnic tension in the empire. Najib Saliba, Christians and Jews Under Islam, Al-Hewar/The Arab-AmErikan Dialogue, Winter 2008-09, p. 3

\textsuperscript{110} Bilgin Ayata, PhD Thesis Submitted to Johns Hopkins University, Department of Political Science, 2011, p.36

\textsuperscript{111} M. Şükrü Hanioglu, A Brief History of the Ottoman Empire, Princeton University Press, 2008, p. 74

43
of the Empire)\(^{112}\) but were formulated and practised compulsorily in order to save the state, preventing the loss of lands, saving the economy and regaining the former political power and status. Regaining the political power and prestigious however, required to be the member of the European concert and the reforms also served for this principal goal.\(^{113}\) In due course, ‘19\(^{th}\) century Ottoman politics were shaped by a struggle around a state-imposed islahat (reform) programme intending to preclude the disintegration of the Ottoman State by means of replacing the classical Ottoman administrative bodies with a modern and central apparatus. Islahat was a matter of survival for it became very much manifest that the reproduction of the classical Ottoman administration next to the newly emerging power regimes in Europe was improbable’.\(^{114}\) The adopted measures of the administrative and the territorial reforms of the Empire which were in favour of universal law and strengthening central authority resulted in changes in the relation of its ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’ too and destroyed centuries of communal autonomy.

E. Kurds in Ottoman Reform Era: Losing Autonomy and Changing Elites

Particularly, as a result of the centralization moves, the elimination of semi-autonomous entities in the Empire’s land was the start of emerging tensions between the Kurdish periphery and the central state. As a result, from 1808 to 1880, several Kurdish uprisings led by emirates took place due to their decreasing power, control and status over Kurdish territory. Emirate uprisings were defeated by the Ottoman Empire but left a significant political vacuum in the region. ‘The dismantling of the emirates meant the termination of the confederative unity of the Kurdish tribes’.\(^{115}\) The outcome was individualization of the Kurdish tribes. ‘Hence the removal of the emirates resulted in tribal confrontations which were formerly prevented by emir who mediated between the numerous tribes’.\(^{116}\) After the defeat of the uprisings by the Ottoman Empire, the political vacuum left from the Kurdish emirates was filled by the Kurdish tribes and their leaders. In fact, ‘the tribes were the only institutions that could both fill the political vacuum

\(^{112}\) Not only Muslim community but also Christian communities reacted against the principle of equality at the time. The principle of equality, because of dismissing the symbolic hierarchy among the non-Muslim communities was not appreciated by the non-Muslim communities of the Empire in large. For instance, due to losing the privileged status, Greek Patriarchate vis a vis the other non-Muslim religious institutions, a typical Greek reaction to the reform verdict was: “the state made us equal with the Jews, we are satisfied with Muslim superiority”. Quoted in Şükrü Hanioğlu, A Brief History of the Ottoman Empire, Princeton University Press, 2008, p. 76-77

\(^{113}\) Ibid.

\(^{114}\) Mesut Yeğen, “Turkish nationalism and the Kurdish question”, Ethnic and Racial Studies, 30:1, 119-151, 2007, p. 121-122

\(^{115}\) Sylvia Kedourie, Turkey: Identity, Democracy, Politics, Routledge, 2013, p.219

\(^{116}\) Ibid.
and provide protection to their members and clients. Each Kurdish tribe thus became a de facto political and military entity.\textsuperscript{117}

That is to say, the destruction of the emirates that were in charge since 16\textsuperscript{th} century led to a change in the Kurdish ruling elite. Through the increasing power of the Kurdish tribes, the religious leaders, the sheikhs, who were connected with these tribes, had strengthened their power in the Kurdish society and had become influential agencies. In other words, the politics of centralization changed ‘the mechanisms of political domination and subordination in the Kurdish region (both between the Empire and the Kurds and among the Kurds)’\textsuperscript{118}. Therefore, Kurdish tribes and religious leaders constituted the new ruling and guiding elite of Kurdish society beginning from the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century. ‘In this transition period, the tension raised between the Kurds and the Ottoman state, was an administrative issue between the imperial centre and local Kurdish powers, more than a question of identity in the modern sense’.\textsuperscript{119}

Alongside with increasing centralization moves, by the first constitution of the Ottoman Empire of 1876 (Kanun-i Esasi) Turkish was defined as the official language of the state, which should be spoken by the officials and the deputies\textsuperscript{120} and the politicization of Turkishness merged with Islam started to forge ahead among competing political formulas to save the state. The steps towards a secular Ottoman citizenship and other modernizing reforms began to have a more Islamic and nationalist outlook by the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876-1909) in the face of growing nationalist sentiments in the Balkans.

F. A Pragmatic Integration Model of Muslim Periphery: Kurds in Hamidian Era

During the Abdulhamid II era (1876-1909), the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-78 and continuing insurgencies in the Balkan provinces mostly among the Christian Orthodox\textsuperscript{121} communities of the Empire were among the primary challenges and defining pillars of the political climate. The first trauma for the Ottoman Empire in this era was the emergence of de-facto independent Bulgarian state within the Ottoman Empire by the Treaty of Berlin in 1878.

\textsuperscript{119} Yılmaz Ensaroğlu, “Turkey’s Kurdish Question and the Peace Process”, Insight Turkey, Vol.15/No.2/2013, pp. 7-17, Available at: http://file.insightturkey.com/files/pdf/20130415155719_15_2_2013 Ensaroglu.pdf , p.8
\textsuperscript{120} Nesrin Uçarlar, Between Majority Power and Minority Resistance: Kurdish Linguistic Rights in Turkey, PhD Thesis Submitted to Lund Political Studies Department of Political Science Lund University, 2009, p. 99
\textsuperscript{121} The Balkan peoples started to declare independence and detach from the Ottoman Empire with the Treaty of San Stefano signed after the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War; in 1876, the Christian communities in the Turkish provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina revolted against the Ottoman dominance. Moreover, in the 1878 Congress
Apart from being a national trauma, the defeat of Ottomans and the independence of the Bulgarian state meant a new wave of Muslim population who fled toward Istanbul and Anatolia following the continuing wave that already started as a result of the Russia-Caucasian war ((1763–1864) after which Muslim Caucasians were deported to the Ottoman lands.

Increasing failures in the war field and the flow of the Muslim populations from these defeated lands to the Empire, created a political tendency started to develop in favour of the popularity of Turkishness among the Muslim majority of the Empire. Since Christian Russia and Western nationalism was perceived as the force behind the Balkan insurgencies, an anti-West and anti-Christian approach started to dominate the Ottoman ruling elite as well as the Muslim majority accordingly. So, although the official state ideology continued to be Ottomanism, the popularity of Turkishness was significantly raised and it was highly merged with an Islamic foundation.

However, Anatolia, began to be invented in this era by the tacit doctrine of Abdulhamid II as “a refugee” for such type of Turkishness. According to this, Anatolia should be protected from all threats, such as the Armenians inside, and the Russian Empire outside, so that the ethnically diversified Muslim components in Anatolia, namely the Kurds, should be integrated and reinforced by the state. That is how a new and ‘special relationship established between the Sultane and Sunni Kurds’ via the formation of an irregular militia in 1891, called Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiments, that was named after Abdulhamid II.

The Hamidiyye Regiments were composed of select Kurdish tribes and were created as a way to transform Kurdish tribes from a local power into an armed force of state authority itself as a force to manage internal and external threats. By this way Kurds’ probable potential to challenge state authority- as the Kurdish emirates did in the past - was aimed to be prevented and Kurds were missioned to play a barrier role against the treats as the leading members of the Muslim periphery. While selecting Kurds for the regiments however, the Ottoman state considered the linguistic, religious and cultural heterogeneity among Kurds (religious differences such as Alevi, Sunni (Mainly Shafii and also Hanefi), Yezidi or Jewish Kurds or linguistic and cultural differences among Zaza- and Kirmancki-speaking groups) as a way to rule and control the intra-Kurdish dynamics. As Bozarslan states, apart from their barrier role in the periphery, the Hamidiyye Regiments presented other advantages to the Ottoman state: the Sunni tribes that were integrated into the cavalries could benefit from resources that the

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centre allotted to them. This selective resource-allocation produced repeated conflicts between the integrated and the non-integrated tribes, thereby transforming the earlier tribal violence against the state into intra-Kurdish violence. When selected for the regiments, the Kurdish soldiers received their education and training in military schools based in Istanbul, and went back to Eastern Anatolia where they became a strong military force.

The symbolic meaning of the regiments however was significant by which ‘and according to the Abdulhamid II, the Kurds would be drawn into the fold of Ottomanism, assimilated into "civilization,” and would offer their “special martial qualities” in service to their patron’s domains. To show them how special they were, be even named the organization into which they were to be drafted after himself to highlight the special bond that was to develop between himself and “his” Kurds. This symbolic meaning seems to be appreciated by Kurds at the time since Abdulhamid II was called as ‘Bave Kurdan’ in Kurdish, meaning ‘Father of Kurds’.

Regarding the relations between the Sultanate and Kurdish society, the second invention in Abdulhamid’s era, as a very typical example of ideological state apparatus in Althusserian sense, was the establishment of the Tribal Schools in 1892 which were designed as boarding schools to raise the children of Kurdish and Arabic tribal leaders according to a systematic program of education/indoctrination which would be expected to make young Kurds and Arabs loyal citizens and commanders of the Ottoman Empire. In the Tribal Schools, the religious courses such as Qur'an and Islamic law (fitnah, fıkıh-fiqh) were supported by modern natural sciences, French, Turkish, geography, history, literature and military courses. Kurdish and Arabic children were educated to acquire separate professions at these schools. For instance, while the Kurds were educated in the cavalry system, which was the profession of their families; the Arabs were educated in civil services. These schools had a strict curriculum and education policy. The children who were far away from their families could not speak their mother languages in these schools and Sultan Abdulhamid II was regularly informed about the courses and grades of each child. After graduation from these schools, they would be expected to attend higher education, namely the Mekteb-i Sultani to be future officials in their provinces. It was

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125 Albanian youth were also educated in these schools since Albanians, as the only European based community, were one of the Muslim communities Ottoman Empire.
126 Today it is called Galatasaray High School
a way for the Ottoman Empire to create a loyal Kurdish elite which also provided control over the tribes and power groups in the Kurdish populated regions.

As a consequence of this integration policies of the Hamidian Era, Kurds as a Muslim component of society, despite revolts against the centralization moves in the administrative structure, did not react against the increasing Turkish nationalism at the time since “Turkishness” was not taken separately or out of the Islamic content and brotherhood. The Kurdish nationalism however, started to develop mainly against the emerging Armenian nationalism at the time which in fact was an issue that had significant impacts on long term Turkish-Kurdish relations and as well as on the political future of Kurds in Turkey.

G. Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism Vis-à-vis Armenian Nationalism

Under the influence of Western nationalist and socialist thoughts, the idea of emancipation and national liberation emerged among the Armenian youth and intelligentsia, giving birth to the first nationalist organizations in the Eastern Anatolia part of the Ottoman Empire. It can be said that Armenians began to think themselves as a nation rather than a religious group or other identity much more earlier than Turks and Kurds, and Armenian nationalism already emerged in the 19th century before the development of Turkish and Kurdish nationalisms. However, except of a small number of Armenians who formed revolutionary groups in order to fight for independence and sided with Russia as being the members of voluntary units on the Caucasian side against the Ottomans, the nationalist consciousness among the majority of Ottoman Armenians was not opposing them to perceive themselves as part of the Ottoman identity. Majority of the Armenians at the time, wanted to stay in the Empire, but they also wanted reforms to protect their rights and allow them to prosper as equal citizens of the state. In the eye of Ottoman leaders however, who had been experiencing small nationalist movements in the Balkans grow into insurmountable ones, the pattern was ‘familiar’ and concerning. That’s how the positive prejudice towards Armenians in which they were called as the "loyal millet" as one of "benign symbiosis"127 of the Empire began to be shattered and over time they started to be perceived as the ‘extension of ‘gavur’ (the non-Muslim) world like the other non-Muslim communities of the Empire.

Apart from the political factors however, as a consequence of the reform era which opened the Ottoman economy to the world market, the increasing economic status of the non-Muslim communities compared to their Muslim counterparts was another significant factor that supported this negative political climate. Accordingly, after the Anglo-Ottoman Convention of 1838 (Baltalimanı Treaty) which marked the beginning of free trade with Europe with lower taxes on trade and the abolition of state monopolies, saw the Armenian and also Greek merchants become a growing commercial bourgeoisie class 128 of the Empire as they were considered the traditional intermediaries between the European countries and the Ottoman Empire. 129 The growing size of the non-Muslim merchants compared to the Muslim counterparts however started to build the base of the social tension between the Muslim and Non-Muslim communities especially by and after the economic depression of 1870-1890 which took part alongside the escalation of ethnic tensions in Anatolia. 130

In such type of political and economic atmosphere however, among the neighbouring Eastern Anatolian populations (Armenians, Assyrians, Nestorians and Kurds), due to ‘their shared Islamic bond, Kurds were assumed to be more loyal and reliable to the Sultanate than the non-Muslim communities’. 131 From Kurd’s perspective, emerging Armenian nationalism was a treat both for Muslimhood and Kurdishness so that as Bozarslan states ‘Armenian nationalism itself in turn helped provoke the emergence of Kurdish nationalism’ 132 which also tacked Kurds with Muslim Turkish nationalism 133 at the time. For instance, the Hamidiye regiments had as one of their tasks to collect taxes from Armenian villages on behalf of the Sultanate, and were noted for their excessive use of violence and banditry during these tax collections, which escalated most infamously between 1894-96 in the massacres of Armenians. 134 Since the Hamidiye regiments had a high degree of legal immunity, no court had the competence to adjudicate

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128 Before the trade with Europe however, Armenians and Greeks as the urban based communities of the Empire traditionally dealt with trade, commerce and artisanship which was also a natural result of the Ottoman policy applied for centuries that of which did not allow the non-Muslim communities to professionalize in the public sector or state bureaucracy. For instance, becoming a soldier or public servant was reserved only for Muslims.

129 Quoted in Bedross Der Matossian, The Taboo within the Taboo: The Fate of ‘Armenian Capital’ at the End of the Ottoman Empire, European Journal of Turkish Studies [En ligne], Liste complète, 2011, mis en ligne le 06 octobre 2011, Consulté le 01 octobre 2016. URL : http://ejts.revues.org/4411


131 Bilgin Ayata,……., 2011, p.35


133 Tanıl Bora, Cereyanlar: Türkiye’de Siyasi İdeolojiler, İletişim Yayımları, 2017, p. 821

134 Bilgin Ayata,……..2011, p.38
On the other hand, the era of Abdulhamid II, was a controversial period in which the reform movement of *Tanzimat* reached its climax but at the same time the basic institutions of the reform such as the Parliament and the *Tanzimat* Constitution itself were dismissed and promulgated following the second year of Abdulhamid II reign. It was the period that a young Ottoman generation, namely the Young Ottomans, who were educated in the modern schools of the Empire became opponents to the Sultanate due to the suspension of the Constitution, his authoritarian rule and widespread surveillance. By the abolishment of the Constitution however they were driven underground and despite the differences among them, they were all favoured the replacement of Abdulhamid II’s absolute monarchy with a constitutional government.

The critical line and the legacy of the Young Ottomans provided the foundation for the Young Turk movement which subsequently emerged in early 20th century as a secret society and coalition of various reform groups. Young Turk movement which were consisted of Ottoman exiles, students, civil servants, and army officers transformed into a political organisation with the name of Committee of Union and later established as an official political party, namely The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). Mainly inspired by the Japanese modernization model which was perceived as remarkably successful in terms of embracing the western science and technology without losing their ‘Eastern spiritual essence’, the CUP was willing to re-establish the constitutional monarchy and aimed to solve the problems of the Empire by means of modern mediums and mechanisms which were believed to re-ensure the unity of the Empire. In 1908 they led a rebellion against the absolute rule of Abdulhamid II and announced the start of the Second Constitutional period in the Ottoman Empire. The Hamidian era in which the competing political formulas that would save the Ottoman state had collided, the state was in harmony with specific Kurdish groups.

**H. The Young Turks and Radicalization of Turkish Nationalism**

The overthrow of the Hamidian regime by The Young Turks of the CUP in 1908, however, despite its claim of being the successor of constitutionals and its promise to act in the name

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136 During his 40 years’ rule, the most far-reaching of his reforms were in education; 18 professional schools were established; Darülfünun, later known as the University of Istanbul, was founded (1900); and a network of secondary, primary, and military schools was extended throughout the empire. Also, the Ministry of Justice was reorganized, and railway and telegraph systems were developed. See: Britannica
of ‘Unity of the Elements’ as an ideal at the beginning, referred to the era in which the politicization of Turkishness became radicalized. The term ‘Young Turks’ was one that European observers first gave to the movement, but which those within the movement eventually adopted. Initially, the CUP consisted of members with different ethnic and religious backgrounds who were Ottoman patriots, rather than Turkish nationalists. For instance, sociologist Ziya Gökalp, who is perceived as the father of Turkish nationalism on the basis of his writings on Turkishness and the Turkish nation at the time, was the main ideologue of CUP and was himself of Kurdish origin. The CUP movement composed of members who embraced varied ideological orientations such as Westernism, Islamism, Turkism, positivism, centralism and decentralism. The particular form of the CUP's nationalist ideology however developed only over time, most distinctly after 1913, when it departed officially from the ideal of Ottomanism, otherwise after the Balkan Wars. At this point it is important to elaborate on the impact of the Balkan War on Ottoman society and politics in terms of politicization of Turkishness and Kurdishness along with several emerging nationalisms.

I. Balkans Wars as National Trauma

In 1912, the First Balkan War broke out and ended with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire as well as the loss of 85% of its European territory. Losing the Balkans, namely the Rumeli, which had been the heart of the Empire as the most advanced and productive province was very traumatic. Many in the empire saw their defeat as Allah's divine punishment for a society that did not know how to pull itself together. The Balkan Wars resulted in the mass expulsion of Muslims (known as muhacirs) from the Balkans, beginning in the mid-19th century as one of the significant factors which increased the politicization of Turkishness. Hundreds of thousands

137 Taner Akcam, *From empire to republic: Turkish nationalism and the Armenian genocide*, Zed Books, 2004, p.29
138 In his early years, Ziya Gökalp was loyal to the Ottoman cosmopolitanism as it was the case for the CUP government in its early years. Gökalp served in Salonika as an elected member of CUP and the cosmopolitan and tolerant impact of the city can be seen in his writing on Ottomanism during the time. After his return to Istanbul after the Balkan War, his understating and writings changed accordingly. After his return, he worked on the relationship between Islam and Turkish nationalism. For further readings see: Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks in Turkish Politics*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969. Taha Parla, *The Social and Political Thought of Ziya Gökalp 1876-1924*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985. Sina Akşin, *Jön Türkler ve İttihat ve Terakki (Young Turks and Committee of Union and Progress)*, Istanbul: Remzi Kitapevi, 1989. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition (Studies in Middle Eastern History)*, Oxford-New York 1995.
139 Ibid.
140 For a detailed analysis of the ideology and development within the CUP, see Hanioğlu (2001), Ahmad (1969), Zurcher (2004)
of Muslims, including Turks, Circassians, and Chechens, were expelled or forced to flee from the Caucasus and the Balkans as a result of the Russo-Turkish wars and the conflicts in the Balkans. Although Turkish nationalism had been on the agenda of Ottoman politics ever since the late 19th century, it was able to defeat Ottomanism only after the Balkan Wars, which ended in 1913 with a great loss of Ottoman territory.\footnote{Mesut Yegen, “Turkish nationalism and the Kurdish question”, Ethnic and Racial Studies, 30:1, 119-151, 2007, p.121}

The trauma of the Balkan wars had a significant impact on the new concept of Turkishness and its Anatolia perception which fed the idea of revenge by the non-Muslim ‘enemies’ that were perceived as the extensions of the Non-Muslim-West that had defeated Ottoman Muslims from the Balkans.\footnote{“From its initial conception in the process of defining the Turkish national identity in the late nineteenth century to this day, ‘the West’ has been contrasted to ‘the East’ in a continuous negotiation between the two constructs. ‘The West’ has either been celebrated as a ‘model’ to be followed or exercised as a threat to ‘indigenous’ national values.” Mehem Ahiska, ‘Occidentalism: The Historical Fantasy of the Modern’, The South Atlantic Quarterly, Volume 102, Number 2/3, Spring/Summer 2003, pp. 353-379, Published by Duke University Press} A journal published in Constantinople expressed the mood of the times: Let this be a warning ... O Muslims, don't get comfortable! Do not let your blood cool before taking revenge. As many as 850,000 Balkan refugees were settled in areas where the Armenians were resident from the period of 1878–1904.\footnote{Taner Akçam, A shameful act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility, New York: Metropolitan, 2006, p.86-87} Besides, deported Balkan refugees included a disproportionate percentage of the political and cultural élite, lost their ancestral homes\footnote{Erik Jan Zürcher, The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk’s Turkey, I.B Tauris, London, New York, 2010, p.71} most of which took prominent roles in CUP government. The radicalization of Turkish nationalism after the Balkan Wars manifested itself in the changing CUP policies, particularly towards Christian populations, and especially Armenians and to a certain extent towards non-Turkish communities living in the Empire.

The issue of land and having the means of power over a specific land as a governed and ruled territory became one of the primary challenges for the Ottoman Empire as it was the main power struggle between and inside the states. Since in that particular era of world history, as some had the fear of losing, others had the hope of gaining their ‘home-lands’. In this regard, it was crucially important for the CUP to secure economic and demographic power over the land. Accordingly, a theory of national economy [Milli İktisat] had been developed which strived to eliminate the Armenian and Greek presence from the field of the economy and replace it with a Turkish element, which would develop a capitalist bourgeoisie and take over the prominent...
role played by Armenians and Greeks. The political and social engineering of Turkish nationalism in the 20th century was also operating through demographic changes and it had two primary legs: exclusion of non-Muslims and assimilation of non-Turkish groups. Since from 1913 onwards, loyalty was thought to be expected only from Muslims (preferably Turkish ones), the equation of loyalty with ethnicity entailed a transformation of the region’s very demography. This process resulted in the mass deportation of Armenians and genocide in 1915 and the resettlement of non-Turkish minorities, specifically Kurds beginning from 1916.

During this transitional period, the integrated process of modernization and nationalization promoted and glorified a ‘Turkishness’ that was mainly based on mono-ethnicity, comprising one language and one religion. Islam, on the other hand, was an indispensable component of this Turkish identity as historically they were not separate entities. By doing so, Anatolia – which was religiously and ethnically diversified during the time – would be homogenised as the last territorial space to save the state in the form of nation state. This was a project to form the remaining unity based on the dominance of a Turkish national core. It is debatable whether they were already in the grip of Turkish nationalism or inspired by a Muslim-Ottoman proto-nationalism, but it is absolutely clear that the members of CUP identified themselves with the interests of the state (which they served as soldiers and bureaucrats) and of the Muslim majority. Their perceived enemy was as much an ‘enemy within’ as an ‘enemy without’.

On the other hand, in terms of the particular situation of the Kurds during the same period, it was the CUP government that changed the name of Kurdistan to Vilayat-ı Şarkiya (The Orient/East Province) and applied gradual and forced resettlement as a way to assimilate non-Turkish elements of society and create a homogeneous territory. It was important for CUP

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151 Erik Jan Zürcher, The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk’s Turkey, I.B Tauris, London, New York, 2010, p.69
152 The roles of Kurdish tribes in the Armenian massacres was the official reason for these resettlements.
Kurds “not to live their tribal lives and preserve their nationalities where they are sent,” and it was “absolutely necessary to separate the tribal chieftains from their people”, as well as to “settle them separately in Turkish-populated areas in the province.” Those who were unable to travel were to be “distributed individually in Turkish villages in the province and wherever sent, the population of Kurds was not to exceed the general population up to an upper limit of 5%”.  

On the other hand, the Hamidian Regiments had been saved and renamed as Tribal Regiments and in spite of a series of Kurdish rebellions against the CUP government between 1908 and 1914, the alliance of the regiments with the centre continued until the end of the First World War. In the Armenian massacres took place in 1915 however, the Balkan refugees and considerable part of the Kurds played a vital role. As a result of this process the properties were re-distributed by special state agencies to Muslim refugees from the Balkans who were resettled, or, to local leading families or the aghas (hereditary leaders) of Kurdish tribes which the state hoped to urge to become sedentary. This was the path to Turkification and Islamization of society and to the appropriation of wealth.

Section II: Late Ottoman Kurdish Movements: Traditional Kurdists, Cultural Modernizers

The history of the emergence of Kurdish nationalism is one of the most debated topics in the literature on the Kurds as there are diversified views resulting from various definitions of nationalism, changing methodologies and, due to readings based on the current political context. Although the Kurds as a significant group of people with their distinct language and culture, and Kurdistan as a defined geography in which Kurds live, and also as an administrative region were in use since the Selçuklu Empire (1037-1194), the politicization of Kurdish identity and its convergence into a political nationalism – as a form of nationalism is explicitly orientated around the pursuit of sovereign statehood and territory which is usually expressed

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154 Ibid.
through a particular politicized ethnic identity—first appeared in the late 20th century and specifically after the First World War.

As covered previously, the state driven modernization and centralization processes, emerging nationalisms in Europe and in the European regions of the Empire gave colour to the late Ottoman era which was also the period in which Kurdish nationalism was planted. To put in a different way, as Bozarslan suggested, “the spread of a more or less aggressive Turkish nationalism among the Young Turk circles in exile at the turn of the twentieth century also reinforced nationalist feelings among the Kurds. By the end of the century, a cultural, if not political, nationalism was quite well diffused among the Kurdish educated elite”.158

On the other hand, it is important to note that in the late Ottoman era, as it was the case for the Turkish nationalism too, the nationalism(s) that emerged among the Kurds was neither unified nor linear; it was leaded/guided by diverse actors, who embraced different references on the basis of different social and political discomforts and demands as well as future visions. Accordingly, rather than to define it as nationalism in today’s sense, it is preferable to note that Kurdist sentiments or sensibility in the late Ottoman period had varying shades. Among the heterogeneity of the motivations however, while the dominant Kurdishness or Kurdist sensibility presented in the framework of Islam and tribal structure in general, there was one more defining tendency led by the Kurdish educated elite. To put it differently, there were two significant/defining axes among the Kurdish movement in the late Ottoman era: On the one hand, it was the rural based traditional-conservative axis, and on the other it was the axis of the urban based cultural modernizers.

At this point, the effect of Hamidiye Regiments and the Tribal Schools should be noted as one of the factors that sowed the seeds of Kurdish nationalism. These two apparatuses, which were designed during the Hamidian regime to create loyal Ottoman citizens in particular through Islam, in the long term and under changing dynamics, dialectically resulted in opposing but interrelated processes to reoccur side by side among Kurds. They yet created divergent Kurdish positions among those who also had the potential to converge with each other. For instance, as Bruinessen states, while the Hamidiye regiments and the Tribal Schools impeded the unification

of Kurds and reinforced tribal divisions that had fractured Kurdish society for centuries,\(^\text{159}\) as Olson notes, they also accelerated modernization and nationalism amongst Kurds, since the training of Kurdish soldiers in the west of the Empire exposed Kurdish soldiers to intellectual circles in Istanbul and to the debates on nationalism there in which Kurdish soldiers went on to play an important role in advancing nationalist ideas a few years later. The military experience and training that Kurds gained through the Hamidiye regiments strengthened the demands for statehood, and several uprisings took place in subsequent decades.\(^\text{160}\) As noted previously, these uprisings had traditional and religious motives and were led by traditional actors. The formation of Hamidiye regiments and the emergence of a nationhood among young members of the former emirates’ families took place simultaneously.

\section*{A. Kurdish Cultural Nationalism: Kurdish Organizations and Press}

The first newspaper in Kurdish (Kurmanji dialect) \textit{Kurdistan} began publication on 22 April 1898\(^\text{161}\) in Egypt\(^\text{162}\) by individual efforts of a notable Botan Kurdish family member, Mithat Mikdat. \textit{Kurdistan} had a supplement in French. In the newspaper, articles on Kurdish history were included without any interruption since the 8\(^{th}\) issue. In addition, the sections of Ehmedê Xani’s\(^\text{163}\) \textit{Mem û Zîn}\(^\text{164}\) were published in pieces from 2\(^{nd}\) to 21\(^{st}\) issue. Mem û Zîn as a tragic love story between two lovers, Mem and Zin from different regions of Kurdistan who fall in love at the celebration of Newroz, and is considered a cornerstone in the history of Kurdish language and literature. However, it was more than a love story and Xani became a guide for Kurds in terms of his emphasis on the importance of writing in the Kurdish language and the statements he made on the oppression of the Kurds by the Turks, Arabs and Persians in the absence of unity among Kurds. For this reason, \textit{Kurdistan} published pieces of Xani’s work both as an example of a masterpiece written in Kurdish and due to its call for a united Kurdishness.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[161] 22 April is celebrated as the ‘birth of Kurdish press’.
\item[162] Due to the Ottoman pressure, the newspaper had not been able to be published on regular basis and some issues could only be printed in several European countries. (Bora, 2017: 821)
\item[163] Madrasah-educated, well known Kurdish mullah and poet.
\item[164] The devastation weakened by the Ottoman-Safavid wars on these people was mourned, for example, by Ehmedê Xani, who versified the famous Kurdish epic, \textit{Mem û Zîn}, in 1694. While the story is a Kurdish version of a love story between two individuals from rival clans whose union is obstructed—a recurring theme in the literature of the entire Middle East—the story is said by many to represent, through Mem and Zin, the protagonists, the two parts of Kurdistan divided between the Ottoman and Iranian empires and the failure of the Kurdish people to unite under a ruler of their own (for this interpretation see, for example, Hassanpour, Nationalism and Language, 83–90).8.Tezcan, “Development of the Use of ‘Kurdistan,’
\end{footnotes}
Although *Kurdistan* was originally announced to be released twice a month, it was not regularly released because of the lack of reporters, political pressure and financial problems. The newspaper’s critical stance towards the Abdulhamid regime caused it to be banned in the Ottoman territories. For this reason, the newspaper was published in Cairo, Egypt, where Ottoman influence had greatly weakened during the time. When it faced pressures in Egypt too, some of the issues were printed in Geneva, London, Folkstone and distributed secretly in the Kurdish region of the Empire.\(^\text{165}\)

*Figure I: Pages from the first issue of Kurdistan Newspaper*

The *Kurdistan* was a publication that promoted the notion of Kurdishness/ Kurdist sensibility and called on the Kurdish tribal and religious leaders - as they were the wealthy members of the Kurdish society - to educate their children in modern schools and promote the building of schools in Kurdish villages.\(^\text{166}\) One of the primary themes of the newspaper, as a consequence of the Kurdish-Armenian confrontation in the region, was Kurdish-Armenian relations. As a response to the violent acts of the Hamidian Regiments during the era, the articles published in the newspaper suggest a collaboration between Kurds and Armenians.\(^\text{167}\)

When it comes to relations with the Sultanate, it is possible to divide the publication policy of the *Kurdistan* into three different periods: the moderate first period, the second period in which the Istanbul government was criticized hard, and the third period, in which closer relations were established with, and followed combined actions with the Young Turks.\(^\text{168}\) Furthermore, with

\(^{165}\) During London and Folkstone periods, *Kurdistan* and *Osmanlı* (Ottoman in English, and was the newspaper of Young Turks who exiled in Europe by the Hamidian regime) were printed in the same printing houses. The articles published in *Osmanlı* and *Kurdistan* which were sympathetic to each other shows that the Young Turks and the Kurds in exile had interaction with each other especially on the shared base of being opponents of the Hamidian regime.

\(^{166}\) Tanıl Bora….., 2017, p. 821


\(^{168}\) UKAM, P.13
regards to the theme of Kurdish-Armenian friendship and collaboration, certain readings were significant in the newspaper. Armenians were categorized as ‘defeatist’ and ‘innocent’ in the newspaper, which also called to protect the rights of the ‘innocent’ Armenians - who were in fact a group which accepted Kurdish patronage. On the other hand, since it threatened the Ottoman territory and claimed to establish an independent Armenia which expanded over the land of Kurdistan, the necessity of putting up a fight prevailed. This excluded genocide or massacre against the Armenians, defined as the ‘defeatist, furious minority’, but the idea of the need to fight was also seemingly supported as an idea in the journal. Through its articles, the Kurdistan tried to draw a clear line which was against both the Hamidian regiments’ violence towards Armenians and armed Armenian activism. 

Despite its fragmented perception and selective reading on Armenians, the themes of friendship and collaboration with Armenians, which was uncommon during the time, was an important fact to underline about the journal. However, it is also important to note that this theme did not receive any significant appreciation from the Kurds by and large, and had a very limited effect on Kurdish educated elites.

In 1900, the first organization established around the idea of a Kurdish national identity was Kurdistan Azm-i Kavi (Kurdistan Strong/Iron Will, KAK) led by the prominent religious figures who were members of madrasah tradition. Since Kurdish education was common practice in madrasah, and madrasahs were taken as the main places in which Kurdishness as a culture had been lived and reproduced, the KAK did not see Kurdish identity as separate from the Islamic identity, so they worked to strength both. Said-i Kurdi who was named as a Bediüzzaman which meant ‘the unique and high personality of his time, the polestar of his time’ was one of the key and politically active members of KAK during this period. After the dismissal of the Abdulhamid regime, the KAK was in favour of the CUP government in terms of its constitutionalist features, but in the short term, due to the growing Turkish nationalist discourse of the CUP, Kurdish figures inside KAK, such as Said-i Kurdi, moved away from CUP policies. This was also the time of the emergence of a significant tendency among the Kurdish educated elites.

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170 Madrasas were the traditional Muslim Schools in Ottoman Empire which were also the universities of that era.
171 Said-i Kurdi (1877-1960), later known as Said-i Nursi. Defined himself as a Republican religious person beginning from the 1900. He was supporter of Republicanism, mainly inspired of Jean Jacques Rousseau (Tanıl Bora,….., 2017, p. 424)
172 Tanıl Bora, …. , 2017, p. 823
elites, who had started to express their objections to the identification of combined Kurdish and Islamic identities and this identification began to be debated as a problematic phenomenon.

As it is stated in the previous section, the CUP era was generally defined by the radicalization of Turkish nationalism. However, several Kurdish organizations which offer examples of Kurdish cultural nationalism were founded during this period. For instance, following the establishment of the CUP government, the second Kurdish organisation, which was the first in terms of its modern approach was Kürd Terakki ve Teavün Cemiyeti (Kurdish Society for Mutual Aid and Progress (KTTC), founded in 1908 in Istanbul by the Kurdish educated elite and notables. The prominent Kurdish figures of the time such as Seyit Abdülkadir, Saidi Kurdi (Nursi), Babanzade İsmail Hakkı and Hacı Tevfik (Piremerd) were among the founding cadres of KTTC. It was an important umbrella organization in terms of bringing together the big and notable Kurdish families, namely the Bedirhan, Şemdinan and Babanzade, who had previously been in conflict with each other. Among the members of the party, many belonged to old Kurdish emirate families who had been dismantled by the central Ottoman government earlier in the nineteenth century, and who had been living in ‘exile’ in the capital ever since.

As well as defending the Constitution and declaring loyalty to CUP’s party programme, under its regulations the KTTC defined making Kurdish a language of modern education, printing publications in Kurdish, preparing the history of Kurdish literature, fulfilling modern needs of Kurds and opening party branches in Kurdish populated regions as the aims of the organization. The KTTC was loyal to the Ottoman ideals and emphasised the importance of the Kurdish element in the Ottoman context, and argued that the education, modernisation and protection of the freedoms of the Kurdish people were important not just for Kurdish society,

173 “Kürd Terakki ve Teavün Cemiyeti (Kurdish Society for Progress and Mutual Aid), Osmanlı Kürtlük Ittihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti (Society for Kurdish Ottoman Union and Progress), Kürtlük Muhibleri Cemiyeti (Society for Kurdistan Lovers), Ciwata Talebeyi Kurdan-Hêvi (Society for Kurdish Students-Hope), Kürtlük Teali Cemiyeti (Society for the Rise of Kurdistan) and Kürd Kadınlari Cemiyeti (Society for Kurdish Women). Some Kurdish cultural activities also emerged in that period. These organizations were cultural organizations and were not Kurdish separatist groups with the political goal of secession from the Ottoman Empire.” Mehmet Orhan, “Kurdish Rebellions and Conflict Groups in Turkey during the 1920s and 1930s”, Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs Vol. 32, No. 3, September 2012, 339–358, p.340


but for the good of the empire overall.\textsuperscript{178} To put in differently, as Bozarslan stated, the commitment to the constitutional regime with an emphasis on freedom and unity of Kurds within the larger framework of the Ottoman State, with special emphasis on the advancement of Kurdish civilisation and Kurdish freedom, were two political tendencies among the KTTC members during the time.\textsuperscript{179}

Apart from the central body in Istanbul, KTTC shortly opened branches in different parts of the Kurdish region such as Mosul, Muş, Van, Bitlis and Diyarbakır. Unlike many of the Kurdish intellectuals in the capital who supported the CUP (at least for the first few years of its governance), members of Kurdish clubs (KTTC) in the provinces sought a return to the [Hamidian] status quo before the Constitution. As a shared characteristic with the central body in Istanbul, the local KTTC branches also used Kurdish vocabulary while expressing their views or protesting the CUP regime, but their demands were in favour of a return to the previous regime [Hamidian] and had no national tone. For instance, ‘their calls to ‘return to the Sharia’ were symbolic of this aspiration’.\textsuperscript{180}

The KTTC sponsored the publication of the eponymous journal, \textit{Kürd Teavün ve Terakki Gazetesi} (Kurdish Journal of Mutual Aid and Progress, hereafter KTTG), and also set up an educational organisation, \textit{Kurd Nesr-i Maarif Cemiyeti} (Kurdish Society for the Diffusion of Learning), which is said to have established a school for Kurdish children in the capital.\textsuperscript{181}

KTTG was bilingual, published in both Turkish and Kurdish, and two dialects of Kurdish, namely Kurmanci and Sorani, were used in the journal. Under the journal’s name, there was a fixed phrase written in Turkish which read: “It comes out once a week, it is a religious, scientific, political, literary and social newspaper” (Hür, 2011).\textsuperscript{182} In the first issue of the KTTG, the article written by Babanzade İsmail and entitled as "Kurds and Kurdistan" was significant in terms of defining the Kurdish identity and its components in a hierarchical order through the eyes of Kurdish elites of the time. According to this, ‘Kurds must first be Muslims, then

\textsuperscript{178} Janet Klein, “Kurdish nationalists and nonnationalist Kurdists: rethinking minority nationalism and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1909”, Nations and Nationalism 13 (1), 2007, 135–153, p. 139
\textsuperscript{179} Mehmet Emin Bozarslan, \textit{Kürd Teavün ve Terakki Gazetesi}, Uppsala: İsveç, Deng yayinevi (Wesanxana Deng), 1998p. 22
\textsuperscript{180} Janet Klein, “Kurdish nationalists and nonnationalist Kurdists: rethinking minority nationalism and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1909”, Nations and Nationalism 13 (1), 2007, 135–153, p. 143
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid.p.139
\textsuperscript{182} Ayşe Hür, “Küllerinden Doğan Kürt Basını” [Kurdish Press which was born from its ashes], on 10 April 2011, Available at: http://duzceyerelhaber.com/Ayse-HUR-Taraf-yazilari/1204-Kullerinden-dogan-Kurt-basimi
genuine, real Ottomans, and finally Kurds’.183 The unity of the Kurds was one of the primary topics addressed by the writers and Kurdish society was called on to stop internal fights among one another.

As covered by the Kurdistan previously, Kurdish-Armenian relations were also among the popular topics that the KTTG covered, but the difference was that in the KTTG, the Armenian massacres that took place in 1894–1896 were never mentioned directly. Unlike the Kurdistan’s clear, direct and self-critical approach in terms of Kurdish participation (referring to the members of Hamidiye regiments and other Kurdish notables) in the Armenian massacres, ‘KTTG gave the biggest responsibility to the Hamidian regime by defining it as a government which encouraged killing and plundering then all the killings as a result of the brutality of the Kurds’.184 The KTTG was among the publications that the CUP regime banned during the time.

With its diversified components, Kurdish cultural nationalism did not have the chance to develop any further under the given conditions of Ottoman Empire and it did not receive significant support from the Kurdish majority, in particular on its, more or less, friendship-based Armenian approach. As stated earlier, a series of Kurdish rebellions took place during 1909-1914 against the CUP government under the leadership of engaged Kurdish tribal leaders and sheiks, which ‘first started against the Armenians then turned into opposition against the state’.185 However, this opposition was far from having a Kurdish nationalist agenda and the Kurds mostly sided with the Turks during the First World War (1914–1918).

B. From Cultural Nationalism to Political Nationalism

After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War, Kurdish nationalism was revived with a more political approach. The Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti (Association for the Elevation of Kurdistan, KTC) brought a diversified group of Kurdish elite/notables together under its roof and as a consequence of this pluralistic membership profile, the party did not have a homogenous political programme. While some party members were defending a clear Kurdish future, some others, like the head of the party, were suggesting autonomy and the unity of Turks and Kurds.186 To put it differently, the ‘secular-modern’ wing inside the party was willing to imagine a separate Kurdistan, while the ‘religious -traditional’ wing was in favour of

183 According to Aydinkaya, before describing Kurds as Ottomans inserting adjectives like “real” “genuine” or “without a hidden agenda” indirectly referred to the Armenians and their debatable loyalty to Ottoman identity.
185 Bozraslan,.., 2002, p. 846
186 Ibid. p.847
autonomy. Officially, KTC was suggesting regional autonomy for Kurdish populated provinces and advocating Kurdish governors for these provinces with the condition of staying loyal to the Sultan and the Caliphate. In its official documents, the party was using the phrase *Autonomie du Kurdistan* in French.\(^{187}\) Despite the diversified stances and the views under its roof, the KTC departed from the first Kurdish intellectual activities in the last period of the Ottoman Empire with its claim for a national independent body of self-governance and supported nationalism in the modern sense. The members of KTC were the “passive receivers” and “active users” of Western ideas, and were greatly influenced by positivism and social Darwinism in the late 19\(^{th}\) and early 20\(^{th}\) centuries. In this sense, the party had too much in common with the Turkish Unionists and Arab nationalist elites\(^{188}\).

The unofficial newspaper of KTC was *Jin* which means ‘Life’ in English. In the first issue of the newspaper, Siverekli Hilmi’s article entitled "Address to Kurdish Youth" defined the aim of the journal as follows: "To publish on Kurdish historical life, national rights, literature and sociology which have been neglected for centuries"\(^{189}\). Through the articles published in *Jin* it is understood that the journal defined a political duty for itself which mainly aimed to extend the distinct features of the Kurds as a nation, that distinguished it from other nations, as well as attaching it to the international community by means of establishing a boundary through this distinctiveness. In fact, this was an approach that demonstrated the creativity of the *Jin* writers in imagining a modern nation in the European sense, formed out of traditional Kurdish society. The writers in their articles were frequently complaining about the lack of national consciousness which was linked with ignorance and illiteracy among the Kurds. ‘Mother tongue education, namely in Kurdish’ was suggested as way to fulfil this gap.\(^{190}\) The “urgency mood” in terms of building a national consciousness among the Kurds and placing Kurds as a nation with a relevant/deserved place in the contemporary league of international nations/civilizations was a dominant theme among the *Jin* writers.

\(^{187}\) Tanıl Bora,…, 2017, p. 824

\(^{188}\) Hamit Bozarslan, “‘Being in Time’: Kurdish Movement and Quests of Universal’, The Kurdish Question Revisited, Edited by Gareth Stansfield and Mohammed Shareef, 2005, p.43-44

\(^{189}\) UKAM

\(^{190}\) Tanıl Bora,…, 2017, p. 824
During the efforts to define the Kurds, with their distinctive features as a nation and as a response to the lack of Kurdish historical writing, the journal writers invented/constructed a national history for Kurds including national days, myths and symbols, since they perceived these as *sine qua non* requirements of being a nation. For instance, announcing the legend of Blacksmith Kawa as a significant national day for Kurds on every 31 August was an invention of *Jin* writers. Mesopotamia was defined as the imagined Kurdish land and “Blacksmith Kawa” was described as the mythical Kurdish hero. The story was created as a descent and resistance myth on the basis of the legendary struggle by Blacksmith Kawa against the Assyrian King Dhahhak, an Assyrian tyrant, who led Kurds (literally the Meds who were accepted as Kurds’ ancestor) to resist and rise up against tyranny and exploitation. Accepting 21 March as the New Year’s Day of Kurds – which was already celebrated at the time by Middle Eastern societies traditionally including Kurds - was part of the Kurdish national repertoire that the *Jin* writers invented during the time.

As seen in most forms of nationalism, the invention of the resources of Kurdish nationalism was a way for the writers to build Kurdish history on an ancient past, to establish a sense of continuity between generations which provides a persistence line between past, present and future. It was also way for the writers to link this legendary past with the contemporary terminology of the time, which applied the Wilson Principles suggesting a universalized right to self-determination. Like the previous Kurdish newspapers, *Jin* covered Kurdish-Armenian relations as one of the primary topics published in the journal. There were pieces on this topic...
in 20 issues over a total of 25. Yet despite the fact that the Armenian killings were still taking place in the field, the 1915 massacres as a topic were almost completely ignored by both secular and conservative cadres of Jin. Indeed, in the post-first world war era and with reference to the Wilson Principles, Jin was projecting its politics towards the idea of a Kurdistan which could be established on the basis of Kurds being the stronger majority in the region in the absence of Armenians after the 1915 genocide. 191

Overall the Kurds who were the founders and the agents of Kurdish cultural nationalism were mainly urban based, educated elites who were far away from the regional and internal dynamics playing out among the mainstream Kurdish masses. Moreover, as Bruinessen states, for these elites, politics was a play of gentlemen, which was of no concern for the masses.192 They were educated in Ottoman schools and were very much influenced by the changing dynamics at the centre of the Sultanate, like their contemporaneous. For instance, while mainstream Kurdishness developed a nationalism against Armenian nationalism in the region, these young Kurds invented their Kurdishness as a response to the Turkish nationalism of the Young Turks, and both were shaped under the impact of the nationalism wing received from Europe. In the long run, these young cultural modernizers had become the source of reference for the Kurdish nationalist movement which emerged in the late 20th century.

However, during their time as a small group of people they had a very limited impact on Kurdish society. In general, Kurds were loyal to their tribal relations and to religion, which went much ahead with the nationalist consciousness in its modern sense. In accordance with the comprehensiveness of the millet system at the time, Kurds did not separate themselves from other Muslim components of the Ottoman Empire.

Section III: Republic of Turkey and Invention of ‘Kurdish Question’

A. Independence War: Mobilizing Muslims, Establishing Turkish Nation State

Following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in First World War, the Treaty of Sévres was signed in 1920 between the victorious allies and the Ottoman Empire. According to the Treaty, while the Ottoman Empire was abolished and obliged to renounce all rights over Arabia, Asia and North Africa, Armenians were promised an independent state and Kurds guaranteed

192 Martin van Bruinessen, Kürdistan Üzerine Yazılar, trans. by N. Kiraç et İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002, p. 150
autonomy with the right to appeal to the Council of the League of Nations within one year\textsuperscript{193} on the condition that the majority of the population desired independence from Turkey, and if the Council then considered that these peoples were capable of such independence and recommended that it should be granted to them.\textsuperscript{194} The Treaty of Sèvres is seen as the realization of the Sykes Picot Agreement of 1916 which was drafted in the final years of First World War, as a secret document negotiated by British officer Mark Sykes and French diplomat François Georges-Picot which divides the Middle East into British and French zones of influence and delineates the borders of the modern Middle East. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the borders drawn in the Sykes Picot agreement were signed into law with the Treaty of Sèvres.

A growing Turkish nationalist movement which was founded previously in 1919 by the former CUP members, did not recognize the Sèvres Treaty and started a national war of independence. In April 1920, on the basis of the dissolved Parliament in Istanbul, Mustafa Kemal called elections throughout the country in order to convene a new parliament. As a result of this process, the new parliament was opened in Ankara in 1921 and it was called as the Grand National Assembly of Turkey by a cabinet decree. The 1921 Constitution was adopted on January 20 and it was a simple document consisting of only 23 short articles. The first article of the constitution of 1921 had already de facto defined Turkey as a republic, declaring that ‘Sovereignty is vested in the nation without condition. The governmental system is based on the principle of self-determination and government by the people’. One other important aspect of this constitution is that it was the first and last Turkish constitution, in which the preferred moniker of the country was ‘the State of Turkey’ rather than ‘the Turkish State’.\textsuperscript{195} Accordingly, the Sultanate was abolished by the Ankara Parliament in 1922.

The majority of Kurds in Turkey supported the resistance during the War of Independence which defined the militarily defensible borders for the state by a manifesto called the \textit{Misak-i Milli} (National Pact)\textsuperscript{196} led by Mustafa Kemal who later became the founder of the Turkish nation state. In the National Pact however, rather than emphasizing ethnicity, religion was prioritized as a criterion and the tone of public communication to convince and mobilize the existing society for an independence war.\textsuperscript{197} During the time, despite the existence of well-

\textsuperscript{193} Tanıl Bora,……,2017p. 827
\textsuperscript{194} Treaty of Sèvres, p. 19, for full version see: \url{http://sam.baskent.edu.tr/belge/Sevres_ENG.pdf}
\textsuperscript{195} On the Way of a New Constitution: Constitutional History, Political Parties and Civil Platforms, Friedrich Ebert Shiftung (2011), Available at: \url{http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/tuerkei/12220.pdf}
\textsuperscript{196} The National Pact corresponds to Turkey’s current borders except Mosul province. It was a sacred goal to achieve during the time and is still a sacred territory that should be saved.
\textsuperscript{197} M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, \textit{A Brief History of the Ottoman Empire}, Princeton University Press, 2008.
diffused Kurdish nationalism and despite efforts to establish independent Kurdish state, Kurdish society largely perceived itself to be in and as the part of the former Ottoman context, on the basis of its loyalty to the Caliphate and fundamentally to the Islamic state framework.

At the formation process of the independence war by means of the congress held in different cities of Anatolia and in his letters of invitation to the Kurdish tribal leaders Mustafa Kemal presented the struggle as the one to protect the Caliphate and resist Armenian attacks. In Amasya Meetings in 1919 for instance, autonomy for Kurds was negotiated, and it was declared by Amasya Protocol that the remaining Ottoman country was the territory of both Turks and Kurds. Even in 1923, in his statement given in İzmit, Mustafa Kemal referred to local autonomy for Kurds for one more and actually last time.

As it was clarified in Mustafa Kemal’s letters to the Kurdish tribal leaders, the Armenian issue meanwhile, in terms of the crimes committed against them, became one of the primary factors that determined the position of Kurdish nationalists. This was also a tool used by Turkish nationalists to motivate the Kurds to be part of the independence war. The inexplicit nature of Sévres, which suggested autonomy for Kurds but proposed the establishment of an Armenian state, was one of the primary reasons for which Kurds sided with the Turks during the Independence War. The Kurdish nationalist figures who were active, especially in the international political sphere, and who raised the claim of Kurdish autonomy or independence did not receive sufficient support from the Kurdish masses. Among the diversified reasons for this lack of support, as Bruinessen stated, the Armenian massacres played a paradoxical function: in fact, it was the Armenian massacres which made the idea of Kurdistan possible by means of the extinction of the Armenians from the region. It was also the weight of the Armenian massacres on the shoulders of the Kurds which would oblige Kurdish community leaders and to some extent the Kurdish nationalists to abandon the Kurdistan aim until a later stage.

It is also important to note that some part of the region considered by Kurds to be their historic homeland, namely Kurdistan, was (and is) part of Western Armenia, according to the Armenians. The possibility of Armenians returning and asking for their captured lands and wealth was a primary fear for both the Kurds and Turks during the time and consequently most

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199 Ibid, p.266-268
200 Tani Bora, 2017, p 827.
201 Tani Bora, 2017.
of the Kurds preferred to side with a Muslim Turkish national movement rather than with the possibility of an ‘infidel’ Armenian state. Besides this, the promise given to Kurds by Mustafa Kemal which referred to a "state of Turks and Kurds", to protect the Caliphate and to preserve Islam as the basis of the new state, which would be established after the independence war, was also a convincing reason for which the Kurds sided with the Turks. In other words, the shared cultural and religious features in a social context and the promised prosperity through power sharing in a political context constituted the ground for the Kurds being part of the Turkish War of Independence.

Only three years later, after successful battles of the Turkish independence movement and heavy diplomatic traffic, the second conference of the allies in Lausanne in 1923 suspended the agreement of Sévres, and the borders of present-day Turkey were redrawn. This time, the promises of autonomy given to Kurds and Armenians were ignored in favour of a larger territory for Turkey.²⁰² By the Lausanne Treaty in 1923, while Turkey, Iraq and Syria were established as nation states resulting out of the former Ottoman territories, Kurds were divided within the borders of four nation states including Iran. The largest population of Kurds however remained in Turkey. At this point it is worth to quote Bozarslan’s detailed assessment regarding this second division of Kurdistan:

>This new division of Kurdistan was in fact much more critical than the first one that resulted from the Qasr-i Chirin Agreement between the Ottoman Empire and Iran in 1639. The Qasr-i Chirin Agreement was signed in a period when the concept of nationhood did not exist. The Kurds were simply one among many other ethnic groups divided between larger political entities. These borders, moreover, separated the empires but not the populations... During the second division of Kurdistan in the 1920s, however, the question of the borders was directly linked to that of nationhood. The Kurds clearly understood that the new division implied the split-up of their nation and regarded it as a betrayal by the Kemalist state of its early promises to protect the Kurds at any costs. Moreover, the newly established borders were militarized... For the Kurds, communication among family and tribe members could thus only be maintained by militarily challenging the borders and the national sovereignties that the borders represented²⁰³

On 29 October 1923, the Republic of Turkey was founded as a laic²⁰⁴ and modern nation state and Mustafa Kemal was elected as its first president. The founding of the Republic of Turkey

²⁰² Bilgin Ayata,…..2011, p.47
²⁰⁴ Opposed to the general use, Republic of Turkey is not a secular state but it is a laic state because the state has not distanced itself equally from all religions, beliefs and non-belief. A French version of laicism adopted in Turkey which is embodied in the principles of Kemalism and operated as a political religion.
led to the end of the Ottoman millet system with the new political reforms. The abolition of the Sultanate in 1922 was followed by the abolishment of Caliphate in 1924 by the Great National Assembly, both of which later became the significant foundation of the new regime’s claim to define itself as a clear departure from the Ottoman past. Despite this claim, the dominant nationalistic discourse which was expanded over time, and the myth of ‘Westernization’ which referred to the continuity of centralized top-down modernization, were taken for granted from the recent Ottoman past. The standing policy line towards the non-Muslim communities formed another continuity between the late Ottoman and newly Republican states. The exclusion policies especially against Armenians and Greeks as the Christian communities of the former Ottoman Empire, which had previously been seen as the natural allies of Russian and Western expansionism as a continuous state of mind were taken for granted by the new Republic. Although the Lausanne Treaty protected the rights of non-Muslim communities, as in the late Ottoman past, the non-Muslim elements of society continued to be perceived as a threat to national unity and to territorial integrity.

B. Making the Modern State and the Laic Nation

Muslim but non-Turkish elements of society were the primary issue for the Republican regime, as a category that should be assimilated well in the given demographic situation, in which Muslims eventually became the majority. The creation of a national identity on the basis of a majority ethnicity inevitably involves the creation of minorities who are ‘perceived[d] as too alien or politically unreliable for incorporation or amalgamation.’

Although Turkishness had not been claimed as the basis for the new nation state at the beginning and Kurds were previously defined by Mustafa Kemal as the founding elements of the new state, shortly after, Turkish nationalism became the constitutive ideology of the laic modern

205 Despite the Treaty does not mention any specific non-Muslim community, as a result of Turkey’s official position, only Armenians, Greeks, and Jews are accepted as minorities as they were the three largest non-Muslim communities in the Ottoman administration system. By the Articles 37–45, the non-Muslim minorities in Turkey are granted the right to use their own language, the right of political and civic equality, the right to establish religious, educational, and social welfare institutions, and the right to freedom of religion, travel, and migration. On the other hand, Other non-Muslim religious groups, for example, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Nestorians, who were not included in the Ottoman Millet system, were denied any distinct minority status. By the same token, the Baha’is, the Yezidis, and believers of the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Catholic United churches (the Chaldean Church and the Syrian Catholic Church), and the Roman Catholic Church were not included in the protectionist framework that emerged from the official interpretation of the Treaty. See: Şule Toktaş & Bülent Aras, “The EU and Minority Rights in Turkey”, Political Science Quarterly Volume 124 Number 4 2009–10.

206 The Wealth Tax in 1942, mainly imposed on Christians and Jews, and the deportation of 40,000 Greeks in 1955 due to the Cyprus conflict were state practices which literally attempted to erase the non-Muslim features of society.

nation state, since it was taken as the main instrument of the desired modernization on the basis of creating a homogeneous unity. In 1924, inspired by the French and Polish constitutions, the new constitution was formally entitled the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey and replaced the constitution of 1921. By the 1924 Constitution however, the statement of “state of Turkey” in the 1921 Constitution was replaced with the “Turkish state” and Turkishness was officially introduced in terms of citizenship. In this way, Kurds were erased as one of the two founding nations and the promise made to them regarding autonomy was ignored completely. Ignorance regarding the Kurds expanded over time, and its articulation became absent in the public sphere of Turkey.

Just one year on from the establishment of the Republic, an intense reform period had started and in April 1924 the National Law Court Organization Regulation (Mahkeme Teşkilatı Kanunu) brought an end to the Şerîye (sharia) courts, retired their judges and transferred their jurisdiction to the secular courts. Subsequently, in May 1924, madrasas were closed. The legislation on the unification of education in 1924 and the introduction of European style family law in 1926 caused the secular state to directly control these important fields and consequently contracted the role of the religious establishment.

Two presidencies, namely the Presidency of Religious Affairs (PRA) and Presidency of General Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces (PTAF), established only six months after the foundation of the Republic are important to note, since they were invented as the ‘security pillars’ of the republican regime. As autonomous bodies which were free from the control of civil government, these two institutions played a crucial role in terms of building and maintaining the national modernization project of the new regime. For instance, the PRA, founded in 1924 to substitute the office of Sheikh-ul-Islam of the Ottoman Empire, to regulate and monitor Islam and religious affairs, recruited some of the leading and lower rank late Ottoman ulema and incorporated them into the republican state in a selective manner. The PRA was designed as an apparatus of the state to control and invent a unique interpretation of Islam, which would not contradict with the founding principles of the new regime. Islam, which was almost excluded from the public sphere by the Republican regime, was introduced by the PRA for the Muslims to stay in the borders of the private sphere. This interpretation was heavily influenced

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208 The Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, Article 88.
209 Mehmet Orhan, “Kurdish Rebellions and Conflict Groups in Turkey during the 1920s and 1930s”, Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs Vol. 32, No. 3, September 2012, p. 341-342
by Ziya Gokalp’s vision of Islam and is observable in his writings through the 1910s. On the other hand, PTAF was presented as the saviour of the country and the guardian of the laic nation state. As Mete Tunçay states, despite the official formulation, which was content to separate the worldly from the divine and to oppose the exploitation of religion for political purposes, the principle of laicism, and in particular the manner of its application… became an instrument for control and supervision of Islam by the state.

The language reform was another crucial part of the Republican nationalist program. According to the law in 1928, the text for written Turkish was changed from Arabic to Latin and the reform called for a drastic alteration of both the spoken and the written languages. By the same law, numbers written in Arabic were replaced with their Western equivalents. The goal was defined to create a language that was more Turkish, which signified modernity and was less Arabic or Persian - which signified the Islamic, or the pre-modern. The republican elite viewed non-Turkish words as symbols of the past, so under a national campaign, supported by government policies, a purification process of language began. Lexicographers began to drop Arabic and Persian words from dictionaries, substituting them with resurrected archaic terms or words from Turkish dialects, or new words coined from old stems and roots. In reality, it was a process

\[\text{211} \text{ Ibid.}\]
which aimed to erase all traces of the past and also gave the opportunity to the new Republic to invent its own history and policy on a new basis. This Alphabet Reform radically changed Turkish society’s relationship with its past and enabled the state to control society’s access to its past by selectively transcribing only those texts and documents that gave support to the state’s point of view. Thus, in the words of Turkey’s founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, ‘Turkish society forms a harmonious whole with no classes or privileges’ and ‘How happy one who says I am a Turk’. The use of the phrase ‘he who says I am a Turk’ rather than more simply ‘Turk’ is a striking reference to the regime’s ‘mandatory invitation’ to assimilation for society’s non-Turkish segments. Besides, ‘Turk’ appeared an abstraction of state which was a new ‘identity in progress’ that would have been made through the top-down reforms.

In this respect, two doctrinal theories played an important role in the Turkification of history: the 1932 ‘Turkish history thesis’ which postulated the first indigenous people of Anatolia, the Hittites, as the ancestors of Turks, and the 1936 ‘Sun language theory’ that launched pure Turkish as the primordial language from which all other languages emerged. These theories omitted the presence and the history of non-Turkish groups. Both theses ‘conveniently reinforced Turkish claims to the land of Anatolia and made Turks the rightful inheritors of an ancient and advanced civilization’. ‘In this project of imagination and its material practice, history plays an adamant role as a source of legitimacy as well as a strategy of mobilization’. In other words, the myths of Turkish nationalism were all fabricated by the ‘official history’ of the early republican era.

As is the case with many other young nationalisms, the aim of all these reforms was to create the ‘new man’ of the Republic. In accordance with the ideals of the new regime, education emerged as the most efficient apparatus of the state, as Louis Althusser would have said, from which to gain the forthcoming desirable nation. In an article in which he mentions the continuity of the mindset between the late Ottomans and early republicans, Erik Zürcher notes the “common and naive faith in education as a driving force of change in society”. As has also happened in the Western case, the modern state in Turkey aims to create “citizens” through the mediation of education. And as Füsun Üstel elaborates: ‘In the construction of the ‘citizen,’ who is the new political actor of the modern central state, the role of school is critically

215 Kerem Öktem, “Creating the Turk’s Homeland: Modernization, Nationalism and Geography in Southeast Turkey in the late 19th and 20th Centuries”, Paper for Socrates Kokkalis Graduate Workshop 2003, p. 2
important. Children began to be perceived as the ‘future of society’ and they began to be drawn into the sphere of influence of the state as the ‘future of the regime’.  

As İsmail Kaplan says: “[According to Atatürk] the basic objective of education is to raise tireless, wise and well-behaved children who are loyal to their country and nation. Accordingly, in order to raise a man as a ‘real man’ it is compulsory to make him strong in his society, and in that way, it would be possible to progress as a whole in the way of modern civilization.” Education and the educated future generations were so important for the early republicans that the regime dedicated itself to the Turkish youth.

As a result of the attempt to create a modern nation, school emerged as the barracks in which the “new man” of the new regime would be trained. Creation of the ‘New Man’ was crucial for the republican elite since this would have been a material basis or in other words, a stable civil society for the legitimacy of regime.

C. Under the Rule and Penetrating Gaze of the ‘Father Turk’

Mustafa Kemal as the leader of the War of Independence and the founder of the modern nation state undersigned the process summarized above. He founded the Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party -CHP) in 1923 to represent the nationalist movement in elections and to serve as a vanguard party in support of the Kemalist reform program. Atatürk's Six Arrows were an integral part of the CHP's political platform. In controlling the CHP, Atatürk also controlled the assembly and assured support there for the government he had appointed.

Mustafa Kemal indeed, ‘shortly after the Turkish Republic was founded in 1923, the ruling cadre mobilized the limited resources of the new state to create and disseminate the Atatürk cult as the new symbol to unify the nation’. He was the “new face” of the “new state” which urgently needed to construct a “modern nation” from the “vassal” of the Ottoman Empire. A symbolic operation based upon the charismatic leadership of Atatürk became the pre-eminent

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216 Füsun Üstel, Makbul Vatandaşın Peşinde: II. Meşrutiyet'ten Bugüne Vatandaşlık Eğitimi [In pursuit of the ideal citizen: Civic education from constitutional monarchy to today], İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004.

217 Meanwhile, teachers bear the same mission; they share and carry the responsibility quoted above. In a speech in which he addressed the nation’s teachers, Atatürk said, “The new generations will be the work of the teachers,” continuing as follows, as cited by Cemil Öztürk: “The republic needs mentally, physically, morally and intellectually strong and honest protectors. Teachers, it is in your hands to do this.” As a result of the attempt to create a modern nation, school emerged as the barracks in which the “new man” of the new regime would be trained. And Atatürk was the embodied and sanctified figure of this abstraction; that’s why he is called the “chief instructor” of the nation.

218 Republicanism, Nationalism, Populism, Revolutionism, Secularism and Statism

219 Prior to 1950, the Republic of Turkey was essentially a one-party state ruled by the Republican People's Party, which had been created by Atatürk to implement the tenets of Kemalism. Although there had been abortive experiments with “loyal opposition” parties in the mid-1920s and in 1930, it was not until 1946 that the CHP permitted political parties to form and contest elections, albeit in a politically controlled environment.

activity of the nation-building process in Turkey. Thus, as Özyürek explains: ‘From the early
days of his rule, Atatürk’s statues and their countless replications decorated every city and town
center in the country. Laws and regulations were enacted that Atatürk be represented in every
public office, classroom, courthouse, prison, and police station.’

Mustafa Kemal’s speech entitled Nutuk [The speech] which claimed to describe the
Independence Struggle of Turkey against the Allies (1919-1922) and encouraged society in
terms of history writing, delivered in over six days for a duration of thirty-six hours and thirty-one
minutes in Ankara to the Congress of the CHP, was the embodiment of the whole project
of Turkish national modernization and its core essence. As an epic, self-narrative text Nutuk
categorized the historical facts from the narrator’s perspective and proposed it as an accurate
history. As Adak states, Nutuk’s claim to history was supported by the incorporation of a
plethora of historical documents within Nutuk, and for decades, the ‘interpretation’ of
documents by the narrator of Nutuk was taken as synonymous with historical fact. Nutuk which
later became a ‘holy book’ for the state indeed was and is a very significant part of the Turkish
(Kemalist) nationalist myth. Additionally, it is the self-narrative of the ‘new individual’ who
represented the history of his life by inscribing it in the narrative of the nation. Thus, the ‘self’

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221 Ibid.
of *Nutuk* could more accurately be termed the ‘I-nation’. The ‘I-nation’ which is Turkish and repressively laic however, excluded, and was not appreciated by the Kurds.

**Section IV: Kurdish Uprisings in Early Republican Era**

In a centralized and Jacobin form of reformation and coercive modernization, the Turkish identity was embraced as the primary source of unity and sought to subdue all non-Turkish elements through denial. Kurds as a major Muslim but non-Turkish community remained outside of the ‘ideal’ that the Republican elite envisaged for their imagined nation. Turkish modernity as a holistic project, with different layers of economic, social and political imaginations for an indefinite future, based on an ethnically, linguistically, religiously and culturally homogeneous society, there was no suitable place for the Kurds. From a Turkish republican perspective, Kurds were problematic for several reasons: with their religiosity, Kurds evoked the past, that the republicans would have liked to be forgotten forever. When their religiosity was added to the issue of their tribal social structure and traditional culture, Kurds were seen as being removed from being civilized or modern (future) citizens of the new state. More importantly, with a coercive presumption that speaking the majority language was a prerequisite for proper citizenship, Kurds, due to their district language, found themselves outside of the linguistic unity, which was also damaging to the essential conditions needed to meet the claim of being a homogeneous nation. Non-Turkish speakers were by default viewed as possible enemies of the nation. Bozarslan explains the situation in detailed as follows:

*In a society in which religious diversity had been removed leaving no significant religious distinctions, language as the signifier of the many ethnic distinctions, implicated the dominance of the majority over minority which automatically resulted in binary labels such “us” and the “others”. Moreover, Turkish nationalism, as it was officially propagated in the Republic’s semi-official organs, switched rapidly from a cultural nationalism towards a Social-Darwinist one that explained the relations between Turkishness and Kurdishness as an eternal fight between a positive, progressive and civilized concept and a negative, reactionary and barbarian atavism. In this regard, Kurds were taken as a feudal ethno-class that must be assimilated or destroyed for the sake of both state security and social progress. Anatolian history was rapidly “Turkicised”. Official history denied the existence of other components beyond those which were Turkish, and forbid the assertion of other cultural or ethnic identities. This was in complete contradiction to the premises of the War of Independence, which was conducted in the name of the Kurdish-Turkish fraternity.*

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222 Hülya Adak, “National Myths and Self-Na(rra)tions: Mustafa Kemal’s Nutuk and Halide Edib’s Memoirs and The Turkish Ordeal”, The South Atlantic Quarterly, no 102, Spring/Summer 2003, p. 516

223 (Bozarslan, 2012).
From the Kurdish perspective however, beginning with their rejection as equal founding partners of the new state, the abolishment of the Caliphate and the laic national modernization which runs throughout Turkishness, began to be perceived as an attack against all expressions and conduits of Kurdishness. Demolishing the social and political institutions of Islam, which targeted the main sources of the Kurdish habitat or ‘land of Kurdishness’, changed the track towards an ethnic nationalism based the superiority of the ethnic Turk compared to the other ethnicities. As such, assimilation policies under the name of integration received strong reaction from Kurds, who rebelled against the Kemalist regime.

Before the establishment of the Republic, in a period of political ambiguity and competing political centres of power, among 24 reported insurgencies took place in Anatolia. Four were in the Kurdish populated areas and three of them involving Kurdish tribes and clans – among which Koçgiri was the most serious. Before covering the Kurdish uprisings of the Republican era, it is important to note the Koçgiri uprising to mark the fact that the modernization movement of the Young Turks (secularizing the state, Turkifying the culture) had already radicalized some Kurdish religious and local elites, even before the Kemalist reforms.

The Koçgiri Uprising led by Alevi-Kurd tribes under the leadership of Nuri Dersimi – head of the Koçgiri tribe - took place in Dersim and Sivas from 1918 to 1921 on the basis of coexistence of Kurdishness and Alawite. Some KTC members were also involved in the uprising. The uprising started with Kurdish demands to realize the autonomy which was defined by the Treaty of Sévres. During the time, the Istanbul government was still in place and the Ankara based independence movement was being organized. The uprising was repressed by the Ankara government, which in a short time took the place of Istanbul rule. On the other hand, it was not supported by the Sunni Kurdish tribes and remained an Alevi Kurdish uprising. The uprising was harshly resisted and the amnesty demands of the rebelling tribes were rejected by the government.

225 The Ottoman millet legacy based on Sunni Islam was not desirable for Alevi Kurds.
226 The vividness of the memory of the Koçgiri events is also linked to the fact that other memories of the Koçgiri revolt and its repression have been actively kept and reactivated by oppositional circles, mainly Kurdish nationalists, but also by leftists. Kurdish nationalist memories tend to over-emphasize the reach of the events. This was most obvious in the early 1990s, when the PKK was active in the region in its strategy of moving north. One PKK militant, a great-grandson of Alişan – and a nephew of the MP mentioned above – took as a codename «Alişer
As discussed in previous sections, the tacit national agreement between Kurds and Turks that had previously existed started to be shattered by the reforms in the early years of the Republic. By the 1924 Constitution, the abolition of the Caliphate, removal of the statement that defined state religion as Islam following laic reforms conducted under a centralized mode of modernization based on the superiority of Turkish identity, were all elements that made Kurds reconsider their place and their relations with the newly established state. The reform period invalidated autonomy expectations of Kurds and also weakened the linkage between the state and Kurds which used to be provided through Islam, which constituted the dominant ingredient of Kurdish identity. To put it differently, ‘the removal of the Caliphate by the Ankara government in 1924 radicalized the question of the lack of integration between the Kurds and the central power. This was because the institution of the Caliphate was an indicator of the fact that the logic of unity between Kurds and the political centre was the combination of the logic of Islam and that of emperorship - a logic which guaranteed the endurance of the autonomy of the Kurds’. 

Apart from being denied access to any means of political power, coercive modernization with its forcibly imposed reforms such as the imposition of Western dress, the banning of the religious brotherhoods, and the attempt to replace Islam with a Kemalist civil religion created strong reactions in the Kurdish regions. Conservative Kurdish circles regarded these measures as a direct state intervention in the religious and private spheres and as more evidence of betrayal by the initial Kemalist promises. As a consequence, the loss of ground for Kurdish national and traditional expectations, led to two different opposing Kurdish axes: national and traditional or political and religious, acting together against a Kemalist single party regime. During the single party era (1923-1946), among the uprisings that took place by the Kurdish opposing movement against Kemalism, three were significant, not only in terms of their long-term effects on Kurdish nationalism and collective memory but also because of their challenging capacity which clarified the nature of the Turkish regime. These were: The Sheikh

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Koçgiri. Following his joining the PKK, the organization created a new regional section, called Koçgiri, and gave him responsibility for it. For details see: Elise, M (2009), The Repression of the Koçgiri Rebellion, 1920-1921. Available At: http://www.sciencespo.fr/ mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/fr/document/repression-koa-giri-rebellion-1920-1921

227 Tanıl Bora,...., 2017, p. 828
229 Bozarslan, 2012

A. **1925, Sheikh Said Uprising**

The first Kurdish rebellion which is accepted as a chapter in the history of Kurdish nationalism is the Sheikh Said Uprising which commenced on 13 February 1925 in Piran (later Dicle, administratively tied to Diyarbakır). The rebels quickly captured many towns in the region and reached as far as Diyarbakır. Initially, the rebels were successful in defeating several local military units… The charismatic leader of this revolt was a Naqshbandi sheikh with great local influence, Sheikh Said; and the explicit aim of the rebellion was the establishment of an independent Kurdish state, where the Islamic principles, violated in modern Turkey, were to be respected. Despite the religious outlook and terminology of the rebels, the Sheikh Said Uprising was neither purely religious nor purely nationalist.

**Azadi** (Freedom) which was established in 1923 in Erzurum as a clandestine Kurdish organization and consisted of former officers who were militarily experienced Kurdish figures, was in the background of the Sheikh Said Uprising. It is important to note that during the time, the Turkish political camp was also divided internally and due to repressive modernization measures, a general discomfort was felt among society and a strong conservative or religious political line appeared in opposition to Mustafa Kemal. **Azadi** by means of considering the divided Turkish political landscape and Kurdish grievances of the time managed to mobilize the tribal leaders, militia of the former Hamidian regiments and Kurdish nationalists under its roof during its first congress, and defined its aim as starting a general uprising in Kurdistan which would be followed by a Kurdish government in the region. Despite the hesitance among religious Kurdish figures, apart from the abolition of the Caliphate and closure of the Islamic schools, the measures taken by the new regime, such as the ban on Kurdish language in 1924 in the name of populism, the exile of the aghas and intellectuals to Western Turkey in the name of the abolition of feudalism, the expropriation of the land of Kurdish landlords and the distribution of these lands to the Turkish speakers who were to be settled in Kurdistan provided a supportive environment in which **Azadi** could convince diversified Kurdish groups to act towards a shared goal. In the end ‘the primary aim of both Sheikh Said and the Azadi leaders...

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was the establishment of an independent Kurdistan. The motivation of the rank and file was mixed, but for them the religious factor was predominant. The planners and leaders of the revolt, at any rate, thought that religious agitation would be more effective in gaining mass support than nationalist propaganda alone. Partly for this reason, Sheikhs were chosen as figureheads for the revolt. The movement was called a jihad ('holy war'); Sheikh Said assumed the title of amir almujahidin ('commander of the warriors of the faith'). At the same time, it is important to note that a significant Kurdish nationalism was already possessed by the Sheikh Said and his Naqshbandi disciples so that it would be wrong to underestimate their political agency or accept them as the passive receivers of Azadi’s instructions. The hand writing which is attributed to the Sheikh Said clearly articulated this strong Kurdish ingredient:

‘With the excuse of religion and Caliphate, Turks and Ottomans has been pushing us step by step to the slavery, darkness, ignorance and annihilation... They came as migrants, they occupied our lands by tricks and conspiracies and turned our land into a ruined place. Kurdistan has never been ruined in its history like this... Do not be afraid of death, don’t let your arms to shake during the war. To accept a life with injustice, fear, pain and torture is a shame for all. Dying for freedom is better than living in slavery...’

However, Islam as the equal anathema in this Kurdishness is understood to be seen and idealized with its realization during the Hamidian era. For instance, according to the article of The Tyrone Daily Herald on 25 February 1925, Sheikh Said declared that Abdulhamid’s eldest son Mehmet Selim Efendi, who was living in Beirut during the time, would be the Sultan of the Kurdish state which would be established after the rebellion. In Sheikh Said’s discourse, the Kurdishness was explicitly apprehended as the force that could and should save Islam, whose flag ‘has been abandoned’ by the ‘Turks’, who have not only betrayed their promises to the Kurds, but also Islam as a religion and as a umma.

At the end of two months, Sheikh Said was captured and hanged with his 47 followers on 29 June 1925. Thousands of less influential Kurds were slaughtered without trial. The populations of entire districts were deported to the West. A law entitled Takrir-i Sükun (Law for the

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232 Ibid.p. 298
Restoration of Order) was enacted just after the uprising in the same year which created _Istiklal Mahkemeleri_ (Independence Tribunals) through which extraordinary and exceptional use of law had been employed against the opposing figures. At the communicational level, the Sheikh Said Rebellion was seen and defined as an attempt to divide the country. Domestically it was presented as a Kurdish/separatist rebellion, whereas abroad (especially in the West) it was presented as a reactionary uprising that wanted a return to the sultanate and the caliphate. This way, the potential domestic support of non-Kurdish Muslims would be prevented, and the same would be true for Westerners who might be sensitive about the Kurds. According to Abdulhalik Renda, who prepared one of the first Kurdish reports of the state (1925), ‘The rebellion is a national movement under the guise of religion.’ Thus, the rebellion became a ground and excuse for the Kemalist government (the Republican People’s Party, or RPP), by completely silencing the political opposition (the Progressive Republican Party, or PRP) in parliament. By the _Takrir-i Sükun_ Law virtually all opposition to Mustafa Kemal and his inner circle were eliminated. Throughout republican history, it has been regarded as the most important sign of the dictatorial spirit and practice that the Kemalists embraced during the early years of the republic. This law allowed Mustafa Kemal to implement his radical Westernizing reforms without any political challenge.236

**B. Ağrı Uprising (1927-1930)**

The second rebellion against the Kemalist regime was the Ağrı – Ararat Uprising from 1927 to 1930, led by General Ihsan Nuri Pasha, who was a former Ottoman general and declared a Republic of Ararat on Mount Ararat, which is located in between Agri and Iğdır provinces of Turkey and Iranian border. The Agri Uprising was significant in terms of the ethno-political features that were dominant in the movement due to the fact that it was guided by Xoybun (Genuine), which was a more accoutred and broadly based nationalist organization compared to _Azadi_.237 Xoybun as a Kurdish national league was established in 1927 in Syria, and managed to gather the Kurdish organizations in Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Egypt. It also had support from both the urban based nationalist intellectual circles and a series of tribal and religious leaders including the followers of Sheikh Said.

In its first congress, Xoybun defined the Kurds as the ancient society of Mesopotamia, Kurdistan as a slavery under the rule of Turkey and formulized its objective as a Kurdish

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236 Hakan Özoglu, …., 2011, p.183-184
revolution against the Turkish outrage which would result in an independent Kurdistan.\textsuperscript{238} Xoybun claimed the realization of a Turkish-Kurdish founding partnership as was promised before by Mustafa Kemal. It is not wrong to say that Kurdish nationalism in the Republican period, especially Xoybun as a Kurdish nationalist movement, was affected by Kemalism both as an “enemy” and a “role model”. For instance, in response and counter to the Turkish official-national history writing at the time, in the Kurdish history writing of Xoybun, it is not the Turks but the Kurds who are defined as the ones with an ancient past, who contributed to the progress of civilization by means of Kurdish emirates. Turkishness is described as having done everything to bring down Kurdishness to its own level by means of depriving it of progress and education.\textsuperscript{239} The equation of Kurdishness with feudalism was also seen as the manipulation/misrepresentation of Kemalism, and Xoybun tried to prove this manipulation at the international level. After the Alphabet change in Turkey, in its publications Xoybun used the Latin alphabet as a way to sustain its relations with Turkey’s Kurds, but also to prove they were as modern as the Turks.\textsuperscript{240} Celadet Bexirhan, who was accepted as the leader of the Xoybun movement, pondered in his article that ‘Maybe the slavery of Kurds will continue for several years, but the Ankara government cannot manage to annihilate the Kurdish society by means of applying its system’.\textsuperscript{241}

In one-years’ time however, the rebels created a miniature Kurdish republic in Mount Ararat, expanded it to include Bitlis and Van provinces, had a well-equipped army with thousands of soldiers, used the yellow-red-green coloured national flag and started to publish a newspaper. According to some assertions they even applied to the League of Nations through Great Britain, to be recognized as a nation on the basis of Wilson principles. On the other hand, this uprising was ultimately quelled by the Turkish government, with the assistance of Iran and Soviet Russia during the time. At the end of the process and as an emerging pattern, 34 rebels were sentenced to death and large amounts of Kurdish tribal leaders and families based in Ağrı were forcibly migrated to different parts of Turkey in order to disperse and assimilate Kurds among Turks.

\textbf{C. Dersim Uprising}

After the Sheikh Said and Agri Uprisings, achieving the ‘Turkification of Anatolia’ as an irreversible project became a vital objective for the Turkish government and subsequently a

\textsuperscript{238} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{239} Xoybun, 1928:9) cited in Hamit Bozarslan,…, 2002, p. 850
\textsuperscript{240} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{241} Ibid.
dramatic display of ethnic Turkish nationalism started by the mid-1930s. Following these uprisings, in 1934, the Law of (Re)Settlement came into operation with the aim of creating ‘a country speaking one language, sharing the same mentality and with unity of sentiment’ as Minister of the Interior Kaya stated. Accordingly, in 1935 the Tunceli Law meant that part of former Dersim province, formerly part of the province of Elazığ, was established as a separate province, renamed Tunceli and ruled in a state of emergency by the military governor, Abdullah Alpdoğan, the head of the Fourth General Inspectorate.

In the mid-1930s, Dersim became a focus in the context of interior politics as an issue to be solved by the Turkish government as it was located in an inaccessible place on the top of high mountains, weakly controlled by state authorities and its population comprised of Alevi Kurds. The Kurdish Alevi based in the Dersim area however, were linguistically and religiously different from the Sunni Kurdish majority. Adhering to the heterodox Alevi sect separated them socially from the Sunni Kurds and their Zaza dialect of Kurdish was another differentiating feature of the Alevi Kurds. Although there are Alevi in many other parts of Turkey, those of Dersim constitute a distinct group, with different beliefs and practices. Since the Ottoman era, Dersim became a shelter for the Alevi population which had been living under the Sunni pressure and propaganda. It had been perceived as a challenge to the state authority because of being a local resistance – which was based on a strong tribal affiliation - to the central power. Although Dersim tribes supported the Turkish war of independence, the previous Kurdish uprisings and the social and demographic features of Dersim turned the attention of

242 During the era, the world system and increasing political movements in Europe: Mussolini, Hitler…
244 Alpdoğan was the son-in-law of Nurettin Pasha, the general who had led the repression of the Koçgiri uprising in 1921.
245 Indeed, the Settlement Law of 1934 divided Turkey into three zones. The first zone was composed of communities determined to belong to Turkish culture and ethnicity. The second zone was composed of communities in which Turkish was not the dominant language but which considered culturally Turkish. This group included past immigrants of Balkans and Caucasus who were considered Turkish even if ethnically they might have been Albanians, Circassians, Pomaks, Tatars etc… Finally, the third zone was composed of communities who neither spoke Turkish nor belonged to Turkish culture (Kurds and Arabs). These regions had to remain close to civilian settlements and migration for security reasons. In the second and third zones, the development of Turkish language and culture were to be supported though official settlement and migration policies (Taşpınar, Ö (2005), Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam in Turkey: Kemalist Identity in Transition, p. 65)
246 The Alevi venerated Ali, Muhammad’s son-in-law. They refused the Sharia and remained attached to unorthodox Sufi beliefs and practices widespread in Anatolia before the 16th century, when the Ottoman state embraced Sunnite orthodoxy; the beliefs were mostly linked to Anatolian saint Hacı Bektaş (13th century). Since many of the Alevi had sympathised with Safavid Persia in the 16th century, they were lastingly stigmatised as heretics and traitors.
the Turkish government towards it, describing it as a source of threats against the stability of the Republican regime. Despite the Kurdish revolts, from the suppression of Koçgiri Revolt in 1921 until Mustafa Kemal’s speech describing Dersim as an abscess in 1935, there was no discernible Kurdish/Alevi opposition to the new regime.\textsuperscript{248}

The process that resulted in the Dersim Uprising started with a minor incident. One day in March 1937, a strategic wooden bridge was burned down and telephone lines cut. Suspicion fell to the tribes associated with Seyyit Riza, who was a local charismatic figure – both a tribal chief and a religious figure - who was against the Tunceli Law. The army may have believed this [minor incident] to be the beginning of an expected rebellion.\textsuperscript{249} It was also understood that it was more than enough reason for the Turkish government to launch a military operation against Dersim. The rebellion did not have any significant support from the Sunni Kurds and was quashed, with 25,000 Turkish troops and an air bombardment campaign. One of the bomber pilots in the Dersim operation was Sabiha Gökcen, the adopted daughter of Mustafa Kemal. As an educated modern female pilot, she was presented as the role model for Turkish women by means of her performance during the Dersim rebellion. She was the first pilot member of the Turkish army and became a national hero.\textsuperscript{250}

\textsuperscript{248} (Bozarslan, 2003).


\textsuperscript{250} Hrant Dink, the editor in chief of weekly Armenian Agos, published an article in 2004 under his name, claiming that Sabiha Gökcen, Atatürk’s adopted daughter and Turkey’s first female fighter pilot, was of Armenian origin. On 21 February of that year, Hurriyet, the biggest daily paper in Turkey, carried the story in its headline: ‘Is she Sabiha Gökcen or Hatun Sebileyan?’ The next day, the Turkish military Chief of Staff’s office issued a strongly worded statement. Since Gökcen was a national figure and a ‘holy’ member of the Turkish Air Force, the claims were strongly denied and condemned by Turkey’s powerful and influential military. According to the army, opening such a figure to debate, for whatever purpose, made no contribution to national integrity and social peace. Furthermore, claims about Gökcen’s origin were labeled as completely fabricated and constituted an insult not only to Gökcen but also to Ataturk. The statement concluded as follows: ‘These days, when we are in need of a very strong national solidarity, the majority of our people understand the purpose of such news stories that are against our national integrity, solidarity and national values and follow these publications with concern.’ Dink had stepped into a forbidden zone by questioning the Turkishness of Sabiha Gökcen, resulting in an immediate uprising in Turkey’s ultranationalist right-wing media. The headlines and titles of the newspapers columns were diverse: ‘Where did Sabiha Gökcen’s Armenian Origin Come From?’ (Milliyet); ‘Look at that Armenian!’ (Yeniçağ’); ‘Expel them’ (Ortadogu); ‘Hrant scratches’ (Yeniçağ’); ‘Agos cannot destroy our order’ (Yeniçağ’); ‘Love it or leave it’ (Ortadogu); and ‘Hrant Dink take your luggage and leave’ (Yeniçağ’). ‘These quarrels, spreading in the public through the mainstream media, found more coverage in those days in newspapers that had relatively small circulation numbers but that adopted a nationalist and conservative approach; after that, Dink’s name started to be used with adjectives such as “separatist, devastator, enemy” in news and columns.’ In the days following the publication of his article relating to Gökcen’s Armenian origin, many articles penned by Dink became the subject of misinterpretation and exaggeration. In one case, a single sentence from Dink’s eight-week serial column (dated 13 February 2004) on Armenian identity was taken out of context; in another case, his critical approach towards the attitude of Diaspora Armenians about their relations with Turkey was distorted and dismissed. This was introduced in a hostile manner as ‘Hrant Dink insults Turkish identity’. Court cases and protests against Dink by aggressive nationalist groups ensued. Dink was sentenced to six months in jail under Article 301 of the Turkish
Despite the call for a ceasefire and a claim of amnesty, all leaders of the Dersim Uprising were hanged, including Seyit Rıza and his son whose age was falsely increased by the Turkish regime. The number of the dead during the uprising ranged from 13,000 (Turkey official sources), to 40,000 (U.S. sources) and 80,000 (Kurdish sources). After the hanging of the leaders, the Turkish military operations continued in Dersim until 1939. At the end of the process, Dersim was de-populated, with most of the remaining population forcefully deported to Western Turkey ‘in order to accelerate the Turkification of this rebellious group’. Either as a real or an imagined story, it has been claimed that before he was persecuted, Seyit Rıza had a meeting with Mustafa Kemal. According to this, Mustafa Kemal asked Seyit Rıza to apologize so that he would forgive him and rescue him from persecution. In is believed and told I larger among Kurdish society that Seyit Rıza did not accept Mustafa Kemal’s request, saying that he had not done anything for which he should apologize, and was hanged. At the end of the Uprising a large amount of the Dersim population was compulsorily settled in different regions of Turkey.

D. Conclusion

Through the historical context that has been covered above, what was left for the Kurds back from the last century of Ottoman Empire and the early Republican period is the question required to be asked at this stage.

In the first place, the common element between these two different periods was the centralized modernization which gradually gained a Turkish authoritarian posture and refers to a loss, and decline in the power and the union of Kurds. Therefore, two types of Kurdish discomfort, namely the traditional Kurdists and cultural modernizers, started to appear in the late Ottoman period as a response to the changing dynamics at the time. Despite their differences, both of

Criminal Code. The 17-year-old triggerman who assassinated Dink on 19 January 2007 was reported to have yelled, ‘I shot the Armenian!’ ‘When asked, “Why did you kill?” he responded that he had learned from newspapers that Hrant was a traitor.’ On the night of his arrest, a photograph of the murderer holding a Turkish flag while a smiling gendarme and police officers posed next to him was engraved in public memory as it spread through visual and print media. The photo and the camera recordings leaked into the media and showed that police and gendarmerie officers treated the killer as a ‘hero’. The public strongly reacted to this and it was reported that four police officers of the station where the photographs were taken had been dismissed and four military police officers had been moved to other assignments. Unsurprisingly, the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) issued a statement relating to the leaked images, stating that they were ‘attempts aimed at framing the TAF and urging the media to be cautious in publicizing these attempts’. Today the second big airport of Istanbul is called Sabiha Gökçen Airport.

them had significant Kurdish sentiments and they built the foundation of the Kurdish political nationalism in the later stage.

At the end of the First World War, Kurdish society was divided between the territories of four nation states and Kurdish people separated from one another across the hard and militarized nation state borders. The process which began with a Muslim spirit and the ideal of a Turkish-Kurdish state in Turkey, turned into building a solely Turkish state in 1923 and Kurds who were seen as a ‘border security force’ for the Empire, turned into a ‘border threat’ for Turkish Republic, as they did for Iraq, Iran and Syria. The young nation states that the Kurds were scattered among, were authoritarian and averse to identity rights or integration, which in time created a common sentiment of Kurdishness among the Kurds of four different nation states even though they varied in ideology and representation.

Kurdish rebellions took place in all these nation states between 1919 and 1925 and state nationalisms in these countries dialectically strengthened the Kurdish nationalism. When the series of revolts taking place during the single party era in Turkey, it was also the case in Iran and Iraq. As Bozarslan describes, despite, the ‘distinct political cultures and patterns, specific histories which have been determined by distinct national powers and in some cases also antagonist strategies’ among the divided Kurds in these states, ‘these violent contests marked the transition from "primitive rebellions” to modern nationalism and to modern forms of violence. Although none of the Kurdish revolts succeeded in mobilizing the entire Kurdish population in any single country, almost all of them gave birth to trans-border, region-wide military mobilizations.’

The mobilization through the uprisings and dissemination of a Kurdish nationalist discourse that was inherited from the Kurdish cultural and political nationalisms of the late Ottoman era and the early Republican period, has become to shape the frame and the repertoire of the divided Kurdish movements. The concept of repertoire here, as Charles tilly defines, “refers to all the means of action of one or more groups on the basis of shared interests” and is acknowledged as a phenomenon that points out the historicity, rationality and the limits of a collective and political action under a given context and changing variables. It is not a static concept and also

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highlights the shared or inspiring themes which creates a symbolic system that spontaneously operates alongside the political action.

In this regard, the heritage of the late Ottoman and early Republican eras created a proximate national repertoire among Kurds which has at least two layers: At one hand, on the basis of the shared Kurdish experience under the Unitarian states such as uprisings, exiles, bans, ignorance, exclusion and oppression, the nation states have already been defined as colonizers and Kurdish society as a slave nation. At the other hand however, a clear idea of Kurdishness, invention of a national history and the desire for an independent Kurdistan or regional Kurdish autonomy were diffused among Kurds. Accordingly the symbolic sources such as “a national song, a national flag, a map of Kurdistan and a national day”254 were adopted as the defining elements of this shared Kurdish repertoire. Therefore, during the early Republican era, Kurdish nationalists and traditional Kurdists met around the ground of ‘Kurdish cause’ despite their ideological and representational distinctions.

On the other hand, the ‘Kurdish Question’ has been invented by the establishment of the nation state and through the practices of the Republican regime which was not a natural result of Kurdish nationalism but rather the result of the power and dominance relations that was based on the exclusion of all identities other than Turkishness. The repression of the Kurdish uprisings in the single party era resulted in a period of silence among Kurdish society and until the 1960s, this spiral of silence could not be broken. However, the past and recent Kurdish history has become an alive political and symbolic heritage in the reawakening of Kurdish sentiments in 1960s, which was followed by the radical Kurdish movements in 1970s. By the establishment of the PKK in 1978 however, the Kurdish national movement had moved to a new stage, which also changed intra-Kurdish dynamics once again.

CHAPTER II

History of PKK

For the Kurds who were divided across the borders of four nation states in the Middle East, even though the particular contexts surrounding each one was different depending on the internal dynamics of the country in question, due to ‘Kurdish geography being an integrated and interacting political space, something happens in one part of Kurdistan always affects the other parts’. In the 1960s this was the case and there emerged a new period for Kurds which could rightfully be named as the ‘Kurdish awakening’. The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad was established in Iran in 1946 after Second World War with the support of the Soviet Union, and even though it survived only for a year, it served as a reference for the Kurdish movements to follow. The Kurdish movement that started in Iraq under the leadership of Mullah Mustafa Barzani following his return from exile in Russia in 1958 and the worldwide momentum gained by the anti-authoritarian and anti-colonialist movements, brought about the political construction of a ‘universalistic Kurdish dawa’ and situated Kurds on the left of the political spectrum in 1960s. In Turkey, this process brought the emergence of the PKK, which was ideologically formed in the early 1970s, became a party during the late 1970s and formed an armed wing and declared a prolonged people’s war in the early 1980s.

Accordingly, the first section of this chapter will look at the social and political movements of the 1960s and the development of the Kurdish organizations during the 1970s on the way to the establishment of the PKK while relating them to Öcalan’s biography, which took shape in these processes. The second section, as the field research suggests, PKK is accepted as Öcalan’s discourse and his practice, and its history will be analysed in two parts, before and after Öcalan’s capture in 1999. The period before his imprisonment until 1999 will be acknowledged as the ‘First Manifesto Era’ and the period until 1999 up today will be defined as the Second Manifesto Era. There are two basic reasons for this, based on the field research: Firstly, according to the interviewees, the real change in Öcalan’s and PKK’s discourse happened with Öcalan’s imprisonment. Secondly, they refer to the ‘Imrali process’ as the milestone that

256 Ibid.
changed Öcalan position as a leader from a person into an institution, namely a sacred body. Organizing the chapter in such a way, then, not only reflects a faithfulness to the findings of the field research but also helps in a practical manner by offering a consistent, clear and synchronized periodization that will be adhered to in the following chapter as well.

Section I. On the Way to the Establishment of the PKK: From Silence to Eastism

Since the inception of the single party regime, ‘whenever the Kurdish question was mentioned in the Turkish state discourse, it was in terms of reactionary politics, tribal resistance or regional backwardness, but never as an ethno-political question. As the question was not addressed in terms of a political problem, the solution was not sought within the political area or through political means, and successive governments in Turkey instead insistently securitized the Kurdish question and responded to the issue through demographic engineering with a social Darwinist approach, security based policies and by way of violence, which is called the securitization of the Kurdish issue in Turkey.

‘A few decades of total silence reigned in the Kurdish region after the brutal suppression of the first wave of Kurdish resistance during the 1920s and 1930s’. The “period of tiredness”, as it is referred to, between 1938 and 1959 was a result of the lack of power and strategy among Kurds to implement another uprising following the suppression of the Dersim Rebellion in 1938’. This silence was broken in the 1960s due to the changing socioeconomic and political dynamics within Turkey, and the international developments of the time.

After the transition to a multi-party system in Turkey in 1946, the Democrat Party (DP), under the leadership of Adnan Menderes received overwhelming support from groups previously

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259 Harun Ercan, “Talking to the Ontological Other: Armed Struggle and Negotiations Between the Turkish State and the PKK”, Dialect Antropol, 37:113-122, 2013, p. 114
261 He was later issued the death penalty and executed in 1961 following a coup d’état in 1960. During his trial he said that some Kurdish figures in the region were trying to establish a separate state. Despite this, the 27th May coup was the first coup d’état in Turkey in which the Turkish Army, which perceived itself as the “real owner” of the country and protector of Atatürk’s principles, showed that even a Prime Minister can be killed when they challenge the system established by the Kemalist regime. All of the coups in Turkey to date have been presented as compulsory and necessary in order to protect Atatürk’s founding principles. (As has the most recent attempt I think!) Most of the literature on the 27th May coup discusses it within a positive subtext because of the so called “democratic” constitution it brought about in 1961. While the constitution provided some important rights, the 27th May coup did in fact form a foundation for the Turkish army’s future routine and institutionalized coup d’états in Turkey, which from that point onward occurred every ten years until 1980. Analysis of the Turkish military often points to the short term governments of the military cadres, describing them in a positive manner in comparison to long term military regimes in other parts of the world. In reality, this short term governing of the army created a legitimization of the coup in the mindset of society at least, and presented coup d’états in Turkey as inevitable
suppressed under the single party regime, predominantly including religious and Kurdish segments of society. ‘The Menderes years (1950-60) brought a certain measure of liberalization and relaxation of the policy of forced assimilation’. The developments during the era such as the number of the Kurds elected to the parliament, the allowance of the exiled Kurdish aghas and Sheikhs to return to their homeland and economic benefits that integrated some part of the Kurds within the system created the background for what became known as Kurdish stance Doguculuk or “Eastism”.

That said, when it comes to the official state discourse on the Kurdish issue and the practices of the DP government, there is no great difference when comparing it with the single party era. Rather, ‘it was a period that the government tried to keep the (Kurdish) area under control by co-opting Kurdish tribal and religious leaders and landlords. Through the party system, these local authorities allied themselves with political forces in the capital. They controlled large numbers of local votes, in exchange for which they received spoils to distribute among their followers. Thus the positions of these traditional leaders were reinforced, both vis-à-vis the central government and vis-à-vis the local population’.

As the prominent Kurdish political figure, Altan Tan, defines it, ‘the biggest success of the DP government comprised its “brave” politics, through which it carried opposing families’ children to the parliament; after DP none of the parties arising in the Turkish political arena could succeed in operating a strategy of firstly including such a significant amount of opposing figures within parliament and secondly, assimilating them to such an extent.

A. Kurdishness Awakening via Eastism

Eastism, which did not have a formal or organized body but created a dynamism, especially among the Kurdish youth in almost every Kurdish city in Turkey during the 1960s, signalled a new period for the Kurdish movement in Turkey. The group was established in 1958 and mainly

acts carried out by the military as there were no other options. This enabled the normalization and routinization of the idea that the civil authorities can be abolished any time in Turkey if the army – as the real and the unsparking owner of the country – sees necessary if such authorities are not doing the greatest good for the country and if there is a “threat” against the regime. This approach has created a militarized state and society in Turkey. In actuality, the short term nature of governance of the military regime can be explained by the fact that it has never had such power and capacity or true ability to govern for a longer period. The Turkish military can be better understood through the conceptualization of Steven Cook in which he focuses on the armies of Turkey, Egypt and Algeria and defines them as “ruling but not governing”. In the context discussed, after the military coup of 1960, the deposed Prime Minister Adnan Menderes claimed that a number of these Kurdish authorities, not content with their increased powers, had been plotting to achieve full independence for the Kurdish provinces.

263Ibid.
264Religious background and became an MP from HDP
265Altan Tan, Kürt Sorunu, Timas Yayımları, Istanbul, 2011, p. 316
centred in Diyarbakır. Its self-naming was a ‘result’ of the context at the time\textsuperscript{266}, and clearly not a random choice; it reflects the dominant lexicon and limited dynamism of the era. So was the case for the state terminology and common use of language among the Turkish majority - due to the denial of the existence of the Kurds at the time- “East” was an enforced strategy of wording, and served as a replacement term for the Kurds in order to express the problems of Kurdistan, namely the land of Kurds.

Growing from collective knowledge of the previous experiences, the term East/Eastism was also a means of self-protection. ‘The movement was formed by the Kurdish generation born after the establishment of the Turkish Republic and generally comprised self-employed individuals in their early 30s at the time. Their significant emphasis on studying the holy book of Kemalism, the \textit{Nutuk}, also demonstrates the Eastist’s attempt to seek the acknowledged existence and legitimization of Kurdishness within Kemalizm\textsuperscript{267}. The main sources of inspiration for this group at the time included the Algerian War of Independence\textsuperscript{268} and Kurdish-language broadcasts on Radio Baghdad\textsuperscript{269}. However, their primary daily paper entitled \textit{İleri Yurt} (Advanced Country) was written in Turkish and ‘they could be defined as a close group of Kurdish people who were socially friends and mainly separated from each other and reached an awareness of their own Kurdish identity by means of re-reading the recent past and without talking in Kurdish\textsuperscript{270}.

‘The movement was mainly concerned with economic issues and development in the region which was officially recognized as an “underprivileged-area”\textsuperscript{271}. Although they were only a small group of Kurdish educated youth with a limited impact on Kurdish masses or were the ‘Kurdish counter-elites’ as Watts defines them, their trials in the 1960s created a widespread discussion of the ‘Eastern question’.

Among 50 of them, 40 were arrested and 10 were released due to not having enough space in the military prison. Among the released deferent, Mehmet Emin Batu died due to stomach

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\textsuperscript{266} According to Bruinessena and Güneş, this wording was result of legal restrictions at the time. (Güneşi 2012); (Bruinessen, 2000).
\textsuperscript{268} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{271} Jack David Eller, From Culture to Ethnicity Conflict: An Anthropological Perspective on Ethnic Conflict, University of Michigan Press, 1999, p. 174
\end{flushleft}
bleeding and because of their number was later decreased to forty-nine, the case is referred as
the “The Incident of 49s’ (49’lar Olayı). After 14 months in prison, the May 27 coup took place
while the group waited to be released to court and they were excluded from the amnesty that
coup d’etat government announced at the time. Their trial lasted until 1967. The incident and
the trial process was a was a junction for the Kurds which awaken the memories of the past. In
its symbolic meaning, despite ‘the change in its disclosure and altered in nature’272, they were
the ones that embodied the survival of the Kurdishness after being brutally supressed in the
past. When they were arrested and persecuted in the late 1959s, known as, it was a defining
moment for the Kurdish movement because of its symbolic meaning in the collective memory
of Kurds. ‘The acceptance of Eastists as a movement demonstrated that the Kurdish ethnicity
had not been lost, even if its discourse had changed and its nature had been altered’273.

The limited dynamism in the political sphere of Turkey was interrupted by the first military
coup d’etat in the country, which, took place on 27 May 1960. Following the coup, 485
prominent Kurdish tribal leaders and large land owners were detained and sent to a camp in
Sivas and 55 of them were subsequently exiled to Southern and Western Turkey which came
to be known as “The Incident of 55” (55’ler Olayı). In 1963, 23 Kurdish nationalists were also
imprisoned, referred to as “The Incident of 23”, in the Kurdish collective memory. It was also
during this period that the names of Kurdish towns were changed into Turkish one, and
additionally, with the aim of “Turkifying” Kurdish children, boarding schools were established,
and Turkish-language radio stations started to broadcast to Kurdistan.

B. Kurds Positioning in the Left

Paradoxically, the constitution drawn up in 1960 introduced new checks and balances on the
government, new social rights (such as the right to strike and a minimum wage), and increased
individual rights and freedoms274 and it made room for oppressed voices to be heard and
political opposition to harness its struggle. The Kurds were able to express some of their
demands and concerns in this period. As is clearly defined by Bozarslan, overall, the 1960s
were mainly based on ‘a dual dynamic for the Kurds, who were experiencing both exile and
new expression opportunities’275. At the end of the 1960s and start of the 1970s the revived
dynamic among Kurds met with revolutionist movements which were gaining momentum in

272 Ibid.
273 Ibid.
274Clement Dodd, Crisis of Turkish Democracy, The Eothen Press, 1983, p. 11
Milliyetçilik Cilt, 841-870, p. 853

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Turkey at the time. The Turkish left became a sphere for the “uncomfortable Kurds” who experienced an ontological stress under the official regime of the country.

There were several reasons behind the positioning of Kurds on the left side of the political spectrum in Turkey, following the left-wing zeitgeist of the time\textsuperscript{276} such as ‘the messages of “Marxism-Leninism” sent to the “oppressed nations” on the path to self-determination. The authoritarian regimes at the time in countries such as Turkey and Iran in which Kurds were suppressed, were supported by the United States, which was the leading actor of the anti-communist polar at the time\textsuperscript{277}. More importantly, there was a lack of political space for the Kurds in the Islamic and right-wing politics of Turkey, within which it was not possible for them to hold onto their Kurdishness as an equal part of their political identity. Additionally, in the Kurdish collective memory the image of Mahabad Kurdish Republic was still alive and loaded with leftist references. Left wing politics ostensibly provided a possible political path for the Kurds at the time, allowing their Kurdishness to exist.

Besides certain democratic liberations of 1960s, the dislocatory changes in the country such as migration to Western Turkey or Europe, urbanization due to economic development as a result of the incorporation of capitalism in Anatolia and the reduction of agriculture within domestic production, spread of education during the 1950s and 1960s were the additional concurrent factors which most affected the Kurds and contributed to their positioning on the left. As Romano states, eventually this created a new, non-traditional Kurdish nationalist elite. For the increasing number of Kurds who settled in various cities, economic modernization produced new challenges and opportunities. Education, particularly university education, exposed a new generation of both wealthy, and poor, talented Kurds to ideas of nationalism, socialism, and the struggle of other peoples\textsuperscript{278} against the state repression. There was also ‘a generational shift in the Turkish and Kurdish left at the time due to the increase in the youth population and the growing plebeian features of the sociological landscape’.\textsuperscript{279}

On the political scene however, the Turkish Labor Party (Türkiye İşçi Partisi -TIP), which has leading Kurdish members in its founding cadres and recognized the Kurdish problem for the

\textsuperscript{276} Revolutionary struggles in the World: Cuba, Vietnam, Laos, Angola, Mozambique, Algeria, Palestine and others
\textsuperscript{277} Hamit Bozarslan, “‘Being in Time”: Kurdish Movement and Quests of Universal’, The Kurdish Question Revisited, Edited by Gareth Stansfield and Mohammed Shareef, 2005.
\textsuperscript{279} Hamit Bozarslan, ‘Between integration, autonomization and radicalization. Hamit Bozarslan on the Kurdish Movement and the Turkish Left’, Interviewed by Marlies Casier and Olivier Grojean, European Journal of Turkish Studies Social Sciences on Contemporary Turkey 14 | 2012.
first time in Turkey’s history at its 1970 Party Congress, became an important shelter for the Kurds at the time. The Eastern Meetings (*Doğu Mitingleri*) organized by the socialist Kurds acting in the TLP and the nationalists who founded the Democratic Party of Turkish Kurdistan (*Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi -TKDP*), in the major Kurdish cities created a dynamism in terms of being the first large-scale gatherings after the Dersim Rebellion in which Kurds could voice their problems and demands. It was also a leading factor in the establishment of the *Devrincı Doğu Kültür Ocakları* (DDKO-Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths) in 1969, through which the Kurdish movement became autonomous from the Turkish left. The creation of the DDKO was a direct consequence of both intra-Kurdish and Turkey-wide dynamics and it was a profoundly pacifist and reformist movement.280

C. Abdullah Öcalan in the Changing 1960s

Öcalan was born in Ömerli (Amara with the old name), a village in Halfeti, Şanlıurfa Province in eastern Turkey which is just located in the north of Syria border and is a linguistically and culturally mixed area. Although there is lack of official birth record of him, his birthday is widely accepted as 4 April 1948. He was born to a peasant family without any tribal belongings281 whose grandmother, so that, his mother is said to be Turkish and father is Kurdish.282 He is the oldest of seven children, with three brothers and two sisters. As many of the Kurds in Turkey, he speaks Kurdish by born and learned Turkish in the primary school. However, as he stated in his several interviews, although he speaks Kurdish by born, Öcalan speaks, writes and thinks in Turkish better than Kurdish.

At the time, as it was the case for the children of many lower-class families in Turkey, education— as a lift that makes class shifts possible- had a central role and function in Öcalan’s life and for the first time his departure from his village to Ankara in 1966 was because of having his high school education. Although he applied for a place in airforce military school in order to be a professional Turkish army officer283, he was turned down because of his past age of entry and

280 Ibid.
281 Later on, Öcalan’s supporters would make much of the fact that he came from as depressed surroundings as his followers, unlike many of the earlier leading Kurdish figures, who often were linked to large tribal or wealthy landowning families.
282 When Öcalan was arrested in 1999, he said that his mother is Turkish but this was contradicted by his brother Osman Öcalan. In reality, it is widely accepted that his grandmother was Turkish and his mother was coming from a diversified ethnic background.
283 In his statements and as it is widely accepted among Kurds, it is believed that in reality he was refused by the military school because of being a Kurd. On the other hand, as Marcus puts it, applying to a military school was not an uncommon dream for a Kurdish boy schooled in the heroics of Turkey’s founder and top general, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.
instead had a vocational high school education in Ankara at Ankara Title Deed and Cadastre Vocational High School (Ankara Tapu-Kadastro Meslek Lisesi). His arrival in Ankara coincided with Kurdish dynamism that was evidently present in the big cities as well as the region. As Marcus elaborates it, ‘teenagers purposefully smoked “Bitlis” cigarettes, whose name referred to the city where the tobacco was grown in the southeast.’ The excitement created by the Barzani movement in Iraq had found a counterpart in Turkey and in 1965, the Turkey Kurdistan Democratic Party (TKDP) was established as a branch of the Iraq Kurdistan Democratic Party and was defending a program of autonomy similar to the KDP in Iraq. During the same years, socialism was fast becoming a hegemonic discourse among the educated Turkish and Kurdish youths, and mobilizing mass movements.

During high school years however, while noticing the emerging Kurdish consciousness, Öcalan was defined and define himself as a religious person who regularly went to mosque and was famous with his loyalty to prey. Religion is a world of reference that Öcalan knows and belongs to as the child of a religious family. In his high school years, he keeps the same life style he used to have before. At the same time, his arrival from a village to the big city brings with it problems of adaptation and a sense of alienation, which makes religion a safe refuge for him. During this period, he reads Sayyid Qutb, the Egyptian writer and the ideological father of modern political Islam, who was executed in 1966 after 10 years in prison. Also during his political explorations in high school, Öcalan attends the meetings of the Milli Türk Talebe Bırığı (National Turkish Student Association) and the Komünizle Mücadele Derneği (The Association for the Struggle Against Communism, founded in 1950). He says that among all the speakers he listened to, the most ideologically compelling was Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, one of the foremost names in Turkey’s Islamist movement. During the same period, he also reads Kant and Bergson under the influence of his high school teachers. He says that the book which influenced him the most was Leo Huberman’s The Alfabet of Socialism, which was popular around the time, Öcalan read it in the last year of high school. After he reads the book, according to him “Mohammad loses and Marx wins”. These eclectic readings are in fact not so

287 Öcalan’ın sorgu videosu 288 Kısakürek was a leading Muslim thinker and a famous poet at the time whose impact is still alive in today’s Turkey among the Muslim movements via his “Great East Ideal.
strange considering the spirit of those times. Öcalan belonged to a generation searching for its ‘revolution’ and he was trying to find out whether Islam or Marxism was the way to that revolution.

Following his graduation from the high school, he started working as a state servant in Diyarbakır at the Diyarbakir Title Deeds Office. He was relocated one month later to Bakırköy, Istanbul. During his short stay in Istanbul, ‘occasionally, he had gone to meetings of the Kurdish cultural clubs known as DDKO, but neither the Kurdish group nor the speeches of Turkish leftists roused him much’.289 While working in Istanbul, he continued his education and he first entered the Istanbul University Law Faculty but one year later in 1971 enrolled at Ankara University to study political science.

D. Radicalization of the Political Landscape in the 1970s

The second coup d’état of 12 March 1971 which was earlier signalled in a warning by the Turkish Chief of General Staff against “the increasing Kurdish propaganda in the East due to the support for Kurdish separatism by England and the United States, as well as the influence of Barzani in Iraq”, brought with it the closure of all oppositional political entities in Turkey including of TLP and DDKO which were charged with communist propaganda and supporting Kurdish separatism. It was also the 12 March coup that established the idea that there was no hope of success with a legally framed struggles, and it therefore radicalized the political landscape. Besides, for the left wing groups, the worldwide political climate of the era which was defined by the anti-colonial and anti-antiauthoritarian movements290 was source of inspiration and ‘towards the 1970s, they were already very much engaged with the war literature of left movements in the world (Mao, Giap, Troçki…) which were translated into Turkish and gave the leftist groups an ‘international horizon of salvation’ on the basis of a scientifically

290 Although they could not be categorized as anti-authoritarian movements due to the fact of their loyalty to Kemalism in large, ‘at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the revolutionary left in Turkey has gained momentum, getting morale and inspiration from revolutionary struggles elsewhere in the world – from Cuba to Vietnam, Laos to Angola, Mozambique and Guinea and Algeria to Palestine. See: Kürkçü, Ertuğrul. 2007. ‘Türkiye Sosyalist Hareketine Silahlı Mücadelemin Girişî.’, in Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce Cilt 8: Sol, edited by Murat Gültekingil, 494–542. İstanbul: İletişim quoted in Gunes Murat Tezur, ‘Violence and nationalist mobilization: the onset of the Kurdish insurgency in Turkey’, Nationalities Papers, 43:2, 248-266, p.252
proven war theory’. The ideas of ‘people’s war’ or ‘guerrilla war’ were widely debated among the Turkish left and adopted by some of the groups.

The process of radicalization within left wing movements inevitably resulted in the establishment of radical groups. At the time, the three primary militant groups were the THKO (Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu), which adopted Che Guevara and Debray’s (1967) foco theory of guerilla warfare; the THKP-C (Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi), influenced by the urban guerilla theories of Carlos Marighella and Douglas Bravo; and the TKP-ML/TİKKO (Türkiye Komünist Partisi-Marksist-Leninist/Türkiye İşçi Köylü Kurtuluş Ordusu), inspired by Mao Zedong’s notion of protracted people’s war. At the Kurdish end of the left wing landscape, after the releases from Diyarbakır Prison, which was later defined as a “school for the Kurds”, there was a fragmented and diversified Kurdish movement on the political scene, comprising Rizgari, DDKD, TSKP (The Path of Freedom), Kawa, Tekoşin (Militancy) and Beş Parçacilar (Liberators of the five parts of Kurdistan). These movements generally had pacifist profiles in practice, but on a theoretical level were not closed to the idea of an armed struggle.

A crucial regional factor which concurrently set off the trend of radicalization among Kurdish movements and strengthened their anti-imperialist discourse in the mid-1970s, just after the military regime in Turkey, was Barzani’s defeat in Iraq in 1975. As a result of the loss of the “Barzani myth”, as Bozarslan explains, ‘the Kurds no longer had any kind of father. The father figure appeared to be that of a ‘betrayer.’ Barzani is accused of having ‘betrayed’ the Kurdish cause, not because he wanted to, but because he trusted the ‘imperialist powers.’ Finding themselves without this reference after almost 15 years of a Barzani “cult” created a huge vacuum. This vacuum could not be filled without a process of radicalization’.

E. Öcalan Positioning in the Left

As a student at Ankara University Faculty of Political which was mainly dominated by the left-wing political groups, Öcalan shortly engaged with the leftist political groups, like many of the Kurdish students who were part of the Turkish left at the time. Öcalan was a sympathizer of the THKO and THKP-C whose leaders were arrested just after the coup d’etat in 1971. Following
their arrestment, the leaders of the THKO, Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Aslan and Hüseyin Inan were executed on 6 May 1972 and most of the core members of the THKP-C were killed in Kızıldere, Ankara, on 30 March 1972.'294 During his political activism at the time, Öcalan was jailed for once because of distributing an illegal brochure against the arrestment’s of THKO leaders295 and was imprisoned at Mamak Prison for 6 months in 1972. In the later stage, his release in 6 months compared to other detainees who were arrested with him and suspension of his military duty became the source of the claims according to which he was affiliated with the Turkish National Intelligence Service. However, such claims have never been proven.

Later on, Öcalan actively took part in the administration and activities of the student organization called Ankara Demokratik Yüksek Öğretim Derneği (ADYÖD; Ankara Democratic Higher Education Association) which was established by the Türkiye Sosyalist İşçi Partisi (TSİP; the Socialist Workers Party of Turkey) in 1974. Although ADYÖD was established by the TSİP and was a platform for diversified left wing groups, it was taken under the ‘control of the revolutionary students which were mainly from the THKO and THKP-C. Among the members of ADYÖD at this time were those students who would play an important role in the establishment of the PKK, including Abdullah Öcalan, Haki Karer, Baki Karer, Kemal Pir, Ali Haydar Kaytan, Duran Kalkan and Cemil Bayık.296 ADYÖD was also the organization that Öcalan would meet with his future wife Kesire Yıldırım.

Contrary to what is widely presented however, he was not a member of the Kurdish cultural clubs, namely the DDKO, which was known as the first autonomous Kurdish organization independent from the Turkish left and was formed in 1969. As İsmet Ateş states, who was the founding president of the DDKO at the time, Öcalan was invited to the organization but he refused to be part of it saying that ‘there are agha and sheik’s children in it’.297 Therefore, at the time, Öcalan politically positioned himself in the Turkish left before forming his own group in a Kurdish line which makes the PKK ‘born from Turkish the left’298

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295 The brochure was written by Doğu Perinçek with the title of Şafak Bildirisi.
297 Personal Interview on 17 March 2018, Istanbul
In such type of political landscape, Öcalan was not defined as an outstanding figure in the left-wing circles compared to the charismatic leaders of the Turkish left and to the prominent Kurdish leftist figures in it. But he was known by his political views as a person who had a Kurdish awareness but was not fully engaged in a Kurdish line.

F. Öcalan Towards a Kurdish Line and Emergence of the PKK

In 1975, Öcalan left the ADYÖD following its closure in 1974 and since then searched for the ways to establish his own group. Before evolving in the PKK, they were a group of friends who were called as the Kürdistan Devrimcileri (Revolutionaries of Kurdistan- KD) and they were clear about the idea that there was a need for establishing a political party (compulsorily an illegal party at the given circumstances) which would adopt an armed struggle for a revolutionary change in Turkey. This was not an uncommon idea at the time and shared by several left wing Kurdish revolutionary groups in theory. However, they ‘considered Turkish Kurdistan as the most appropriate area to start a political and armed struggle for a revolutionary change in Turkey compared to urban environment’. Therefore, Öcalan and his group decided to go to the Kurdish region to share their ideas and test the water. In the PKK historiography, this is defined as the ‘return to the homeland’ that was decided by the group during the ‘Dikmen meeting’ which took place in Ankara in the early 1976. This was also the meeting that an organizational committee of the group was established and Öcalan was elected as the chairman of the group. ‘In terms of Öcalan's leadership, it was the first and last organizational election in the PKK’s history’. Öcalan’s leading position had always been clear within the party, but at the time, his fellow party members was still calling him as ‘Apo Arkadaş’ (Comrade Apo) among themselves.

Following the decision of the return to the region however, the group shared its ideas and promote its line by means of having one-on-one conversations and debates to win people’s support. While dealing with their audience, they were considering the religious sensitivities of the people and using a dual communication approach. As Marcus quotes in her work, group members would talk about Marxism and Leninism with the ones who have an interest,

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299 Ibid. p.129
300 Can Yüce, 1999: 261; quoted in Akkaya, 2005
otherwise, they would speak of national struggle since Kurdish society was highly religious and they tried to avoid to talk on socialism directly not to be understood as anti-Islam.\(^{302}\)

By 1978, the group was smoothly started to be known in the region and apart from the name of Revolutionaries of Kurdistan, they were also called as \textit{Apocular} which making reference to the circle around Abdullah Öcalan and literally means "the followers of Apo" in English. In 1978 declaration of the group was made by the ‘Manifesto’\(^{303}\), namely \textit{Kürdistan Devriminin Yolu} (The Path of the Kurdistan Revolution), written by Öcalan and his two comrades, Mazlum Doğan and Hayri Durmuş (accredited only to Öcalan today). By the ‘Manifesto’, which is accepted as Öcalan’s ‘First Manifesto’ in this study, was published in the first issue of the Serxwebun defining the objective as to establish a ‘Free United Kurdistan’. The document had a strong ‘Marxist-Leninist’ approach, and was based on an alliance of workers and peasants. According Burkay a decade later, the PKK imitated the THKP-C’s strategy of rural mobilization.\(^{304}\) In April 1979 however, the group was renamed as The \textit{Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan} (PKK- Kurdish Workers Party).

Going back to the phrase of \textit{Apocular}, it is important to note that in its first years, the name of \textit{Apocular} was strongly criticised by the founding members of PKK such as Kemal Pir due to the reduction of a political movement into a man’s story which also ignores the capability and the agency of its members:

\begin{quote}
“\textit{The Apoculuk (Apoism) was a way to show us as if we are depended on one person. In fact, we were not that much depending on one person. I mean it is wrong to say that ‘if there is no Abdullah, there is no movement’. Abdullah by himself is member of this movement. This is the situation.}”\(^{305}\)
\end{quote}

At the time, apart from the PKK however, \textit{Kürdistan Ulusal Kurtuluşcularları} (KUK- Kurdistan National Liberators) emerged as another Kurdish organization which was a derivation of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and was extremely radical and committed to the armed struggle.\(^{306}\) In understanding the emergence of the radical Kurdish organizations, it is important to note the defeat of the Barzani movement in Iraq in 1975 in terms of its consequence of creating a sense


\(^{303}\) The name is obviously inspired by Marx’s Manifesto.


\(^{305}\) Cemil Gündoğan, \textit{Kawa Davası Savunması ve Kürtlerde Siyasi Savunma Geleneği}, Vate Yayınları, 2007, s.276

of ‘urgency mood’ among the Kurds in Turkey. ‘The ‘1975’ momentum cannot be explained solely by the new opportunity to establish Kurdish parties, but also by this absolute and sacrificial sense of urgency. Both the KUK and the PKK were the outcomes of this sense of urgency.’

For these groups, legitimizing violence was a way in which to be visible as agents within the Kurdish political landscape and it interconnected with their need and attempts to fulfill the leadership problem that emerged after the loss of Barzani as a leader-father figure. The claim of these radical groups was also to be the ‘owner of Kurdishness and the Kurdish dawa (cause)’ in all parts of Kurdistan and their struggle to be the real “owner” of these things embodied the idea that it was the turn of Turkey’s Kurds to represent the Kurdish dawa. The 1970s ended with the third and most destructive coup d’état of Turkey on 12 September 1980.

G. Significance of the 12 September Coup in the Context of the PKK

The year 1980 was a significant year in Turkey’s history because of the launch of the third military coup d’état in the history of Republic, which was the most influential in terms of its long term effects on the substance and means of political and social life in Turkey. As with the routine practices of the previous interventions, by the 12 September coup, the constitution had been suspended and the political parties closed while their leaders were questioned, prosecuted and imprisoned. One of the most important implications of the coup was that over 20,000 people sought political refuge in other countries, while around 300 people died due to unknown and suspicious causes. Additionally, over a million people were blacklisted and 98,404 people were tried on charges of being members of leftist, nationalist or conservative ideological organizations.

The September coup targeted all oppositional political groups, with a particular focus on leftist and the Kurdish nationalist movements.

The Diyarbakır Military Prison was established after the coup and is largely accepted to have been more than a prison and rather a “concentration camp” because of the brutal torture and violence perpetrated by the state there. This violence surpassed the existing imagination of the time and constitutes a defining moment in the collective Kurdish memory and in the history of the PKK. According to the testimonies of victims, which became public in the late 1990s and were not denied by the official authorities, and even appropriated as being in the “nature of the

307 Ibid.
308 Turkey commemorates the 35th anniversary of the September 12 1980 coup d'etat, Daily Sabah, on 12 September 2015, Available at: https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/2015/09/12/turkey-commemorates-the-35th-anniversary-of-the-september-12-1980-coup-detat
by prominent military figures of the time, the torture which took place at Diyarbakir Prison was not only physical but also psychological and formed part of an official master plan. The constant recitation of the Turkish national anthem, “Atatürk’s Address to the Turkish Youth”, military and ultra-nationalist songs and slogans such as “A Turk is worth the whole universe” were part of an intensive “prison curriculum” aimed at “Turkifying” the incarcerated Kurds in which Father Turk’s symbolic presence or the ‘face’ was in the forefront. It has since emerged that the torturers called this form of torture “education”. The torture therefore had a strongly ethnic nature and was aimed at the Turkification of Kurdish prisoners.

‘Turkey was ruled by a military regime after the coup d’état on 12 September 1980 until 6 November 1983 and most of the Kurdish political activists were arrested and incarcerated in numerous prisons. Hence, in the early 1980s prisons, especially the Diyarbakir Prison, were the main site of resistance and Kurdish political activism. There were several riots and hunger strikes to protest against torture within the prison, but it was the individual and group suicide protests led by the Kurdish prisoners and their ‘Kurdish’ methods of resistance ‘such as speaking, singing and shouting slogans in Kurdish’ (as a way of improving the collective mood and against the ban on Kurdish), which had the most impact in terms of holding such a significant place in the Kurdish collective memory and in particular in relation to the history of the PKK.

The deaths of prisoners who were also members of the PKK, as a result of hunger strikes, including Kemal Pir, Hayri Durmuş, Akif Yılmaz and Ali Çiçek in 1982; the suicide of Mazlum Doğan (in protest against the violence experienced) on 21 March of the same year, this being the day of traditional Kurdish New Year, Newroz, and on May 18 of that year, the self-immolation of four young prisoners, Mahmut Zengin, Eşref Anyık, Ferhat Kurtay and Necmi Öner, who rolled themselves up in newspapers sprayed with paint and holding hands, burned themselves alive in protest, all became key events, the individuals who died going on to become.

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310 As a response to the debates sparked after the execution of Erdal Eren who was a 17-year-old high school student and hanged after the military coup, Kenan Evren, the leader of 1980 coup d’état remarked in 1984: “So, after I catch them and send them to trial, I will not execute them, but look after them for the rest of their lives? I will feed this traitor who kills a soldier that gives his life for the land? Would you accept that?”. See: ‘Asmayalım da Besleyelim mi?’, Evrensel, on 9 May 2015, available at: https://www.evrensel.net/haber/112363/asmayalim-da-besleyelim-mi-2
312 Ibid.
important figures in the martyrdom discourse of the PKK. It is widely accepted that ‘The 1980 coup and its oppressiveness helped to create a siege mentality among the Kurds, compelling them to believe that their future was constrained and contained by the Turkish state’.\textsuperscript{315} It can easily be asserted that the practices carried out in Diyarbakır, which is acknowledged by Kurds as the unofficial capital of the Kurdish region, played a crucial role in the crystallisation of nationalist secessionist ideas and in the radicalization of a generation of Kurds, large numbers of whom went on to join the ranks of the militant Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK), which launched an armed struggle in 1984 with the aim of establishing an independent Kurdish state.\textsuperscript{316}

Consequently, the 12 September coup d’état confirmed the idea among the Kurdish movements that there was no chance of struggle against repressive state policies and violence by means of constitutional and democratic means, and that as there was no law or justice for the Kurds, neither freedom nor equality could be gained from a place of non-violent and pacifist political movements.

\textbf{H. ‘Father Turk’ as the Face of State’s Symbolic Violence}

As another significant characteristic of the coup, ‘although the military coups of 1960 and 1971 had the pretext of saving Ataturk’s principles and reforms, his cult distinctively reached its climax by the 1980 military coup\textsuperscript{317} in terms of turning into the face of symbolic violence of the state against the opposing groups. Throughout the 1980s however, Atatürk was not only the face of the state’s reaction against the conflict between right and left wing political movements, but also the face of the military rule which presented Kemalism as the best and the only appropriate political tradition in Turkey. Using the cult of Atatürk, the 1980 coup enshrined the Turkish military's role in national security in a rewritten Constitution, and symbolized the military's view of political Islam, Kurdish secessionism and communism as anathema. During that time Atatürk symbols became further magnified and were produced directly by the state, in which Atatürk was mostly depicted as a soldier and statesman.\textsuperscript{318} After the 1980 coup, the oppression of the Kurds brought about by the military regime, along with the statues and monuments of the Turkish ‘national father’ erected in the East and Southeast regions with

\textsuperscript{315} Ibid, p. 80
\textsuperscript{316} Ibid.
quotes emphasizing ‘Turkishness’, provoked the reconstruction of Kurdish nationalist memory, imagery and discourse which were all expressed in extremely aggressive and anti-Turkish ways.

This symbolic violence in the face of the Turkish founding father, can be considered as a factor that triggered once more the need for a national father figure among the Kurds which had been lost by the defeat of Barzani. Since it created the idea that the Turkish state and its ‘Turkish’ status quo - hidden under the image of Atatürk - could only be challenged through a father figure who would represent the mirror-image of Atatürk, in saving his (Kurdish) nation. In this regard, the PKK became the most potent expression of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey in this era after it launched its guerrilla war in 1984. The role of the PKK grew exponentially after the Gulf War and Öcalan, who gradually constructed and imagined as a ‘Father Kurd’ that would answer/reply the ‘Father Turk’ of the state, became the embodied figure of the idealized struggle for Kurdish independence.

SECTION II: The PKK in the Early First Manifesto Era

Following the declaration of the group by the ‘First Manifesto’ which defined the Kurdish issue in Turkey on the basis of revolutionary socialism; Öcalan defined Kurdistan as a colony of Turkey and other occupying state forces by *Kürdistan’da Zorun Rolü* (The Role of Force in Kurdistan) published in 1982. He made a distinction between the nationalisms of ‘oppressed nations’ and ‘oppressor nations’ and according to this, the only way to get rid of the oppressor’s rule is to establish an independent and united Kurdistan via the use of violence. Therefore, Öcalan defined the path of revolution on the basis of a simultaneous struggle which on the one hand was against colonialism and on the other aimed at the creation of an independent state. The national salvation was imagined in the form of nation state and the revolution was defined as a prolonged armed struggle or ‘people’s war’, based on peasantry. The leadership of the revolution however was named as ‘the working class’, led by the PKK. A red flag with the hammer-and-sickle became the party symbol and would be in place until the fifth party-congress of the PKK in 1995.

319 The PKK published in the 1970s and 1980s "Doğru Yolu Kavrayalım" (Let's Understand the Right Way), "Kürdistan'da Örgütlenme Üzerine" (On Organization in Kurdistan), "Kürdistan'da Çözüm Yolu" (The Way of solution in Kurdistan), "Kürdistan'da Zorun Rolü" (The role of coercion in Kurdistan), "Tasfiyeciliğin Tasfiyesi" (Liquidation of liquidationism), "Seviyorsan Savaş" (If you like, make war), "Ayaklanma Taktiği Üzerine Tezler ve Görevlerimiz" (Theses on insurrectional strategy and our responsibilities), etc. Most of these texts were written by Abdullah Öcalan, or by Mazlum Doğan and Hayri Durmuş. See: Mehmet Orhan.


321 Ibid.
At the establishment period of the PKK, a ‘determined struggle’ against colonialism and for an independent nation state was seen as the only option for a free and united Kurdistan to emerge and exist and the options such as ‘regional autonomy’ or ‘autonomy’ were strictly rejected. According to this ideological reading, ‘the colonial division of Kurdistan and its feudal fragmentation were the main barriers that lay in the way of a united Kurdistan… Since there was a strong link between the practices of colonialism and the continuation of feudalism’, the start of the struggle was employed against the ‘native feudal-collaborators’. Therefore, the first attack of the PKK starting from 1978 was against the tribal families ‘who dominated the region’s economy and worked with the state’. They were named as ‘feudal landlords’ and condemned for ‘exploiting the peasants’, and ‘collaborating with government’ by the PKK. In the lexicon of the organization, this attack is described as follows: ‘the uprisings in Hilvan and Severek, which developed into a revolutionary armed struggle, marked the beginning of the popular uprising for national liberation’.

In the book *Kürdistan’da Zorun Rolü* (The Role of Force in Kurdistan), very much inspired by the work of Frederick Engels titled, The Role of Force in History, Öcalan defined the use of violence, namely the guerrilla war, not only as a military solution for the problems faced, but also as a condition for a political solution and progress as:

"The guerrilla war will not only solve the problem of military imbalance, but will also accelerate, strengthen and protect political development. It can be clearly stated that we will be able to develop political work on the basis of the guerrilla struggle... During the process of developing political work on the basis of armed struggle, the guerrillas play a crucial role. It is even necessary to carry out the organizational work of the party on the basis of the guerrilla struggle."

'If there are some revolutionary changes in Kurdistan, which is the condition to live, there is need for theory of war, or in other words, revolutionary violence is unavoidable... Since the guerrilla war is the only way to turn the power imbalance between us and the enemy in our own benefit.'

Therefore, from the beginning of its formation, the PKK appeared as both a military and political organization due to the fact that ‘the violence they perpetrated was

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322 PKK Programı, Köln, 1984, p.45-49
327
rational/instrumental, in the sense that it sought to change the political and judicial status of the Kurds’. 328

Apart from targeting the tribal families, the attacks of the PKK also employed against other Kurdish left and nationalist groups of the time, coloured this era also as the start of an intra-Kurdish violence among competing Kurdish actors. The struggle for having the monopoly of Kurdish political power resulted the intra-Kurdish violence to ‘take extreme forms of armed conflict, assassination, death threat and torture. In period from 1975 to 1980, the PKK had conflicts and fights with several Kurdish groups such as KUK, DDKD, Rizgari, Ala-Rizgari, Tekoşin and Sterka Sor’. 329

A. Making the PKK in Syria

Towards the 1980s however, the overall political field was extremely tense in the country. Increasing political violence among the rival groups, the intra Kurdish conflict emerged between the PKK and other Kurdish organizations, growing rumours about an upcoming coup d’état and finally the arrest of one of the ruling members of his group, made Öcalan to search for a safer place for himself. ‘His immediate goal was to save himself; his long-term plan was to arrange for PKK fighters to get training from the Palestinian militant groups in Syria and Lebanon.’ 330 Therefore, in 1979 just before the third coup d’état in 1980, Öcalan and a small group of his associates fled to Syria, where they started to build the core of the PKK. ‘Öcalan’s exit to Syria was not very well organised, despite the party’s attempts to forge connections abroad since April, 1979’ 331 and ‘some PKK members did not realize Öcalan was gone until the following year’. 332

However, Syria would become a home for the PKK to reorganize itself and in which it began to have guerrilla trainings in Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley with the Palestinian groups who were already located in the region and were supported by the Syrian government in their fight

329 Among these conflicts, the ones between the PKK and KUK, the PKK and Têkoşin and the PKK and Stêrka Sor were more regular than the others. In other cases, the violence appeared sporadically and irregularly, although some tension still existed between them. See: Mehmet Orhan
against Israel. The Palestinian movement, in its symbolic meaning, was acknowledged ‘as a model of resistance to the ‘anti-imperialist struggle’ in the world and was not only a diplomatic contact for the PKK but also the main channel of “acquisition of training and arms”’. The PKK was not the only group that migrated to Syria and receive military trainings in Palestinian camps at the time. However, as Akkaya discuss, ‘among the various Turkish and Kurdish radical groups received military training in Palestinian camps in Jordan and Lebanon, the PKK benefited most from this opportunity due to having more than one thousand militants in Lebanon following the 1980 military coup.’ When Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 however, the weapons left behind by Palestinian had strengthened the arm resources of the PKK.

While Syria became a home and school for the PKK in militaristic sense, in Turkey the PKK ‘gained the dubious honour of being the Kurdish organization with the most militants in prison’ and the PKK members who could not make their ways to Syria, made the ‘social fame’ of the PKK in prisons by means of improving a Kurdish mood inside and leading several riots, hunger strikes and self-immolation protests against torture and oppression within the prison. Thus, six years after its foundation and eight months after the military regime had transferred power to a civilian government in Turkey, the PKK’s first armed attacks against Turkish state forces occurred on 15 August 1984 in Eruh and Şemdinli, with the heritage of the Diyarbakır Prison very much in mind. During these attacks one gendarmerie soldier was killed, seven soldiers, two policemen and three civilians were injured. This was followed by a PKK raid on a police station in Siirt, two days later. In the PKK’s literature, the attacks of Eruh and Şemdinli is referred to as “the revolutionary action of August 15, 1984” and seen as the centre of the resistance history of the organization since it is seen to ‘illustrate what human consciousness, determination, and convictions can achieve’.

**B. Second Stage in the First Manifesto: The PKK Becoming a Reference Actor**

Starting with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and beginning of the Gulf War, the 1990s brought many political and social changes not only in the world, but also in Turkey. The 1990s in Turkey was coloured by various and contradicting dynamics due to the consequences of and adaptation challenges to the post-cold war world era alongside with the growing unsolved

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334 Ibid.
336 PKK Party programme
domestic problems. At one hand, the 1990s in Turkey was defined by the escalation of the armed conflict which had shifted from rural settlements to urban centres, forced migration, political murders, failing coalitions, economic crisis and memorandums. At the other hand however, after a period of substantial economic liberalization in the second half of the 1980s, the 1990s was an era that witnessed the emergence a more dynamic and plural media and civil society environment which became relatively independent from the state control and there was also a new phase in Turkey-EU relations. This multi-layered and puzzled-like situation in the country resulted in a dual process which refers to the significant emergence of different realities and experiences employed for different sectors of the society. Therefore, the escalation of the armed conflict and rise of the Kurdish legal movement resulted in a shift from the exclusion to the securitization of the Kurdish question and the rise of the Muslim oriented political groups resulted in the securitization of the political Islam. This was also the creation of a divided judicial system and political reality that was employed against these social and political groups, which can be described as due to conflict between the politicization Kurdishness and state-led Turkishness as well as ‘the clash between the secularity and religiosity’ which has been embodied among secular and Muslim segments of the society.

C. Armed Conflict and Massification of the PKK

The 1990s, in particular history of the PKK, were the years that the organization strengthened its public support among different sections of Kurdish society. In the second half of the 1990s however, due to the massification of organization, the PKK had also gone through an ideological and organizational change. With regards to the massification of the movement, the second phase of the securitization of the Kurdish question by means of employing various forms of indiscriminative violence, extraordinary political and administrative measures against Kurds and the bans on the legal Kurdish movement had a vital role.

The period beginning with the Eruh attack of the PKK in 1984 up to 1999 was the period of active warfare between the parties, although there were one-sided ceasefire declarations by the PKK during this period. As a response to the PKK attacks, the Turkish state declared state of

337 The private TV channels and return of the repressed, relative strengthening of civil society autonomous from considerable amount of liberalization in both economic and social realms
339 From the beginning, Kurdish question was tended to be understood as a problem of separatism by the state. In the 1990s however, the politicization of the Kurdish masses and the rise of the Kurdish legal movement was totally associated with each other and were seen as a new phase in the PKK’s separatism.
emergency rule in the Kurdish region and created a village guard system by means of arming Kurdish people to fight against the PKK. Besides, the illegal and competitive coercive organs built within the state ‘such as the Gendarmerie Intelligence Organization and Counter Terrorism Centre (JITEM) and the Special Forces (Özel Tim or Özel Harekat Dairesi), as well as contract killers, state-enlisted Hizbullah fighters and village guards targeted the very intellectuals and moderates who could have mediated between PKK’s maximalist demands for independence and the Turkish state’s insistence on territorial integrity’. Military operations in the region went alongside with political murders, unidentified perpetrator killings, forced migration and bans on Kurdish political movements and media, especially during the first half of the 1990s.

The armed conflict and the jeopardized political and judicial system repeatedly interfered with the legal Kurdish political movement. ‘The first party to openly advocate for Kurdish interests in Turkey was established in 1990 under the name of the People’s Labor Party (Halkın Emek Partisi (HEP)). For the general elections of 1991, HEP formed an alliance with the Social Democratic People’s Party (Sosyal Demokrat Halk Partisi -SHP) and secured 22 seats in the parliament’341. The fall of the alliance was triggered when Leyla Zana ended her oath of loyalty in parliament in the Kurdish language as a reaction to the nationalist content of the oath, and her declaration that she took the oath for ‘the brotherhood of the Turkish and Kurdish people’ received fierce reactions. After departing from SHP, HEP deputies formed another party called DEP but it was closed in 1994 and over 12 deputies including Leyla Zana sentenced to 15 years’ imprisonment in accordance with Article 168-2 of the Turkish Penal Code and Article 3713 of the Anti-Terrorism Law on charges of "staging separatist activities both in Turkey and abroad in line with orders and directives of leaders of the terrorist organization the PKK". Additionally, the way in which the deputies were taken from parliament immediately after the removal of their immunities by the police, who pushed them into police cars, became forever etched in the memory of the Kurds as an act of the Turkish state carried out to insult their Kurdishness.

This increased the anger and reactions among the Kurds and ‘it also empowered the PKK, for many Kurds felt that since they were given no political ground, the armed route was the only way forward’.342 After DEP and ‘from 1993 to 2003, politicians advocating for Kurdish issues regrouped under various parties including OZDEP, DEP and HADEP. All were prosecuted and

forced to close’ and the legal Kurdish movement tried to survive in between the many closures and replacements. This was also a factor allowing the PKK to increased its influence and control over the legal Kurdish parties. ‘The relationship between the reference actor which is the PKK and the representative actor, which is HEP (and its successors) has not been easy and they have never been an entirely happy couple…. They could not divorce and are obliged to co-exist’. Therefore, the closure of the legal and cultural means of Kurdish representation enabled the PKK to increase its mobilization among the Kurdish population.

The war against the PKK by military and police force increasingly turned against a coercive and violent way in which Kurdish people as a whole and anyone defined as an enemy could easily become a target. In the first half of the 1990s alone ‘ten thousand PKK members and Turkish soldiers were killed. More than 4000 Kurdish villages were not only evacuated but also burnt down and millions of rural Kurds were forcibly internally displaced since they were seen as the “social base of the PKK’s terror”. Alongside the pressure on legal Kurdish parties, from the start of the 1990s a series of assassinations began against prominent Kurdish personalities and Turkish figures working on the Kurdish issue. The murders of Vedat Aydın who was a respected human rights activist and the head of the Diyarbakır branch of HEP in 1991, Kurdish writer Musa Anter (a member of the 49s) in 1992, member of parliament Mehmet Sincar from HEP while he was on a mission to investigate the ‘unidentified killings’, investigative journalist Uğur Mumcu who was researching the Kurdish issue and the death of General Eşref Bitlis who was known for his critical stance towards the indiscriminate killings in the Kurdish areas in an unresolved plane accident were key incidents of the 1990s that surrounded the Kurds. These incidents created a political atmosphere in which the Kurds constituted a ‘threat’ for the Turkish state and the Turkish state constituted a ‘threat’ for the Kurds. Growing unemployment and impoverishment as a result of forced migration also became part of increasing reaction among Kurds towards their situation, and towards the state violence, discrimination and social exclusion experienced.

During the 1990s, several Kurdish public demonstrations by Kurdish crowds took place, especially in the cities of the southeast and in Istanbul around symbolic dates such as the Newroz. The broad political structure of the organization became apparent in the spring periods

of the 1990s, and in particular in 1992 when mass demonstrations took place in the cities of Cizre and Nusaybin considered by the PKK to be serhildan(s) or uprisings - a Kurdish intifada. The PKK was following the Palestinian resistance movement and trying to organize an urban rebellion along with guerrilla warfare and diplomacy, which is why the pro-PKK demonstrations and uprisings were called serhildan in the 1990s.

As a result of the severe repression and armed conflict, the Kurdish youth in particular, and women not only from Turkey but also from the Kurdish diaspora, started to join the PKK in large numbers during the 1990s. The repressed legal demands in the Kurdish landscape, began to be expressed in the illegal structure of the organization due to the lack of relevant legal alternatives. The 1990s were the massification period of the PKK and it was no longer a rural-based organization. Due to the escalation of violence by the armed conflict, forced migration and intra-communal tension, approximately one million Kurds were forced from rural villages and migration to the cities and urban space became ‘the key aspect in articulating Kurdish identity, conditioning freedom and producing counter narratives to those of the Turkish state’. This how the PKK, named as the “29th revolt” which developed from a ‘group of 15–20 university students’, evolved into what has become the ‘biggest challenge to the Turkish state in the twentieth century’.

D. The Changing PKK due to Changing Internal and International Dynamics

As a result of the massification of the movement, the profiles of the PKK guerrillas changed in the 1990s and a diversified young and educated generation became part of the organization, which strengthened the PKK’s discourse as an umbrella organization for all Kurds, attracting them regardless of their social, cultural and class conflicts/differences.

Towards the end of the 1990s, however, the “PKK started to shift in its political orientation from a Marxist-Leninist rhetoric to a soft socialism and nationalism. In this new phase, the movement acknowledged Islam and incorporated religious discourses, concepts, metaphors and

347 Murat Güvenç “Constructing Narratives of Kurdish Nationalism in the Urban Space of Diyarbakır”, Turkey, TDSR, Volume XXIII, number 2011, p. 28
actors which became more visible in following years”. In this process of change, “the PKK also moved from a radically separatist to a milder, democratic discourse, abandoning the objective of an independent Kurdish state and beginning to insist on some form of democratic autonomy”. In 1995, in the fifth congress of the PKK, the symbol of a hammer and sickle in the party flag was replaced with the emblem of a torch and in the programme following the congress, the Soviet Union style of socialism was criticized due to its dogmatic, materialistic vulgarity, and chauvinist and centralist features.

It is again in the 1990s that the Kurdish diaspora began to be a strong agent as the transnational representative of Kurdishness, in terms of its role in the enunciation of the problems and demands of Kurds at the international level. With regard to their important effect on developments in Turkey, Kurdish ROJ TV and the legal advocacy project the Kurdish Human Rights Project (KHRP) established in Europe in the 1990s, were crucial transnational platforms for the Kurdish diaspora. Broadly speaking, while the activities of ROJ-TV relate to collective identity building (and maintenance) within the larger Kurdish community, the KHRP, which managed to stay impartial and dealt with diversified human rights violations, was established to use the existing international human rights mechanisms of the time, such as the ECHR, OSCE and UN mechanisms, regarding the Kurdish issue and contributed to raising awareness both in Europe and Turkey in the way of the procurement of the abolition of torture by all lawful means. In brief, the 1990s were years in the PKK’s history in which a ‘single man’s efforts’, developed, ‘massified’, and eventually became part of an international controversy.

Today, alongside its strict hierarchical structure, the PKK has a complex system composed of different parties and organizations, including armed organizations, a co-party which separately organizes women members, the popular front Kongra-Gel, sister organizations in Syria, Iran and Iraq, and itself one of the parties inside of this complex structure. ‘As the members and sympathizers of the PKK refer to Öcalan as a sun, we may develop this analogy and compare the organization of the party structure to a planetary system: The planets (PKK, KONGRA-

351 Ibid.
353 Bilgin Ayata,…. , 2011, p.133
354 Both Kurdish and Turkish cases had been received by the KHRP including the violation cases against the Turkish Hizbullah.
355 Ali Kemal Özcan, Turkey’s Kurds: A theoretical analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan, Routledge, 2006, p. 16
GEL, KKK/KCK, KNK and guerrilla forces) are in orbit around the sun (Abdullah Öcalan) and various moons (organizations, parties) are in orbit around these’.356

Section III: Capture of Öcalan, Towards the Second Manifesto and a New PKK

As a result of Tukey’s pressure on Syria and the significant role of the USA government, following his forced departure from Syria and moving from Russia to Italy, Greece and finally to Kenya, Abdullah Öcalan was captured on 15 February 1999 after fifteen years of waging a guerrilla war against the Turkish state. As soon as he was captured by Turkish officials, throngs of Kurds rioted in the streets in different cities of the world, especially in Europe, chanting ‘‘Biji Serok Apo!’: ‘Long Live Leader Apo!’ and attacked the diplomatic missions of Turkey and Kenya as well as occupying the Greek embassies. They held pictures of their leader; expressing rage because their “head” had been arrested by their “enemy”, after being refused political asylum by various European states.

In Turkey however, Öcalan’s capture was depicted as a national victory and the Turkish media repeatedly broadcast scenes of Öcalan in a plane just after being arrested, with his teary and fearful face and eyes covered with a bandage. In his first dialogue with members of national intelligence service on the plane, Öcalan stated that his mother is of Turkish origin and that he was ready to serve the people of Turkey in any way, and this scene was another aspect of his arrest that was broadcast for weeks on television channels in Turkey at the time.

The Turkish state referred to Öcalan as a “bloody terrorist” and a “baby killer”, whereas he is perceived as a “hero” and a “freedom fighter” by most of his followers. Some Kurds in Turkey and abroad, responded to his capture by means of setting fire to themselves in protest. After his arrest, Öcalan was first sentenced to death and this was later commuted to a life sentence after the abolition of the death penalty in Turkey in 2002. The period beginning with Öcalan’s departure from Syria on 9th October in 1998 and ending with his arrest on 15th February 1999, is referred to as the “Great Gladio/International Conspiracy” within PKK literature, based on the idea that his capture was planned and organized by NATO forces.

Clearly, the capture of Öcalan was a milestone in the history of the PKK, following which the organisation went through a structural and ideological transformation. In 1999, after its three unilateral ceasefires during the 1990s, the PKK declared a permanent ceasefire and started to

bring its guerrilla forces inside the borders of Iraq. As a result of the shock of Öcalan’s arrest, the party saw internal divisions and the separation of many high-ranking cadres from the movement at this time. Despite the ‘shock and the retreat’ process within the PKK however, the capacity of Öcalan to guide the Kurdish movement has continued since his imprisonment on Imralı Island and the PKK has experienced much change due to his capture, at a later stage as a result of his new instructions given from prison; largely a consequence of a transformation of both the internal and international context.

The 9/11 attacks in the USA in 2001 and their repercussions in the following years made things more complicated for the PKK after the capture of Öcalan. While the Iraqi Kurds, represented by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) became US-allies and the major Kurdish actors in the region after the US-led war in Iraq, the PKK, as of 2002 was designated as a proscribed international terrorist organization by the EU, the US and the UK in line with the ‘War on Terror’ strategy launched by the US just after the 9/11 events and through which many countries strengthened their anti-terrorism legislation and expanded the powers of law enforcement and intelligence agencies to prevent terrorist attacks. In this period, Iraqi Kurdistan gained an unprecedented opportunity for recognition as an autonomous self-ruling territory, and became a new centre of attraction for many Kurds.

A. From Armed Conflict to ‘Kurdish Opening’

The beginning of the 2000s started with new political dynamics in Turkey. After the closure of Refah Partisi (Welfare Party) as a result of the post-modern military coup on 28 February 1997 and its split into ‘traditionalist’ and ‘reformist’ groups; in 2001 Adalet ve Kalkınma

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357 Ibid.
358 Ibid. p. 154
359 The 28 February 1997 military memorandum in Turkey refers to the decisions issued by the Turkish military leadership in a National Security Council meeting on 28 February 1997 after which they made a military tank tour in Ankara Sincan. This memorandum forced the resignation of Islamist Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan of the Welfare Party, and saw the end of his coalition government. The event has been famously labelled a "postmodern coup" and the process after the coup is alleged to have been organised by the Batı Çalışma Grubu (Western Working Group), a purported clandestine group within the military. The mainstream media had an active role in this process. Mainstream media organisations, prompted by Turkey’s military establishment, published fictitious news/content on the rise of Islamism. This catalysed public anxiety over the longitude of the secularist regime and created public support for the toppling of the Refah-yol (Welfare-path) coalition government between the center right True Path Party (DP) and the Islamic conservative Welfare Party (RP). During its monthly meeting in February, the National Security Council, an executive organ comprised of civilian and military leaders, “advised” RP leader Necmettin Erbakan to resign. The military’s message was clear; Erbakan would have faced a more direct military intervention had he not agreed to step down. The government was not the only target of the February 28th process. Cengiz Candar and Mehmet Ali Birand, two well-known journalists working for mainstream media, also became the targets of the fictitious news leaked by the Chief of Staff which alleged that they were on the payroll of the PKK. Based on false documents fabricated by a senior member of the Turkish Armed Forces allegedly based on the testimony of a PKK militant-turned-informant, both journalists were labelled as “PKK agents” by the
Partisi (Justice and Development Party- AK Party) was established by the ‘reformists’ block led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and became the ruling party in 2002. Despite its Islamist roots, AK Party formed a single-party government on the basis of a pro-EU agenda, something which many considered to be an oxymoron both in Turkey and abroad. Indeed, since the foundation of the Republic in Turkey ‘the depiction of Islam as ‘the other’’ or as the symbol of ‘non-modern orientalism’ has always constituted the essential substance of the secular state’s legitimacy itself. AK Party’s pro-European stand suggested that the ‘historical mission’ of the Republican state establishment in Turkey – military, bureaucracy, judiciary and media- has been, in a way, ‘stolen’. This mission, defined by Atatürk himself and internalised by the society as ‘catching up with the level of modern contemporary civilisations’ was no more under the monopoly of the state’s establishment. This challenged the preconceptions of the establishment but was also the reason for several repressed groups to appreciate the ‘conservative democracy’ formula of the AK Party which addressed the universal language of democracy, human rights and the rule of law at the time. This was also a way for the AK Party cadres to deal with the internal and international portrayal of Islam as ‘an essentially dysfunctional religion for both modernity and democracy’ and of securing its political presence against the obstacles arising from a system of Kemalist status quo. Although it was blamed for betraying its ancestors because of its modernist and pro-European stance, and was not accepted as sincere or real enough by the laic opposition despite its reformist agenda, due to its Islamic roots, the party’s ‘conservative democracy’ was appreciated by the society at large, including the Kurds. On the international level, the party’s approach eventually became a healing formula for the West as well, especially after the 9/11 trauma, and was a means by which to transform the tendency of the Western public to associate Islam with terrorism.

The EU process which was accelerated with the acceptance of Turkey as a candidate country in 1999 and the EU’s decision to open negotiations with Turkey in 2005 gave life to the era and received great public support. In particular, the political and economic reforms introduced along the lines of the EU’s Copenhagen Criteria between 2002 and 2008 which reduced the influence of the military in politics; eradicated the death penalty; abolished the State Security Courts

mainstream media, which did not feel the need to check the accuracy of the information leaked from the military. Journalists implicated in these fabrications were dismissed by media moguls, while a leading human rights activist also branded as a PKK agent survived an assassination attempt. For further reading see: Elmas & Kurban (2010), ‘Media policies and regulatory practices in a selected set of European countries, the EU and the Council of Europe: The case of Turkey’, Available at http://www.mediadem.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/Turkey.pdf

360 Ibid.

(Devlet Güvenlik Mahkemeleri-DGM); aligned the judiciary with European standards; and established the supremacy of international agreements in the area of fundamental freedoms over internal legislation\textsuperscript{362} increased the hopes of oppositional groups, including Kurds, in the way of solving their problems by political means in the country and open a path to be recovered from the weight of the past.

On one hand, the democratization process as a part of EU initiation opened more space for the Kurdish legal politics in Turkey, on the other, the idea of ‘Turkey as a member of EU’ which refers to a normalization for different oppositional social and political groups, started to be a reference line, including the Kurds, which indicated a decreasing tendency in their motivation to express their Kurdish interests through the PKK. For instance, while the pro-Kurdish political parties have been steadily building an institutional and support base over the past two decades and their effort has resulted in electoral success in the second half of the 2000s\textsuperscript{363}, at the PKK side the EU process and its impacts on Kurds was being critically discussed as it appeared in party’s bulletins and internal publications. For instance, the leading article of Gündem on 12 October 2004, in which Abdullah Öcalan also writes with a pseudonym, the decrease in the number and the tone of the demonstrations on 9 October and 15 February against the ‘Great Gladio Conspiracy’ in 2004 was questioned in a relation with EU dynamic in Turkey and the self-ruling Kurdish territory in Iraq. After identifying the “dim soul” of the demonstrations and decrease in the reaction of the Kurds against the Gladio, the article warned the Kurds as below:

\begin{quote}
'The forces of Kurdish democracy can only be essential and active actors of democratic solution as long as they stay deeply aware of the Conspiracy and show the required reaction against it. None of the formulas, understandings or approaches except of this awareness would make the forces of Kurdish democracy to gain the status of original/essential element of the history... If a Turkey part of EU is more convincing than an independent Turkey for the Kurds, then we have to open it to debate'.\textsuperscript{364}
\end{quote}

2004 became the year that the PKK ended its unilateral ceasefire after five years and the clashes between PKK and the Turkish armed forces continued and reached a peak in 2007 and 2008. During this period, in political terms, the PKK concentrated on civil campaigns, such as the right of Kurdish language education and a campaign for Öcalan, in which more than three


\textsuperscript{363} Cengiz Güneş & Welat Zeydanlioğlu, The Kurdish Question in Turkey: New Perspectives on Violence, Representation and Reconciliation, Routledge, 2013, p. 268

\textsuperscript{364} Gündem, 12 October 2004
million Kurds in Turkey signed up to a petition stating that they ‘recognize Öcalan as their political representative’.365

B. Öcalan’s Second Manifesto: Democratic Confederalism

Considering these dynamics and starting from 1999, the prison readings of Öcalan which resulted in his Prison Writings that are based on the ideas of the thinkers such as Murray Bookchin, Immanuel Wallerstein, Michel Foucault, W. Adorno and Nietzsche provided him with a path to rethink and redefine the PKK movement and its objectives. The readings that he focused on, concerning the international debates on the post-socialist literature, criticisms of nation state and capitalist modernity, both shaped his defense texts and the new political project of the PKK. In 2000s the development of the PKK’s new political project - which is the result of the particular impact of Bookchin’s ideas on Öcalan, initially called ‘democratic republic’, then referred to as ‘democratic confederalism’ and both of which are based on the idea of radical democracy - build on Öcalan’s thoughts that he explained in-depth by means of his defence texts submitted to the Turkish courts and the European Court of Human Rights during his imprisonment. These defence texts were accepted in the consecutive PKK congresses as the official party line. Initially the texts led to serious confusion in the movement, but since 2005 the ideological and organizational structures have been adapted to one another366 and Öcalan became a strategic leader more than a tactical leader for the movement.

In 2005, the PKK was re-established as an organisation in its 9th Congress, which also redefined the movement’s aims based on Öcalan’s thoughts, as the realisation of “gender liberationist democratic ecological society”, the establishment of democratic communities to eliminate all remnants of feudalism, the realisation of “the self-determination and national unity of the Kurdish nation”, the development of “a democracy based on ecology and liberation of women”, and democratic Confederalism.367 With its new manifesto, the PKK was also engaging in self-criticism and declaring that the previous goal to establish a nation state is outdated, no longer meaningful and not emancipatory since the needs of Kurdish people go beyond it. Accordingly, it put forward a solution to the Kurdish question based on democratic confederalism that rejects

367 Gülistan Yarkın, “The ideological transformation of the PKK regarding the political economy of the Kurdish region in Turkey”. Kurdish Studies, Volume 3, No:1, pp.22-46, 2015, p. 36
the state system and gets its power from “communal values” and people’s assemblies. For instance, as a societal alternative organization to the nation and based on the idea of democracy, referring to the people’s power from the bottom/grassroots, the KCK (Association of Communities in Kurdistan - Kona Civakên Kurdistan) which “is a movement which struggles for establishing its own democracy, neither ground on the existing nation-states nor see them as the obstacle” became an umbrella organization in the reconstruction of the PKK and all affiliated organizations from 2005 onwards.

In the same period, the legal Kurdish political movement embodied under the name of DTP (The Democratic Society Party) in 2005 as the successor to HEP, DEP, HADEP and DEHAP declared democratic autonomy as their political project in accordance with Öcalan’s thoughts. They introduced the notion of democratic autonomy as Kurd’s right to have their own democratic structure in the region in which the Turkish state as a general public authority is fundamental. After DTP was banned in 2009, the BDP (Peace and Democracy party) followed the same line and with the DTK (Democratic Society Congress), established in 2007 as a wider congress, constituted the two main organizational forms of the Kurdish political movement, and led it. Eventually through its political projects of democratic-republic, democratic-autonomy and democratic-confederalism, the PKK defined a new agenda which goes beyond self-determination free from the concept of a nation-state. In other words, as Akkaya and Jongerden stated ‘a primary objective of the PKK has been the realization of an independent Kurdistan, but the road to realizing independence has been transformed from one of state-building to one of society building at this period.

On the other hand, democratic autonomy and democratic republic based on Öcalan’s thoughts has been presented as a political project not only for Kurds but also for the Turks - indeed for humanity, namely, the Great Humanity Project- which is claimed to provide democracy for all as a whole in the country. For instance, by the activities of Mesopotamia Social Forum and DTK, the political project of democratic autonomy has been presented and discussed with the leading figures of the Turkish and international public.

All these developments took place interrelated with the changing political climate in Turkey beginning from the 2000s. Since its election in 2002, the AK Party government has expressed

368 Ibid, p.36
369 (PKK 2005: 175)
what it claims to be a genuine commitment to solving the Kurdish Question and the great majority of the reforms that the government made to meet the Copenhagen Criteria (i.e. abolishing the state of emergency, decreased detention periods pending trial, abolishing the State Security Courts, eliminating legal restrictions on the Kurdish language, lifting the ban on Kurdish-language publications, etc.) was directly or indirectly relevant to the Kurdish question. The 2005 Diyarbakır speech of the Prime Minister Erdoğan, in which for the first time a Prime Minister of Turkey explicitly referred to “the Kurdish question”, and his declaration to resolve the issue with more democracy, equal citizenship, and greater welfare was accepted as a milestone in Turkish history in terms of implying a change in the classical state approach to the Kurdish question, which has been based on ignorance and security measures, since his speech represented the official recognition of the Kurdish question by the state.

Although having diverse reactions from different segments of the society and power groups inside state mechanisms and endorsing paradoxical restrictions on rights and liberties such as the amendments to the Anti-Terror Law and the Law on the Duties and Powers of the Police, the arrest of KCK members, the standstill of the reform agenda was overcome by 2009, which was the year of a strong public debate on a “Kurdish opening” as part of the government’s program. Although during the period between 2009 and 2013 the process continued with ups and downs – which included the leaking of the direct talks between the National Intelligence Agency, Abdullah Öcalan and the PKK (later known as the Oslo Process), the attempt to detain Hakan Fidan, head of the National Intelligence Agency, and former directors of the organization in 2012; the increasing activity of the PKK as part of the 4th Period of Strategic Struggle, (based on “People’s Revolutionary War”); increasing state military activity; and hunger strikes to end Abdullah Öcalan’s isolation – the parties succeeded in renewing contact. In 2013, after the talks between the National Intelligence Agency and Öcalan reached a certain level, two deputies of Kurdish BDP serving in the Parliament, Ahmet Türk and Ayla Akat, met with Öcalan. The second group of deputies visited Öcalan one month later after and these were followed by the meetings that BDP officials had with PKK and KCK leaders in Iraq and Europe in which they shared Öcalan’s letters with them.

As a result of this process, the 21st March 2013 was accepted as a historic date for Turkey since it was considered to be the end of a three-decade war between PKK and the Turkish state after the cease-fire call of Abdullah Öcalan, in the Kurdish New Year’s Newroz celebration. In his message read by two Kurdish parliamentarians in the Kurdish and Turkish languages to more than one million people who had gathered to celebrate Newroz in Diyarbakir, Öcalan said: ‘We have reached the point where the guns must be silenced and where ideas must speak. A new era has started, where it is politics, not guns, which is at the forefront… This is not the time for "conflict, clashes" but for "unity, embracing and exchanging blessings”’. The PKK leadership on Mount Qandil responded positively to Öcalan’s message and declared a ceasefire only days after their announcement of loyalty delivered through official channels.373

This process was accepted as the beginning of the new era in which for the first time the Turkish government publicly acknowledged that Öcalan should be considered as a political leader of Kurds in Turkey, not as a terrorist or a “baby-killer”, and that solve the Kurdish issue would be solved with him. With the softening tone in the Turkish official lexicon about Abdullah Öcalan, a lively public debate began. After the long years of the armed conflict and its othering language, the Turkish public is still being challenged with the idea of whether he is a “baby-killer” or “peace maker”. On the one hand, despite the differences among them, Kurds widely indicate that if Öcalan and the PKK had not existed, nobody would have accepted the presence of the Kurdish identity in Turkey and accepted the Kurds as rightful agents of the peace discussions today. Apparently, the transformation of the PKK as an organization, especially after the capture of Öcalan and the transformation of Öcalan’s leadership in the last two decades occurred interrelatedly and made their history indivisible. On the other hand, as it is widely accepted as a fact and stated by many of the interviewees of this study, that ‘although the PKK is equal to Öcalan, Öcalan is surely bigger than PKK’374 and it is important to focus on Öcalan’s history and thought, related to but beyond the PKK since it is also indicated that ‘if Öcalan did not exist, there would be no PKK’375.

373 Ibid.
374 Personal Interview, on May 2015, Diyarbakır
375 Ibid.
CHAPTER III

Sources of Sacred Narrative on Öcalan

Based on the outcomes of the field research, the three themes, namely ‘The role of Violence’, ‘Kurdishness/Kurdish Cause’ and ‘Öcalan’s investment on Women and Youth’ will be discussed in this chapter as they are repeatedly and significantly put forward by the interviewees as the aspects and elements of the context which resulted in the emergence of a sacred political narrative surrounding Öcalan. Acknowledging them as the sources of sacred narrative on Öcalan, the chapter will cover every theme under its own section and while doing so, a comparative approach or a dual prism will be employed by means of elaborating these themes according to Öcalan’s First and Second Manifesto discourses via the PKK on the one hand; while on the other, on the basis of the field work, the manifestations and the interpretations of these themes will be discussed through their meanings, places and the functions in the social and political realms of Kurds. This comparative approach is required due to an examination the line of interaction between Öcalan’s discourse that is presented and realized via the PKK and its reflections on and reinterpretations in the worlds of Kurds, namely through the prism of their subjective regimes. Starting with the use of violence, first section will cover successively the violence in Öcalan’s theory in the way it is understood and employed in and by the PKK and also the experience, understanding and interpretation of violence in the lives and minds of Kurds.

Section I: The Role of Violence

Beginning with the uprisings emerged in the Ottoman empire, the political struggle of the Kurdish movements has been shaped through violence. This is not because Kurds having an ‘essence’ that leans towards violence but rather because violence has been the major formative element of political history of the geographies where Kurds live. Besides, history itself in broader sense, is a narrative in which among competing violence(s), it is the victorious who have the opportunity to gain a political agency and legitimacy for its power.

During the transition period from an Empire to a nation state and under the rule of the nation states that they were divided along, Kurdish movements were generally “structured as military movements and they possessed more or less hierarchically organized party structures and
In the lack of available unarmed political means, the violence that has been employed by tribal-religious leaders or by nationalists, either in the form of rebels or more organized armed struggles, appears both as a response to the state violence or the loss of power and perpetrated as a means to change the political or juridical status of the Kurds. Therefore, the history that the PKK has come through has given a vital and defining role to the use of violence.

**A. First Manifesto Era and the Violence in Öcalan’s Theory and Practice via the PKK**

In this section it is necessary to have an in-depth look at Öcalan’s discourse with a particular interest in his understanding of violence that is embodied and practiced via the PKK.

Earlier, it was noted that especially during the early First Manifesto Era, Öcalan’s PKK was set up in a Marxist-Leninist framework and that the zeitgeist of this era was shaped by the heritage of the anti-authoritarian, anticolonial and revolutionary movements of the recent past on both the national and international levels. As Arendt also notes, this zeitgeist indicates a post-WW1 political climate in which the meaning and functioning of violence and war changed, a connection between war and revolution was established, revolution gained the upper hand and as a result, notions of a “just” or an “unjust” war came into existence. During this period, wars waged in the name of freedom came to exist, and “the idea that violence was a crime, whereas war was justifiable only for self-defense and as preemptive attack, developed.”

Most of the anti-colonial and revolutionary movements from this era which established themselves in reference to Marxist theories saw and grounded their own struggle as a “just war”. As stated in the previous chapter, beginning with his First Manifesto which was supplemented by additional documents and brochures until the 1980s, Öcalan also sees PKK’s struggle as a struggle for emancipation, and so, as a “just war”, and frames it so. As such, he defined Kurdistan as a colony and the “path of Kurdish revolution” on the basis of a prolonged armed struggle and an alliance of peasants and working class. On the basis of Marxist theory, the PKK’s model of prolonged armed struggle was mainly inspired by the experiences in Vietnam and China.

That is to say that during the First Manifesto period, the violence defined in the form of armed struggle and based on the intersectionality between the zeitgeist of the era and the situation of the Kurds sets itself up against the “unjust violence” surrounding the Kurds. As such, a “just

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war” was naturally for emancipation and it was considered to be against three specific category of the entities at the time: the “colonialist state forces”, “its extensions/ native collaborators” and the “slaved Kurdish man”:

The PKK has given priority to fight against the colonialist forces which see Kurdistan as the natural part of their territories. All the policies and practices that these powers have developed in the years of their long colonial rule, are against the interests of our people and cannot be shown legitimate in anyway. Due to this colonial rule enlarging its structural power in Kurdistan through tribal and sectarian bodies, our people are lack of cultural and national personality... The emancipation from colonialism is possible only through the language of its own... It is the revolutionary force that allows our people to live as human beings again...

One of the tasks that the PKK must fulfil is to disseminate the fascist, social chauvinist ideologies and power outbreaks at any cost which are urging our people to commit crimes against their own national essence. The PKK treats fighting against these forces as a problem of violence and distinguishes it from the problems of people which needs to be solved by conviction.379

According to this and as it is embodied in his saying of “the emancipation from colonialism is only possible through the language that is its own”, it is understood that Öcalan defines the PKK’s use of violence, first of all, as a response – therefore, as a counter violence- to the colonialist state violence. Since the violence of the state – which is namely the colonialist violence- can be challenged only through “the language of its own”, in Öcalan’s understanding, the use of violence via the PKK – namely the revolutionary violence- appears as an inevitable response and a condition for the Kurdish liberation. As it was suggested by Engels earlier, according to Öcalan, the violence/force used by a nation trying to protect itself against the colonial domination is progressive and the only way of development. For this reason, it is a legitimate violence and a historical requirement; therefore, in PKK literature the term is “force” instead of “violence”. However, this compulsory violence is stemming from “being the weak one”, aims to change the power inequality between the weak and the strong; “the weak”- who decide to start a struggle against the strong colonial state(s), should always keep their own weakness in mind. The violence in Ocalan’s discourse, as a prerequisite condition of Kurdish liberation, therefore also appears as a founding violence. Here, founding violence is described as the violence of the weak, who is exploited and treated unjustly, which aims to transform the rules and laws of the establishment, as well as what those rules and laws see as sacred. In this respect, founding violence indicates both a destruction and a remaking, or rebirth. At the same time, any kind of violence that takes it upon itself to change the system also has to come up

with a new system, law and sacredness in order to replace those that it is challenging. As such, a “just war” waged against an “unjust violence” requires a pattern of sacredness in order to bind its subjects to the new law it constructs. It is right at this point that the opposed system, the order of the unjust war, becomes a reference point; as embodied in Öcalan’s insistence on using the language of that which he is challenging. For the construction as well as credibility of the new pattern of sacredness, the “just war” needs victims, just as in the challenged system. The victims of the “just war” are both the enemy, and also those who will fight the enemy, and give their lives for victory and emancipation if need be. This logic underlies Öcalan’s discourse on violence and violence is defined as a multi-valent violence that aims to change the power balance between the enslaved nation and the colonialist state as well as indicating the beginning of a ‘new time’ and a ‘new way of being’; so it refers to a founding and transformative act which is also associated with power.

Accordingly, “the extensions of the colonialist state”, namely the “feudal” or “reactionary” forces or the “enemy within” according to Öcalan, spontaneously appear as the target of the same type of violence because they are “intra colonialists” and supporters of the external colonialist system. A third category of the “enemy” however is defined as the “enslaved Kurdish man” who is seen as the product and collaborator of the overall colonial system. Regarding this third category, which is defined as a lack of personality due to being shaped under a colonialist gaze, while calling for the necessary use of violence for the anti-colonial freedom, Öcalan suggests that the colonized Kurdish man finds his freedom in and through violence in a very Fanonian way. This understanding also refers to Öcalan’s aim of creating the ‘New Kurdish Man’ via the PKK; a man presented both as the ‘object’ and the ‘subject’ of the PKK’s transformative violence.380

Therefore, during the foundation years of the organization, violence for Öcalan was not a defence tactic but was a founding strategy. Since it is a founding strategy, according to Öcalan, there is no need to wait or postpone to use it. In other words, the role of violence appears at the PKK “not as a matter of tactic of the future but it emerges as a political approach which should be taken into agenda urgently”.381

Is there any possibility for a slaved society not to use the violence as a defence method or follow a defence tactic? This is far away from the concrete reality and revolutionary science. Some are talking about being prepared for the armed

380 The idea of creating a New Kurdish Man in Öcalan’s discourse will be discussed in detail in the following section.

381 Aydin Aydinoğlu, Fis Köyüden Kobane’ye Kürt Özgürlük Hareketi, Versus Yayınları, 2014, p. 38
struggle. What is this preparation? When we first started the work with few words, what preparation we had?... We [PKK] accept action as preparation, preparation is organization and preparation is attacking...\(^{382}\)

As clarified in the quotes above, by means of associating violence with action, Öcalan defines the active war as a way of learning in practice or in other words, he defines a path in which learning is secondary to action and it is only possible through practicing the violence. Underlying this perspective is the taken-for-granted idea of being equal before death, inherited by the revolutionary national movements from the secular nationalisms that established the nation states. According to this perspective, war and heroism is not a virtue reserved just for the aristocrats or the chosen anymore. Through secular nationalism, they are also for the people. As embodied in the myth of the “unknown soldier”, this notion of equality, wherein ordinary people/citizens can also gain victory and prestige by dying, has become dominant. At this point practicing violence itself becomes such that it makes all privileges or deprivations meaningless (or surpasses them), and bestows a new kind of subjectivity (the state of being a subject) to the individual. In this way, the ordinary person can have a share of the victory, virtue and equality and so, he is mobilized. According to this perspective, the emancipation of a nation is in the hands of that nation itself. Violence as it is described by Öcalan above is the obvious result of just such an understanding. Finally, as the above quote demonstrates, the violence as a way and form of learning that is gained through the practice seems like prior in Öcalan’s call for the masses in order to mobilize them via the PKK towards a Kurdish salvation. By this way, the Kurds are being told that they do not need to ‘know’ as a condition to ‘act’, namely to become part of the movement.

According to Öcalan’s statements, the peasants and the working class however, were the primary targets of mobilization for the movement as they are considered as the “weakest of the weak”. Being “the weakest of the weak” at this point refers to not only being the most oppressed or exploited but also being ‘the weakest’ in terms of ‘knowing’ and ‘acting’. In this regard, his call can also be understood as a promise of power and identity to the “weakest of the weak” via becoming part of the armed struggle and having the name of guerrilla. Once peasants or working class become guerrillas, they have a significant power and role due to being defined by Öcalan as the basis of the mobilization process of Kurds both socially and politically. So being a guerrilla via the armed struggle refers to a promise of gaining a physical, social and political status, meaning a change in power relations between the weak and the strong. Adopted from

\(^{382}\) Abdullah Öcalan, Önderlik Gerçeği ve PKK Deneyimi Cilt I, Weşanên Serxwebûn 55, 1992, p. 35
Mao’s protracted war and very much inspired by guerrilla warfare in Palestine and Vietnam to obtain the support of the population through attacks, agitation and propaganda; the initial goal of this guerrilla warfare appears to mobilize the peasantry first, but also to bring together different Kurds together towards the same goal:

... Ordinary members of PKK operate either in a guerrilla unit, in a cell, or in a neighbourhood committee. This large part of the party is also the driving force of war. These are closest to the masses and battlefields, that is, the items inside. In short, these members constitute the basic organizations of the party.\textsuperscript{383}

The guerrillas that are defined as the driving force of the armed struggle are not the practitioners of a spontaneous violence but they are required to use an organized violence \emph{vis a vis} the organized colonialist violence. According to this, the violence is a means to create shock and fear among the enslaved nation, to sever its ties with the colonialist state and to reorganize it concurrently. Overall, on the basis of his Engels readings, in \textit{The Role of Force in History}, Ocalan defines the use of violence, namely the guerrilla war, not only as a military solution for the problems faced, but also as a condition for a political solution and progress by which the violence is given a historic(al) role:

\begin{quote}
The guerrilla war will not only solve the problem of military imbalance, but will also accelerate, strengthen and protect political development. It can be clearly stated that we will be able to develop political work on the basis of the guerrilla struggle ... During the process of developing political work on the basis of armed struggle, the guerrillas play a crucial role. It is even necessary to carry out the organizational work of the party on the basis of the guerrilla struggle.\textsuperscript{384}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
If there are some revolutionary changes in Kurdistan, which is the condition to live, there is need for theory of war, or in other words, revolutionary violence is unavoidable... So the guerrilla war is the only way to turn the power imbalance between us and the enemy in our own benefit...\textsuperscript{385}
\end{quote}

The guerrillas as the members of the military force are also imagined as the armed propagandists with a military and a political mission. Discipline, secrecy and a constructive attitude towards society are defined as the inseparable military, political and ethical mission of the guerrillas. This is a direct consequence of the understanding in which the guerrilla is defined as an ideal space or a guiding ‘habitus’ through which the Kurdish nation would be created:

\begin{quote}
We would be created as a nation through the guerrilla. The style of guerrilla warfare means very much to us. It is a mode of action through which our people would gain
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{383} Abdullah Öcalan, \textit{Önderlik Gerçeği ve PKK Deneyimi Cilt I}, Weşanên Serxwebûn 55, 1992, p. 217
\textsuperscript{384} Abdullah Öcalan, \textit{Kürdistan'ıda Zorun Rolü}, Cologne, Weşanên Serxwebûn, 1993 [1983], p.297
\textsuperscript{385} Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
consciousness, patriotism; become politicized, have the courage and gain the spirit of self-sacrifice and overall become modern human beings.\textsuperscript{386}

The guerrilla is indeed an area of emancipation and democratization. It is an area of education, organization and security. It's a place to find a personality. It is also a narrow approach to consider guerrillas as a military force. The guerrilla (we have said at the beginning) is a complete political organization. It is a domain that humanity really finds itself and is democratized.\textsuperscript{387}

The guerrilla as the space of emancipation-democratization, as a place of gaining a personality and as a body of security and education refers to a holistic and counter reality and a framework of Kurdishness that Öcalan would like to create via the PKK. In this context, the guerrilla is not just a political and military role model but also the sacred symbol and role model of the new order that PKK wants to establish. The guerrilla is the “unknown soldier” in the fight for emancipation, and he sacrifices his life of slavery, unfit to be lived, for a “life worth living” that is hoped to exist in the future for everyone. To the others, he offers the path of adding virtue to an ordinary life, obtaining immortality by fighting against the enemy for emancipation, and recreating one’s self with an eye to victory. This is why PKK calls its guerrillas who die fighting the state “martyrs” even though it is a thoroughly secular movement. The myth of martyrdom has been one of the most important symbolic resources of the organization from its foundation onwards. The martyr is a kind of sacrifice, and martyrdom is a mechanism for producing transcendentalism.

That the guerrilla is always ready to sacrifice himself indicates a state wherein his act of violence is the product of more supreme values than his life is. His self-sacrifice, that is, his martyrdom enables the material continuity of these supreme values for those who witness it. Within the framework of this understanding, the guerrilla who dies of his own volition and for a just cause is the physical embodiment of eternal emancipation and the eternal emancipation he obtains by his death, that is, his self-sacrifice, is also heralded for those who remain behind. This image of the guerrilla ready for self-sacrifice represents the person who dies to reestablish and protect a disrupted unity; as such, it is intended for those who experience the memory of his dying, and in this way it aims to determine the identity of the living. As a sacrificial role model who might be martyred at any time, the guerrilla is the person ready to pay his debt for the emancipation/freedom of his enslaved society. This means that those who remain alive are indebted to the dead. Therefore, the guerrilla imposes a morality and a sense of duty that is derived from this morality as well. In this aspect, the violence Öcalan describes is also a sacred

violence that is adopted and brought to life for a sacred cause. To put it another way, it is possible for any Kurd to be a guerrilla without being loyal to a tribe or a sheikh; as such, the state of being a guerrilla is a sacred invitation to all Kurds since it is the embodiment of emancipation and honour. Of course, Öcalan himself gets his share from this sacredness. As a result, the PKK itself as a political and militaristic body composed of guerrillas appears as the home of a founding and transformative violence which directly provides a counter sanctity.

At this stage, let us return to the mundane and political aims of the movement without forgetting the connection between sacredness and sovereignty. Keeping this in mind, Öcalan’s preference of employing violence against the targeted groups becomes significant. As mentioned earlier, among the target groups described above, the PKK’s first attack was not against the state but against a prominent Kurdish tribal leader called Mehmet Celal Bucak. Known as “the Hilvan and Siverek attacks” and defined as “the first bullet” marking the foundation of the PKK in its lexicon, this attack points to the priority given to targeting the “native collaborators” over the “colonialist state forces”. What is the reason for this? Does it shed any further light on Öcalan’s understanding of violence?

In the first place, since in Öcalan’s ideological argumentation, the colonialist state is pointed out as the prior target, the PKK’s use of violence against the “collaborators” first, does not seem as a natural result of his ideology. However, just like in the Maoist and Vietnamese models of prolonged armed struggles, it indicates practical and pragmatic necessities and seems to be the result of a decision stemming from the presence of the established opposing Kurdish groups which the PKK would like to challenge at the time. The PKK chose to start from ‘the weaker’ compared to the state and as Tezcür suggests, “the PKK's violence was a strategic decision on the part of its leadership to compete effectively against other Kurdish organizations.”

Particularly with regards to attacks against other Kurdish entities, it is basically an act of cleaning the field in order to be the leading actor of the Kurdish political arena. According to a former PKK member, these acts were modelled after “the Russian Communist Party of the 1920s which forbade all other parties and got rid of the cliques”.

So it is not wrong to say that this violence is also a selective and purificatory in terms selecting the targets according to rational criteria and that is also employed to “change the power relations in the Kurdish field”.

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in favour of the PKK. The most important simultaneous function of this purificatory violence is that as a method of justifying violence against those who stray from the party line, it perpetuates the idea of an ‘internal enemy who collaborates with external enemies’. This is because on the way to emancipation, unity and purity will be achieved by purging these internal enemies. Therefore, the violence in Öcalan’s discourse appears to constitute one of the primary factors in implementing and then consolidating the PKK’s power among Kurds. Again as Tezcür describes, “being a latecomer, the PKK employed violence to develop a niche. The PKK deliberately decided not to establish a regular publication like other organizations until 1982. Instead, it sought to achieve influence primarily through violent means.”

PKK is a radical movement that was established under a sense of urgency created by feelings of belatedness in order to change the system; the founding, transformative, purificatory and rational violence it uses in order to achieve its aims is a very modern and almost unavoidably sacred violence. This sacred violence and all other sacredness created through its mediation are vital parts of PKK’s aim to gain power, and to rule in the Kurdish domain which will emerge in time as a set of hierarchical relationships. As the leader of this movement Öcalan has always been at the apex of this political and sacred imagination. This central position of Öcalan, who used to be ‘first among equals’ in the beginning, would become more prominent and institutional over time. Bozarslan clearly explains this situation as follows:

It is obvious, for instance, that while fighting the state, the PKK has, with much harsher means than other Kurdish movements, tried to impose itself as the Kurdish leadership in Turkey. In order to achieve this goal, it has transformed, more than any other Kurdish organization before it, the cult of the “Supreme Leader “into a taboo, that of martyrdom and of “purificatory” violence into a ritual. It is also obvious that these practices constitute the means of “institutionalization” of the organization and the establishment of its control over the Kurdish population. From the perspective of the Kurdish actors, thus, the war does not only oppose what is perceived as an adequate answer to power, nor is it only a policy legitimized solely by the Kurdish nationalism and its premises. It also structures the Kurdish society, produces the power structures within the Kurdish movement and the Kurdish society. Through resource allocation, careers, social and political ascension, mechanisms of hierarchy, it creates new elites, whose political culture is deeply rooted within the armed struggle and whose future depend to a large extent on it.

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The use of violence against the “imperialist Turkish state”, which is the primary target according to Öcalan’s ideological argumentation, was carried out six years after the establishment of the PKK in Erhu and Şemdinli on August 15, 1984. This incident is defined as “the leap of 15 August” in the PKK’s terminology before which the 1980 coup d’état was an important parenthesis that had a significant impact on Kurdish society and positioned the PKK in a relevant context in terms of its claims and violence strategy. As the second phase of the First Manifesto period, the second half of the 1980s and the 1990s witness intense conflict between the state and the PKK, and during this period, PKK counters the state’s “total war against terrorism” with “mobile warfare”. At the same time, the 1990s were also the years that the PKK start to change its violence strategy due to the politicization of the Kurdish society and the massification of the movement which became a more selective violence. “Consistent with the argument that selective violence is more effective than indiscriminate violence in generating support, the insurgent social base expanded significantly with the advent of the 1990s”.393

On the other hand, beginning from the mid-1980s and significantly in the first half of the 1990s, the PKK’s use of selective violence appeared also in the form of anti-civilian violence. On the basis of the acknowledgement that the civilians are “the group of people is made up of the unarmed men, women and children who take no direct part in the fighting of war and who should not be the objects of attack”394, the PKK’s selective violence against the families of the village guards and teachers in that era were significant examples of the anti-civilian violence. According to Masullo and O’Connor, these two groups were not targeted because of their individual identities but chosen as the targets because of being the collective identifiers of the given social and political conflict in the region and therefore, the PKK used a method of “collective targeting”.395 Although there is lack of systematic and accurate available data regarding the killings of the village guard families, according to the Amnesty International

Report, in between 1984-1996, the PKK had killed a total of 90 teachers\textsuperscript{396} and the vast majority (74) were killed between 1993 and 1995.\textsuperscript{397}

With regards to the selective violence which was based on collective targeting however, the attacks against the village guard families and the teachers seems to have two basic reasons at the time: first, to give an “intra message” directly to Kurds which manifest the “fate” of the “collaborators” so that provoke them to choose their side; second, to raise the state’s weakness and lack of the capacity in protecting its citizens. This would also refer to the superiority of the PKK in the region compared to the state. As a response to the international criticisms especially for its violence against teachers at the time, “Abdullah Öcalan stated that the PKK does not murder civilians or members of civilian organizations but those that fight against it under ”civilian” guise. Furthermore, he claimed that it does not murder teachers; the murdered teachers were not true teachers but members of NAP/MHP\textsuperscript{398} units”.\textsuperscript{399} In the mid of the 1990s however, through the decisions of the 5\textsuperscript{th} Congress, on 24 January 1995, with its statement made to the United Nations, the PKK recognized the Geneva Convention of War and guaranteed its implementation so that declared not to employ anti-civilian violence in principle.

The Second Manifesto Era beginning with the capture of Öcalan, brought the wave of the self-sacrificial violence among the PKK militants and sympathisers. This was not the result of a decision by the PKK but emerged spontaneously among the PKK militants and sympathisers as a response to Öcalan’s arrest. In this period, “some sixty-four Kurds aged between seventeen and sixty-three have attempted to immolate themselves in Turkey and Europe: at least twenty died. This is indeed the largest wave of sacrificial violence in the history of the PKK”\textsuperscript{400}. In the Second Manifesto Era, the significant change regarding violence in Öcalan’s discourse via the PKK however is related to Öcalan’s personal position and also connected to his formulation of Democratic Confederalism. Because this subject is going to be discussed in detail in the Chapter

\textsuperscript{396} In this era, defined “as a response to the all-out war of Turkish state”, the PKK first announced a ban on educational activities of Kurdish people and then declared that the teachers who were appointed to the region were selectively chosen and missioned by the Turkish state in large so that they were not ordinary civilians. The teachers who were perceived and claimed as collaborating with Turkish security forces or spying for the state were defined as the civilian-looking members of the Turkish army, namely the ‘soldier-teachers’. Since they were believed to be sent to the region with the duty of Turkifying Kurdish children, they became the targets of the PKK’s selective violence.


\textsuperscript{398} Özgür Ülke, 6 Nov, 1994, quoted in Robert Olson, \textit{The Kurdish National Movement in the 1990s}, The University Press of Kentucky, 1996, p.36

\textsuperscript{399} Mehmet Orhan, \textit{La violence politique dans l’espace kurde de Turquie : fragmentations, mobilisations, participations et répertoires [Political violence in Turkey’s Kurdish space: fragmentation, mobilization, participation and repertoires]}, PhD Thesis Submitted to L’École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS), 2012, p.328

\textsuperscript{400} Mehmet Orhan, \textit{La violence politique dans l’espace kurde de Turquie : fragmentations, mobilisations, participations et répertoires [Political violence in Turkey’s Kurdish space: fragmentation, mobilization, participation and repertoires]}, PhD Thesis Submitted to L’École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS), 2012, p.328
Four, let us confine ourselves to saying that during this period violence did not lose its place and importance in Öcalan’s discourse, but that it was reformulated as “legitimate self-defence”.

**B. Manifestations and Interpretations of the PKK’s Violence**

At this stage, as being a defining and multi-functional means especially in the founding years of the organization, the impact of the PKK’s use of violence among Kurdish society needs to be asked as a question in order to see the changing perceptions regarding it and Öcalan over time. So did the violence that Öcalan formulates as a founding and strategic force to ‘make’ the PKK and to mobilize the Kurds for liberation work at the time? Or in other words, did the use of violence totally guarantee the support for the Öcalan’s PKK?

As it is already known and also proven by the field work of this study, although the majority of Kurds consisted of landless peasants and only a small number of families controlled the vast estates of the region, Öcalan’s peasant-based liberation call did not receive an immediate mass of support from the Kurdish public at the time. Moreover, his big claims and challenging allegations were disturbing for the majority of the Kurds, due to different reasons. For instance, as the target for movement, the economically and socially privileged Kurds were positioned against the PKK. On the other hand, the lower class, unprivileged majority of Kurds were also distant in their support to the PKK in its early years because of being hesitant regarding the winner of the field control struggle in the region as well as due to the framework of the Kurdishness that was shaped by traditional and religious codes in place. Furthermore, Öcalan's language, which was apparently modern/secular, was unfamiliar for the Kurds in general, since even the lexicon of the Kurdish political struggle until that time, had been shaped in a traditional context.

Another dimension that is stemming from the same traditional framework and caused Kurds to question of the PKK’s claims was Abdullah Öcalan by himself due to being the leader of the group as a person who did not have any recognized Kurdish power heritage at the time. In other words, as the group’s leader who appeared with the claim of speaking on behalf of “the real Kurdish national front”\(^{401}\), Öcalan neither came from a wealthy family which would have meant membership of a strong traditional Kurdish tribe, nor did he constitute a religiously representative position; he therefore lacked both privileged economic power and respected

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social status. He was just a young man from a lower class, peasant background; the son of an ordinary Kurdish family who deprived of any economic or social capital. In this regard, he was initially far from promising and could not be categorized or acknowledged by the existing/dominant appropriate codes of Kurdish society. As such, he was not perceived as strong enough to carry and lead the ‘weight of the Kurdish cause’ and was not perceived to promise much in terms of any potential to accomplish this historical mission.

This is also a situation that can be traced through the prevalent way in which the PKK was referred to by Kurdish society in its early years. As Renas Çelik discusses it, in the Kurdish lexicon, from the 1980s to the beginning of the 1990s, the common phrase that was used to define the PKK and its members was “yen derve” in Kurmançî Kurdish, and “e teberi” in Zazaki dialect, which can be translated to mean “outsiders” and “students” in English. This seems like the reflection of the status of the PKK founders who were the members of the Kurdish minority in terms of having a university education and caused them to be perceived as the ‘outsiders’ of the majority. However, another commonly used Kurdish phrase used to refer to PKK members at the time was “yen çiye”, means “the ones on mountains”. As Çelik elaborates it, these first phrases used, refer to both the physical conditions of PKK members – who were living in mountains and fighting against the state’s armed forces - and also to the psychological stand of Kurdish society towards them, in which the PKK was defined as an organization whose members were living in the mountains, alone in nature and learning how to survive within it, excluded from social norms, without social or political support and acting out of its own society as well. Therefore, these naming overall refers to a loose bind between Kurdish society and the PKK as it was perceived as a relative outsider, a foreigner, a suspicious organization which was distant from the existing norms and values of Kurdish society at the time.

Given the limited interest of the Kurds in the movement during its early years and considering the fact that the PKK was not the only Kurdish organization that acknowledged the use of violence at the time, then firstly the question of what differentiated the PKK from the other Kurdish organizations appears as significant point required to be raised. Secondly, the question of what made Öcalan’s PKK a defining actor in the Kurdish political sphere in Turkey, through which he has become the undisputable face of the movement needs to be asked. The fieldwork

403 Ibid.
404 Ibid
results would elaborate the answers for these questions and also provide the manifestations and the interpretations of violence in the social and political realms of Kurds.

Fame and Credibility Gained Though the Violence

...I have never been supportive of using violence, but the ones, the Kurdish groups who were the supporters of the idea of using violence at the time were supporting it only theoretically indeed. When they were thinking how to do it, waiting for the right time to apply it, Öcalan did it suddenly. So, there was no gap between the theory and practice at the PKK, at least this was the idea emerged in the minds of people. The PKK gained a credibility and reputation ... (Personal Interview, Male, Age 59, London, April 2013).

According to the interviewees and as it is clarified through the quote above, despite the presence of other leftist Kurdish organizations which accepted the use of violence as the condition to establish an independent Kurdistan, the PKK became the first organization which used and realized it through action. Being the first actor of using and realizing the theory in practice seems to differentiate the PKK from its counterparts and besides attributed a credibility and reliability to it. So beginning from the Hilvan and Siverek attack of the PKK against the tribal leaders, the violence of the PKK has appeared as the fulfilment of its theory and seems to have further symbolic meanings.

As being the member of one of the leading and strongest Kurdish tribe, Bucak represented more than a Kurdish and tribal power. He was also a high-ranking member of the conservative Justice Party (Adalet Partisi) so was connected with the power of the state. To put it differently the state was embedded in his identity while he was coming from one of the strongest Kurdish tribes. This dual line of power that is embodied in Bucak’s identity makes him an identifier as a target through which an ‘echo violence’ can be manifested. The echo violence in this study is suggested as a selective violence which targets the one who is the carrier of the representation of more than one ruling power and has the capacity to attract the political attention of the most powerful and the least vulnerable groups at the same time while traveling in the worlds of the ones in between through the resonance of word of mouth. So, in having the motivation and using the ‘echo violence’, the political result is prior to the militaristic outcome. Therefore, when the PKK demonstrated its first attack against Bucak tribe, the result was failure in militaristic sense but the ‘echo’ of the incident was big in terms of receiving political attention of the state, namely “the strongest” as well as the vulnerable Kurds, namely “the weakest”.
Besides, according to the interviewees, the symbolic meaning and the social outcome gained through the attack was more important than its militaristic success:

...The Hilvan and Siverek attack, against the Bucak family, was extremely important and had significant impact on Kurds. Starting with this attack and with the following ones, day by day, Kurds started to think that this PKK, whether it is right or wrong, does what it says... This is so powerful you know! Take it seriously! An organization does what it says!” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 59, London, April 2013).

Despite the failure, challenging the power of a traditional wealthy tribal figure who was also connected with the state seems to be considered as the “first crack” in the indifference of the Kurds towards Öcalan and the PKK. This is because of the impact of the attack in terms of having the capacity of shattering the established norms among Kurdish society. The idea which had previously been taken for granted that the power of a traditional, wealthy, feared and respected member of a Kurdish tribe, who was also connected with the Turkish state, could not be challenged, touched or destroyed seems like to being damaged by this first attack of the PKK. In other words, the violence of the PKK against a tribal leader, in a way, was the manifestation of the violence of “the weak” against “the strong” in the Kurdish field. As İsmail Beşikçi suggests, “this how the PKK became as a side” of the conflict between “the weak” and “the strong” so that “provoked a new state of mind among unprivileged Kurds”.405

In fact, becoming sided with the weak is a way of forming a proximity in the symbolic universe of the PKK and unprivileged segments of Kurdish society which operates through several layers. According to this, first, the PKK represents “the weak” at the time with regards to being a young and new organization in the field compared to the well-established Kurdish organizations. Secondly, it claims to act in the name and for the benefit “the weak” as it is embodied in the attack against the tribal Kurdish entities. Thirdly, except of the founding figures in it, the members of the PKK at the time were “the weak” due to widely being composed of the landless peasants. The Hilvan Siverek attack therefore, “apparently helped to extend the influence of the PKK over popular peasantry as those groups were subject to severe tribal exploitation backed or, at least, ignored by the state”.406 It is also the incident that provides a legitimate ground for the PKK in accordance with its political and militaristic strategy.

The PKK’s act “in the name” and “for the benefit” of the weak however, was not necessarily and totally appreciated by Kurds and it is important note that the PKK’s first attack also created

405 İsmail Beşikçi, Devletlerarası Sömürge Kürdistan, İstanbul: Alan Yayıncılık,1990, p. 51-52
406 Barış Tuğrul, “Political Violence and Social Change in the Kurdish Case from 199s Onwards”, La Federación Española de Sociología Congress, 2016, p.15
a sort of trepidation and shock among ordinary Kurds too due to causing an intra-Kurdish violence at the time. For instance, “the brazenness of the attack [Hilvan and Siverek] was unprecedented and generated a vicious cycle of violence between the Bucak clan and the PKK cadres in the Siverek district of Urfa”407 which in the following years transformed in the fragmentation of Kurds via the village guards versus guerrilla forces. Besides, the PKK attacks against the other oppositional Kurdish organizations and the inter-killings inside the organization were the incidents that were highly criticized and questioned by the Kurds at the time. All of these, therefore, resulted in a diversified violence repertoire regarding the PKK among the Kurds which in the field seems to be still valid today through which different definitions and results of violence appears as oppose to and in accordance with Ocalan's theory.

**Killing and Surviving via Violence**

... If you ask me what makes the PKK, the PKK today, I think that it was the violence... Such an extreme violence beyond the borders of any ethical concerns... It is a movement that transformed into a political actor by operating an unprecedented violence in the region... (Personal Interview, Male, Age 34, April 2014)

... Yes, the PKK used an extreme violence during its foundation years, especially in between 1980-1984... And yes, this brought about costs for the PKK and for the Kurdish people too. But if Öcalan did not use that violence it would have been impossible for him to establish the movement or keep it together. He would not have survived if he had not used the violence... (Personal Interview, Male, Age 35, Istanbul, October 2013)

As stated by two of the interviewees, regardless of whether one agrees or disagrees with the PKK’s use of violence, the role of violence appears to have had a significant importance in their understanding of the PKK, especially with regards to its construction period. Agreeing on the rational and instrumental function of the violence, by means of referring to its “transformative role in making the PKK” and “conditionality for its survival” in their analysis, the interviewees in large also points to two different characteristics of the violence, that are considered to have been used and voiced by the PKK and experienced or sensed among Kurds. As appears in the first quote, the first one refers to an “indiscriminative violence” and the second defines it as a “founding violence” which refers to both a constructive and destructive substance:

> Although they defined violence as a revolutionary force to fight against oppressors which means state and feudal injustice, at the beginning, I mean, before and during

the period of 1980-1984, PKK used the violence against other Kurdish leftist groups in the region. State ignored this violence among the Kurdish leftist groups, probably with the idea of letting two sides to destroy each other... But this practice of violence between the PKK and other organizations at the time gave PKK the chance to gain experience in the field, train its leader cadres and militants in terms of armed practice, provided the legitimacy of illegality and more importantly prepared them for the period after 1980-1984...” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 34, April 2014, Istanbul)

... Ok, the PKK used violence, used it against the Kurds too, especially in its first years... But after all those years of rebellion, I mean... After all those rebellions, you revolted and you were killed again and again, many times... And they (the PKK) came back with the claim of a united Kurdistan. The Turkish state was so violent, and you have all those powerful Kurdish tribes and sheiks... I mean there were not too many alternatives... Öcalan, I think, saw the necessity of using violence. I mean they also used a very critical language about leaders such as Sheik Said and others, and during the time I remember that I felt so uncomfortable about all this, and would like to react against it... But after a time, they changed their approach, and people accepted them not only because of violence or fear, but also because they understood what it means... (Personal Interview, Male, Age 35, October 2013, Istanbul)

The PKK’s use of violence was not against the feudal forces but was against its comrades too... I remember the dad of one of my best friends... Although he supported HADEP, he hated PKK too much, really too much... Before 1984, he was a member of the Rizgari movement. When he was about the die, his son, I mean my friend, asked him, why do you hate PKK that much? And he said that ‘they killed 70 friends of mine’... And can you believe it, he noted the names of all his friends one by one who were killed by the PKK. There are several cases like this... (Personal Interview, Male, Age: 34, April 2014, Istanbul)

For the interviewees, these different interpretation of violence(s) are understood as stemming from the “targets” and “results” of the violence(s). So the indiscriminative violence is described as the one that has lack of ethics and is limitless; and is attributed to the PKK’s attacks that targeted Kurds who were coming from diversified political and social backgrounds. The PKK’s violence as a founding violence however is described as the condition of “making the PKK” and “securing its survival”. The “weight of the past” which refers to a collective memory that recalls the repeated uprisings and failures in the far and recent past, appears as a legitimate- or at least as a proximate- ground for the interviewees in terms of describing the compulsory use of violence in the case of the PKK. More importantly, as it is raised in the last quote, the PKK’s violence is understood in a continuity with Kurdish past in terms of referring to a political struggle and in this regard, is understood as a political violence.
Another type of violence that is attributed to the PKK and defined by the interviewees is the violence of the PKK against itself which indeed refers to the purificatory violence:

> It was not only the Kurdish leftists or the tribal leaders that the PKK attacked at the time. The PKK killed its own members too. All those internal executions and the people who were blamed of being betrayer(hain), later on, they were announced as innocents and as martyrs... Indeed, when it comes to violence, we have to talk about the violence of the PKK against the PKK...” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 53, Diyarbakır, April 2015)

Plenty of patriotic young members of the PKK were wasted by the PKK itself as a result of the unfounded allegations or internal power battles. So the Kurdish human capital was wasted by the PKK too... Unfortunately, this is a fact that we, as Kurds, have to talk and confront with... (Personal Interview, Male, Age 63, İstanbul, February 2018)

Not only members of the opposing Kurdish organizations but also many PKK members were killed by PKK itself due to their criticism about Öcalan... I mean, all these things are clearly known... Some of the ones who killed by PKK, then announced as the martyrs... (Personal Interview, Male, Age 45, December 2017, İstanbul)

The essential heritage of these years of the PKK’s use of violence however is defined in the interviews through its long term effects on Kurdish society which repeatedly points to the acceptance of the “legitimacy of the illegality” as a framework of Kurdish political sphere and the victimization of the legal Kurdish movements:

> ... But one more thing happened in the Kurdish land due to the use of violence. The violence between and inside Kurdish organizations has begun to be used as a tool to eliminate differences for the emerging problems and more importantly normalized the violence. In particular, when it comes to the PKK, the violence as an instrument of protection in an illegal environment, unavoidably reduced the level of political pluralism and prudence. In the long run, the result is that the PKK has lost its ability to think about or on itself as an organization, except of its leader. This was also the reason that made Öcalan an indispensable leader for the organization (Personal Interview, Male, Age 42, Diyarbakır, 2015)

The spiral of silence emerged at the time, gradually created a violent-dominant framework in which many Kurds killed each other in the name of Kurdishness and produced a tacit disparage in using the non-violent means of politics in the Kurdish political field. Of course the state has the biggest responsibility in this regard but it hard to define the PKK immune from this responsibility... Today its reflection in the PKK dominated Kurdish politics is as armed organization the PKK being the hegemonic power of the sphere who widely shapes the substance and actors of the Kurdish legal field. And under the given circumstances, this means that all the cost
of PKK dominated policies is being paid by the civic and legal political actors
(Personal Interview, Male, Age 63, November 2017, Istanbul)

State Violence as a Relevance Maker of PKK’s Violence

The violence repertoire of the Kurds in the field however is not only composed of or limited with the PKK’s violence alone. All of the interviews conducted in the field arise the violence of the state when having a talk on the PKK’s use of violence. In order words, these two opposing violence(s) emerges in the minds of Kurds simultaneously with each other; sometimes they appear as the cause of the other and sometimes as mutually reproducing, transforming and interpreting one another, a process that has been designated as ‘evocative violence’ in this study.

Regarding the founding period of the PKK, the prior and significant symbol of the state violence that appears in the minds of Kurds spontaneously is the Diyarbakır Military Prison Number 5. As a military prison that was established following the coup d’état of 12 September 1980 and composed of Kurdish prisoners by large, Diyarbakır Prison embodies the military regime’s, so that state’s indiscriminate violence, the systematic torture and the humiliation within a Turkified posture against Kurdish prisoners and it constitutes a milestone in the collective memory of Kurds. It is widely called as “the state’s violence land”, “Diyarbakır hell” and “the period of barbarity” in Kurdish social lexicon as it is the case for the interviewees of this study.

According to the respondents, the PKK cannot be reduced to a reaction against the torture perpetrated in Diyarbakır Prison but the PKK’s spark cannot also be understood without the “deep cut” of Diyarbakır Prison on the bodies and minds of Kurds. In the eye of the interviewees, Diyarbakır Prison is the crystallization of the military regime’s mindset in which Kurds -as a total social category - were invented as the “enemies” of the Turkish state and society. And thus, it is defined as the beginning of Kurdish alienation to the Turkish state, together with an increasing anger against it. Therefore, it is defined as a violence experience that obscured the ties between the Kurds and state and through which the timing, ability and the meaning of the PKK’s use violence gradually appears relevant in the lives of Kurds:

The Diyarbakır Prison created the conditions of the 15th August… The 15th August is considered as the milestone (milad) of the Kurdish will…408

The torture that was employed in Diyarbakır Prison was not comparable with any other case. It was torture perpetrated against the prisoners but also against their families. When the torture of Diyarbakır Prison became a matter through the court cases at the European Human Rights Court in 1990s, EHRC was obliged to expand the scope and

408 Müslüm Yücel, Abdullah Öcalan: Amara’dan İmralı’ya, Alfa Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 2014, p. 381
content of its existing laws due to discovering the unknown types of torture to that day.
And needless to say, it was a landmark for the Kurds in many sense so that was a landmark for the PKK. (Personal Interview, Male, Age 59, London, April 2013)

As discussed in the previous chapter, the guiding figures of the resistance against the state brutality that took place in Diyarbakır Prison were largely the arrested PKK members. It is widely known that, “more than any other Kurdish group, imprisoned PKK members organized collective resistance including hunger strikes and self-immolations. Their defiance strongly contributed to the image of the PKK as a self-sacrificing organization confronting a profoundly unjust regime”.409 It is for this reason that Diyarbakır Prison is widely named as the place which gave the birth the PKK and described as a “school” for it:

Today most of the leading, founding figures of the party are not alive any more... They became martyrs for the movement. Why? Because they resisted in Diyarbakır Prison and said ‘we are captured’. This naming has a significant meaning for Kurds... ‘Being captured’ is a very familiar state of being for them, and it triggers the historical background... The resistance in Diyarbakır Prison made the PKK a respected movement. The PKK members there, were noted by the Kurdish people as the ones who did not give up, did not speak under torture and did not betray their friends... They were noted in the minds of the people as the ones which had the strongest group solidarity in the prison...This meant a lot... (Personal Interview, Female, Age 45, April 2013, Diyarbakır)

In Diyarbakır Prison, the PKK proved its difference from other groups... The resistance and the solidarity among the PKK members there was first appreciated by the other prisoners... They said that the ‘PKK saved our honour’... This idea spread through society... Actually, by means of their resistance and attitude against the violence and the torture in the prison, the PKK members destroyed a psychological barrier...In fact, this was the most challenging issue, breaking the psychological wall, at those times and the PKK did it... (Personal Interview, Male, Age 59, April 2013, London)

In Öcalan’s discourse and in the historiography of the PKK too, the brutality of the state and the resistance given by the PKK members in Diyarbakır Prison, constitutes a significant place due to “vindicating the PKK’s argument about the futility of electoral and legal politics” 410 and providing the ground to (re)invent the myth of resistance and the martyrdom. As one of the leading members of the PKK, Mazlum Doğan’s suicide in order to protest the repression and torture inside the Prison on 21 March, Newroz day, in 1982 became the symbol of the political resistance of the PKK against the “enemies” of Kurds as well as the representation of its “self-

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sacrificial act” for Kurdish freedom. Besides, it is how the blacksmith Kawa which is united with Newroz as a day connotes the “revolt against tyranny” and as a shared Kurdish national myth, was reinterpreted by the PKK and therefore Mazlum Doğan was named as the “Contemporary Kawa”.\textsuperscript{411} In fact, Mazlum Doğan’s suicidal act is the first example of the suicidal violence that is defined as a transcendental political action and is glorified as sacred model– also as an instrument of propaganda too- for the successors of the movement in Öcalan’s discourse. As Mehmet Orhan rightfully defines it, “the heroic narration of sacrificial acts serves to aestheticize conflict and death. Violence immediately solicits the register of morality”\textsuperscript{412} and refers to a constituting element in the PKK’s political culture and historiography. The importance of the self-sacrificial violence is explained as follows:

\begin{quote}
If the Kurdish people became an honourable member of the international community, the role of the first fighters who courageously shed their blood was decisive. It would have been impossible to throw away the seeds of the revolution without having offered these first sacrifices. Without understanding the basis of the popular resistance struggle, one cannot understand the greatness of the post-1975 resistance fighters.\textsuperscript{413}
\end{quote}

The respect accorded to those people in the movement who are still alive today is because of those who died. All those people, young, male, female, they died for this struggle. Can those who remained behind ignore or turn their backs on this? Or think of those who are waiting for news of those on the mountain today. Those people are there to die and PKK owes a lot to the self-sacrifice of these people. (Personal Interview, Female, 52, Diyarbakır, March 2014)

Therefore, embodying itself in Diyarbakır Prison, the 12 September coup d’état did not only effect the prisoners but also their families as well as the ordinary Kurds. This brutal period resulted in a much more radicalized process of socialization and it significantly politicized and radicalized the young generations of Kurdish society. As Bozarslan states, “after 12 September coup, the radicalization process of Kurdish society took place underground among boys aged 10 to 15”.\textsuperscript{414} Therefore, the “great cleansing” of the military regime against oppositional political groups, the massive detentions, the imposition of the martial law and the wide severe

\textsuperscript{411} Mehmet Can Yüce, Özgür Halk, March 1997.
\textsuperscript{414} Müslüm, Yücel, Abdullah Öcalan & Amara’dan Imralı’ya [Abdullah Öcalan: From Amara to Imralı], Alfa Yayınları, 2014.
repression, coupled with bans on anything Kurdish. Following this period, “when the PKK decided to start its guerrilla campaign in 1984, there was an activated human capital and a legitimate ground for the PKK” that was already strengthened by the state violence. Again as Bozarslan describes it, “many of these young boys (and, also, girls), welcomed this new phase of violence as the re-conquest of their symbolic resources and as the starting point of a new and violent, but nevertheless open, process of socialization”.

It is important note that in later years, Diyarbakir Prison became a useful tool for both the state and the PKK in generating their discourses and also creating attendant meanings. The state chose to see the torture in Diyarbakir Prison as a scapegoat for all its previous faults and use it to reduce the PKK's evolution to a reaction to the state’s violence and repression as well as to reduce its systematic repression to an exception that is squeezed in the limits of Diyarbakir Prison. On the other side, the PKK made those members of its own, who resisted the brutal state practices in the Prison using the Kurdish language and methods, into heroes and mythic figures of resistance, especially the dead ones; those members who survived and were released were widely accused with weakness or betrayal and discredited due to “speaking” under the torture. The loss of the charismatic PKK members at that time and desecration of Diyarbakir Prison survivors has resulted Öcalan to stand out among the leading founding members of the PKK and gradually put him in a position as the only figure who is immune from falling mistake vis a vis the experienced or potential threats stemming from the internal and external enemies.

The centrality of the 1980 coup made the position of the PKK at the time significant in at least one respect. For instance, in the later stage of the post-coup era, Öcalan’s departure to Syria just before the coup d’etat in 1980 was reinterpreted as his distinguished foresight and unique leadership through which he gradually began to be appreciated as a leader who manages his movement to survive under such destructive circumstances. Evolving in a success story, his migration to Syria began to have a mystic meaning too, in a way very much reminding the migrations of Prophets who migrates from the holy land to another place for the sake of the community and with condition of saving the ideal of returning back to that holy land. Therefore, Öcalan’s leave for Syria has gradually evolved in a “sacred migration” which over time has become of one of the sources of creating him as the saviour of Kurds:

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The first level or step of Öcalan’s becoming a cult was his sojourn in Syria. At a time when political violence was at its worst and after which Turkey experienced one of its bloodiest coups, he left Turkey and thus, he was able to survive. Following the coup there was no organization left which could defend the Kurdish cause. Only PKK survived from those years, and looking back now, Öcalan’s sojourn in Syria made Öcalan both respectable and sacred within the PKK. The idea took hold that Öcalan had foreseen the coup before everyone and that he saved both himself and his movement by going abroad, and of course, the Kurdish movement. (Personal Interview, Male, Age 42, Diyarbakır, March 2015)

At the end of the day, surviving after all that surrounding violence(s) was the success of Öcalan…He continues to survive and that was his main success…

Another significant aspect of this matter is that the same coup used Atatürk as a cover and justification for all its actions, like the previous coups but also in a much more radical manner. As discussed in the previous chapter, in the same period including the pre and post-coup process, the fact that Atatürk was used as an “ideological mask” of the symbolic violence of 12 September had a profound effect in the construction of the sanctity around Öcalan. Within this mental climate where the reality as well as the practice of politics was pushed to the background, giant images of Ataturk in Kurdish provinces entrenched ---or provoked--- the need for a father figure, which had already existed in Kurdish society and which had become urgent since the loss of the Barzani myth. This process invented Atatürk as a “state fetish”, and in a way that would become clear later on, it turned PKK into the only Kurdish movement capable of reacting to this attack with similar mechanisms, and Öcalan into a substitute father figure.

**The 1990s as the Period of Widespread State Violence**

In the interviews, the second period that is referred to as a significant era in terms of state violence is “the long-lasting 1990s” also known as the “darkest years” for Turkey’s Kurds. Without an exception, in every interview the acceleration of the extensive military operations and the state enacted violence in the Kurdish region were referred to as a defining framework in which Kurds perceived themselves as the subjects of a widespread pressure in that era. The

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418 In his discussion, Abrams defines the state system as an institutionalized practices and as an idea as which is “an overt symbolic identity progressively divorced from practices as an illusionary account of practice”. Rather than a reality, he defined it as an ideological “mask” that is used to hide relations of power and domination. According to him, “The state is not the reality which stands behind the mask of political practice. It is itself the mask which prevents our seeing political practice as it is.”. See: Philip Abrams, “Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State”, Journal of Historical Sociology 1:58–89, 1977, p.82.
1990s are seen as a direct consequence of the approach of the coup d’état of 1980 which “saw Kurdishness, including the Kurdish language, as a social illness that must be cured with an overdose of Kemalism and offering of more and more Turkishness as the condition of the survival of the Kurdishness”⁴²⁰ and it is defined as a period in which the state violence manifested itself both in direct and indirect ways.

In the first place, with the start of the armed conflict between the PKK and the state, declaration of the state of emergency rule⁴²¹ in many cities of the Kurdish region in the 1987⁴²² and the various means of violence such as torture, kidnapping, disappearances, unaccounted murders, and forced migration that state employed by the use of state of emergency rule are given as the main and shared characteristics of the 1990s for Kurds. In this process, state’s engagement in “symbolic violence” alongside physical violence as a strategy to threaten and pacify the Kurds is still alive in the memories of Kurds and these memories include display of the bloody, mutilated, tortured bodies of dead guerrillas, political figures and ordinary citizens who were accused of being PKK supporters in many towns and city squares of the Kurdish region. As a type of violence which “appears before and during the physical violence, the symbolic violence is also a language which legitimize ‘enemy production process’ in the long run”⁴²³ and it clearly led to the dehumanization of the Kurds, “neutralizing” the crimes committed against them and their identity.⁴²⁴

All these experiences had a significant impact on Kurds in terms of their changing relationship, both with state and the PKK. During this period, the interviewees state that Kurdish society was forced by violence to approach the point of having to make a choice between the violence of the state - with which they were familiar - and the violence of the guerrillas, “which were against the violence of the state, and somehow could not be captured but were always present, by its side”.⁴²⁵ Therefore, all these narratives point out that during the armed conflict, by the intensification of the security based approach and repressive policies of the state, the Kurdish

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⁴²¹ which replaced the martial law of the former military regime

⁴²² Following the state of emergency rule applied from 1925 to 1950, the second term of the state of emergency rule in the geographies inhabited by Kurds was continuously from 1987 to 2002.

⁴²³ Hamit Bozarslan, Ortadoğu: Bir Şiddet Tarihi [Middle East: A History of Violence], İletişim Yayınları, 2013, p. 25


⁴²⁵ Sinan Kızılkaya, Kürt Siyasetinde Örgüt Kültürü [The Organizational Culture in Kurdish Politics], Mana Yayınları, 2012, p.42.
region was turned into a “war zone” in which Kurds were trapped under the pressure of conflicting violence(s).

As discussed in the previous chapter, since the emergence of the PKK, successive governments have conveniently reduced the Kurdish question to a security issue and have understood it only as a terror problem that should be eliminated by all means. Throughout the armed conflict however, while the Turkish state was forcing Kurds to choose their side, by means of offering them the “opportunity” to be village guards and join the war against the PKK or forcing them to migrate; “the PKK's strategy was also to provoke repression by the state in order to force the Kurdish population to take sides; either that of the state or the PKK”. In short, Kurds stayed in between the “fear of the state” and the “fear of the PKK”. Therefore, “Kurdish civilians were the primary victims of the mushrooming violence because they were caught between the PKK and the Turkish military, both of whom penalised those who did not side with them”.

Forced migration of Kurds was referred to as another defining phenomena of the 1990s by the interviewees, which as a fact had a significant impact on changing relations between state and the Kurds as well as between Kurds and the PKK. During this period, “some 3,400 Kurdish settlements in eastern Turkey were forcibly evacuated by the state, resulting in the displacement of more than one million Kurdish people”. This means that, as a result of the forced immigration, a large and diversified Kurdish mass changed its living space, losing its “home”. This also means that Kurds lost their cultural and traditional ties, social networks and accustomed modes of production. “Under new conditions, the significant codes of Kurdish society such as ‘tradition’, ‘status’, ‘role’ and ‘custom’ started to change and alter. Most lost their economic independence, their privacy patterns were broken, domestic roles and the authority inside families and the community changed not to mention the impoverishment, deprivation and exclusion that met the masses”.

The Kurds were forcibly displaced and moved to big cities; they had to leave behind their way of living, mechanisms of support, and their cultural and traditional ties. Especially among the younger people, the PKK offered a context and meaning to those young people who couldn’t adapt to city life, who conflicted with their families’ value systems but also were not accepted by the big city. This is also the generation that doesn’t recognize anyone prior to Öcalan as a national hero... PKK

426 Martin van Bruinessen, Kurdish Ethno-Nationalism versus Nation Building States, Istanbul: ISIS Press (Collected articles), 2000, p. 246
430 Sinan Kızılkaya, ibid., p. 42
answered not only the need these young people had for meaning, but also their need for belonging and status. It offered them a network which made them feel not alone and defenceless in the city. So this, for them, was also a way of surviving in the city.

(Personal Interview, Male, Interview via Skype on June 2016)

Therefore “the forced migration from rural areas to the big cities expanded the PKK’s scope and the profiles of its supporters”431. As explained in the previous chapter, the massification of the organization brings with it a change in its ideological discourse, also as a result of the international developments of the era. With the lack of the Soviet Union as a moral centre, as the PKK spread to wider Kurdish groups, due to ascendancy of the Islamic legal politics in Turkey and with the emergence of Hezbollah432 as a religious movement that violently challenged the PKK in the region; in the 1990s the PKK changed its ideological discourse and moved away from its hard core Marxist discourse into a soft socialist and nationalist tone, in which “religious (Islamic) thought and forms were also incorporated”.433 During this era, the conflict between the PKK and the Turkish Hezbollah, backed by the state and with supporters from among the Kurds, creates a new intra-violence among the Kurds. Today there are different opinions on who first started the violence and who is responsible; nonetheless, Öcalan’s redesign of the organization according to the demands of the times is seen as a success. According to this point of view, Öcalan changed and updated the PKK’s discourse and its language by taking into account new internal and world dynamics and the diversified sensitivities and the characteristics of the Kurds who were involved in the party or started to perceive it as a legitimate actor:

The PKK has a very strong sociological reading... He (Öcalan) can see the dynamics and has the ability to adopt himself and the PKK according to the necessities of the time... The Kurdish cause is in forefront of all the things that they had gone through... (Personal Interview, Female, Age 52, Diyarbakır, March 2013)

As a result of all these developments, throughout the 1990s, Öcalan was able to answer the needs and expectations of various groups within Kurdish society and gained a political power which manage to influence the national agenda in Turkey. Managing to influence the national agenda in Turkey however meant that the area for legal politics, already very limited for the Kurds, was narrowed even more. So because of the potential of all Kurds, despite their political

431 The mothers of victims whose children were disappeared or lost by unknown killings, the young Kurdish generation grow up in between violence. This was corresponding to the period of serhildan struggles began. Especially after 1992, there was a serhildan process began and continued for one or two years, until 1994.
432 Just like the PKK, in its first years, Kurdish Hizbullah did a field cleaning in the region against the other religious groups. However, it is widely known that Hizbullah movement in Turkey was largely been supported by the state against the PKK. Today Hizbullah line is represented by HÜDA-Par which is a legal political party.
differences, to be the target of daily violence and systematic repression; and also because of the bans on legal Kurdish movements during the 1990s seems like to strengthened first and foremost the mission of the “Kurdish cause” among Kurds. The interviewees say this was the long process in which the PKK began to turn into the most relevant agent and the only existing power able to carry out this mission.

In this era, the public demonstrations or popular uprisings of Kurds started in the spring of 1990 in Nusaybin, which quickly spread throughout the southeast and became a continuous phenomenon can be read as the result of the wider context described above. These public demonstrations, namely serhildan, first started after the killing of thirteen guerrillas in Nusaybin and due to the refusal of the state to return the dead guerrillas' bodies to their families. The demonstrations broke out without the direct involvement of the PKK, but this marked a new type of relationship between the people and the organization. It indicated the overcoming of hesitancy and fear of the state among the Kurds in the context of their acceptance of and claim for the dead guerrillas. Taking the dead and burying them according to their traditions carried with it the risk of being coded as a “terrorist” by the state. It was also a sign of respect and defined a bind with the dead. In between 1990 and 1992, large numbers of Kurds took part in these popular uprisings across Kurdish towns. “Shop closures and boycotts were organised in most towns in the South East, especially in Diyarbakir, Batman, Sınak, and Siirt”.434 This reaction of the Kurds was not only to the conflicting violence, but more than that, to the gradual losses of society and to the ban on mourning:

*In the 1990s people took to the streets in order to claim their memories... After going through several types of violence and losing their loved ones, being the target of many types of discrimination, humiliation... All these things made people say or to do something about it... They did it either with an ideological stance or regardless of any ideological concerns... They just claimed their memories in the first place...*(Personal Interview, Male, Age 35, April 2014, Istanbul)

The changing characteristic of the relation between the society and the organization in those years was also transmitted to the Kurdish lexicon in terms of naming the PKK and its members. The Kurdish phrase ‘zarok’ which means “child” and ‘zaro ke me’ means “our children” started to be used to define PKK members by the 1990s. As Çelik describes, the word ‘zarok’ referred to two primary substances in the Kurdish world of meaning and cultural vocabulary: First, it pointed out the fact that most of the PKK members joined the organization were from the

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Kurdish region and families, so the naming referred to “the children of the same land”, namely Kurdistan which also implicated the growing familiarity, organic relationship between the organization and the Kurdish society. Secondly, it still referred to the “childishness” of the group, because of their declaration of war against the Turkish state.\footnote{Azad Rênas Çelik, “Kürdistan’da Hoşnutsuzluğun Toplumsal Örgütlenmesi Olarak PKK ve Dönüşen Algılar”, Toplum ve Kuram, Sayı 5, Bahar-Yaz 2011.} When the previous Kurdish rebels and their dramatic end were recalled in the Kurdish collective memory, PKK’s claim was still not realistic for the Kurdish society and their claim was taken peculiar to their “naivety” and “childhood”. This changing mode of naming however refers to a change among Kurds regarding the PKK in which PKK members were no longer “outsiders” but “their children”.\footnote{Ibid.} Thus, in the 1990s, “the PKK activism grew rapidly in size and popularity, gaining both physical and psychological tools and boosting the Kurdish community’s sense of political identity and nationalism throughout the early 1990s”.\footnote{Nesrin Uçarlar, Between Majority Power and Minority Resistance: Kurdish Linguistic Rights in Turkey, PhD Thesis Submitted to Lund Political Studies Department of Political Science Lund University, 2009, p.135.}

At the same time we see that the repertoire of violence within the Kurdish field, represented in the above quotes, also corresponds to the faces of violence in Öcalan’s discourse to a great extent. Rather than affirming Öcalan’s discourse on violence, this correspondence shows that Öcalan’s violence is recognized both by the state and the people as a violence that gets results.

The enforced violence of PKK’s early times, which appeared as something between fear and enchantment to the people, transformed its rational, pragmatical and emotional influences on the people to a stronger version of itself, and this violence also became capable of producing consent for itself. As a result, the limited appeal of the PKK, which was particularly strong among poor and young Kurds at the beginning, became massified and attracted more diversified Kurds in terms of their age, gender, social and class backgrounds. According to the interviewees whether they like it or not, the PKK’s armed struggle is perceived as the main factor that resulted in the shift from a denial to a recognition in Turkish state’s approach regarding the Kurdish question. As Akkaya defines it, this is a shift from a “complete denial” to a “conditional recognition”.\footnote{Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya, “From denial to insurgency: the PKK and the reconstruction of the Kurdish identity”, Conference Paper, January 2011, p. 1, available at: https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/3132960}

The PKK’s gain to have an interlocutor position with the Turkish state however, concurrently strengthened Öcalan’s power and started to position him as a father Kurdish figure. “Öcalan's charisma can be explained by the PKK’s consistently strengthening armed struggle, which
eventually reached a significant enough level so as to influence Turkish politics”.\(^{439}\) Besides and by means of the significant role of violence in its construction period, based on the ashes of the1980s, the1990s turned the PKK into a political actor; as bearer of the Kurdish cause. The idea that “all the suffering we have gone through is because of our Kurdishness” settled in the minds of Kurds. At that stage, despite its self-claim, it was hard to define the PKK as a working-class movement, since in its early years it is hard to talk about the presence of a significant Kurdish working class and in the 1990s however, its structure and impact had gone beyond the class divisions of Kurdish society. Instead, the Kurdish cause in particular, as it is defined in the quote below, appeared as one of the main driving force for the majority of Kurds who defined the PKK as the agents of this mission and who naturally saw Öcalan as the leader of the movement. The enchanting and cognitive faces and functions of violence are thought of in the same breath as the sacred cause of Kurdishness; as a result, PKK becomes the hegemonic actor of Kurdish politics and Öcalan becomes the holy leader of the movement:

"... I told you the story of my friend’s father... His friends were killed by the PKK... He told the reason of his hatred towards the PKK but just before he died and told it only to his son... Why? You know, this is a complicated issue for Kurdish people... This man did not see himself as having the right to talk about this issue publicly. And believe me, it is not only related to the power of the PKK, nor is it the fear. After 1984 this society (Kurdish society) experienced such violence that they only had the PKK left to rely on. And they didn’t want to say anything that would insult the PKK or decrease its reputation, since society would remain vulnerable (Personal Interview, Male, Age 34, Istanbul)"

Section II: Kurdishness or the Kurdish Cause

In the field, the second constituting element that is defined as the source of Öcalan being sacralized is the Kurdishness or the Kurdish cause. In this section, Kurdishness as a source or foundation that is believed to transform Öcalan into a sacred figure will be discussed via Öcalan’s discourse and from the perspectives of Kurds. Kurdishness or Kurdishness Cause is described by many of the interviewees as the essence or the “spin cord” of the story which is represented by the PKK today. Or in other words, it is repeatedly said that the importance, meaning and function of the PKK for today’s Kurds is stemming from the importance or the “holiness of the Kurdish cause”.

Although Kurdishness and national cause is such a holy matter for Kurds and in the discourse of Öcalan, both Kurds and Öcalan has a problematic relationship with nationalism as an ideology. To put it differently, “since nationalism has been associated with the state, it has always had a negative connotation in the Kurdish vocabulary”.\(^{440}\) In traditional Kurdish movements this line of discomfort with nationalism has been expressed through its position against state nationalism as it was realized in the Kurdish uprisings. The PKK however, builds its national thesis on the “oppressed nations nationalism” by the help of Marxist theory as a “distinguished type of nationalism” in term of being against the repressive state nationalism. Moreover, Öcalan’s approach regarding nationalism has been based on denouncement of both the Kurdish nationalism which was labelled as a “collaborator” or “primitive nationalism” and Turkish nationalism which was called “imperialist”, “colonialist” or “bourgeois-nationalism”. Öcalan stated that these two opposing nationalisms were same in their soul and collaborated with each other time to time.

On the other hand, although PKK did not define itself as a national movement and coded nationalism negatively, it cannot be taken as totally separate or released from the content, function and opportunities of nationalism especially based on the legitimate grounding that the nationalism of oppressed nations and their right to self-determination provided for the movement which at the time was seen as “progressive” when compared to the state nationalisms. Besides, as Öcalan stated later in the mid-2000s, “the PKK was unable to transcend the nation-statist paradigm for a long time” [ until the 1990s to 2005].\(^{441}\)

Consequently, this section will cover the nationalism understanding in Öcalan’s discourse and his definition of Kurdishness in the first part and the second part will elaborate the manifestations of Kurdishness on the basis of the field work. In the first part however, along with having a Marxist rhetoric, this study suggests that Öcalan's nationalism is fed from two main sources: First is the early cultural Kurdish nationalism and the second is Kemalism as the political and symbolic sources that influences the PKK's political nationalism repertoire.


\(^{441}\) Abdullah Öcalan, Prison Writings III: The Road Map to Negotiations, Cologne: International Initiative Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan- Peace in Kurdistan, 2012, p. 89
A. National Question in Öcalan’s First Manifesto

In its foundation years, Öcalan defined the PKK as the “correct”, “real”, “revolutionary” and “progressive” political agency of Kurdishness namely as the “real national front”.\textsuperscript{442} The characteristic of the Kurdistan Revolution is defined as the “national democratic revolution” with the aim of the unification of Kurds under an independent state structure.\textsuperscript{443} In contrast with competing Kurdish actors at the time which were named as “wrong” and “reformist” due to supporting the ideas such as regional autonomy or federal unity, the aim of Öcalan’s “real national front” was aiming to establish a nation state:

\begin{quote}
In this respect, the solutions suggested on national issue such as "regional autonomy", "federal unity", "language and cultural autonomy" by both the "revolutionaries" of the oppressing and 'revolutionaries' of oppressed nations, which are different in nuances but share the same essence, are reactionary and against the only correct interpretation of the right to self-determination which is the independent state. In today’s given conditions, the independent state is the only correct truth and because of this, it is a revolutionary thesis and all other theses or the solution ways which do not refer to the state borders are reformists and because of this, they are reactionary too.\textsuperscript{444}
\end{quote}

What is embedded in defining the Kurdistan as a colony and the aim of establishing it as a united body in the form of a nation state is however directly referring to the Öcalan’s Kurdish imagination of the territory. According to this, Kurdistan as a divided land between four nation states is considered as a “stolen land”\textsuperscript{445} of the Kurds so that the nation state was attributed an historical and constructive role in reuniting it. This refers to an understanding that is taken for granted regarding nation state in nationalist ideologies, as the legitimate body to transform people into a nation with a defined homeland and an “historical narrative based on a discourse of absolute cultural and geographical continuity with the past”.\textsuperscript{446} To put it differently, the principle of the “people’s war” in the PKK’s discourse as the condition needed to reach the “free, independent future” is replacing the principle theme of “national war” that nationalism presented as a way to return to the past, namely the “golden age”. Besides, the “role of violence” whether it is revolutionary or national war, refers to a similar legitimization strategy as a way

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\textsuperscript{442} PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan) Program ve Tüzüğü, Weşanên Serxwebûn 71, 1995.
\textsuperscript{443} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{444} Abdullah Öcalan, Kürdistan Devriminin Yolu (Manifesto), Wəşanê Serxwebûn 24, 1978, p. 128
\textsuperscript{445} Ali Balcı, The PKK- Kurdistan Workers’ Party’s Regional Politics: During and After Cold War Era, Palgrave Macmillen, 2017, p.72
\textsuperscript{446} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
to save the country from the slavery or occupation of the “enemy” and constitutes a collective narrative which centrally functions to (re)form the existing society.

Despite its clear nationalist paradigm however, notwithstanding and apart from being shaped under the left-wing zeitgeist of the era, what is the reason for Öcalan to avoid positioning the PKK as a nationalist movement? Does it refer to any further pragmatic, practical and political facets? If yes, what is the role and function of these in making the PKK and Öcalan a father figure?

B. The PKK as the Agent of Modern Kurdish History: overt Marxism and tacit Nationalism

In the first place, while thinking on Öcalan’s preference to frame the PKK not in a nationalist but in a Marxist discourse in its early years, it is important to recall the basic but the crucial fact that, from the beginning the PKK does not have a “problem” of ethnicity. That is to say, Kurdish identity was already present as a significant ethnic and political identity before the emergence of the PKK. Unlike many other nationalisms which obliged people to invent their national identities concurrently in their founding years, in the PKK’s case this “problem” is absent. Besides, the Kurdish nationalism which was represented by traditional Kurdish actors at the time, was an opponent to the PKK and already a “problem” for the Turkish state. At the international level however, Barzani was carrying the flag of Kurdish nationalism as “a legendary superhero, whose feats were sung and told in all corners of Kurdistan”.447 In his way to establish an armed struggle on the basis of a new Kurdishness against the Turkish state, Öcalan established his discourse on an “overt Marxism” and a “tacit nationalism”. Or in other words, the Kurdish identity was already available for him to be the subject/base of a liberation war against colonial rule but the “problem” was the defining colour and the political language of the existing Kurdish identity that had been leading the Kurdish struggle at the time. Therefore, in the absence of the lack of ethnic content regarding the identity, sharing a similar positon with Turkish state towards the tribal Kurdish entities, the “problem” is defined by Öcalan as the traditional framework of Kurdishness which was defined by the tribal, feudal sources. On the other side, by defining the Turkish state as a colonialist power in Kurdistan, Öcalan is saving the proximate line with the former Kurdish nationalisms. Therefore, after the failure of the Barzani movement in Iraq and to mobilize the Kurds alongside the need to

distinguish itself from the competing actors, Öcalan’s PKK emerges with the claim of the Turkey’s Kurds to represent the Kurdish cause in the Middle East and as its owner. This is a formulation for Öcalan to underline the PKK’s “difference” and “novelty” in the Kurdish political field.

Articulating Kurdish nationalist demands in a Marxist discourse however, has several functions. It provides Öcalan’s PKK the peculiarity or particularity as well as giving it the chance to link itself with a broader universality. As Bozarslan states, “one should in fact admit that in the Kurdish case, as well as in the case of many other ethnic minorities or colonized peoples, “particularism” and “universalism” went always hand-in-hand: universalism constructed particularism as a “national” group entitled to enter in the universal history, and particularism has always sought to legitimize itself as a part of a broader humanity”. Linking his movement with a broader universality through Marxism however is also a way for Öcalan to define the PKK as a “modern” Kurdish movement too. As in the case of Turkish nationalism in which Westernization replaces modernization, in Öcalan’s discourse, Marxism replaces the modernization as a way define its difference and uniqueness in the field. This refers to a claim of being a departure from the Kurdish past as well as being the beginning of modern Kurdish revolution. Lastly, Marxism which replaces the modernization in Öcalan’s employment is a response to the “modern Turkish master”. Using the contemporary Marxist discourse gives the chance Öcalan to express Kurds being modern via the PKK so that proposing a Kurdishness which is at least as modern as Turkishness so that suggests an equal relationship for the PKK with the Turkish state as its opponent.

Under the circumstances of defining itself as a departure from the traditional Kurdish past and as a modern Kurdish movement, through the “colonial Kurdistan thesis” Öcalan could also redefine the ‘threats’ against the Kurdishness as well as the form of Kurdish struggle against these threats. According to this, unlike the traditional Kurdish movements - which lead the previous uprisings and indicated the State as the factor that demolishing or threatening the sources of Kurdishness because of its central, secular and modern features - the PKK defined the Turkish state, the imperialist powers and their colonial system - which exploited and enslaved the Kurds- as the ‘threats’ in front of the Kurdish consciousness and realization of Kurdishness. To put in differently, “Turkish state was a threat because of destroying the Kurdish

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consciousness” and the “imperial system was a threat because of preventing the possibility of Kurdish nation state”. However, the nuance was the PKK’s acceptance of the modern paradigm in which it defined the Turkish state as a ‘threat’ not because it is a modern nation state but because it is colonial state.

This reading of Öcalan while constructing PKK’s founding discourse also implicates that the traditional and religious form of the Kurdish oppositional movements referred to a type of “false consciousness” that had been shaped in the framework of the colonialisst strategy in which Kurds mistakenly perceived modernism and secularism as threats to their identity. Thus, the obstacle in front of the modernization of the Kurds was defined as the Turkish state. According to Öcalan’s reading, due to this “false Kurdish consciousness”, “historical error” or more directly the “lack of the capacity to identify the real threats” against itself, Kurds has repeatedly failed and that is how they contributed to their state of being slavery. The political failures of the traditional Kurdish movements throughout the history, namely, the defeated and repressed Kurdish uprisings, were taken and given as the historical proofs of this “false consciousness” or the “wrongfulness”. For this reason, the given Kurdish identity which existed before the PKK was also implicated as a “threat” to the realization of Kurdishness together with the Turkish state.

According to Öcalan’s PKK, the new struggle was required to take a modern and revolutionary form as it is the only form of struggle able to challenge the colonial rule and PKK was the embodiment of it. The redefinition of the “threat” to Kurdishness implicates a new definition of “unity” as well. It was a modern Kurdish unity in which Öcalan defined and positioned the PKK as the new historical actor and the modern political agent of the Kurdish field. Defining a modern secular revolutionary war against the conflicting actors of the given field (Turkish state, Traditional Kurdish opposition) gave the PKK the opportunity to distinguish itself from both and create a new political argument to delegitimize the available conflicting theses of these parties. As a response to the Turkish lexicon labelling Kurds as a “pre-modern”, “reactionary” and “backward” society, the Marxist theory that the PKK accepted as its guidance theory was a contemporary modern political language that invalidates the Turkish negative attributions towards Kurdishness.

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C. Symbolic Sources of the PKK’s Founding National Discourse

The modern claim of the PKK was in fact not new in the Kurdish history. Apart from the PKK’s peers in the Kurdish left during the late 1970s and 1980s, the first symbolic resources of the modern rhetoric for the PKK was provided more than half century ago by the Kurdish nationalists of the late Ottoman Empire. The objection to the identification of Kurdishness with religion and tradition was first started to be debated among the Kurdish educated elite during the CUP era and against the Young Turks. “Despite its limited impact on Kurds during the time, a modern Kurdish approach clearly emerged in the first two decades of the 20th century as reaction to growing Turkish nationalism”.450

In this regard and especially in its foundation years, the heritage of the Kurdish cultural and political nationalism of the late Ottoman era – which had impact on different parts of Kurdistan in terms of providing a Kurdish national repertoire including a national history, shared national myths, song, flag and map - can easily been detected in the PKK’s imagination of Kurdishness.451 For instance, just like these previous Kurdish nationalists, Öcalan defined the Mesopotamia as the homeland of the Kurds, described a Kurdish Golden Age based on a far past in which he claims that the Kurds had a twenty thousand years old history that they constituted the root of the Aryan culture. Accordingly, the Kurdish language is the main constituent element of the Sumerian culture, there is a relationship between the Antic Helen and Kurdish culture, and the Hurrians and the Mitanos were Kurds.452 As it was invented by the earlier Kurdish nationalists, Öcalan’s PKK adopted Newroz as a national myth and symbol of resistance while the Kawa the Blacksmith was transformed into a proletarian national hero. Despite the change in his discourse beginning from the 1990s, in his early years, Öcalan also

450 Hamit Bozarslan, “Between integration, autonomization and radicalization”, European Journal of Turkish Studies 14, 2012, reached on 12 June 2016, Available at http://ejts.revues.org/4663. Alongside Kemalism at the time, the late Ottoman Kurdish nationalist has become inspirational for the second generation of the Kurdish nationalists during the Republican era in terms of motivating them to discover and build their Kurdish awareness. 451 It is not wrong to say that the new Kurdish generations in Republican era, rediscovered this former Kurdish nationalist line through the memoirs and history writings of the exiled Kurdish nationalists such as Zinar Silopi (Kadri Cemilpaşazade) and Nuri Dersimi. The pieces written by the exiled Kurdish nationalist during the ‘silenced years’ were later reprinted and constituted the most important sources of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey and among Kurdish diaspora in 1960s and 1970s. By the end of the single party regime, the 1950s and 1960s were the years that the repressed critical notables of Kemalism started to tell an alternative history reading by means of the publications of memoirs. In this regard, memoirs have significant impact on oppositional political culture in Turkey beginning from the 1960s. For further reading see: Doğan Gürpınar, “The Politics of Memoirs and Memoir Publishing in Twentieth Century Turkey”, Turkish Studies Vol. 13, No. 3, 537–557, September 2012 452 Abdullah Öcalan, Sümer Rahip Devletinden Demokratik Uygarlığa: AIHM Savunmalari Cilt I, Mezopotamya Yayınları, 2001, p.74-77
took for granted the idea that Islam has a negative impact on the Kurds and deepen their slavery in his early years:

Islam itself has played no role rather than adhering the Kurds’ to their traditional levels of slavery for almost 1400 years, especially the Sunni official interpretation of Islam had played a further role in deepening Kurd’s slavery.  

As a result, it is not wrong to say that Kurdish nationalist heritage was one of the primary symbolic sources in the founding discourse of Öcalan’s PKK although it did not position itself as a national movement. While “the use of force” is used as opposed to state violence in the PKK’s discourse, concurrently a counter history starts to be written too as a way to create a counter society with the aim to take back the “stolen land” of the Kurds. To put it differently, the PKK emerged as a movement which claimed for “the stolen land”, “stolen labour” and “stolen personalities” of the Kurds. On the other hand, this counter-discourse was not immune from the Turkish state’s national discourse. “As national history is written primarily from the viewpoint of the majority by a group of state-oriented authors, the counter-national history writing by minorities, on the other hand, is never immune from the involvement of the nationalist paradigm”.  

D. Legacy of Kemalism in Öcalan’s National Paradigm  

Apart from the heritage of earlier Kurdish nationalists who shared basically the same intellectual background with the Young Turks, the impact of Kemalism can also be followed in Öcalan’s founding discourse especially in terms of the interpretation of the “modern” embedded in a national paradigm. Moreover, the role of violence in this national paradigm, the historiography and the understanding of society in the PKK’s modern discourse refers to a similarity with Kemalism although it is a political regime that the PKK opposed to. This does not mean a paradox but refers to a familiar pattern that arises in the case of many other radical movements as a result of the interaction with the “enemy”:

Radical movements, at least for a specific period of time, develops in a continuity with the political regimes to which they rise against. It is not a surprise for the rebelling movements to have an authoritarian content too just as the authoritarian state that they are opposed to. The authoritarian states, in fact, are the schools for the radical movements in which they have been educated and learned the symbols,

453 Abdullah Öcalan, Özgür İnsan Savunması, Düzenleyen: Azad Bakini, p.7  
454 Nesrin Uçarlar, Between Majority Power and Minority Resistance: Kurdish Linguistic Rights in Turkey, PhD Thesis Submitted to Lund Political Studies Department of Political Science Lund University, 2009, p.97
slogans and political syntax in it. Authoritarian state which has a decisive role in
the production of the political culture in a given society actually has an impact on
the reproduction of this culture by means of the revolts emerged against itself.\textsuperscript{455}

Needless to say, it is not possible to explain the PKK by means of /through Kemalism or to
reduce one into another, firstly due to the significant differences between Öcalan and Atatürk
caus ed by them being the leadership figures of different historical periods and circumstances.
On the other hand, without falling into anachronism, it is also important to analyse the impact
of Kemalism on the PKK’s founding discourse as an important political and symbolic resource.
As a significant fact and as Murat Belge rightfully points out, almost all of the political thoughts
that emerged in the Republican era were influenced by Kemalism in different levels of depth
regardless of their legal status, their ethnic or religious orientations.\textsuperscript{456} Especially the positivist,
Jacobin and etatist substance of Kemalism, as it is one of the readings of modernity in Turkey
but essentialized as the one and the only, has become an ideational resource even for the
opposing political thoughts and positions in Turkey due to the authoritarian and penetrating
gaze of Kemalism that has operated through the popular and bureaucratic imagination of Turkey
for decades which is also school for the opposing groups.

Additionally, the indoctrination process starting from the primary school until the end of
graduate studies, is based on Atatürk’s founding principles\textsuperscript{457} and that are supported by and
reproduced in every aspect of Turkey’s social life /socialization processes. Using the
terminology of de Certeau, being aware of the mistake of accepting society as a passive receiver
or practiser of the Kemalist “strategy” requires the awareness of the mistake to accept the
society and its “tactics” to challenge it as totally immune from the impact of that strategy too.
So, considering the active interaction between the “context” and the “subject”, regardless of
having a positive or negative content of the mutual interaction in between and based upon the
principle of reciprocity brings us to the fact that Öcalan as a figure who is socially, politically
and intellectually constructed in the Kemalist political climate is not
exempt from its sealing impact. In this regard, comparatively addressing the parallelisms between these two founding
discourses would give a clearer picture especially when we go back to the themes of modern
national paradigm, the role of violence, historiography and society perception.

\textsuperscript{455} Hamit Bozarslan, “Kürt Milliyetçiliği ve Kürt Hareketi (1898-2000)” [Kurdish Nationalism and Kurdish
29-30
\textsuperscript{457} Which are republicanism, etatism, revolutionism, laicism, populism, and nationalism.
E. Kemalism and Apoism as Modern Revolutionist Nationalisms

As it is discussed in Chapter II, although the modernization process of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic are highly connected with each other, the Republican regime founded in 1923 defined itself as a clear departure from the Ottoman past. Along with this consideration, this period and the preceding one, the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1922), are presented as the stages of the Turkish “Revolution”, in the first of which independence of the Turks were secured against imperialist powers and in the second, an independent new modern state was founded. However, the Turkish War of Independence and the founding moment of 1923 made the revolution against not only the imperialist occupying forces but also against the collaborationist sultan and the Istanbul government. Taking for granted the Turkish imagination of the territory [Anatolia] from predecessors, the republic was perceived and portrayed as a rebirth of Turkishness with the emergence of a “new, young and vibrant Turkishness” freed simultaneously from obscurity and foreign intrusion.

To create a modern nation from the vassal of the Ottoman Empire, forgetting the past, changing the “old Ottoman man” into a “new Republican citizen” were defined as both the conditions and objectives of the Turkish revolution as a way to clean the “errors” and “mistake” of the past. According to this view, the Ottoman past which was backward and reactionary and the Ottoman order that was dogmatic, opposed to science, civilization and modernity embodied a total “wrongness” that the new Republic would like to cut its ties. The “wrongness” of the past was being proved in Ottoman failure(s) to save the state and stability of the Turkishness. In short, Ottoman past perceived in conflict with the new Turkey. Besides, Ottoman past and its backwardness was seen embedded in Islam and Islam related Ottoman tradition, so that modernism and laicism was seen as its antidotes or recipe to challenge it. Hence for Kemalism, “Islam represents more than just a religion, and becomes the general signifier for the “old order”, or the Ottoman Turkish tradition, which is considered as the prime culprit that kept Turkey backward”.

As a consequence of such a point of view, intensively in the single party era, an invented history based on a distant and ideal past generalized in which the Turkishness was both redefined and mystified. The main components of the new regime’s historiography consisted of the “Turkish

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460 Eyüpr Sabri Çarmıklı, Caught between Islam and the West: Secularism in the Kemalist discourse, PhD Thesis awarded by the University of Westminster, 2011, p. 1
history thesis” that defined the Turks as the first indigenous people of Anatolia in which the Hittites emerged as their ancestors and the “Sun language theory” that claimed Turkish was the primordial language as the source of all our other languages of civilization. Under the influence of this nationalist climate, Ergenekon legend\textsuperscript{461} which was a mythical epic discovered during the late Ottoman era about the destruction and rebuilding of the Gokturk (Kokturk) Empire serving as an origin myth for Turkish tribes and today’s Turkic states, reinvented in the early Republican era during 1930s and used to consubstantiate with the Turkish revolution. In the further steps of the radical Turkish nationalism however, Shamanism claimed to be the national religion of Turks and Islam defined as the factor which weakened the unity of Turks in the history.

As it is clarified in the paragraphs above, Öcalan’s PKK which emerged as a counter-discourse against the Turkish state’s official discourse – Kemalism- develops in a quite similar thinking path with it, as “many of the oppressed who directly or indirectly participate in revolution intend — conditioned by the myths of the old order — to make it their private revolution”.\textsuperscript{462} As Freire suggest, “the shadow of their former oppressor is still cast over them”.\textsuperscript{463} To put it differently, “the oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines”.\textsuperscript{464} Therefore, as Bozarslan briefly states, this process of inverting or copying is more than a “Stockholm Syndrome” but it is a way for the oppressed at the beginning to restore the dignity and form the minds:

\textit{Like the Kemalist ideologues, the PKK also rejected the known past and proposed a return back to an imagined “Golden Age.” Only this uncorrupted “Golden Age” could give birth to the future, and therefore, allow the renewal of a history that had been interrupted by the corruption of the past. For the Kemalists, Ergenekon, the mythic land of the Turks, was the place where this Golden Age has taken place. In the case of the PKK, Mesopotamia became the imagined land of the Kurds, the place...}

\textsuperscript{461} “The legend takes its name from the Central Asian valley in which fleeing Gokturks sought refuge and a new homeland. Their empire had been destroyed as a result of battles with Chinese and other non-Turkic forces. They fled into a forbidding mountainous region and at its center came across an enormous fruitful valley. They decided to remain there and, melting down all of their iron tools and weapons, created an enormous iron door to seal the only entrance to the valley. Here they lived in peace and the clans flourished and became powerful again. After many generations, they became so numerous that the valley became overpopulated. They decided to melt down the iron door to forge weapons. However, no one remained of the generation that had led them through the passes, valleys and ravines into the valley, so they wandered aimlessly through the mountains until a gray mother wolf (the symbol on the Gokturk coat of arms) appeared and led them out of the mountains. On the steppes, after many battles, the Gokturk won back their importance, although they never regained their old unity and rather split into many tribes that nevertheless traced their communal origins back to the Gokturk”. See: Jenny White, “The Ergenekon Legend”, available at: \url{http://kamilpasha.com/?p=45}


\textsuperscript{463} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{464} Ibid.
of the Kurdish Golden Age and of Kawa the Blacksmith, the mythic Kurdish hero. All these references lent to young Kurds a similar code and system of symbols equivalent to those of the Turks and permitted them to achieve a psychic equality. They were restoring dignity and forming minds.465

However, when it comes to the society perception of these two founding narratives, it is important to focus on their theories of the New Man which constitutes a nodal point in their discourses and apprises another aspect of the continuity in which the personification of the collective power under a leader figure via the myth of New Man takes place.

F. Creating the New Man, Making the New Order

“According to Laclau and Mouffe any political discourse is formed of a series of signs are placed along each other in an equivalence chain by which they achieve meaning”.466 There is an articulation between the signs and in fact the signs of a discourse get their meanings through links with each other... However, discourses attempt to fix webs of meaning through the constitution of nodal points. Nodal points organise the discourse around a central privileged signifier or reference point – ‘points de caption’ as Lacan (1977) termed it.467

In this regard, the myth of New Man is a nodal point both in Öcalan’s PKK, Apoism, and Kemalism. It binds together the “particular system of meanings or ‘chain of signification’ and assigning meanings to other signifiers within”468 these discourses. The New Man is a synonym/archetype of the new Turk and the new Kurd that these discourses would like to create as a compact signifier of all their desired achievements regarding the society and the political power/dominance they would like gain over it.

Accordingly, in both, the New Man is at the centre of the conflict and the struggle between the “old” and “new” order. There is a constant dichotomy and conflict between the old and the new man while the first one depicted as “backward”, “reactionary” and “collaborator”, the second was the “modern”, “progressive” and “free” man. When it is the conflict and struggle between the “old Ottoman man” and the “new Republican citizen” in Kemalism, in Öcalan’s discourse

468 Ibid.
it is the conflict and struggle between the “slave tribal-feudal Kurdish man” and “free modern Kurdish man”.

The New Man ideal in both clearly represents the destruction of the old order and construction of a new order which basically refers to the transformation of the society and change the existing order through an ideology. While this is the destruction of the Ottoman and construction of the Republican legacy in Turkish case, it is the destruction of the colonial Turkish rule together with the feudal-tribal sub-rule and in response it is the construction of a free united Kurdistan in Apoism.

*It is important to remember that our Party has the following feature: It is our duty to reverse to whatever the enemy has imposed to our people throughout its history and to respond immediately to what it has done to our people. On this basis, to fulfil the resurrection of our people, is our creed.*

Apparently, the myth of New Man is ideally loaded and has specific functions. In this regard, both Kemalism and Öcalan’s founding discourses can be read through Murray’s suggestion in which he describes the functions of the New Man as (a) cynosural–emotional–memorable–inspirational, (b) convictional, (c) evaluational, (d) conational, and (e) integrational”.

**Making a New Society via New Man**

At this stage, before focusing on the description and the functions of the New Man, it is important to focus on the “existing man” since the problem about the “old man” is clear. That is to say, it is necessary to understand the definition of the “existing man” from the point of view of these founding narratives in order to understand the details of why that “existing man” is more or less stays in the orbit of the problem as it gives us to explore the commonalities and the differences between these founding discourses in terms of their society perceptions.

As stated earlier, the PKK did not have a “problem” of answering the question of “who is Kurd?” since the Kurdish identity was already significant and present before the PKK’s emergence. On the other hand, the answer to the question of “who is a Kurd” was problematic for Öcalan on which he builds the discourse of the PKK:

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470 Henry A. Murray, “The possible nature of a “mythology” to come”, in H. A. Murray (Ed.), Myth and mythmaking, New York: George Braziller, 1960, p. 335
Kurd is a slave. Who can like the sheep Kurd? Slave Kurd is not loveable, it can be only damned... You cannot love it. The way to love it goes through the war. Likewise, the way towards love goes through a good partisanship, to serve for a good army war. We are a slave society. We need an absolute freedom and we are ready to cover all the cost for freedom. Losing thousand or hundred thousand does not make any difference.  

According to Öcalan’s view, since the existing Kurd is a colonized, enslaved and the holder of a “false consciousness”, he is also a “collaborator”, “betray” and “looser” too. Consequently, there is nothing to do with this Kurd and the only condition to sympathise any Kurd is only possible to give a war to liberate him from slavery which refers to “recreate” and “redefine” him in individual, social and political terms. The war refers to the revolutionary war in terms of having the aim of creating a new mind - mode of thinking behaving and acting - which would create the “free man” of the future as the counter of the “slave man” who is accepted as a continuous entity in the existing man. So, the New Kurdish Man represents what existing Kurd is not. However, it would be wrong to understand the revolutionary war of the PKK against this enslaved and corrupted Kurd as war to destroy or demolish it totally. For the sake of the “true Kurdishness” which was deliberately forgotten by the colonial rule and it collaborators, the PKK does not demolish the enslaved Kurd totally but aim to transform it which basically means to change its political resources and language. This transformation process however, would be the “incubation bag” of the PKK’s rule, authority and power. Since any transformation process is based on the “given” and as the claim to reshape the “given” according to the new rules and principles is not a process of creating something out of nothing, it is also a process of planting, establishing and maintaining the new rule of the “transformer” which seek to decide the modes of transformation due to its central role within the process. To put it concretely, in the PKK’s case, the transformation of the Kurdish society – in the PKK’s rhetoric it is the “reorganization of the society” - refers also to an ideological transformation in which the PKK emerges as the agent of the decision-making and elimination and decides on who is and is not the “wrong”, “collaborator” or “reactionary” Kurd, based on the position of the existing Kurds towards PKK’s transformation proposal. That is to say, the PKK defines itself as a benchmark that would measure and determine which Kurds

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471 Abdullah Öcalan, Apocu Militan Kişilik Cilt I, Bilim Aydınlanma Yayınları, available at: https://issuu.com/hayatibalikoglu/docs/apocu_militan_ki__ilik_1-c__lt-abdu

472 This is a crucial point which differs PKK from KUK for instance. As a counterpart, radical Kurdish organization KUK defined Kurdistan as a colony and committed to the armed struggle for its independence too. It defined its aim as to demolish the colonial system and the Kurdish collaborators. On the other hand, PKK’s claim is to change and transform the colonial system and very society. This implicates the pragmatic way of thinking as to be able to change a system first requires to be/defined a strong actor in it.
are “worthy” to be the candidates of being the New Man. While doing this categorisation among the Kurds, approval or disapproval of the modern political language was the PKK’s vital criteria which refers to a pragmatic judgement alongside the ideological one.

Öcalan’s approach however is a reverse type of valuation in which the “prospect Kurd” idealized by means of devaluation of the “existing Kurd”. In a way, it is the valuation of Öcalan’s imagined Kurd in which his rule via the PKK is also being dignified. In this regard, Öcalan defined the given Kurdishness as the source of slavery, corruption, alienation and self-depreciation. The national pride is absent in Öcalan’s founding discourse and it would be deserved only after a hard-working process towards the predetermined direction under the PKK’s rule in which the free Kurdish man’s mentality becomes dominant and a new Kurdish unity would be established.

On the other hand, in Kemalism, the national pride was an invaluable resource, so “Atatürk sought to cultivate a strong sense of pride in national belonging”.473 In his discourse, he defines Turks as intelligent, progressive and brave:

> The Turkish Nation has a lofty character, the Turkish nation is hard-working, the Turkish Nation is intelligent... The Turkish nation knows how to overcome difficulties with national unity and solidarity. And the torch which the Turkish people have kept in their hands and minds in the way of progress and civilization, is the positive science... 474

“Atatürk defines Turkishness as the source of his self-confidence and his most praiseworthy foundation”.475 On the other hand, the question of “who is a Turk” was a crucial and problematic question that should be answered by the Republican ruling elite in the founding years since the “Turk” was still a bit “ambiguous entity” due to being recently invented as an ethnic identity in the late Ottoman era even though it was the substance of the prospect modern Turkish citizen.

So, the formula which suggest the proposition “who says I am a Turk” was defined as the broad and ambiguous definition of the Turk. Regardless of holding a different ethnic identity, accepting Turkishness as the supra identity became the criteria to define the ideal Turkish citizen. 476 Actually, this was a pragmatic discourse more than an ideological one in which being at the side of Kemalism became the criteria that indicates/determine the status of different ethnic

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475 Ibid.
476 Which was compulsory for the ruling elite, since including the founding members of the Republic, the society was composed of many migrants from Balkans and Caucasus with diversified ethnic orientations.
groups in the new Turkish state in terms of being accepted as the “rightful” agents of the Turkish citizenship. As long as they agree with the definition of Kemalism with regards to the question of “what is a Turk”, there was no problem for the ruling elite to accept these groups inside the circle of Turkishness.

Apparently, the acceptance regarding Turkishness as a supra identity implicates the acceptance of the rule and legitimacy of the new regime. So, it offers the non-Turkish groups not being marked as a threat for the new state but did not guarantee it. To put it differently, the acceptance or non-acceptance of the concept of Turkishness as a supra identity was signifying one’s position whether it was in favour of or against to the Kemalism. So, in the cases of Turkishness is not being recognized as a supra identity – a stance to protect one’s own-original identity was also coded as a refusal to the Turkish identity- is understood as a disproval of the political definition of the state regarding the unity so that those who are decisive in the articulation of their own ethnic identities are defined as a threat against the nation and state authority via their position to the offered Turkishness. In short, defining any other content as identity marker rather than Turkishness, means to exit from Turkishness. The “mandatory invitation” to the Turkishness which is embodied in the phrase “the one who says himself a Turk” rather than more simply “I am a Turk” actually can be read as an indirect way of formulation of the desire and the claim of the Turkishness being invited into the “indigenousity” of the land [Anatolia] through the acceptance of the indigenous societies in it which is reversely expressed via Turkishness.

On the other hand, although the Turk is being glorified as a national identity, Kemalism did not see the existing/very society as a proper, mature and capable enough to be a modern nation. As it is clarified in the words of Ziya Gökalp below, who is one of the guiding ideologues of the Republic especially in terms his impact on founding the Turkish national culture, the public is still the carrier of the undesirable past, even its Turkishness is not enough it to be free from the old order due the lack of modern equipped human resources:

There are three different layers of people in our country in terms of their level of civilization and the pedagogy: The public, the ones educated in madrassah [Medreseliler] and the ones educated in the modern schools [Mektepliler]... Among them, the first category [the public] is still not fully free from the Far-Eastern civilization, the second are living in the Eastern civilization, it is the only third group which has had benefit from the Western civilization. That means that one portion of our nation is living in ancient age, the second is in the medieval age and a third in
a modern age. How can the life of a nation can be normal with such a threefold life.477

“The public is backward, Islamic and open to the Arabic influence, therefore refers to the “other” that should be transformed”.478 Accordingly, the work, responsibility and the capability to transform this otherized public would be implemented under the guidance of the modern educated elite, as they were the agents of the modern age which defined as the third group in Gökalp’s scheme. The society would be transformed gradually and arrive at the level of being a proper civilized nation. However, “the Kurds (the major linguistically distinct non-Turkish group), the AleviS (the major non-Sunni group, i.e. a group which does not belong to the par defeat State’s religion) and during some periods, the Islamists (who, while accepting Turcity and Islam, contest the right to the state and to the “integrated “political actors, to monopolize the religious references as an instrument of legitimization)”479 corresponds to the first and the second group as the “objects” of Kemalist transformational work.

Overall, in both Kemalism and Öcalan’s discourses, the New Man apparently does not have much to say about the present time due to the lack of social complement/equivalence 480 and it appears as a bridge between the “golden past” and “saved future”. However existing man by means of his transformation would be the agent of the construction of a better future in present. In this regard, the New Man is a strategy rather than tactic in both founding discourses and it is the man of a “strategic time” which refers to the beginning of a new era in its social, economic and political means. It is therefore the “extraordinary psychic entity”481 of the new historical era in which he arises as the leading figure of the transformation of the society as a whole. In Kemalism, the New Man is the “messenger” of the new era of the modern Turks and in Apoism it is the New Man tells about the new modern era of the Kurds:

Now our labourer society has a pioneer organization. By its presence the disorganized-unorganized history of our society has been ended. Moreover, the problem of being without a leading organization, has been solved by the “new men” who are the followers of the most scientific teaching of the contemporary era which

480 Both are the educated elites of their societies and at the beginning did not have the capacity to represent mainstream/majority.
481 Henry A. Murray, ibid., p. 319.
is the scientific socialist ideology. The PKK is a contemporary and modern party and it is founded by the new men and candidates of New man.482

It was a big, important revolution. This revolution was made in the name of the nation in the name of liberation. Through the establishment of a nation-wide, democratic government, the enemy destroyed their armies, the homeland saved the invasion. The victory of heroic army in courageous squares was also fruitful in the field of politics. After introducing the success and the quality of the new management of Turkey, it has clarified and strengthened its existence with its known title. It opened a republican era in Turkish history.483

In both of the founding discourses, as a consequence of the modern mode of thinking, the New Man is also presented as a natural result of a progressive history in which the claim to be the start of a new era becomes more convincing. In this sense, regardless of being supported or not by the society, in both, the transformation of the existing society through the myth of New Man is accepted as a “historical obligation” which is demonstrated as “for public despite the public” in Kemalism and “saving Kurds from slavery despite the Kurds” in Öcalan’s discourse. The paradoxical nature of this proposal implicates the mentality which acknowledge and believe in “the necessity of the anti-democratic means to prepare people toward democratic ends”484.

The creation of this "new person" has been imposed by the challenging circumstances of the national liberation struggle which has a strong regional and universal influence and has lost of enemies but only a few friends. The fact that the revolution would not be successful with a normal type of staff necessitated creating a "new person" on this very strong basis.485

The difference between the New Man of Öcalan and Kemalism however is the “time of the birth” of the New Man. In other words, “the PKK claims to create this New Man before the revolution and through sheer determination and hard work, the socialist “superman” would be created in the bases of the PKK”.486 In Kemalism however, as a result of the independence war and the actualization of the revolution by means of the establishment of the Republic, the work of creating the New Man is the immediate following stage of the revolution.

482 Öcalan
483 Atatürk’ün Siyaset Bilimi ve Devlet Yönetimi, Cilt II, s.165-166
Personality of the New Man: A Collective Entity

The New Man as opposed to the old man of the old rule refers to the prospect subject which would behave, feel and think clearly in a new way. So, he is not the man of “today” but he is the man of “tomorrow”. He constantly has the dichotomy of “today” and “tomorrow” or the conflict of “good” and “bad” in his personality. “Newness however could be only achieved by a new perception of the self, new moral standards, a new language, a new history in the prescribed hierarchy”. So, the New Man is not blurred or hesitant but he is totally a “conscious man”. At the top of the prescribed hierarchy for the New Man’s being however, the “collective substance” lies down with specific functions in his personality. The New Man as a “collective agent” is more than an average individual and holding a collective identity in two (interrelated) ways: First, he functions to mobilize the collective, namely, the society and second he purges itself of individualism and committed himself to the society as the one who should work towards a collective aim and for the common good permanently:

... History express itself through New Man. The thousand years heritage of the humanity lives in him. The new man does not drink, does not gamble, never thinks of his own personal pleasure or comfort, and there is no rascality or roguery in him, those who [in the past] indulged in such activities will, sharp as knife, cut out all these habits as soon as he or she is join in the new men. The new man’s philosophy and morality, the way he sits and stands, his style, ego, attitude and reactions are his and his alone. The basis of all these things is his love for the revolution, freedom, country, and socialism, a love that is as solid as a rock. Applying scientific socialism to the reality of our country creates the new man.

So, the New Man is a conscious builder of a better future in the way of society’s welfare. In Kemalism as well, the New Man of the new regime appears as a supra-human being who gains a meaningful personality only in a collective context in which he must sacrifice his individuality for the sake of the society:

Everyone has an individuality; whereas every individual does not necessarily have a personality. The condition for any individual to have a personality is having a social identity. Every real individual has a social identity; because every individual living in a society so the member of it. In that case, the social identity that we would like to provide to the individual comprises different assets than the ones found/owned by an average individual. A personality is the embodiment of the distinguished societal soul and ethic. An individual who has a personality is somebody who does not say “I” and does not see himself above the people; but on

The New Man is also committed to the founding ideology that he represents in his personality and because of that, he has responsibilities both to the founding ideology and the society together. Traditional methods and endorsement are not acceptable in this new man theory and the New Man is a modern man which is saved from the slavery of the old rule and since then have the “duty of progressing continuously”. In Kemalism “through the light of true science”, the New Turkish Man who has been saved from the backwardness of the Ottoman rule, have the mission “to catch up with contemporary civilization” and in Apoism through “the light of true socialism” it was the new Kurdish man who should take firm action against any manifestation of tribalism, feudalism and slavery as well as against the domination of the colonialist. Later, in the 1990s, this task of the New Kurdish Man has been updated by Öcalan as him to serve to the “big humanity project” in which the independence war of the PKK is described as the “beginning of the revolution of the humanity”.

Besides, there is also the “self-actualization burden” of the New Man which means an “internal fight” both on individual and social level. On the personal level, the New Man has to fight against the egotism, laziness, and dishonesty which is strongly linked with his social tasks since he has to fight against these inside the party and the society interrelatedly too. In this regard, the New Man is evaluational too. It propagated, revived, and re-established veneration for what it represented. He is a man should realize every principle and mission of the revolution on himself then, provide it for the society. In other words, as a political myth, the myth of a New Man is built to mobilize collective action by posing collective responsibilities.

More concretely in Öcalan’s discourse however, “the first work which refer to the ‘personality’ of the Kurds came out in 1983 (Öcalan 1983), but the question of the individual only became central to Öcalan’s writings in the following years when guerrilla training started in Lebanon”. In the following years, significantly in the 1990s as a result of the massification of the PKK movement and the collapse of the Soviet Union, gradually, the notions like

489 Kazım Nami Duru, “Başyazı” [Head Article], in Yeni Kültür [New Culture], Issue 24, 1938, p. 97.
491 Ibid, p.202
492 Oliver Grojean, “The Production of the New Man Within the PKK”, European Journal of Turkish Studies [Online], Online since 09 July 2014, available at: http://ejts.revues.org/4925
“humanization”, “socialization”, “liberated personality” and “self –actualization” became dominant themes in Öcalan’s writing and talks. It was not a deviation from Marxism\textsuperscript{493} but it is more a result of Öcalan’s reading of ideology which is in the line of Leninist interpretation.

Unlike the Marxist interpretation in which the ideology is defined as a false consciousness and as a process resembles a \textit{camera obscura} transformation of real objects into upside-down images, as “Boudon argues, Lenin was less interested in whether the ideology was a truthful representation of reality or not and more interested in its effectiveness. Lenin strongly believed that ideology is a useful tool to be used as a weapon in the class struggle to force and enforce the desired social changes”.\textsuperscript{494} In Öcalan’s discourse, the myth of the New Man, arises as a social and political tool to change the society and as a type of authority in accordance with the Leninist view of ideology. So, “Self-production”, that is to say that the “generation of a virtuous personality liberated from both Turkish alienation and alienation by traditional social structures and so worthy of the guide’s trust, progressively became the only path offered to activists in the \textit{Çözümlemeler} (Resolutions\textsuperscript{495}), lectures given by Öcalan himself at the Academy’.\textsuperscript{496} The guerrilla however is the embodiment of Öcalan’s New Man:

\begin{quote}
The is a need for a new life. There is no progress without forming a new personality. And this new personality is embodied in guerrilla, we call it guerrilla... Guerrilla is the new man, the new man who is a social and political man... Guerrilla is the space of freedom and democratization. It is space of education, organization and security. It is space of gaining a personality. So, taking guerrilla as an armed force only would be a mistake by means of narrowing down its meaning... It is a space that our people find themselves and democratized.\textsuperscript{497}
\end{quote}

Accordingly, the New Man appears as a \textit{Homo Kemalicus/Turkicus} and \textit{Homo Kurdicus} and with a reference to the functions of it as Murray describes, it is a pioneer/cynosural model through which new modes of the new life would be generated by the society under the founding principles of the founding discourses. As the figure in which the “awakening of a society” is embedded, the New Man is emotional and inspirational too. Besides, he is a man as the one who engenders the collective hope and action for a better future for all and he is expected to be

\textsuperscript{493} Olivier Grojean, David Romano and Özcan read this as a turn from the Marxist notions and stating that the notions of ‘humanisation,’ ‘socialisation,’ ‘individual emancipation’ (özgürleşme), ‘self,’ and ‘liberated personality’ progressively replaced the classical Marxist notions of ‘class struggle’ and ‘historical materialism’.


\textsuperscript{495} In the literature \textit{Çözümlemeler} is widely interpreted in English as ‘Analysis’. In this study, I suggest to translate it as ‘Resolutions’ which is much more equivalent with the meaning of the term in Turkish.

\textsuperscript{496} Olivier Grojean, “The Production of the New Man Within the PKK”, European Journal of Turkish Studies [Online], Online since 09 July 2014, available at: \url{http://ejts.revues.org/4925}

identified/internalized by the society. The New Man is a repeating theme too as the memorable facet of the founding rule that would produce the retention of the founding principles in the collective memory of the society. Both in Kemalism and Apoism, the memorable function of the New Man however is primarily provided by the rituals in which the martyrs of the Revolution(s) plays a vital role. Since the New Man is a pioneer in the national liberation he is also the one who should know that the path towards the revolution is not easy and requires sacrifices. This is presented as the “nature of the revolution” and the New Man is the one who should pass this exam.

One more significant feature of the New Man in these founding discourses sign out to the function of the New Man as a “problem/conflict solver”. As a conscious, dedicated and collective entity, the New Man is depicted as not only a trouble-shooter but also a trouble-preventer. As a historical answer of the founding discourses to the historical problems/errors of their societies, the New Man both in Kemalism and Öcalan’s definition, arises as the man who is always one step ahead the society because of transforming himself permanently according to the principles of the founding discourses. This is how the New Man gains a conflict resolver characteristic. Since the New Man is imagined and realized as an answer to all old, present and possible future questions/problems of the society, he is given the feature of solving both external and internal disputes this is what Murray defines as the “integrative function”498 of the New Man:

"PKK is a force of public order and security. Now in the lack of PKK for instance, there would be more disputes in Kurdistan compared to the past. The presence of guerrilla has already prevented the fights, blood feud and several crimes. So it is a crucial force for the social and legal consistency. Even the government [Turkish government] can see and accept this. [In the presence of the PKK] the legal criminal cases have dramatically been reduced, now very little if any. Lots of social problems have been solved. [Guerrilla] has a positive impact like this and it is proven. And this points out that in the future [guerrilla] will be an institution that have many impacts on social and legal life."499

**Indoctrination and Making the New Rule via New Man**

The main apparatus that would raise the New Men of the new order and ensure the transformation of the society is defined as education, in both Öcalan’s PKK and Kemalism which clearly refer to a political education. The educational function of the New Man operates

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in two ways: As the agent who has to be educated and who has to educate, in which he appears as both the subject and object of the indoctrination process. Moreover, the New Man’s educational function is central and Murray (1960) states that it operates alongside with the conational function of the New Man myth with “two opposite manifestations: (a) educational [sic], guiding and conducting valued actions, and (b) deterrent, suppressing disvalued actions”.  

The education was matter of culture and was a kind of obsession for Kemalism. It is perceived as the home/factory of the formation of the desired culture of the New Man of the Republic and it is taken as the main apparatus to create the ‘new child’ as pioneer of the local “civilized”:

*The foundation of the Republic is culture ... culture is fundamental element of being a human being in the sense of humanity .... What we try to tell until this point is that; the children of today's Republic are cultural people.*

In Kemalism the educational function of the New Man is implemented through the national education and military service. Besides, according to the Kemalism while the national education is the barrack of the prospect ideal citizens, Turkish National Army perceived “as the organic extension of the people and the land” and is defined personally by Atatürk as the guardian of the ideals that are reflected in the myth of the New Man:

*I believe that the education has been applied until this time [Republican era] is one of the main reasons of our nation to be backward. For this reason, when I talk about an education program I mean a culture which is totally cleaned from the impacts of the empty beliefs of the old era and also from the foreign ideas which are not connected with our disposition at all. Since it is such a culture that would develop our national genius.*

*All history shows that when the nations wanted to reach their high goals, they found their uniformed children in front of these enthusiasts. Within this generality of*

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501 In the minds of Kemalist policy makers and ideologues education is a matter of culture from the beginning. Therefore, Atatürk personally defined the education as a matter of culture so that the name of the Ministry of Education was changed as the Ministry of Culture in 1936. Besides, Atatürk stated if he was not a President, he wished to be the Minister of Culture.


503 Not the ‘National Army of Turkey’ but the ‘Turkish National Army’. It is not a coincidence but part of national strategy that is also clarified regarding evaluation of the debates on the Constitutions of 1921 and 1924 which has been discussed in Chapter I.

504 “This myth is originated from the heritage of Orientalist Western thought on Turks and Muslims in which they are defined as military and fanatic. This oriental view has been internalized reversely in a positive content by Kemalism”. For further readings see: Eyüp Sabri Çarmıklı, *Caught between Islam and the West: Secularism in the Kemalist discourse*, PhD Thesis awarded by the University of Westminster, 2011.

history, a high separation is seen in our history and in Turkish history. You know that when the Turkish nation wanted to take a step to rise, they saw the army of their own heroic children as leaders, always in front of these steps, as the leaders of the movements that always carry the higher nationality. For this reason, the Turkish nation has deep confidence in the heroic children who are ready to walk the sword in danger against the danger and will always feed this confidence. After that, the heroic soldiers will always lead to the fulfilment of the supreme ideal of the Turkish nation.  

In the PKK, however, the education function is designed and implemented directly by the party. However, the party education at the PKK has three components. As Westrheim describes, “the PKK has three main sites for their political education: The Mountain, the prisons and Kurdish communities in Turkey and Diaspora. If the struggle should develop into a strong political and social movement, these sites had to be regarded as one body”.  

Actually, we have been experienced deschooling or the lack of school [under the colonial rule]. But instead of this, we gained our solid experience through the school of life. But today PKK has emerged a system of schools and this school [of PKK] is educating more and transmitting more knowledge compared to even the most perfect universities. 

Revolutionary education is so important and compulsory… Being an army is a matter of education. To make an army from a Kurdish man who is highly uneducated requires a tremendous effort and education process… To give this education to the people is the duty of [PKK] cadres.

This New Man who is continuously being educated by the party and educates the society while stepping forward towards the predetermined future ideal, he is also the one who should always be awake against the permanent internal and external threats. So, the New Man is also the one who should be vigilant/alert all the time. In Kemalism this is clarified in the words of Atatürk in which he calls for the Turkish youth because of the idea that the youth refers to the prospect New Man as young generations are believed to be much more immune from the old myths and since they are the potential “receivers” and “followers” of the new myth of the new order/rule:

Turkish Youth! Your first duty is forever to preserve and to defend the Turkish Independence and the Turkish Republic. This is the very foundation of your existence and your future. This foundation is your most precious treasure. In the future, too, there may be malevolent people at home and abroad who will wish to deprive you of this treasure. If some day you are compelled to defend your independence and your republic, you must not tarry to weigh the possibilities and circumstances of the
situation before taking up your duty... You will find the strength you need in your noble blood.\(^{510}\)

In the similar way, in his lectures at the Academy and later in his prison writings too, Öcalan points out the life of the New Kurdish Man as a life which is surrounded by continuous internal and external threats:

The history of the Kurds and those people who lived in the land that is currently called Kurdistan, from 5000 years to the current time, is full of collaborations with external enemies… Within the PKK, there were a huge number of agents of the state and collaborators that were aiming at pacification of the PKK and looking for their own tribal, personal interests that is the 'Kurdish Dilemma'.\(^{511}\)

Accordingly, in Kemalism external threats are the other countries or their “extensions” inside the country that might divide or acquire Turkish territory which in fact refers to all at the same time, namely, the “imperialist powers”, non-Muslim minorities of Turkey as well as non-Turkish Muslims, namely the Kurds. The internal threats however are the ones who are watching to change the constitutional status quo which mainly refers to the Muslim political agents inside the society. In Öcalan’s discourse however, “the internal enemies (religious and tribal Kurdish institutions) supported by the external others (the global imperialism and its regional collaborators such Turkish state) as they are accused of preventing Kurds from achieving their full identity and unity”.\(^{512}\)

**Monopolization, Institutionalization and Personalization of the Power via New Man**

The repeating and coherent themes of external and internal threats which constitutes a continuous theme in the discourses of Kemalism and Apoism are defined to be defeated only by the guidance of a wider structure and the actor which are the party and leadership as the ruling and governing bodies of these two discourses. Since these revolutions are depicted as “timeless”, so they are also the “ongoing revolutions”, so that a lively, up to date interaction between the New Man and ruling body is required. The ruling body refers to the Party/PKK itself in Öcalan’s discourse and Öcalan expects the New Man “to be/becoming the party” (PKK’ıleleşmek):

*We claim that PKK is the reality of the salvation. The person who becomes the party-PKK (PKK’ıleșen insan) becomes saviour too. If you become the power to*

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\(^{510}\) Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Nutuk, 19. Bölüm, avaliable at: 


save/liberate your society, it means you become the Party. Otherwise we cannot say that we are from PKK. Anybody who has no power to become the Party/PKK should be eliminated.513

To be/becoming the party refers to the one’s making his body and mind into the PKK’s authority and way of thinking. In other words, it refers to “people-transformed- into an-army”.514 Besides, the crucial step towards “being/becoming the party” is based on the mechanism of self-criticism at the PKK. This is the indivisible feature of the New Kurdish Man which also constitutes the primary theme in the PKK’s party education. Since “being/becoming party” means becoming the New Man, naturally the self-criticism is the first step in the way of being both; “being/becoming the party” and a New Kurdish Man. According to this view, unless a Kurd does not confront with his enslaved past and accept his historical and personal responsibility in terms of his failure of being enslaved by the colonial strategy, there is no hope for him in the way of being a truthful agent of the revolution. “Through criticism and self-criticism and hard work, the PKK-members were expected to remake themselves, to free themselves of their views and attitudes that they had learned in their ‘old life’ and remould themselves into ‘new men’”.515 As Çandar states, “in the higher management of the PKK - including the founders – there is no one who has not had to submit to his self-criticism and who has not suffered imprisonment for a while due to their wrongdoings in the prisons located in the regions controlled by the PKK in Northern Iraq and in the Beqaa Valley of Lebanon where the armed forces of the organization were based for a period of time”.516

In Kemalism however the guiding body is not only the political party but the military and bureaucratic elites which represent the power structures and strong agents that are beyond any political bodies and are also permanent compared to them. So that, it is not wrong to say that among these, the Turkish National Army as the pioneer actor in the modernization and secularization project of Kemalism is the primary body to monitor and guardian the education and transformation process of society as a whole. As stated earlier, Turkish National Army is thought as an organic extension of the society in which the society is imagined as a “nation-

513 Abdullah Öcalan, Partileşme Sorunları ve Görevlerimiz Cilt 1, Bilim Aydınlanma Yayınları.
516 Cengiz Çandar, The Kurdish Question Freed from Violence: Down the Mountain-How Could the PKK Disarm?, Istanbul: TESEV, 2011, p. 44.
army” and it is responsible to protect the founding principles even from the society if it is required.517

Consequently, in both discourses, there is a hierarchy between the very society and the party. To put it differently, the party is bigger than the society which means the society depends on the party while the New Man as an autonomous myth is becoming through and beyond the society and the party. At the top of this hierarchy however, in both Kemalism and Öcalan’s PKK, there is the preeminent leader standing as the creator and owner of this theoretical and practical cosmos which obviously refers to Atatürk in Kemalism and Öcalan in the PKK:

The demise of this deep-rooted empire gave way to the rise of a new sun, laying the foundations of the Turkish Republic that would last forever. Breaking through the dark clouds, this sun was Mustafa Kemal ATATÜRK, the great soldier and statesman of the 20th century.518

“PKK leadership emerged as a result of unbelievable pains. It emerged as a stance against the damned executions of the nature, society, foreign hegemons and slaves of these and was response to all with the hearth of the public… Was an effort to make public to be aware of its own essential interests and to transform people minds into the mind of leadership. Becoming the hearts of people into the heart of pioneer, becoming hearts of millions to bomb into a single heart and interests of millions which is expressed in a single mind, moreover the union of thinking and will is embodied in PKK”519

Mustafa Kemal had given the surname of Atatürk which means the ‘Father of Turks’ by the Assembly five months after the introduction of the Surname Law in 1934 and Atatürk is the surname which is peculiar to him and not allowed to be used by anybody else. The Surname Law is defined as one of the most important reforms of Kemalism in terms of cleaning the everyday life language of the people from the traditional and religious designations such as “hacı” (pilgrim), "hoca" (/religious teacher), "ağha" (landowner/master), "paşa" (general), "hafiz" (who memorized the Koran) and it has become the symbol of the transformation of the society from being subjects (teba) of the old Ottoman order to the new citizens of the Republic.

As it is clarified in his surname, Atatürk is the father of the country, established Republic from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire and arises like a sun after the centuries-long darkness of the

517 The founding figures of the Republic were the army members who became the ruling elite in politics. So the distinction between the militaristic and political spheres in Turkey has remained uncertain. Besides the TAF has been the primary actor which intervene the political sphere in Turkey permanently…. Only after the 15 July coup attempt, the army has lost its privileged position in Turkey but the mindset in Turkish political culture which perceive the army as an organic part of the nation has not changed that much. The TAF has now reinvented as a Prophet
519 Abdullah Öcalan, Seçme Yazılar Cilt I, Bilim ve Aydınlanma Yayınları.
past. The transformation process of the country had been called in his name and he was also the creator and the practitioner of the process as President, the head Commander and the head Teacher. He was the new symbol of the new state, redefining the unity and symbolizing the rebirth of a modern nation.

Beginning from the mid of the 1920s, Atatürk’s status started to be appear in the city and town centres and his cult had been constructed and maintained in the following years by the state and for instance during the 1980s his symbolization was based on his gigantic representations and he was the face of the state reaction against the conflict between right and left-wing movements in Turkey. In the 1990s although the proliferation of Atatürk images did not emerge as a result of state-directed/driven process, the cult’s popularity was renewed through the reaction by the state elites and by a certain group of society against the rising Islamist movement. In the 2000s however, as a response interchangeably to the Islamic or Kurdish movement, the trend among the young generation of Turkey was/is to etch Atatürk’s signature and his portrait onto their bodies. However, while the form of Atatürk symbolism has changed over time, what it stands for remains the same. By tattooing the image of the “Father Turk” onto their skin, members of the young Turkish generation are making their bodies state territory.521

521 Esra Elmas, “The Cult of Atatürk, the Turkish State and the Society”, Turkish Review, Volume 2 Issue 1, Jan-Feb 2012, p.36
At the other side of the coin, there is Ocalan who --even though he did not adopt a surname such as "AtaKürt"\textsuperscript{522}-- gave new names to PKK members in his role as a father figure. In the PKK and a lot of radical organisations like it, people use code names instead of their real names, for the most part due to reasons of security. This practice emerged from the first period of the PKK as it was being organized in secret; at the same time, it indicates a strategy of counter-naming as part of the political narrative. Considering that naming someone is the very first act of interpreting them, PKK members' adoption of a new name as they join the movement also signifies their denial of the Turkish state's first interpretation of themselves. The code name, a symbol for letting go of the Turkish state's influence including its naming strategies and of freedom, heralds a new life for the new PKK militants. They reinterpret and rename themselves in a Kurdish universe and in relation to a Kurdish authority. Thus the PKK members take the first step towards that new life in which Ocalan killed the slave Kurd and replaced him with the free Kurd.

As widely being acknowledged, Öcalan as the founder of the PKK, has been always a guiding figure in the PKK from the beginning. In the 1980s, he was being called as “Commander Apo” as an indicator him not to be perceived as an absolute power in the party when the first founding figures were also still alive. Beginning from the “migration to Syria”, he started to turn into an enchanted figure as the long-awaited leader of the Kurds who would come from the mountains and save the Kurdish nation. In the 1990s however, the years of excessive state violence, the internally displacements, unknown killings, emergence of a young urbanized Kurdish population, Öcalan turned into “Serok Apo” (President/Head Apo) and he was the “sun”, “hope” and “the leader” for the Kurdish masses which was composed of mainly by an urbanized young Kurdish generation. However, his arrestment in 1999 was a landmark him to be more than a leader and since then his political agency transformed into an institution, namely “the leadership”.

\textsuperscript{522} The term “AtaKürt” was used by journalist Ahmet Altan in his column at Milliyet Newspaper on 17 April 1995. He was sentenced to 1 year 8 months’ prison by the decision of State Security Court. He was also protested by his journalist colleagues at the time and forced to quit his job at Milliyet Newspaper. See: https://bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/160861-ahmet-altan-yazisina-atakurt-basligini-attiginda
In both cases, the collective power of the society has been reflected (in)to the leaders and both figures turned into the cult of personality. Personification of the power made these discourses to create a political monopoly over the Turkish and Kurdish political spheres in which these two leaders have become taboos too. For instance, Atatürk is one of the three leaders of the 21st century together with Humeyni in Iran and Kim Yong Il in North Korea, whose memory and legacy are revered and protected by law. Öcalan, however, is the unquestionable leader of the PKK. Although it is not common, when his ideas or decisions are questioned by any party members, they are being forced to give a self-criticism. This self-criticism session/process in PKK’s lexicon called ‘uygulama’, treatment in English, at the end of which critical figures are obliged to declare publicly that their criticisms were because of their lack of understanding Öcalan. Besides, “criticism of the ‘leadership” was seen as proof of failing to achieve this goal [Kurdish liberation]. Öcalan was more than a distinguished or even indispensable leader, he himself, his person, was built up to be indispensable to the liberation of the Kurdish people’. He alone ‘is’ the key to liberation – as opposed to just possessing it. Apparently, all these practices constitute the means of “institutionalization” of the organizations via their leaders and the establishment of their control over the Turkish and Kurdish political spheres.

Going back to the discussion on the myth of the New Man in the context of the leaders, in both discourses, Atatürk and Öcalan appears as the exceptional figures who are the embodiment of the New Man ‘in time/today’. They are seen as the only ones who are immune from the falsehood of the past and they manage to develop an exceptional personality and mind which is free from the “illnesses” of old rule. So, in both, the validity and the embodiment of the New

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Man is realized through the leaders. Both Atatürk in Kemalism and Öcalan in Apoism emerge as an “asymptotic line” which is always close but not reachable. They are the heroes of the “power house” and have “thousand faces” which inherently have answers for all. They are the source of the “meaning” for the theory and practice of their discourses.

In conclusion, in the context of symbolic resources that Öcalan used to form the discourse and the practice of the PKK, despite the departures, it is not wrong to say there is a strong continuity with Kemalism. As Bozarslan put it previously:

\textit{In fact, the success of the PKK was largely due to its capacity to learn from the State and Kurdify its symbols by overemphasizing them. The PKK had, to a very large extent, inverted Kemalism and Kurdified it. It was able to replace the “Eternal Leader,” as Mustafa Kemal is known in Turkey, with a Kurdish “Leader” (and later "Leadership," and then finally, the “Sun of the Kurds”) … The party’s flag replaced the Turkish star and crescent. The party’s “tribunals”, “tax-rollers”, and military recruiters were accepted as manifestations of a would-be Kurdish state”.}^{525}

In other words, as Yael Navaro Yashin’s splendid observation, Atatürk is the “face” of the Turkish state^{526} and Öcalan is the “face” of a would-be Kurdish state.

On the other hand, when it comes to the question whether PKK is a continuity or discontinuity with the Kurdish traditional past, one should accept that there is no definite or absolute answer to this. The PKK defined itself as a departure from the Kurdish past and as being the first secular Kurdish movement, this claim does not sound inappropriate. However, as it is discussed above, Öcalan’s founding discourse has many symbolic and political sources from the previous Kurdish movements and there is a significant continuity between the PKK and the Kurdish cultural and political nationalism which emerged in the late Ottoman century. However, for this study what is more important than finding an answer to this question theoretically based on Öcalan’s PKK discourse, is focusing on the answers to this question received from the Kurdish field. Consequently, the following section will focus on the perception of the interviewees regarding the Kurdishness or the Kurdish Cause which seems to be the continuing theme for the Kurdish people while describing the meaning and the function of the PKK today.

\footnote{Hamit Bozarslan, \textit{Violence in The Middle East: From Political Struggle to Self-sacrifice}, Markus Wienar Publishers Princeton, 2004.}
G. Kurdish Perspectives on Kurdishness and the Kurdish Cause

As clarified through the history of Kurdish nationalism, beginning from the late Ottoman era, the territory [Kurdistan], the language [Kurdish] and the history [Kurdish history-writing] constitute the main components of the reconstruction process of Kurdishness which was no longer simply a cultural identity, but became a political/politicized identity. Due course, Kurdishness was transformed into a political cause and it is defined by the interviewees of this study as one of the founding sources of the hegemonic status of the PKK today and acknowledging the sacred weight of Öcalan’s leadership in it.

In the first place, Kurdishness or Kurdish cause is defined as having a longer and autonomous history than either the PKK or Öcalan by the interviewees but it also appears as a continuum between the Kurdish past and the PKK, regardless of respondent’s regimes of affirmation. To put it differently, Kurdishness or the Kurdish Cause is the constant theme for the Kurdish people when they describe the meaning, relevance and function of Öcalan and his PKK today – regardless whether they are approving or disapproving it or him. That’s why, except for the uprisings that took place during the Ottoman era, beginning with the foundation of the Turkish Republic, in the Kurdish lexicon, the PKK is accepted as a crucial element in the history of Kurdish uprisings against the state, and is defined as the 29th Kurdish rebellion. So apart from agreeing or disagreeing with the PKK’s claims, its ideology or political position, the Kurdish interviewees of this study defined the Kurdishness/Kurdish Cause as the main source which motivates the Kurds both in supporting or opposing the PKK. Similarly, Kurdishness is among the main themes which also defines the self-positioning of the interviewees regarding Öcalan and the PKK either positively or negatively. Moreover, whether divinizing or demonizing him, the sacred political narrative surrounding Öcalan is also explained by the “sanctity” of the Kurdishness/ the Kurdish Cause.

The preceding part of this section discusses Öcalan’s perspective on the Kurdishness/the Kurdish Cause. This part will focus on Kurdishness or the Kurdish Cause from the perspective of diversified Kurds based on the interviews conducted during the field study. What does Kurdishness mean for the diversified Kurds, how do they define their Kurdishness or the Kurdish Cause and how does their Kurdishness or understanding of the Kurdish Cause determine their self-positioning and Öcalan perception today? These are among the questions that this part aims to examine. It shall explore the intersections and departures of Öcalan’s theory via the PKK and hopes to inform the practice of those in the field with regards to the theme of Kurdishness/ the Kurdish Cause. Furthermore, this comparative reading shall explore
the available “interpretation repertoires” on Kurdishness/the Kurdish Cause as it is the constituting power of both the “theory” and the “practice”.

Accordingly, Kurdishness perspectives of the interviewees will be discussed under the four main themes which appear as repeating components of the narratives relayed when interviewees define and explore Kurdishness/ the Kurdish Cause in relation to Öcalan and the PKK. Although there are fragmented concepts or world of Kurdishness(es), these themes emerge in the narratives as ‘intersective’ and shared ideas that are repeated as part of both the subjective and collective Kurdishness(es). As such, these themes refer to shared experiences and memories of the subjective and collective Kurdishness(es) and constitute the primary source of continuity that the interviewees define with regards to Öcalan and the PKK. Consequently, when diversified Kurds start to talk about the meaning, relevance and function of the PKK, the themes which are defined and repeated as the components of both subjective and collective Kurdishness(es) can be categorized under the titles of othering-alienation, secrecy, pain/suffering and struggle.

**Kurd as a Stranger: Othering and Alienation**

The notions of othering and alienation are two of the most commonly and interchangeably cited experiences by the interviewees in their narratives on Kurdishness despite the political, gender and generational differences among them. Othering and alienation as the two interrelated notions appears as the “natural” parts of the narratives and memories on Kurdishness. They first emerge as soon as the personal histories of the interviewees are spoken of, in which they significantly go back to their childhood and to the process of schooling. Childhood and the start of school education appear as the processes in which interviewees began to learn of their Kurdishness through their “difference” which was underlined and was not appreciated:

“The first thing that is taught to you is the idea that “you are not from me, I am not from you...” So, the first thing you learn when you are a kid is that you are different and your difference is not appreciated. During the childhood, the feeling was something like that: We had a world and there was another world out there and these two worlds were completely different from each other. Sometimes the “stranger” from the other world, would come to our world. In fact, they were ruling us. But these two worlds were like enemies... The other world was an enemy to us because obviously it saw us as an enemy, did not like us and continuously insulted us. As children, we felt like this, we had a world which was real and the other world which did not belong to us, so was not real in this sense, but was frequently intervening our real world. For instance, we could not understand why the language
that everybody speaks in our world is forbidden in school?” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 59, London, April 2013)

“The first thing you realize when you are a child is that you are different... First, you are different because of your language... You are speaking a different language and your language causes some to get annoyed... In the streets, where I grew up, there was no problem since we all spoke Kurdish and we did not feel alienated, but once I started the school, I felt like an alien, a stranger... ” (Personal Interview, Female, Age 39, Diyarbakır, April 2014)

Childhood as a social and cultural artefact rather than a biological category\textsuperscript{527} and schooling as the process of socialization targeting children generally with specific political objectives - which also stayed under the monopoly of state for decades- constitute the earliest memories of the interviewees on Kurdishness. To them, their childhood appears as the process of “discomfort” or “tension” between “forgetting” and “remembering” Kurdishness as soon as their schooling started. The highly Turkified context of the national education system, which is designed to cause pupils to “forget” non-Turkish and non-Turkish speaker subjects of society appears as the reason for such pre-eminence of memories on Kurdishness among those interviewed.

The first defining characteristic of the encounter of a Kurdish child with the non-Kurdi sh world, as quoted in the narratives of the interviewees, is based on a strong binary opposition or dichotomy of “we” and “they” or “us” and the “others”, namely between Kurdishness and Turkishness. However, the binary opposition that the Kurdish child starts to learn, operates primarily through language as the first sign of being different. Language that is taken as the most obvious characteristics of a nation in curriculums appears as the first phase of Kurds to become strangers so that to realize their Kurdishness through being the “other” of the authority that operates through schools. Obviously, language as “the house of the being” as Heidegger defines it and as the most crucial point of reference for both individuals and society, plays a major role in shaping one’s identity at both individual and social levels. Due to speaking Kurdish is forbidden in schools and considering the lack of a language that is defined as the condition of being part of a larger unity, the Kurdish child is turned into an “ambiguous/vague agency” who keeps his/her voice and identity silent and feels like a “stranger” to both him/herself and to the defined ideal unity. This where the “ideal unity” starts to become a “stranger” to the Kurdish child.

“Despite exceptions, a primary and solid result of the language barrier due to the lack of communication, is the inability to express one’s self and accordingly the feeling of being left behind, thus is the loss of self-confidence and of any ‘interest in learning and failure at school, which could lead to leaving school early”. Since the ability to speak Turkish is associated with the proof of mental ability more generally, Kurdish children begin life in a system which implicates Kurdishness and speaking Kurdish as sources of failure and incapability. This creates an emotional suppression and humiliation of Kurdish children in which their birth identity becomes a “conflictual zone” with apparent long-term effects:

“That’s why all the Kurdish children are unsuccessful and demotivated from primary school. From the beginning, Kurdish children are pushed to the bottom of the education system as the lazy, retarded children. There are many examples of this. Today I can easily see that this is at the root of many people's failures in life. For example, many of my friends who have become very successful after political activism and who are very clever were the ones in this school system, who could not solve even the simplest mathematics problems, who did not achieve a certain reading speed and who did not know the meaning of the basic Turkish words. And it lasted until high school. These children were children who would leave school if their families did not insist that they continue... My story is not like this, but this is such a strong feeling that spread to me from the shared climate, that I did not want to study at university for a long time, for instance” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 33, April 2014, Istanbul)

“I learned Turkish in primary school. My school number was 44 and I was the class president. I was older than others since I started school late... But until the 5th year I could not understand Turkish at all. I memorized everything for the exams but if you asked me the meaning of the things, there was nothing. We even did not get when teacher asked us to bring touchwood... I could not get Turkish easily, but I managed to understand the numbers better than everything... The rest of the class was unsuccessful at everything because of the language barrier. My success at maths made me the proper student... I never forget one day the teacher forced me to spit my friend in the eye since he could not solve a maths question. Because of teacher’s pressure, I did it and I never forget this.” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 54, Brussels, December 2015)

For most of the interviewees, learning Turkish took time and filling the gap between them and their Turkish speaking counterparts, was a big challenge. However, it is commonly stated that learning Turkish was not the end of the story for a Kurdish child since the system in which the non-Turkish students are invited to become Turks by way of speaking Turkish, does not wholly

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guarantee the removal of the difference and discomfort of their identity once the condition of speaking Turkish has been met:

“I started primary school in 1987 and the first time that I could speak in Turkish with self-confidence was in 1991. I remember that I was in the fourth year of primary school. I also remember that when I spoke in Turkish with self-confidence for the first time, my teacher made fun of me. I was humiliated because of my Turkish, namely because of my accent, which essentially referred to my Kurdishness. It is the reason that I never forget that moment. Such a strong memory…” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 33, April 2014, Istanbul)

Bourdieu says that “at level of relations between groups, language is worth what those who speak it are worth, so too, at level of interactions between individuals, speech always owes a major part of its value to identity of person who utters it”. 529 So, as clarified in the quote above, Turkish and the way of speaking it appears as the criteria which measures and decide on the “value” of someone’s voice and identity. According to this, while the system defined Kurdishness as the one should be overcome in the course of establishing uniformization by speaking Turkish, it also implicates Kurdish(ness) as an ‘invaluable’ difference. As speaking Turkish is crucial but not enough for providing the sense of belonging to Turkishness, Kurdishness appears as an “unremovable sign” or “error” in the accents of most Kurds which sound as a reminder for both the “sides/poles” of the othering process. In this sense, Kurdishness is like a ‘birthmark’ which cannot be “erased” or “reparable”. Therefore, in a systematic construction of reality according to the Turkish ideology which is in Edward Said’s words, “is a style of thought based on an ontological and epistemological distinction made between” the Kurds and Turks 530, this distinction operates through language:

“Until I went to school I did not speak Turkish, I, literally, only knew a few Turkish words. In fact, I was so excited to start school, since going to school meant, we would become important men in the future. But on first day, we were beaten! On the very first day! What was the age? At the age of seven! I never forget that we had a teacher who was from the Black Sea region, I don’t remember his name now... We did not know any Turkish and I dropped my pen. The chairs were so tiny, so somehow, I dropped my pen and I bent down to get it. The teacher asked me what I was doing, I guess he asked me this (laughing)... so I knew that pen is “kalem” in Turkish. So I tried to say that I dropped my pen, using Kurdish words except of “kalem” ... “Teacher I dropped “kalem” (pen)” ... Then he took me, he made me twist my fingertips and beat me by a ruler... Only because I dropped my pen, tried to take it back from the floor and I tried to express myself in Kurdish due to a lack of Turkish.

529 Pierre Bourdieu, “The economics of linguistic exchanges”, Social Science Information, 16 (6), 1977, p. 652
If I were him, with my mind today, I would ask the student to say it again, so that I could learn Kurdish.” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 59, London, April 2013)

As demonstrated in the quote above, language has an important function in shaping social integration either in a positive or negative way. A setting, in which the condition of being a homogeneous unity is based on the acceptance of Turkishness and speaking the Turkish language as the declaration of belonging to Turkish ethnicity, clearly appears as a factor that as non-Turkish members and non-Turkish speakers of society excludes Kurds from the national unity and damages their social integration from the primary school onwards. Therefore, Kurd as a child is firstly defined as the one who could not “breathe and speak and produce” the same cultural “life-blood” 531 with Turks.

In such a vein of thought that national education appears as a tool of national propaganda in which a child appears as a strong metaphor. The child as a metaphor refers to the idea that ‘there are some people who are part of the nation but like a child [who is perceived as a passive, naive, needy, rudimental and transitory category of the humankind] they require education due to living in undeveloped geographies and due to having uncivilized cultures’ 532. So Kurdish children appear as solid figures of the nation who should be transformed into civilized subjects by means of Turkish assimilation via education. The teachers however emerge as the missionaries of this official discourse so that they have both the authority and the right to punish those who are out of the “imagined form of being”. As Atatürk gave them the duty of being “sculptors” of the New Future Mankind of the Republic, from the point of view of a Kurdish child, the teacher has authority as the embodiment of the “big other” and is the chief actor in the orchestration of Turkishness. This where Kurdishness is implied as a “transitory identity” before becoming a “mature”, namely, Turkish. According to this understanding, education is not only for the child or for the purpose of learning but it is for the nation and to learn to become Turkish. Turkishness is therefore, taken as a ‘completed identity’ in a virtual evolution line:

“When the term ‘education’ is used by itself, everybody draws a different meaning from it. If we are to talk about it in detail, education has a variety of aims and objectives. For example, there is religious education, national education and international education. All these types of education have different aims and objectives. All I can say for sure here is that the education that the Republic of

532 Ferhat Kentel, Ehlileşmemek, Düzişleşmemek, Direnmek (Undomesticated, Unsubdued, Defiant), Interviewed by Esra Elmas, Hayy Yayınları, İstanbul, 2008, p.18
Turkey will provide to the new generation will be a national education and I will not dwell on any of the others. “533

In this regard, the process of schooling in Turkey provides a high potential for the Kurds beginning from childhood, to realize that their Kurdishness is outside of that which is defined as ideal and unity. They are expected to renounce/forget their Kurdishness and it is suggested that they instead embrace and memorize Turkishness as the ‘identity of the identities’. In this sense, education appears a process of forced integration in which ‘difference’ is otherized and in fact, it is the way out of social integration.

Going back to the memories of the interviewees on Kurdishness, another method of assimilation introduced by the teachers was common especially among the Kurdish members of this study who are from the generation 78. Before the conditional recognition of Kurdish identity and when it was not based on physical violence, the effort of teachers went into convincing Kurds of their Turkishness through (re)defining Kurdishness as a “false consciousness” in which Kurds suffer amnesia and forget that their Kurdishness is originated from Turkishness:

“When I went to Erzurum after getting a place in the teachers’ school there, I remember how we were welcomed by our teacher. We were a few from the region who had managed to get into the teachers’ school and one day he gathered us separately. He said, “you are honourable, exclusive holders of the real Turkish blood, you are the Mountain Turks…” . His words were so influential and sounded like a song or an epic tale. Of course, these schools were pilot schools in the region that were constructed with specific national aims and the teachers were carefully selected. As a kid let me confess that you are influenced by these speeches, you feel proud of yourself... But of course, in the following years, you understand that the things you were told and the reality of your life had nothing to do with each other.”

(Personal Interview, Male, Age 59, London, April 2013)

The phrase of “Mountain Turks” was invented “in 1936 by the governor of Dersim region, army general Abdullah Alpdoğan534 and became a popular label in the Turkish lexicon on Kurds in the public and political spheres of Turkey. In a Lacanian way, this official assumption reflects the imagination on Kurdish identity as an ‘empty signifier’ as a result of the ‘distorted’ or ‘lost’ relationship between Turkishness and Kurdishness. In this scheme of thinking Turkishness is perceived as the ‘signifier’ and Kurdishness is taken as signified. Kurdishness sounded ‘illusory’ while Turkishness appeared as the ‘reality’ in this distorted relationship. This is

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533 İsmail Kaplan, “Millî Eğitim İdeolojisi” (The National Education Ideology), within: Modern Türkiye’de Siyasî Düşünce – Cilt 4: Milliyetçilik (Political Thought in Modern Turkey – Volume 4: Nationalism), (İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2002), 789.
actually a different and indirect way of implicating the non-existence of Kurdishness by the Turkish state discourse which as Yeğen suggests is based on a denial of the physical existence of the Kurds. 535

“I think when it comes to Kurdish issue, Turkey has a different look and perspective compared with the other states. Actually, Turkey is the only state which did not accept Kurdishness. For instance, Kurd had been killed in Iraq too, Saddam killed Kurds too. But Saddam accepted that there was something called Kurd. For him Kurds exists and that Kurd was bad, dirty and so on. Here in Turkey there was no Kurd, Kurd did not exist since the idea is we are all brothers and sisters. This is a significant difference…” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 49, Diyarbakır, March 2014)

However, as it is clarified in the interviews, this denial in itself appears as the reason for which Kurds dialectically remember their Kurdishness:

“If Kurdishness is not dead today, one of the important reasons for this is the denial policies of the Turkish state which aimed to destroy it. Actually, in this sense we owe a lot to the Turkish state since it never let us to forget our Kurdishness…” (Personal Interview, Male, Age, 48, Ankara, February 2015)

On the other hand, this is also the point that refers to a clear fragmentation/departure of Kurdishness from Turkishness as the ‘other’- something which was solid and visible in school according to the Kurdish respondents:

“This has a solid, typical result which was visible in the classrooms via the seating arrangements for instance. In general, as if it was the rule or even something that takes place naturally, Kurds were sitting at the back of the classroom. It was a choice for Kurds even without thinking… You speak very little Turkish, if you speak Turkish you certainly speak it with an accent, so you sit at the back. For instance, I changed school during the secondary school and at the first moment I entered the class it was so obvious for me that the one who sat at the back of the classroom was a Kurd… A swarthy guy, sitting at the back… I mean it was so clear for me as a Kurd, without having to say a word, to understand that he was a Kurd… I went and sat next to him, he became my best friend”. (Personal Interview, Male, Age 33, Istanbul, October 2013)

The Kurds, forbidden from using their language are as such are forbidden from expressing themselves clearly and have the feeling of being left behind as the “other” of the unity beginning from the classroom community. The departure or the fragmentation that the respondent described above, refers to the symbolic departure of Kurdishness vis-a-vis forced Turkishness. The othering and alienation process started in the primary school for the Kurds in fact refers to

the micro cosmos of the wider social and political context. The othering is a notion that is produced and reproduced in the everyday lives of Kurds and causing them to imagine themselves accordingly as the “others” or the “strangers” of the wider society.

The use of languages is clearly a reflection of power and language planning is a vital part of that. As Haig defines it, language planning in Turkey has two aspects: corpus planning and status planning and status planning is based on the hegemony of the Turkish language - what Haig called the “invisibilisation of Kurdish”:

‘Invisibilisation is the deliberate removal, or concealment, of the overt signs of the existence a particular culture, with the aim of rendering that culture invisible. It is part of the logic of invisibilisation that the policy and its implementation remain covert, because overt formulation would mean increased visibility.”

As a common phenomenon in several world experiences, this is a process in which the ‘state attempts to eradicate all linguistic differences for the purpose of imposing the language of the majority on the minority. Language then becomes a factor of division rather than unification.

Kurd in Secrecy: A Continuous Pattern of Kurdishness

Apart from the being the “other” or a “stranger” in the given system, secrecy is defined as the prior part of Kurdish identity among the interviewees. Through the framework in which the Kurdish language was legally banned (a ban which includes all language-related representations such as music, media and publishing), Kurdish identity was socially otherized and the Kurdish politics was officially securitized, the formation of secrecy as a natural part of Kurdishness is described as an inevitable result according to the interviewees:

‘Secrecy was the first thing that we started to learn from the very beginning of our childhood. This was something that we were forced to do so. Imagine that your mother tongue is forbidden. Everybody had questions in their mind regarding this ban, regarding further restrictions, but all the questions and the answers could only be expressed inside the borders of your house. You were forbidden to ask these questions publicly; these things were not questionable otherwise there would be costs... Our house was like a madrasa and the religious education was of course 100 % in the Kurdish language... As such, we grew up immediately because of our

536 “Corpus planning defines changes regarding the form of languages themselves (e.g the Alphabet change) and status planning concerns the ‘functional allocation’ of languages within the state, that is, the choice of languages or dialects which are used by citizens for particular purposes or contexts”. See: Geoffrey Haig, “The invisibilization of Kurdish: the other side of language planning in Turkey”, in Concerner S., Haig G. (Eds.), Die Kurden: Studien zu ihrer Sprache, Geschichte und Kultur, (pp. 121-150), EBVerlag: Schenefeld, 2003, p.121-123, available at: http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.458.376&rep=rep1&type=pdf
Kurdishness, in which secrecy was crucial. Hiding your identity… In fact, not hiding your identity, but hiding some aspects of your identity began among us from childhood.’ (Personal Interview, Male, Age 59, London, April 2013)

‘My first meeting with the Kurdish alphabet539 was meeting with its first page you know! It went like this: You had the first page and you memorized it. After a while, the second page arrived, then you memorized it too and sent the first page previously received to others for them to learn it. There was no official education in Kurdish, it was forbidden to use it publicly, so the limited available Kurdish alphabets were fragmented into pieces and distributed hand to hand secretly. It was separated into pieces since if anybody saw it, you would go to prison, be tortured or for sure you would be beaten and be insulted… Life went on hiding these from the ‘others’. I mean hiding things from the Turks. In fact, not from the Turks, but from the state… From childhood to adulthood, let’s say until the age of marriage, that’s how it went. And in the further process, this psychology of secrecy always accompanies you.”

According to the definitions in the narratives, secrecy appears as a dual process in which Kurds were ‘being silenced’ and ‘being silent’. The ‘geography’ or the ‘space’ of the secrecy is mainly referred to the public sphere. The public sphere as ‘the description of an abstract discursive form of public space’540, is the ‘space that is shared with strangers’ 541, namely with the Turks. Although the public sphere is expected to belong to everyone, the ‘place’ of Kurds in this public sphere, denotes them a ‘location’ which is ‘lived’ and ‘perceived’ as a being in a diminished position due to bans and restrictions on exchanging Kurdish subjectivities through/in collectivity. So, the secrecy of Kurds in this public sphere refers to Kurds as ‘being silenced’ due to the seemingly monopoly over the public sphere by the Turks.

Then, who is this Turk for Kurds? The ‘Turk’ in the memories of Kurds first appears as ‘the state’ or ‘through the state’. The Turkish population in Kurdish geography in largely consists of the civic and security bureaucracy. Therefore, the first Turks that Kurds met in their daily lives were the public servants such as state officers, soldiers, gendarmes or police who were generally in the region because of their compulsory state service.542 For Kurds, they were the

539 The form used by the Kurds in Turkey was adapted from Latin alphabet by Celadet Ali Bedirhan in 1932. This alphabet is also called Kurmanji, Haas or Bedirxan alphabet. It is used by the Kurds in Turkey and Syria. The first Kurdish Alphabet in Turkey was published in 1968 by Mehmet Emin Bozarslan.
541 Michael Walzer, “Pleasure and Costs of Urbanity”, in Metropolis CB (Main Trends of the Modern World), edit.by Philip Kosinitz, NYU Press, p.321
Turks who were present in Kurdish cities because of the ‘involuntarily contract’ that they had with the state. They were ‘the Turks in exile’ serving in the Kurdish region as a way of paying the cost of being a state servant:

“What was a Turk for us? In fact, it was the gendarme, police or the governor... So, the Turks we knew were the representatives of the state...” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 52, Brussels, December 2015)

“I remember the gendarme in our village. When I was a child, the Turk in my mind was the gendarme in our village. They had the guns so they were strong. Their power was because of their guns... I remember they made the villagers to prepare their firewood for the winter.” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 47, Brussels, December 2015)

According to the respondents, the state’s policy of compulsory service and the ‘unwillingness’ of the Turkish servants were visible in the settlement strategy of the Turks and Kurds inside the shared cities or towns. The privileged position of Turks in this segregated picture was also significant part of memories. Despite being residents of the same city or town, the lives and worlds of Turks and Kurds are usually defined as clearly segregated from each other in which Turks are seen as the favoured by the state:

‘The distinction was so clear... A foreigner who visited our city could easily understand which part belonged to Kurds and which part belonged to Turks... When we first went to Erzurum, I remember we thought “again the best part of the city has been taken by strangers and we were placed at the back...”’ (Personal Interview, Male, Age 59, London, April 2013)

‘They [the Turks] usually resided in the best part of the towns or cities... Especially, army members- they were settled in the most beautiful part of the city... This is still the same in all parts of Turkey indeed...” (Personal Interview, Female, Age 53, Diyarbakir, March 2014)

‘We lived in the city centre while at the same time having a link with our village. At home and in our village, we spoke Kurdish. But I learned Turkish on the street. My father was wealthy, so we were living in an expensive neighbourhood which was mainly populated by Turks. The language spoken on the streets was Turkish so that’s how I learned Turkish.’ (Personal Interview, Male, Age 45, Diyarbakir, March 2013)

Kurds remember Turks living in the isolated lodging buildings and if they were senior public or security figures, the houses of those Turks would be protected by security as the reminders of the ‘potential danger’ that may appear both for Turks and Kurds. It is not wrong to say that in its subtext, this implies the “inappropriateness of integration” of Kurds and Turks. In this
demographic and physical setting, Kurds remembers the state mainly as a despotic figure which intervened in their lives. The state as the ‘Turk’ or the “Turk in the form of state”, appears as a forbidding and punishing figure requiring that Kurds must hide their language, music, culture, namely the symbolic resources of their existence:

“I remember my grandfather frequently listened to the cassettes of Şivan [Şivan Perwer543] and whenever the soldiers came to our village, he ran to the cabbage garden and hid the cassettes” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 37, Istanbul, September 2016)

“In the old times, the cassettes of Şakiro [ Şahê Dengbêjan Şakiro544] were being hidden, were secretly saved in our villages. If the environment was secure, all family members, relatives came together and listened to his recordings. I remember my uncle was saving and hiding his recordings in a bag...” (Personal Interview, Female, Age 42, Istanbul)

The hierarchical distinction between the Kurdishness and Turkishness, as the reflection of the distinction of the majority and minority, was reflected and reproduced for Kurds through the distinction between the private and public spheres in a dual way: At one side, Kurdishness is confined to private sphere, as if it is a personal issue and prohibited from the public sphere which is the space of collectivity. Therefore, Kurdishness is prohibited from appearing as a collective identity or public body and is obliged to be silenced in the public sphere. As such it entails restrained of communication, transmitting of information and influencing others. For Kurds, this is another facet of being excluded from the collectivity. At the other side however, Kurdishness as an identity, is fragmented between the private and public spheres. This refers to an alienation due to the lack of fulfilling an identity as an integrated whole. Therefore, Kurds are living ‘parallel lives’ which are prohibited from each other and Kurdish agency comprises a tension due to the fragmentation of these two connected lives.

The narrations refer to a socialization process in which the ban on symbolic resources of Kurdishness disabled Kurds from appearing, from being seen and heard by everybody which also hindered their ability to be seen and heard by themselves. This signifies the interruption of the dialogical relationship between the public and private spheres of Kurdishness, between Kurdishness and Turkishness, as well as, the relationship within the public sphere that is based

543 The exiled Kurdish singer, accepted as a modern dengbêj, has had a huge impact among Kurds and became an icon in the Kurdish struggle and resistance by means of his songs.

544 Among the Kurds, Shakiro (Shakir Deniz), known as 'Kewê Ribat' and 'Shahê Dengbêjan' because of his beautiful voice. He was a student of 'Resoyê Gopala' who was a dengbêj like himself. He was also known as 'Şakirê Mezin' or 'Şakirê Bedih'. When his family was exiled to Adana in 1959, he was a young man. After seven years in exile, the family returned to Mus in 1966 and two years later settled in Erzurum Karayaziyya in 1968. He was one of the greatest Kurdish dengbêjs who had been known for singing klans many days without ceasing.
on the exchange and interaction between the subjectivities and collectivities. Moreover, the given hierarchy between the private and public spheres deepened the level of deprivation and the fragmentation of Kurdishness thus making politics a sphere of repression and objection:

“When you say it, they call it a cliché but isn’t it a fact in Turkey you can be a minister or even a prime minister, but you cannot be Kurdish. I mean, as long as you forget your Kurdishness you can be everything... When you insist on remaining a Kurd, I mean, the language... Or when you mention the discrimination against Kurds, the system does not let you to be any of these things... If a Kurd can be a prime minister in Turkey, tell me, why is speaking in Kurdish in the parliament still a problem?” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 42, Yükseova, July 2013)

The narratives suggest that this is a history in which the state forces Kurds to be ‘appropriate Kurds’. An ‘appropriate Kurd’ appears as the one who is one step behind the Turk. So, he respects hierarchically drawn rules and predetermined roles. He is invisible in the public sphere as much as possible, so does not ‘violate’ the sovereignty of Turkishness by means of emancipating his Kurdishness. The ‘appropriate Kurd’ is overall points to a ‘domesticated’ or ‘tamed’ personality and a ‘veiled’ identity. In fact, the secrecy appears as the reflection of this imposed ‘veiled’ identity. Every other manifestation of Kurdishness however refers to Kurds’ incompatibility, danger and separatism as the ‘black sheep’ of the herd. In other words, it refers to the Turkish consensus on establishing the ‘illegitimate Kurd’, if a Kurd does not act according to the appropriate coordinates. This is a constant theme among the Kurds regardless of their gender, political and generational differences and is perceived in a discourse of continuation:

“When it comes to Kurdishness there is no big change in our lives. We must always hide our Kurdishness. The state always finds it irritating, dangerous and threatening... Don’t you remember what happened to Ahmet Kaya? What was it all about? He just wanted to sing a Kurdish song! He did not even do it! He is exiled like the ones before. Maybe this is our destiny, I don’t know... In the end, they

545 Inspired by the work of Füsun Üstel, Makbul Vatandaş'ın Peşinde: II. Meşrutiyet'ten Bugüne Vatandaşlık Eğitimi [In Search of an Appropriate Citizen: Civic Education from the Second Constitutional Monarchy to today], İletişim Yay, 2004.

546 Ahmet Kaya was a prominent Kurdish singer in Turkey. On 10 February 1999 during the televised annual music awards ceremony, Show TV, at which he was to be named Musician of the Year, Kaya said that he wanted to produce music in his native language, as he was of Kurdish background. He also announced that he had recorded a song in Kurdish (Karwan, released on the Hoşçakalin Gözüm album in 2001) and intended to produce a video to accompany it. Following this announcement, he faced massive opposition from Turkish people and celebrities in the event. The incident led to a prosecution case which made him leave Turkey. Kaya went to France in June 1999, escaping various charges arising from his political views. In March 2000 he was sentenced in absentia to three years and nine months in prison on the charge of spreading separatist propaganda. Later, however, the mass media allegation showing Kaya in front of the poster was proven to be forged. He died from a heart attack in Paris in 2000, at the age of 43, and is buried in Père Lachaise Cemetery.
punished him and made him die abroad away from his country, his home…” (Personal Interview, Female, 39, Istanbul, April 2014)

“… After singing several songs in Turkish, just because of stating that he would like to sing a Kurdish song, the Turkish gang with its state, media, elites and average people attacked him. Attacked him in such an irrational, brutal way… In fact, they attacked all of us [Kurds]” (Personal Interview, Male, 33, Istanbul, October 2013)

Secrecy as a continuous pattern of Kurdishness is also the way through which the PKK appears in and communicates with the world of Kurds. To put in differently, secrecy as a theme is a defining characteristic of Kurds and also the PKK which establish a proximate line between Kurds and the Party that links them virtually. The memories of encountering the PKK revolve around a sharp sense of secrecy which refers to a continuum in terms of being as if in the home of Kurdishness:

“I remember some people came to our house. They were strangers, not from our village obviously… But interestingly, my father was excited. I was a kid but I knew that it was not a usual situation. I mean usually strangers did not bring any positive excitement… I asked my father who they were. He told me that they were relatives from my grandmother’s village…” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 37, Istanbul, September 2016)

“I listened to Öcalan on cassettes first… His talks were recorded and distributed secretly… And the visits of guerrillas, talks with them… At a later stage, I started to read party bulletins. But all these things were done in an extreme secrecy… Otherwise, the results would not be hard to guess…” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 34, Istanbul, April 2014)

“Öcalan’s pseudonym was Ali Fırat. Reading his books or any piece he wrote was something like that: Actually, they were secretly distributed and when you read them, you immediately gave them to someone else, if not, you disposed of or totally destroyed them. It was impossible to keep them for a long time… The first book of his which I read first was on the enslaved personally and it was which was published by Mersa [the name of the publication house]” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 34, Istanbul, April 2014)

When reading or listening to PKK related publications or recordings, there is nothing strange about the emergence of secrecy among the Kurds due to the PKK being an illegal armed organization which also listed by the state as a terrorist organization. Bearing in mind the diversified quotes stated above, the important point here is the ‘evocative impact’ or the ‘reflexivity’ that secrecy triggered among the Kurds. The narratives including the memories before and after the PKK clarify that secrecy is a shared and continuous theme for most of the ‘forms’ and ‘times’ of the Kurds:
“You have a sort of secrecy... You must have... When I was at the university, in the
dormitory, I remembered myself not being willing to say that I am a Kurd... We
had a girls group and I did not want to change the mood we had... I know it is sad but it
was the case, I had the idea at the back of mind that it would change relations... You
[as a Kurd] always perceive joy as fragile. I also remember one of the friends in
this group shared a message on her social media account which said 'The disturbing
community, that is spawning uncontrollably” referring to Kurds [ In Turkish it is
written in acrostic form: “Kontrolsüz, Üreyen, Rahatsız, Topluluk” and when the
initial letters of each sentence are combined, it forms the word “Kürd”]. I am
coming from a small, a nuclear family but you cannot change the image of Kurd in
minds...” (Personal Interview, Female, Age 29, Ankara, July 2016)

“I had a friend at school whose father was an instructor at a university. His father
was a nationalist, but we were good friends. One day, when I first told him that I
was the grandson of Sheik Said, he was shocked... He said, “how could it be?”
(Personal Interview, Male, Age 33, Istanbul, October 2013)

In this regard, Kurdishness either in an illegal or legal form or has a religious or modern content,
is also a continuum for the state so that after a while the heterogeneity of Kurdishness
experience among diversified groups assemble with each other. As it is embodied in the state
discourse following the emergence of the PKK in which everything before the PKK is named
as pre-PKK or as a chain resulted in the PKK, the continuing Turkish perception of Kurds seems
to be replied by Kurds with a continuing Kurdish perception of Turks and Turkish state.
According to the interviewees, the Turkish state has always had a problem with all forms of
Kurdishness since Kurdishness in itself is a continuous and existential problem for the Turkish
state. As such, the PKK can find a relevant place in this history and secrecy emerges as a
transideological and transgenerational pattern of Kurdishness:

“With the movement [PKK], we started to read bulletins and periodicals. When the
soldiers came, this time, we were the ones hiding all these materials like our
grandfathers. So, we continue to keep the tradition of hiding (laughing)... I
remember my grandfather was saving the bulletins from Syrian Kurds but because
of hiding them under the soil many times, they were not readable any more...”
(Personal Interview, Male, Age 37, Istanbul, September 2016)

As stated earlier, secrecy is also the result of ‘being silent’ as much as ‘being silenced’. The
othering narrative, of segregated lives and significant alienation makes the Kurds reproduce
these in reverse as a response /repercussion:

“This was also the case for us... Who were the strangers? They were the state
servants, police and gendarme... In fact, every Kurd tried to find a way to reduce
the relationship with these, tried to establish his own way to deal with it or manage
In this regard, it is understood that secrecy is also a means of (self) protection too. Protection gained through staying silent can be the result of diversified motivations and rationalizations which may not be equally and morally welcomed. However, being in silent either of being a sign of internalized repression, a personal conformity or a choice for the wider group interests are all changing faces of one’s need to exercise her/his protection. On other hand, a Kurd may stay in silent not only because the status quo is accepted but as a way of protecting her/his language, culture and identity by means of intentionally ‘not to see’ or ‘not to feel’ it. The ‘misinterpretation’ of the suppression sometimes emerges as a means of survival. In such a “majority world” in which the “meta-knowledge” does not acknowledge Kurdishness as an equal agency in the public sphere, the secrecy appears as a decision either rationally or heuristically – as a ‘heuristic pragmatism’ - taken by some of the Kurds as a way to protect the ‘reality’ and ‘continuity’ of Kurdishness in which they feel completed and consistent.

In this regard, with a reference to Alexandre Koyre, secrecy in the Kurdish context, appears also as a ‘self-defence’ or ‘counter lying’ one’s to protect her/himself against the ‘innovative, massive, absolute and total’ lying mechanisms of the oppressive regime which is capable of using the means of state apparatus. As a response to the imposed ‘idea that there exists a single objective truth valid for everybody’ secrecy - which is an indirect form of lying- emerges as a way to save an alternative subjective truth valid. Besides, secrecy becomes a sphere of making a ‘talent’ through which the repressed may gain an agency as being an actor in the ‘games of lying’ regardless of being constructive or destructive.

Kurds in Pain: Making and Approaching of Subjective and Collective Kurdishness

Secrecy, whether a silenced or a silent position for Kurds, appears either as an outcome of repression or a means of protection, refers to a fear regarding one’s self. The fear however is a response to a material or metaphysical danger – in the form of an object or condition and has a strong connection with the phenomena of violence that has been part of the Kurdish region and Kurdish lives for a long time. It is already discussed that “the violence emerged as the major element shaping the Kurdish movement and Kurdish political arena in Turkey since the end of

the Ottoman Empire”, followed by the 1990s, in which the Kurdish public sphere was surrounded and defined by conflicting violence(s). The interviewees of this study perceive the routinization of the violence and the fear as primary part of their subjective and collective memories on Kurdishness. The narratives of fear however, appear along with the memories on pain which also emerge in subjective or collective forms. Despite, Kurdishness is not a homogeneous totality, when it comes to pain, despite the changing sources and forms it takes, every Kurd has a story and history of pain and suffering:

“Every Kurd has a ‘that day’ in his/her life... A day which constitutes a landmark after which nothing has remained the same. This may be the day that your son or daughter went to the Mountains, or the day a family member was killed, tortured or humiliated... Or the day that your village was put on fire and you are forced to leave your home and so on... Without an exception every Kurd has it... Or if you are not the one who has gone through these things, you know somebody among your relatives or friends who has. So at least every Kurd has the memory of it...” (Personal Interview, Female, Age 38, 20 March 2015, Diyarbakır)

When it comes to pain, the historical and autobiographical memory as the components of collective memory, meet with each other. This is where the subjective and collective experiences of pain intersect with each other and thus subjectivity and collectivity emerges as a united agency. In the narratives of respondents on Kurdishness, this is embodied in the shift between the use of ‘I’ and ‘we’ interchangeably, in which subjective or collective memories of pain may take each other’s place impulsively as if they are the same or as the continuum of each other.

In the Kurdish context, the pain and suffering in largely be defined as deriving from the ‘discourse’ and the ‘practice’ of the Turkish state from the early days of the Republic up today. According to the narratives, as Schuman and Rodgers suggest it, “the occurrence of new events bring the old events that are saved in collective memories” of Kurds:

“After living the 1990s, the past does not feel unfamiliar. I mean, the 1990s cleared up most of the differences with the past, at least from my point of view... The differences are small details for me... In the past they were exiled, then we were displaced in the 1990s. The ones who were together with Sheikh Said or Seit Rıza for instance... They were killed... The survivors were tortured, supressed or...

549 Hamit Bozarslan, ““Why the armed struggle”: Understanding of Violence in Kurdistan of Turkey”, in The Kurdish Conflict in Turkey: Obstacles and Chances for Peace and Democracy, edited by Ferhad Ibrahim, Gülistan Gürbey, New York: LIT St.Martin’s Press, 2000, p. 17
humiliated... The 1990s were the years of all... Mass killings, disappearances and torture as a routine if a Kurd is arrested... So, these have been familiar stories for Kurds for centuries...” (Personal Interview, Female, Age 37, Diyarbakır, March 2014)

“*In Varto, there is a bridge called Abdurrahman Paşa bridge* ⁵⁵². It is the bridge on which Sheik Said was arrested in 1925. In 1994, I don’t remember anybody who used that bridge and was not being beaten...” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 37, Istanbul, September 2016)

“There are several ‘that days’ for the Kurds... I mean especially in the 1990s every day was a ‘that day’ for us... None of the days looked like the previous one and we experienced the ‘adventures’ of those years. I can say that, sometimes we lived 300 days of one year in one day... Each of those days left a mark on memories...” (Personal Interview, Female, Age 40, Diyarbakır, March 2014)

As clarified in the quotes above, the past is transmitted into present through the violence and pain. The indiscriminate violence of the state and the pain emerges on the account of Kurds seems like to erase the differences between the Kurds regarding time, gender, age or political position. “Linking the collective catastrophes of the past to the critical events of the present was commonly seen in the life stories as a way of reading the history of state violence within a discourse of continuity”. ⁵⁵³ Apart from the memories on the pain derived from past or recent Kurdish history, the story and history of the other minorities, particularly Armenians, emerges as the source of the fear and pain that are reimagined in the Kurdish context and reflected in the narratives expressed:

“When the soldiers came to our village all the men were leaving the village and hid away from the soldiers. Because at the back of minds, the memory of the Armenians was still alive as knowledge for us. I remember, sayings such as ‘they may come and take us and execute us by shooting like they did the Armenians men...’” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 37, Istanbul, September 2016)

In the narratives, memories of pain and suffering are based on loss which is both physical and symbolic loss. The pain may therefore be derived from a wide range of losses which consist of the loss of memories, loss of respect, loss of one’s life or of loved ones as well as the loss in/weakened power of Kurdishness:

⁵⁵² In the past Abdurrahman Paşa bridge used to call Crapuh Bridge.
“For instance, I remember the 1970s. My father had the book of Melayê Ciziri who was a very famous Kurdish poet, in old letters. Perhaps, he was a Sufis poet more famous than Yunus Emre [famous Turkish Sufis]. He [my father] appointed somebody to bring it or he brought it personally from Syria in the 1960s. It was such a unique ancient piece worthy of a museum. In the 1970s during martial law rule, one day I arrived home and saw my father who had turned his back, and was cutting something with a small clipper. Then he glued our family photo on its cover. I mean, if the book would be seen by a PKK member for instance, he would think that it was a religious book since it was in the old alphabet... My father cut such a book and vanished it. Now there is no piece of it left. Such things remain in your memory from the childhood...” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 55, Diyarbakır, March 2014)

“I’ll never forget one day... I was going to school. The minibus was stopped by the soldiers on the way from the village to the town. They asked to see our identity cards. At the same time, the commander officer took off his belt and asked what was our village. When I said my village, he gave me a real thrashing... More important than my beating, was old women among us [passengers]. Her name was Sultan. At the time, there was a famous woman guerrilla called Sultan. So, they beat that old lady just because of her name... In front of us! They were saying that ‘maybe you are the guerrilla Sultan, who knows’... I remember how much it hurt me, more than being beaten...” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 37, Istanbul, September 2016)

“There was a guy in our apartment. He was so bad at school and I was giving free courses to support him. His father was from the MHP [Nationalist Party in Turkey]. Because of working together for years, he knew that I was a Kurd. One day, he asked me to give him a summary of the class. I said no, I am bored. Then, he told me that if I did not help him he would say to all the classroom that I was a Kurd and that I would be disgraced.” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 33, Istanbul, October 2013)

The physical and symbolic loss reproduce each other and result in the continuum in the memories and narratives of Kurds on pain. These distant and recent memories on pain and suffering is the point at which the Kurdish history is constructed in a continuity. In narratives, the Kurds are often depicted as a “nation in pain” and the pain and suffering are defined as the “faith/fate of Kurds” as the signifier of the internalization of one’s fate.

“The leftist Kurd, the Muslim Kurd or agha, peasant, men, women... All Kurds... Significantly children... All Kurds suffer because of being a Kurd in Turkey... I

554 Ahmet Melayê Ciziri was a famous Kurdish Sufi who believed to live from late 16th century to early 17th century. His full name was Molla (Mullah) Ahmed el-Cezeri. He was commonly known as Melayê Cizîrî (means mullah from Cizre) or in short “Mela”. His famous piece available today is Diwan which was written in Kurdish with Arabic Alphabet. In his time, the intellectual environment of Cizre was strong and Feqiye Teyran and Ehmê Xani were referred as the significant figures of the same era.

555 Ciziri’s Divan reprinted in the 1960s: For the generation who born after the Alphabet Reform, all the publications written in Arabic sounds or looks like religious

meaning the Kurdish leftist suffered more [than a non-Kurdish leftist], the Kurdish Muslim suffered more [than a non-Kurdish Muslim] ... As they say it, “being a Kurd is trouble!” [In Turkish: Kürtlük başa bela!]( Personal Interview, Female, 57, Diyarbakir, March 2014)

“Is there any single Kurd who did not suffer from the Turkish state? You may walk on tiptoes, no difference... Even the village guards or the ones who had been enslaved by the state... This state comes and finds you everywhere and makes you pay a price because of your Kurdishness... It always reminds you that you are a Kurd at the end of the day...” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 54, Istanbul, October 2013)

Remembering the pain and the continuity of the idea of being a ‘nation’- ‘in’- ‘pain’ does not emerge only through the reoccurrence of new events but it also an idea of a nation that comes through the heritage and transmission of the collective knowledge and memory via the Kurdish oral culture including its traditional and modern components:

“In my childhood there were dengbêjs. They were telling stories, epics, fairy-tales but in fact their stories were not imagined. They were telling of the realities... Telling on what was lived and experienced by Kurds.... Actually, even the love stories were about it [Kurdishness]. Mem-û Zîn is a love story, but it is also the story of a nation... The story of Siyabend û Xêcê (Siyabend and Khaje)... In all the actual content is Kurdishness...” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 37, Istanbul, September 2016)

“We are the generation of Aram Tigran... We started to listen to Kurdish with the songs of Aram Tigran from Radio Erivan... From Radio Cairo, we listened to

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557 Dengbêjs are the singers and storytellers who sing tales from the collective memory of Kurds and sometimes perform alongside an instrument. In Mehmed Uzun’s words dengbêj is described as following: "Deng is sound in my mother tongue Kurdish. Bêj is the one who shapes the sound, who tells it. He is the one who gives the sound its soul, who makes the sound alive. He is the master whose profession is sound, the person whose space is sound. Dengbêj is the one who gives life to sound." Mehmed Uzun, Dengbêjlerîm, İstanbul: İthaki, 2006, p. 11.

558 "Siyabend û Xêcê (Siyabend and Khaje) is a love epic similar to Mem û Zîn. It takes place on Suphan Mountain in Van and concerns a desperate love that brings death for both Siyabend and Khaje. According to the story, Siyabend, an orphan, is expelled from his village because of his bad behaviour. While he is on the mountains, Siyabend finds his best friend and afterwards a woman, Xêcê (Khaje), with whom he falls in love. However, the son of a wealthy man is also in love with her and kidnaps her. Differently from many other epics, Siyabend, the main character, is not a particularly good person". Özlem Galip, Kurdistan: A Land of Longing and Struggle Analysis of 'Home-land' and 'Identity' in the Kurdish Novelistic Discourse from Turkish Kurdistan to its Diaspora (1984-2010), PhD Thesis Submitted to to the University of Exeter), 2012, p. 11

559 Aram Tigran (1934-2009) was an Armenian musician whose mother and father were from Diyarbakir. He sang Kurdish songs during the time he worked at Erivan Radio for 18 years. Due to the bans on Kurdish language, several generations in Turkey heard and learned Kurdish via his Kurdish songs broadcasted through Erivan Radio. As a member of Armenian diaspora of Turkey, Tigran was born in Erivan, Armenia, died in Athens, Greece and buried in Brussels, Belgium. When he was alive, he made a will to be buried in Diyarbakir, Turkey but the Turkish state rejected this request. In his funeral, Öcalan’s note was read which was saying: “Aram Tigran was the philemelo/nightingale of the Middle East. He sang in many languages of Middle East such as Kurdish, Armenian, Syriac, Arabic and Greek. Aram was a bard for me. I heard his voice on radio first in Ankara. When I first heard Aram Tigran in Ankara, I said "This sound should not die, it should always be free.”’”

560 Kurdish was banned and not circulated in Tukey but the Kurdish music and the dengbêjs who left the country could be listened from Erivan, Tahran and Baghdad radios by the Kurdish speaking audience in Turkey.
As in the quotes above demonstrate, pain and suffering are constructed and transmitted generations through the Kurdish oral culture and music. Pain as a constant theme in these Kurdish cultural representations serves a purpose, in covering the differences among Kurds in terms of gender, age and political orientation. Accordingly, whoever asked and stood up for the rights of Kurds or Kurdishness has been beaten or killed, not only in Turkey but in all parts of Kurdistan:

“Kurds were largely recognized after the Halabja massacre of Saddam... Can you believe it; Kurds became known as a result of a massacre...! Before that nobody knew that the Kurds existed...” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 37, Diyarbakır, March 2016)

“The fate of Kurds is not different in Iraq or Iran... We are the repressed people of all these countries... Kurds suffer in all parts of Kurdistan...” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 45, Yüksekova, July 2016)

In this regard pain is also the thing that unites the Kurds beyond time and geography. Pain unites diversified Kurds as a nation that lives, thinks and believes as a unit in today’s time. It unites different Kurdish histories - the past and the future – as being for the Kurdish Cause and unites the divided geography as a virtual Kurdistan. Kurds are united by means of “collective suffering”. “Suffering is defined as shared and ever-present experience” among Kurds and this is how the excluded Kurdish identity or Kurdishness is included in a virtual unity. As such, Kurds may be diversified in terms of their political perspectives and forms or contents of their Kurdishness(es), but they are the same in terms of being in and for the sphere/space of Kurdishness. It is Kurdishness and the Kurdish Cause that make the Kurds an indivisible body with regards to the pain and suffering they experienced as a result of being Kurdish and in the

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561 Kilam are the songs of dengbêjs. Kelam (the word of God) and kilam (harmony and rhythm) are the three concepts that make up the essence of dengbêj culture. See: (Parıltı, 2006: 79-80)

562 “Kom means group in Kurdish. The politicized music of Kurdish music groups (koms) that emerged in the 1990s. Through koms' politicized music, the movement communicated its cause, told the struggle of the movement and aimed to mobilize the masses. In addition to this, music has functioned as a field where the collective identity of the movement as well as the Kurdish identity is constructed”. B. Siynem Ezgi Sarıtas, Articulation of Kurdish identity through politicized music of koms, Unpublished MA thesis submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University, 2010, p. iv.

563 On 16 and 17 March 1988, under the command of Saddam Hussein Iraqi government airplanes, dropped chemical weapons on the town of Halabja. Approximately 5,000 civilians, including women and children, were killed. Halabja massacre powerfully remained in the collective memory of the Kurdish people.

The name of Kurdishness. Kurdishness is imagined as a space that minimizes the differences among Kurds. This is where the linkage with the “majority world” or “worlds of majorities” is reimagined dialectically. Accordingly, this is a way of (re)imagining Kurds not as the minorities of four dividing nation states but as a united majority via Kurdistan – Kurds as the majority of Kurdistan – so that it gains a collective entity in which “strangers” do not appear as “strangers” any more. In this regard, this is a way of reconnecting it with one’s self - including its subjective and collective components- as well as reconnecting one’s self with the ‘other(s)’.

On the other hand, the Kurdish Cause as the name of the process of being and living Kurdishness, emerges also as a source of struggle for the Kurds which develops concurrently with the shared otherness, secrecy and pain.

**Struggle ‘of’, ‘in’, ‘for’ Kurdishness**

The diversified narratives on Kurdishness provide the notion of struggle as another component of Kurdishness, as it is another shared theme that causes Kurdishness to be a continuous cause in the minds of interviewees and coming into play while understanding and explaining the meaning, relevance and function of the PKK. As clarified in the earlier sections, Kurdishness as a mutual signifier of both subjective and collective identity of Kurds, is constructed in the context of a ‘conflict culture’. Conflict culture here is used in symbolic and real terms. That is to say, it is a culture in which the realities or the knowledge of social and the political framework is constructed through the binary oppositions and dichotomies either by means of the use of bare or the symbolic violence. Under the dominance of a Turkified culture which is the result of the exercise of power through the direct will of Turkishness – that grounded and legitimized its sovereignty on the basis of being the majority- the story and the history of Kurdishness became realized, perceived and associated with repression, assimilation, denial, pain and violent as much as consent.

On the other hand, the only form of power that is not organized or realized in the figure of the powerful. As Foucault defines it “power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere”. 565 It “is immanent in all social relations and that all social relations are relations of power, whether in family or in the hierarchies of government and others social institutions. It is a complex form of strategy, a circulating chain and in which ‘the

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individual that power has constituted, is at the same time its vehicle. This is a continuous process that is produced and reproduced interrelatedly. It is also where the individual, minority, nonhegemonic, non-sovereign or the repressed at one side of the binary opposition vis-à-vis the community, majority, hegemonic, sovereign or oppressor appears with an active potential of agency. Besides, this is the point at which power is thought of as constructive as much as destructive.

The Kurdishness that is securitized, then produced, and circulated in the Turkish official and public lexicon, is described as backward, reactionary and separatist subject, especially when it is performed out of the defined “appropriate lines” of the state. The discursive product of Turkish power which circulates the knowledge or the ‘truth’ on Kurdishness however, is not the only available knowledge on Kurdishness, since no form of power is total and fully complete. It is not possible to deny the impact of the Turkish truth-telling in shaping public and private lives among both Turkish and Kurdish subjects of the society. But it is also not possible to accept the results of this process as a total uniformity. Because there are always interstices in the exercise of power and this is what Foucault defines as “where there is power, there is resistance, and yet… this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.”

However, these interstices constitute the nodal points of resistance. Accordingly, while defining Kurdishness as an essential cause and as a continuous agency of Kurdish history, interviewees also denote it as a space and history of struggle:

*Sheik Said, Agri, Dersim, Zilan… They have always been in the minds of every Kurd. Every Kurd have had the idea of not dropping the flags of these movements… At the same time, there was desperation, lack of means… You searched for an exit out of this desperation… But the situation was so complicated… The ones who knew the solution about that or at least had a word to say on it were not organized. So, they could not or did not want to say something… Who knows, maybe they thought that this would drag them into unexpected adventures… But at the end, the histories and stories of these (Sheik Said, Agri, Dersim, Zilan) has never been forgotten… (Personal Interview, Male, Age 59, London, April 2013)*

*When the commander officer beat me with his belt – which was my first beating by a soldier-, my reaction was laughing loudly. How could a person laugh as a response to the violence normally? But this was the case… This was a way of*

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resistance indeed. They expected you to be frightened, to cower in fear but no... I think the best way to respond to the violence is laughing which made the other side desperate more than you... (Personal Interview, Male, Age 37, Istanbul, September 2016)

I have always been an appreciated person among my Turkish environment. I was successful at school so this brings me a privileged position... They found me funny... My Turkish was without accent, at least it is not heavy (smiling)... So, I have always found myself at some stage with the need of saying my Turkish friends that I am a Kurd... Actually, it was not hidden, maybe they already knew it... Now, I think that, maybe the sympathy I received from my Turkish friends, as opposed to the apathy or hatred against the Kurds in general, made me to feel guilty... I don’t know, but I remember something like a tension which was always with me and I needed to say that I was a Kurd... (Personal Interview, Male, Age 34, Istanbul, October 2013)

The quotes above refer to the diversified sources of resistance as they are stemming from different Kurdish historicity(ies) at both subjective and collective level. These two levels in the end, meet with each other and establish a hybrid virtual line of cumulative continuum. At the subjective level, laughing as a response to a violent act or one’s need to announce his Kurdishness - as if it is a secret and in the lack of first-hand/direct discomfort regarding his Kurdishness - emerge as the examples of resistance through their uncommon and unexpected features. They have a capacity to contest the taken for granted memory and reflex of the ‘other’ who is the owner and holder of the “majority knowledge” what Scott calls “public transcript”. Accordingly, “resistance is a subtle form of contesting ‘public transcripts’ by making use of prescribed roles and language to resist the abuse of power – including things like ‘rumour, gossip, disguises, linguistic tricks, metaphors, euphemisms, folktales, ritual gestures, anonymity’”569. Based on the narratives and at the subjective level, the primary aim of resistance emerges against the fragmentation of one’s identity who suffers from the tension that is stemming from being oppressed. This means that resistance or struggle is also a request for resolution by means of reducing the texture of the tension on the body and the mind of one’s self, that is originated from the ‘culture of conflict’.

The tension or the discomfort as it is embodied in form of laughing to the bare violence or in the need to express one’s identity almost in the form of ‘confession’ are the ‘abysses’ as Scott defines. “Scott (1990) argues that resistance generates from the abyss within the oppressed her/himself. This abyss is a result of the tension between the public transcript, which implies

obedience to the dominant power, and the hidden transcript, which emerges as a reaction to repression and humiliation”⁵⁷⁰. Accordingly, at the subjective level, resistance appears as a step towards a self-reconciliation in which one’s reconstruct her/himself exempt from the “imposed conflict”.

On the other hand, struggle of Kurdishness at social level, as defined in the quotes above, emerges against the state oppression. This is a response to the destructive state power and to the social knowledge it provides on Kurdishness. Therefore, the struggle is for Kurdishness. The social type of resistance is explored in the narratives as a way to upside down the public transcript that diminishing Kurds in defining, manifesting and performing their subjective and collective knowledge on their own Kurdishness:

> In our environment, it was always a matter of debate. There was a very small group which said that, “this [struggle] is over here, there was no way to stand up again… Be careful, if you attempt to resist once again they will destroy us totally.” But there was another group which was bigger saying that ‘They [Turkish state] thought that they killed, they finished us… But it is not true, it is not over…’ As you know Sheik Said and his friends were deceived by the state when going to execution. At the gallows, he said “don’t forget one day my grandchildren bring you to book this” … In my childhood they said, “this is not something that can die… Yes, maybe the current picture is opposite now, but, in reality Kurds are honest, so it [struggle, resistance] is not over…”. As a child, as a person who grew up hearing all these stories and conversations, you have had the idea of bravery regarding Kurdishness in your mind… (Personal Interview, Male, Age 59, London, April, 2013)

As the social source of the resistance, the historical heritage of the Kurdish movements constitutes a priority. In other words, as much as defining it as a history of repression, interviewees define the history of defeated Kurdish insurgencies also as part of the history of Kurdish struggle. According to this, the Kurdish Cause is the embodiment of the historical Kurdish struggle which has appeared simultaneously through the politicization of Kurdishness(es). It is important to note that “the struggle for Kurdistan” was the embodiment of the Kurdish Cause for some of the Kurds that they imagined the establishment of an independent Kurdistan as the vital goal of this struggle. Among the PKK members and some of the sympathizers, this was a very solid and ultimate idea until the 2000s. In other words, the struggle was also for Kurdistan:

> Like many others, I became part of the PKK with very strong patriotic ideals and aim. The free, democratic Kurdistan was our primary aim. Our aim was to fight until

the time all Turkish soldiers were driven from the land of Kurdistan... Beginning from 1993, the Leadership (Öcalan) did a strategic change in this regard and now the aim is democratic confederalism... Actually, he was right, we understood that nation state is not a solution. There were some moments that we were not convinced in some of the decision made but we know from the experience that leadership is always right. (Personal Interview, Male, 37, Brussels, December 2015)

An independent Kurdistan has always been a dream in the minds of the Kurds... Regardless of your position regarding the PKK, all the struggles, somehow, is about or related with the idea of Kurdistan. During the late 1980s, even in the 1990s, this was a very living idea among the Kurds... As you know, there are still some groups other than the PKK, who are defending the idea of united Kurdistan. In a way it is not an idea that Kurds can leave easily... (Personal Interview, Male, Age 55, Istanbul, April, 2013)

On the other hand, alongside its uniting function, the discourse of Kurdish struggle has a dividing function too. As it is clarified in the quotes above, one’s position regarding the Kurdish struggle, emerges as a trench that measures and morally (re)categorize Kurds, whether intentionally or not. According to this, ‘the honest’ or ‘the real Kurds’ are the ones who do not give up on – thinking, believing, hoping or imagining ‘of’, ‘in’, ‘for’ Kurdishness. Not giving up thinking, believing, hoping and imagining ‘of’, ‘in’, ‘for’ Kurdishness means staying loyal to the idea of struggle or resistance. If not, this where a Kurd turn into a ‘caşh’ which means ‘traitor’ in English:

How can I say? It is not a problem for Kurd to die but being labelled with the word of “cash/jash”, I mean, named as traitor is not something acceptable... It is worse than death... This has a long history... The word traitor refers to all kinds of dishonourable attitudes and acts... ((Personal Interview, Male, Age 52, Diyarbakır, March 2013)

The resistance here implies the process of (re)constructing Kurdish subjective and collective self as a counter-power and counter-knowledge against the dominancy of the subjective and collective ‘other’. Certainly, this does not mean a total disappearance of the ‘other’ in Kurdish imagination but refers to a more confident type of relationship with it. Gaining power, by means of disposing the self-othering dimension of the overall alienation, resistance also requires saving the ‘other’ as part of the reconstruction process of the self both at subjective and collective level. As Simmel states, ‘the “Other” is fundamental to the constitution of the self, to us as subjects’571. Accordingly, as a repeating theme in the narratives, caşh /traitor refers to the

‘internal other’ as the Kurd who collaborates with ‘the big other’ by means of internalizing the failure. In the narratives, this is manifested through the dichotomies between renunciation and tenacity, loyalty and disloyalty, treason and patriotism, domestication and un-domestication, subordination and insubordination or pessimism and optimism. Apart from referring to the existing relations among Kurds, the motive of traitor is defined as a continuum in the Kurdish history:

*It has been like that for centuries... As you know, the ones who denounced Sheik Said were also Kurdish, they were even his relatives... So, this is a constant problem in Kurdish culture and history... (Personal Interview, Female, Age 54, Diyarbakir, March 2014)*

*From the beginning, the struggle of Kurds has also been a struggle against Kurds. This is a historical fact... We knew it from the experience, from the narratives of our ancestors... We know it from our lives. It is available even in Kurdish epics... This is what Mem û Zîn is about... (Personal Interview, Male, Age 59, London, April, 2013)*

*If you ask me what was the problem about the former Kurdish movements, I would say that the traitors were dominant among us before... Otherwise they would not be failed... (Personal Interview, Male, Age 35, Istanbul, October 2013)*

Supported by the foundation of the collective Kurdish memory transmitted through the generations via cultural heritage, the dichotomy and the ‘struggle in’ Kurdishness appears as a war between the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ which refers to a war between the honourable and dishonourable subjects of the society. Similar to some Mediterranean and Middle Eastern societies, “the concept of honour is central to the everyday Kurdish life and betrayal is considered dishonourable and humiliating”.572 On the social level, as stated earlier, this brings an inner fragmentation among the Kurds. Resistance as one’s/groups’ move towards uniting its self may bring a reflexive type of division/fragmentation. This is a pattern of mimicking – mimicking the repressive ‘other’- and is also used as a political tool to keep Kurdish motivation alive. The struggle of domination or struggle for hegemony among the Kurdish political agencies is another aspect of this dichotomy-based internal fragmentation.573

When it come to the sites of resistance however, in the narratives, the language and music, are distinguished as the sites of the Kurdish resistance which can be understood under the concept

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573 Ibid.
of “infrapolitics” of Scott that he defines it as the informal network of the community in various forms of folk culture and as the nucleus of the resistance\textsuperscript{574}. In this regard, infrapolitics refers to the capacity of the repressed to establish its ‘hidden transcripts’ vis-à-vis the public transcript of the repressor.

**Spaces of Struggle: Language and Music**

As it is discussed earlier, language is not a neutral space but is a reflection and means of power as it is constructed through power arrangements and relations of power. The political use of language to design and transform the societies inevitably makes it a marker of dominance, hegemony and social control. In Turkey’s context, as previously elaborated, in the way of becoming a modern nation, the use of language in the exercise of creating a cultural and political uniformization, resulted in the emergence of suppressed linguistic and political minorities. Kurds as one of the linguistic and political minorities in Turkey, perceive Kurdish language as one of the most important components of the Kurdish identity. It is defined in the narratives as a space that Kurdishness has experienced the processes of otherization, alienation and secrecy. Therefore, Kurdish language is also denoted as the site of Kurdish resistance:

*Speaking Kurdish is a way of protecting your identity... They say (Official Turkish state discourse) that there is no Kurd so there is no Kurdish... Therefore, speaking Kurdish is way of saying that, yes there is something called Kurd and Kurds exist... Even a Kurd who does not speak Kurdish has an awareness to protect her/his language since it is at the heart of Kurdish culture...*

*“During all those years, Kurdish had been banned and restricted... For instance, just because of this, we have an expression now called “mothers who speak through their eyes...” Why do we have it? You know, for many years, mothers could not speak with their prisoned children when they visited them... You cannot understand this pain! 12 September was a landmark in this sense... So, Kurdish is not just a language, Kurdish is the language that all this story has started from...”*

*“Language is the power of a nation... If your language dies, then you die... Your culture, your sufferings, your memories, all those things that makes you you is about language...”*

Language is the place of belonging and music as a form and also as a product of language has a significant effect on interviewee’s narratives through the role it plays in Kurdish resistance alongside its function in constructing and presenting the Kurdish identity. In early 1990s, music

has been a crucial mean of popularizing the standardized Kurdish (Sarhtaş, 2010:138). Kurdish music is perceived in narratives as a representative and constructive site of resistance and stories/ histories of resistance is frequently recalled in the narratives through the memories that are encompassed by the music:

“… For me, there are two main pillars of Kurdish language: dengbej’s songs and stories, together with the madrasa education… These were the things made Kurdishness… Or let me say, this was the Kurdishness to which I opened to my eyes… Later on, I became leftist but it does not matter… These are the things that cannot be erased from Kurdishness and for me being a leftist and having a madrasa culture are not contradicting things…”

“I have many friends who did not have any political consciousness but went to the Mountain just because of listening Şiwan. Şiwan’s strans were so powerful in terms creating a Kurdish emotional climate and political awareness…”

The significance of the lament and lamentation performance in Kurdish culture – in its traditional and modern forms - is also part of memories on resistance through the music of mourning. Lament as one of the most ancient genre of the humankind, when it is after death, is a way to ‘identify’ and dignify the life of the dead person. It emerges as a way of voicing and sharing the pain of the loss and also functions as means of healing the ones who are left behind by their decedent loved ones. In other words, lament is the ‘sound of trauma’ but also the ‘sound of overcoming the trauma’:

“There is a very strong culture of lamentation among Kurds… When I was a child, I remember that, when somebody died in the neighbourhood, we did not turn on the radio or TV at least for one week or ten days. The family of the deceased welcomed the condolence visits for 15 or 20 days… This is also because of sharing the culture of Middle East… In this, there is the memory of Karbala for instance…”

“… The lament and rituals of lamentations are part of our culture… For centuries it is part of our culture and in Turkey I think it appears as a something which is very Kurdish… I mean, probably it is seen as kind of primitive culture for most of the Turks, I know it… One can easily say that “look at that Kurds, even their suffering is noisy” (smiling) … I can guess that it sounds like an exaggeration to an outsider but it is something different for us… Kurdish mothers know the meaning of it…” (Personal Interview, Female, Age 42, Diyarbakır, March 2014)

“Saturday Mothers for me are the mothers of lament and resistance… I think what they do is totally a resistance… State disappeared their children and they do not

575 Strans are the traditional Kurdish songs of mourning which are performed by dengbejs.
576 The Battle of Karbala took place on Muharram 10, in the year 61 AH of the Islamic calendar (October 10, 680 AD) in Karbala, in present-day Iraq. The battle took place between a small group of supporters and relatives of Muhammad's grandson, Husayn ibn Ali, and a larger military detachment from the forces of Yazid I, the Umayyad caliph. Hussein, the grandson of Prophet Mohammad, was martyred in Karbala.
accept this disappearance… I mean, constantly demanding their kids to be found is a way of doing it without needing a political agenda…”

**Actors of Struggle: Women and Kurdish Diaspora**

The quotes on lamentation above bring the dimension to think on actors of the Kurdish resistance. As clarified in the narratives, women, particularly mothers, appear as the significant actors of lamentation in the site of resistance. In many oral traditions, both early and modern, lament has been usually performed by women as it is the case among Kurds in large. Kurdish lament as a form of oral tradition which has various themes such as death, being bereft/stranger, homeland etc. is composed of extempore of women in general and fulfils very important functions in Kurdish community. However, significantly in the 1990s, due to the forced displacement of the Kurdish population, disappearances, assassinations, unknown killings or the losses of the armed conflict, made the lamentation performances of the Kurdish women an important part of the Kurdish political movement. Gradually, laments converged with a political meaning and has become the sites of resistance. In the case of Saturday Mothers, as it is stated by the interviewer, it turns into a silenced resistance as a way of not letting disappeared loved ones to be forgotten. As Schirmer defined it through the case of Chile, “absence of bodies created a presence of protests and the very absence of bodies has created a presence of protests for ongoing life”. As in similar world cases, the role of Kurdish women in resistance certainly does not only exercised through motherhood or in the context of victimhood. As it is going to be discussed in the next section, women have gradually become strong actors of Kurdish politics by means of demonstrating a wide range of roles and experiences.

However, in the narratives when it comes to the 1990s, the dynamism received from the Kurdish youth and the support received from the Kurdish diaspora are given a special attention by the interviewees with regards to the actors of Kurdish resistance. Leaving the role of Kurdish youth to the next section, it is important to elaborate the role of Kurdish diaspora based on the narratives:

“In the 1990s due to the aggressive political climate in the country, it was so hard for us to work in the field of human rights… We had been chased, we had been treated… The human rights violations reached at unbelievable levels and it was almost impossible to reach a solution for or prevent the violations inside the country. Every step was full of troubles. The state was destroying the evidences, when you

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had a witness, giving testimony in Kurdish was banned. If you had everything than there was no will or approach at the courts to conduct the justice objectively. All means of Turkish state was working synchronized including its police, army or judiciary. At that time, with the help of human rights institutions in abroad, we were able to carry the human rights violations experienced by the Kurds to international courts. The role of Kurdish diaspora was crucial and cannot be denied in this sense.”

“In my view, the most crucial contribution of the Kurdish diaspora was to establish MED TV. It was so influential and motivating. I don’t mean the propaganda power only. I am talking about a moral power that the Kurds gained through a TV Channel in which they could see their agenda and hear Kurdish too. The role of MED TV was so important in terms of transmitting the messages of the struggle or increasing the Kurdish awareness among the young members especially among diaspora.” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 59, London, April, 2013)

“I remember a middle-age Kurdish man who was a village guard. We were having a conversation and I was asking him why he was part that system of village guards. I was telling him that it was so bad for Kurds, I tried to convince him in being part of the struggle and so on… At some point of the conversation somehow, I said ‘Look, now Kurds are having a TV channel’… He did not believe me, he said, Kurds were not powerful enough to establish a TV channel. He thought that only the state was capable of doing so… At the end he told me, ‘ok if you established a Kurdish TV Channel, I promise I would leave the village guard and he did...’

As clarified through the quotes, Kurdish diaspora based in different European countries is defined as an important actor of the Kurdish struggle in terms developing the Kurdish culture by means of making it available through the media. Besides, it is defined as an actor in the struggle that contributed to Kurds in terms of having accession to justice:

“When we go abroad, I would say when we went into exile... We see that in many of the countries there was a lack of familiarity with the Kurds. They even did not know that Kurds exist. I don’t exaggerate, I really remembered that we were describing Kurds by giving recipes on their shape, height or colour... Behind it, there was my personal story and experience... In the end, as a person in exile you were there because you were against what the state did to you and because staying in Turkey was no more secure for you... So, for me going into exile by itself was a way to keep on resisting... I always had a problem with the law since there was no law for the Kurds in Turkey. Yes, there was a law theoretically, but it was not applied to Kurds. And this non-existence of law for the Kurds in Turkey made us to create it outside... I’ll never forget, I was giving a talk on human rights violations took place in Turkey at OSCE in Warsaw (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe). There were 54 countries... And the Turkish Ambassador stood up and requested me to be taken out of the room. He told that I was lying. He said there was no such violations, if there was, there would be at least one case or decision made against Turkey in the ECHR. So thankful to him that he showed us the way…” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 59, London, April, 2013)
Places of Struggle

Other than the sources, sites and actors of the resistance, the significant place of the Kurdish resistance stated in the narratives brings us the motive of mountain which is called çiya in Kurdish. Mountain in its symbolic and actual meaning is a powerful image in the distant and recent Kurdish culture and collective Kurdish memory. It has “a special importance with regards to the links between the territory and the struggle”. 579

“Originally Kurds are the people of mountains... But mountains were the friends of the Kurds as you know, as everybody knows (smiling)... Mountain have the memory of desperation and insurrection of Kurds and Kurds have the memory of mountains.”

“We have always had an expectation from the mountains. For some reason the image of mountain is very strong in our lives. For instance, when you are in trouble, you raise your eyes towards the mountains as if asking the mountains to send a saviour for Kurds. This is the mountain that we have in our cultural memory.”

“The mountains have always been saviour for the Kurds. This has an originality... It means Kurds have never scared, Kurds have never abandoned their country... Seeing this line is crucial.... They were not afraid. They did not leave their country. They were never entirely exiled, but they were exiled in their own countries. Therefore, all Kurdish movements are set on the mountain, grown on the mountain and killed on the mountain...”

“If you cannot do politics in the city and when you once decide to revolt against the authority that is based in the city where would you go? Of course, you would go to the mountains.”

“Mountains have significance in the life of the Kurds outside of the struggle”. 580 This significance can be traced in Kurdish imagination and folk culture with its symbolic meanings. Similarly, the political Kurdish vocabulary extensively uses and adopts these symbolic motives that some of which gradually became politically loaded. In this regard, the cultural archetype of the mountain has an important place in the Kurdish political language/culture. “The cultural archetype of mountain, as the natural habitat of and ‘real’ life centres for the Kurds” 581, seems like to be transformed into the political culture as a natural place of the resistance. According to that, “since the cities belong to the strangers in which the life is artificial” 582 mountains arise as the real places and friends for Kurds who are asking for a ‘real’ life.

579 B. Siynem Ezgi Sarıtaş, Articulation of Kurdish Identity Through Politicized Music of Koms, Unpublished Master Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle Technical University, 2010, p.150
580 Ibid, p.152
582 Ibid.
In the 1990s however, the mountain has become the place of the PKK’s struggle and whether interviewees support it or not, they underline the fact that a social bind had been established between the society and the organization in those years. The massive participation of the Kurds, especially the Kurdish youth, to the PKK during the time, was the bind that was established between the Mountain and families via their children, relatives or the children of neighbours. In other words, as the Mountain had become home for their children, its meaning had become a more living motive.

H. The PKK and the Kurdishness: Continuum or Departure, Destructive or Constructive

After covering Kurdishness through the perceptions of the respondents and focusing on the changing repertoires among its components based on the narratives, it is necessary to ask the question whether the PKK is a continuum or departure with regards to Kurdishness or Kurdish history? As it is expected, among the respondents there are diversified answers to this question as well as diversified reasons for their answers:

“Different Kurdish movements have different leaders and different characteristics naturally, due to the historical periods that they have emerged in... But they are same in terms of sharing a single goal: They all have upraised for their political goals and they have all moved towards the establishment of a Kurdistan. For instance, I don’t agree with the interpretations that defined Sheik Said as a religious leader who was motivated and deceived by the British forces... In all Kurdish movements there is a line towards the Kurdish cause and towards Kurdistan. The point that differs the PKK from the predecessors is the new opportunities and instruments that the PKK has had which made it to know the modern world better than the formers. Since the PKK is a strategic and tactic movement... And for sure it has changed the Kurdish society as a whole (meant all parts of Kurdistan) enormously...”

“It is Kurdish but is a definite departure... When you compare with the previous nationalist movements for instance, the PKK is a departure since nationalism should be based on glorifying or at least giving a positive value to the particular ethnic identity that you speak to... In the PKK, we see that there is no value given to the Kurdishness but Kurdishness is harshly criticised and insulted... Yes, maybe paradoxically and whether you like it or not, with this discourse which insults the Kurdish identity, the PKK manage to change many things in the Kurdish society and today it is a hegemonic actor...”

In the narratives given above, the repeating theme of the PKK’s difference which resulted into both the perceptions of a continuum or departure, refers to the agreement among the interviewees which defines the PKK as an actor that changes Kurdish society regardless of defining this change positively or negatively. As another shared point in large, among the
interviewees, the PKK is acknowledged as a ‘Kurdish’ body. However, in almost every narrative, regardless of the final decision regarding the PKK as continuum or not, using the terms of continuum and departure in conjunction with each other is very significant. This can be translated as the reflection of the idea which suggests that the PKK is an ‘ideological departure from but a cultural continuum of Kurdishness’:

“It [the PKK] is Kurdish but I think it is different, is more like a departure... There are three main points that makes it different... I have never done a search on it so maybe I am wrong but according to my observations: first of all, the previous movements has a characteristic of having a link with a big, notable family or tribe... I mean, in a way, those movements were organized by the ones who were economically or socially privileged... In this sense, in all parts of Kurdistan, the PKK has a unique position. If you consider Barzani or Talabani, you would see that they are the leaders of the movements which are also affiliated with specific families and tribes... So, it is different...”

“Yes, the PKK is different from the previous Kurdish movements in many sense... It is socialist... In terms of its class structure, more importantly in terms of its leadership, it is very different... It has transformed the society, changed the settled relations and rigid rules in Kurdish society but at the end of the day, despite the differences and conflicting features, Öcalan is a Kurdish leader and the PKK is a Kurdish organization which represent the Kurdish Cause today...”

Another aspect of the topic that becomes clear through the implication in the last quote above and being approved by the following quotes below is the debate on the ‘ultimate agency’ of the overall of Kurdish picture. This debate on agency emerges in the narratives regardless of naming the PKK as a continuum or departure:

“It is a continuity without any hesitations or question marks. It is a continuum inevitably whether I approve or disapprove it... Since it is all about the Kurdishness... Yes, during its foundation years, in the first ten years let’s say, it defined itself as a departure and refused all other actors other than itself including the predecessors ... But in fact, the continuity is imposed to the PKK. When you bear in mind the Kurdish audience it speaks to, the masses I mean, there is no choice other than considering the characteristics and the sensibilities of this masses... So, the PKK was compelled to be a continuity. Its story cannot be taken either by itself or by anybody, out of the context of histories of Şeyh Ubedullah, Bedirxans, Sheik Said or Seid Rza... Yes, the PKK has been distinguished in this Kurdish history... By means of having an autonomous position among the Kurdish movements or by means of winning the game against its competitor Kurdish organizations but the history that it has put in its own story is the one that makes it... It is true that it has changed the sociology of Kurdistan dramatically and upside down the settled codes and customs, but this is not enough of being a departure from Kurdishness...”

“In fact, Öcalan awaken the dead Kurdishness and in a way, recreate it from the beginning whether we like or dislike it... It is of course a continuum since it is the
reason that today Turkish state and world acknowledge that there is something called Kurdish, Kurdish rights…”

“It is a departure since first of all, it is a secular and modern movement. It has modernised Kurdish politics, in fact it has modernized Kurdish society as a whole not only its politics… Former Kurdish movements were traditional as well as being religious. In this regard, it is a clear departure according to my understanding… It is Kurdish, it makes Kurdish keep alive…”

It is not definite whether the agency of the Kurdish history, is the PKK or Kurdishness by itself but it is definite that PKK cannot be imagined out of the context of Kurdishness whether it is an agency or just a contemporary actor in or of it. In some of the narratives, it can be seen that Kurdishness is perceived as a ‘supra politics’ by itself in which it is taken as a paradigm that is beyond and more than an ideology. This means, especially in the narratives that define Kurdishness as the agency of the overall Kurdish story, the PKK is just an ideology in the politics of Kurdishness.

Another remarkable debate that becomes visible through the narratives however, revolves around the question of whether the PKK is a constructive or destructive actor with regards to the Kurdishness. Before focusing on this debate, it is important to focus on the features of change that the PKK brought into the Kurdish field as it is part of the question above:

“The state violence and repression increased with the emergence of the PKK in the field. It (the state violence and repression) was diversified as much as it was widened. For instance, visits of soldiers to our villages became more frequent… But the visits of guerrillas became a phenomenon too… The intense and psychical encountering of two opposite armed forces in the field, resulted in the emergence of more specific types of torture method that were targeting the lives of ordinary Kurds… Our fathers, our relatives and people of the region in general had gone through series tortures…”

“The Turkish state could not manage to save us from the PKK. In fact, it did not want to protect us… They said, 'let them to bite/destroy each other’… The Kurds who did not support the PKK or would like to stay away from the trouble became the target of both…”

“Before the PKK, the social psychology was already ready for it. I mean, there was already a dominant Kurdish sensibility constituting the social climate. So, when the PKK came into the field, it brought a change not in terms of propaganda but in terms of organizational talent. The propaganda dimension was already done through the Radio Erivan and Şivan’s songs…”

“With the PKK the repression became sharp and the resistance became sharp too. With the emergence of the organization, a new type of authority became embodied in the in the minds of people… Not only in their minds but it also realized in their
lives. It is so clear that Kurds became more confident after the emergence of the PKK since it was the one that had been expected or waited for a long time…”

Apart from the ones above, through the narratives, the changing dynamics with the emergence of the PKK are mainly remembered and defined as the increasing violence which was largely stemming from the Turkish state but in several cases, were originated from the PKK too. The increasing self-confidence among Kurds is also defined as a changing factor which is independent from being in favour of the PKK or not. Regardless of approving it or not, the emergence of the idea among the people that an alternative authority was possible and the presence of an armed force capable of responding to armed force targeting Kurds, seems like impulsively resulted in the emergence of an overall self-confidence.

Before coming back to the question whether the PKK is a constructive or destructive force, ‘the success of the PKK’ emerges as another significant topic required to be noted. Through the narratives, it is understood that the ‘success’ of the PKK refers to its hegemonic position today and it is separately measured regardless of it being constructive or not:

“In my opinion it is a departure and actually being a departure makes it successful. When I say this, I still feel hesitant if it is morally right or not... All organizations before it, more or less, were subject to some traditional codes and norms including the student-based militant Kurdish organizations – which were established in Ankara or Istanbul then returned to Kurdistan - such as Kawa, PSYK and so on... They all tend to use an accountable violence. But the PKK is a fully modern organization. It started as an organization where there was no moral limitation of violence. It then took itself back to the moral borders. In this regard, it is a departure but being a departure does not always bring you the success. Or let’s say, this success has a price... After defining itself as a break, it headed again to fix the ties with the things that it damaged previously…”

“I define it as a continuity, but it is important to note that it actually upside down all traditional components of the Kurdishness especially in its first 10 or 15 years... In the Kurdish political sphere, it does not let any cultural, traditional Kurdishness to survive. In this sense it is destructive too... But it is a success story in all means... Kurds accepted Islam in 640 and 1400 years after that, a movement who also have anti-Islam features in its ideology managed to be successful in terms of gaining a massive support... How can you avoid naming it as a success, if it is the fact…”?

“It is a constructive movement... Since it made the Kurdishness to stand up again and redefined it. I also believe that it updated Kurdishness according to the needs and requirements of the time, century... Especially it brings freedom for women, you cannot imagine the importance of it ... I don’t mean that everything that the PKK had done was right and correct, but if you calculate the gains and losses, I think we gained more than we lost…”
“Yes, it was destructive when it comes to the traditional Kurdishness, but I also believe that it makes the Muslim Kurds to wake up from their mood of inertia…”

In the narratives other than the quotes above, it becomes clear that there is no dominantly shared or absolute idea in defining PKK as a constructive or destructive actor, but its constructive role is explained especially through the liberation of Kurdish women and through the “domino effect” that the PKK created among other Kurdish organizations or groups by means of triggering them to move towards forming a Kurdish agency in the social and political field. In other words, different Kurdish group are believed to discover their political potential through the prism of the dynamism that the PKK created in the Kurdish political field. Besides, it is also understood that defining the PKK as a constructive power in the field is not immune from criticisms especially with regards to its use of violence, especially against other Kurds. It seems that the “purificatory” violence\(^5\) of the PKK remains in the memories of the Kurds as much as the indiscriminative violence of the state. Yet, at some cases this two violence evokes each other.

On the other hand, the destructive role of the PKK is dominantly defined through the “discourse of treason” as it was another cultural archetype in the Kurdish heritage. The interviewees, either they finally define the PKK as a constructive or destructive actor, needs to highlight the discourse of treason that the PKK uses as tool for controlling the Kurdish filed. It is a repressive tool and has significant effect on the Kurdish political sphere:

“It is a continuity, but you have to ask what kind of continuity is that? Kurds pay for everything and they paid the price for the PKK too... Yes, today it represents the Kurdish cause but it does not mean that he accomplished it peacefully... Turkish state violated Kurdistan and the PKK did the same... Kurdistan turned into a violent geography because of the PKK too... Another thing is... According to the PKK, all sins of Kurdishness now belongs to the traditional Muslim Kurdishness... I mean, they say it was the religious Kurds or aghas or sheiks who killed the Armenians... In their understanding and terminology, they are the traitor Kurds... Being a traitor is defined as the characteristic of the traditional Kurds... To me, at the end of the day, the PKK is the name of project to domesticate and in the long run to remove the traditional Muslim Kurdishness from the political field. In fact, Muslim Kurdishness is actually the primary defining source of what is called Kurdishness…”

“In Kurdish culture there has always been the discourse of treason but let’s accept that the PKK has institutionalized and consolidated it. And today it is exercised not

only against the Kurds who are not in favour of the organization (the PKK) but against all Kurds who think or speak different than the organization. This is very repressive, no more no less... And we know that inside the organization there are many who suffered from this... As you know there is a practice what the PKK called ‘uygulama’ (treatment) that it exercised in Bekaa and in Kandil... By the way there is no equivalent word for this Turkish verb – uygulama- in Kurdish language you know! Let me share a quote with you and this is proved by my several conversations with different guerrillas... When you criticise the executive figures of the PKK or Öcalan – God forbids! - they take you to the treatment... You are isolated from everything during this treatment period... And the only way out of this, is giving a self- criticism in which you should be saying that you were not able to understand the leadership well, now you understand him better so you do yourself... Unless you do this self-criticism, none of the alternative defences can save you from this treatment..."

“I don’t want to go back to a Kurdish environment after the prison for a long period of time...Everything comes to me extremely hypocritical. After all the things my father and I had gone through for the struggle... The state violence in a way is more acceptable for me... I mean it is the Turkish state so no surprise to be tortured physically or psychologically by it... But in prison, it was the PKK... They tried to destroy you psychologically... This is much more worse than physical torture... Then after years, they said that the ones who did all those tortures to us were the spies of the Turkish state... No matter what they were... The PKK let them to do all those..."

“We have to accept that apart from the PKK, there is a second PKK today which is composed of the former members of it... We can name them as the PKK’s offended(s)/ resentful(s) or traitors... It is a fact that today there is a second PKK exist even in Turkey and in Diaspora...”

As already clarified in the quotes above, the discourse of treason seems to have an impact on everyday lives of Kurds too and it has become part of the PKK’s authority making process which is transmitted through the first-hand experiences but also through the ‘social echo’ that flows as a repressive factor which shapes the overall socio-political Kurdish sphere. This has an impact of conviction regarding the critical voices inside and outside of the PKK, which are -as a whole - constituting the components of Kurdish political field.

In the narratives, the issue of language, appears as another aspect of the destructive effect of the PKK with regards to the Kurdishness. As it is stated in the previous chapters, Turkish is the official language used in the PKK guerrilla camps. It is also known that Öcalan speaks far better Turkish than Kurdish. Accordingly, including Öcalan’s talks, writings, all official and media texts of the PKK are produced primarily in Turkish. For some of the interviewees, this is one of the indicators that the PKK refers to both a departure and destruction of the Kurdishness:
“First of all, he was not able to speak in Kurdish. I am not sure, even today, if he is capable of speaking Kurdish, but it is said that finally he learned some Kurdish. We know that lots of young Kurdish people learned Turkish in the mountain, not in the state schools. So, tell me what is the logic here? You are against Turkish colonialism, but you don’t have a problem to use its language. Even, (İsmail) Beşikçi puts it very clearly, thanks to the state and the PKK, that now we have the “Kurdish-speaking village guards and Turkish-speaking guerrillas”. Isn’t it weird, isn’t it destructive, you think?”

However, for some other interviewees, while speaking Kurdish is being approved as an indivisible part of the Kurdish identity, the PKK and Öcalan are suggested to be understood through a broader sociological perspective:

“Yes, right he did not speak Kurdish... But let’s think reversely, his theory in its essence is saying that the conditions that made him to be lack of speaking Kurdish was the colonial system. And he started a fight against this system in all means. So Kurdish people could manage to see this essence. From the beginning, people see him as a figure who is working for Kurds... Moreover, here I have another question: how can you manage to challenge the system if you don’t know its language?”

On the other hand, after going through the narratives entirely, it is almost impossible one’s not to realize that there is a solid, engraved idea among the respondents around which they gathered in the end. Although they don’t agree with each other in defining the agency of the Kurdish history, in naming the PKK as a continuum or departure or imagining Kurdistan as an independent state or not, they do all agree on the idea that the PKK cannot be thought without the context of Kurdishness. This refers to a common sense shared by the respondents that being Kurdish cannot be formulated or defined on subjective basis only, but it is an identity impulsively imagined through the prism of collectivity. This situation can be translated as: ‘There is no way out of Kurdishness’:

“It is important to note that, to note it for ourselves as Kurds too, the one who fights at the side of the PKK or the one who is working for the Kurdish rights in the legal field are both working for the same goal... They are all working for the common good of Kurds... They may have different methods, ideologies, future expectations but they are all Kurds. I am against to judge the Muslim Kurds, I mean the ones who do politics under the roof of AK party today... And likewise, they [Muslim Kurds] should not judge or deny the contributions of HDP to the Kurds and Turkish society...”

“Overall, for a Kurd, it is not very easy to say or appear with an excuse such as ‘I am departed from the Kurdishness’... First of it is not possible sociologically”
“There may be some Kurds who prefer to be independent individuals... May be there are some in the big cities like Istanbul or maybe in abroad... For instance, the second generation in diaspora... May be... but still it is not possible to escape from it... At the end of the day, a minimum sense of justice whether it comes through Islam or science, in one way or another, brings you to the issue, Kurdishness... Still, if there is any Kurd who is totally independent from Kurdishness or establish an individual life, then she/he is not Kurdish anymore... Since Kurdishness is the motherland by itself...”

I. Öcalan and the Kurdishness

The above quotes clearly display how the Kurdish cause is sanctified as an ultimate cause, and that because of this sacredness, the PKK which is perceived as the only remaining representative of the cause, has a meaningful position and function. What, then, is the specific relationship between Kurdishness and Öcalan? Or, when and how does Kurdishness become one of the strongest sources of the narrative of sacredness surrounding Öcalan in a defining way? In other words, when and how does the sacredness of the Kurdish cause turn into Öcalan’s sacredness? In this regard, Öcalan’s capture and arrest is a turning point and the interviewees say that the connection between Kurdishness and Öcalan was irrevocably established with his capture.

In previous chapter, it is covered that Öcalan’s capture on 15 February 1999, provokes tremendous demonstrations among Kurds both in Turkey and in different parts of Europe. As it is also stated previously, the period beginning with Öcalan’s departure from Syria and ending with his arrest in 1999, is referred to as the “Great Gladio/International Conspiracy” within PKK literature, based on the idea that his capture was planned and organized by NATO forces. The remembering of Öcalan’s arrestment among the interviewees is diverse but commonly defined as an “unforgettable moment” in Kurdish history. Regardless of approving him or not, except of the three of the interviewees who were neutral to his arrestment, the moment of his capture is remembered with every single details by the interviewees of this study and defined as a landmark in Kurdish history. His capture seems like to have a meaning beyond the political differences among Kurds and the “weight of the moment” has something to do with the Kurdishness and “Kurdishness that is embedded in the arrest of Öcalan” seems to become prominence compared to all other concerns:

‘With his capture the whole history came back... The dominant feeling among Kurds regardless of supporting Öcalan or not, was something like this: Again they take us, again they capture us... As they did in the past they would kill us again... Just like they killed Sheik Said, just like they killed Seid Rıza, they would kill Öcalan too... In a way, in the eye of Kurds, the history was repeating itself but the for the first time
people had the idea that ‘this should not happen ever again’. This was a defining stance among us and mobilized people significantly at the time. And as you know, following his capture, the Kurds did not keep quite but a huge activism began with all means, violent and nonviolent. It was a moment which also showed that nothing would be same for Kurds as before’ (Personal Interview, Male, Age 33, September 2013, Istanbul)

“I remember the demonstrations in Paris. People who had concerns or criticisms about Öcalan were all there and people were surprised to see each other among the protestors. It was such a big crowd... And especially the ones who were harshly critical about Öcalan before, seemed like to be effected the most. They were in the forefront of the walk…” (Personal Interview, Female, Age 40, Istanbul, December 2017)

‘Since I had no sympathy towards him or the movement, I did not feel humiliated or insulted but I have to say that this was not the general feeling among Kurds. At those days I remember a remarkable conversation with one of the leading figures of Hizbullah movement and I still remember it very clearly. I met him [member of Hizbullah movement] on plane and we began to talk on Öcalan’s arrestment. He told me that when he saw Öcalan’s images on TV and newspapers, in which his eyes were closed by a black bandage and he was portrayed as a ‘captive enemy’, he felt being humiliated and insulted... Imagine that these organizations [PKK and Hizbullah] were deadly enemies to each other and the person who felt as I described was not an ordinary Hizbullah sympathizer. He told me that at the end of the day Öcalan was a Kurd... This still comes to me very remarkable and describes how Kurds felt in large during the time.” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 42, December 2017, Istanbul)

‘We regarded him only in a specific manner so we expected him to punch the table and make an honourable defence following his arrestment... He did not reply our expectations. In fact, he could easily play the role that we attributed to him at which he is really successful but he did not... Despite us, he always knows to do the right thing in difficult or dangerous times or at the moments of life or death... Overall, at first I was disappointed but at the back of my mind I also had the idea that ‘he knows something better than us’ [bir bildiği vardır]. In our subconscious, there has always been a door which is open to him...’ (Personal Interview, Male, Age 49, Brussels, December 2015)

However, it is understood that remembrance of Öcalan’s capture has two directions for the interviewees: First one is the way he was arrested and presented by the state. Second, is Öcalan’s state of being in the plane, his body language and his first statements. All of these moments are remembered in a wide range of emotions, such as shock, astonishment, anger, sadness, desperation, humiliation and despair which emerged against the state or him and against both of them. “What he would say or how he would speak?” however, is defined as the prior question that many Kurds have in the mind when they first received the news of his arrestment:
“What he would say, in fact, how he would defend us or how he would defend our cause was the unique question in our minds. When he said those things [my mother is Turkish and I am ready to collaborate with the Turkish state], the first thing we thought was him to be drugged by the state and it is still what I believed. Of course, at the time, we expected him to make an historical speech and die for the Kurdish cause if necessary…” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 49, Brussels, December 2015)

“For me, his first sayings and later on his statements during the Imrali court was a total disappointment. I felt being betrayed and I felt like a stupid person so I was angry with him, with myself and with everything... Just before he was arrested, I was seriously thinking on going to the Mountain and I mean I was about to attend the PKK. After his arrestment, I sharply departed from the movement as a reaction. I could not take it serious for a long time and he was a like another betrayer for me. Of course today this is not my view, I can see the reasons better today, but during the time, this was my psychology.” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 33, September 2013, Istanbul)

“His image on the plane was unbelievably effected people. Those images were spread by the Turkish state and media on purpose. It was not acceptable, not acceptable at all... His eyes were closed with a black bandage, he seemed like to be feared, the state officials were in a mood of victory... And to see all these things, was unacceptable not only for the sympathizers of the movement but even for the Sheiks or opposing Kurds. That picture meant one specific message for the Kurds: Kurdishness was insulted one more time. Kurdish honour was humiliated...” (Personal Interview, Female, Age 41, Diyarbakır, March 2014)

“I did not have any sympathy towards him but I have always understood what he meant for Kurdish people so in this regards the movement has a legitimacy in my view. So when he was arrested, I still expected him to make a strong speech which once again would clarify the PKK’s mission for its followers and more importantly would meet the expectation of Kurdish people who suffered a lot, also because of supporting or even sympathizing the PKK. When I heard his statements first, which was supported by his testimonies during the trials, I felt a deep embarrassment... Even I expected more than this from him and I felt so sorry for all those young and old people who suffered or died for this movement...’ (Personal Interview, Female, Age 52, March 2013, Diyarbakır)

As Bruinessen states, Öcalan images that had been circulated in Turkish media “had the obvious intention of destroying Öcalan's charisma by showing him as a broken and weak man ready to betray his cause.” Some of the interviewees stated that because of the despair as well as deep disappointment, they went through a “mourning period” which is also described as in the form of a “collective psychological depression” among Kurds. In the first days of Öcalan arrestment, some of the Kurds did not shave, wore in black and women cried for days. His arrestment refers

584 Martin van Bruinessen, “Turkey, Europe and the Kurds after the capture of Abdullah Öcalan”, in Martin van Bruinessen, Kurdish ethnonationalism versus nation-building states, Istanbul, The ISIS Press, 2000, available at: https://dspace.library.uu.nl/bitstream/handle/1874/20700/bruinessen_00_turkeyeuropeandthekurdsoalan.pdf?sequence=1
to a clear “crisis of meaning” which is understood as one of the main factors in the emergence of violence against oneself, namely the self-sacrificial violence.

The wave of the self-sacrificial violence that emerged following the arrest of Abdullah Öcalan refers to a sudden and dramatic loss of the belief and hope among Kurds and seems like fundamentally being shaped by the impossibility of better or a new world for Kurds. “This violence involves denouncing a world that has become unbearable more than transforming it”. This type of violence, with a reference to Albert Camus, is also named as a “nihilist violence” by Bozarslan, according to which in the absence of a constructive self-realization possibility and in lack of compromise via action, the violence appears as the only condition of the act of becoming a subject for its user. It is also a subjective violence through which “the individuals might seek to preserve the purity of their own engagement, body and mind, by using violence”. It seems that there is also a driving motive behind this type of violence which aims to or search for giving a meaning to the world which had no meaning in life, thus acquires a meaning through death or the one embodies meaning itself through dying. This is where the one who dies “becoming a meaning” by him or herself. In this regard as Bozarslan suggests it is a “messianic violence” that is “understood as cosmic or apocalyptic violence through which the actor experiences violence as detonating extreme event that will radically transform reality”.

On the other hand, even though creating a deep meaning crisis and despair among Kurds, the capture of Öcalan is also marked as a “new beginning” for the Kurds in terms of his capture clarified the Kurdish will and stance which would definitely not allow to be pacified or repressed -even in the loss of its leader- once again. In this regard, Öcalan’s capture refers both to a ‘death’ and ‘birth’, namely to a ‘rebirth’ for Kurdishness. The biggest success of Öcalan however is defined as “his ability to survive in Prison” and this has become in the later stage

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586 However, “the Kurdish response to Öcalan’s capture showed clearly to what extent the Kurdish national movement has become a transnational phenomenon”. Martin van Bruinessen, “Turkey, Europe and the Kurds after the capture of Abdullah Öcalan”, in Martin van Bruinessen, Kurdish ethnonationalism versus nation-building states, Istanbul, The ISIS Press, 2000, available at: https://dspace.library.uu.nl/bitstream/handle/1874/20700/bruinessen_00_turkeyeuropeandthekurdsoocalan.pdf?sequence=1
587 Kevin McDonald, Our Violent World: Terrorism in Society, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p.179
589 Ibid.
one of the sources of his sacralization as a modern Kurdish leader who is capable of surviving even being captured by the “enemy”. This is perceived as the victory of a single man against a giant state:

“His main success and what makes him an absolute and mythic sacred figure was him managing not to die. Until him every Kurdish movement emerged and died with the death of their leaders. At the end of every uprising there was a failure and at the end the leader was killed following his capture. Öcalan has changed this fate and has become a sacred figure despite he did not die’ (Personal Interview, Male, Age 34, April 2014, Istanbul)

Being different from the previous leaders in terms of “managing not to die” dialectically is the result of the failure of being captured. The failure however is the phenomena which links Öcalan’s story with the history of previous Kurdish movements and their leaders such as Sheik Said, Barzani or Seyid Rıza. In the Kurdish history and collective memory, Kurdish leaders being failed – either in the form of being captured, exiled or killed- is a repeating element of the national repertoire and this where the history of the PKK is connected with the history of Kurdish movements through Öcalan:

“It is common to all of those leaders that they failed or at least this is the common point that Öcalan shared with the others in the mind of Kurdish people. Öcalan has lost too and he is a victim now. Kurds think that he has been in prison for 15 years, did not ask anything for himself and he is in prison for us. He still did not ask anything for himself. Sheik Said failed, Seyid Rıza failed too. And they became heroes following their failures and victimhood. They became mythic leaders. All of the Kurdish leaders hast lost in a way and this is one of the aspect of the way how they have achieved a great respect among Kurdish society” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 34, April 2014, Istanbul)

Section III: Öcalan’s Investment on Women and Youth

“My significant memory from those days is; when the soldiers came to our village my mother, like the other mothers in the village, was the one who stayed at home. This meant for you, as a child, that she was the one who defended the home and the family. Indeed, it became a solid idea in my mind during those days although I have never voiced it even to myself before that but fathers were the ones who were leaving home and mothers were the ones staying with us. This is how your trust and loyalty increased towards your mother. This was one of the facts that has made women dominant over time.” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 39, Istanbul, January 2016)

“The violence of the state and also the violence of the PKK, discredited and humiliated Kurdish men in a radical way. I am not talking only about the brutal violence, torture or death. But I mean the symbolic violence and humiliation that the Kurdish men had been exposed to. If you could not endure the torture in prison and
if you talked, which was, indeed, a common case, then your social repetition was over. Even if you endure the torture, somehow, they found a way to make you to bow your head. You lose your credibility in your social network and this was the case for Kurdish men in the 1990s. There was significant price both to be or not to be part of the Kurdish movement at those times. But the issue was and is more than being tortured or death... In the ‘absence’ of men, both in its physical and symbolic means, women had to take new roles to keep the family together and to save family’s honour. After passing through a violent corridor stemming from both sides, Kurdish men had already lost their self-esteem and social credibility which I believe, in the long run, had a significant impact on increasing women political activism. Öcalan saw this fact very well and used it to strength the movement” (Personal Interview on March 2013, Istanbul, Male, 33)

Since arguments similar to those above are stated repeatedly by the women interviewees of this study too, starting women section with two quotes from men may still sound paradoxical. However, this neither prioritizes men's perspective on the issue nor defines the role of violence as the sole cause of the increase in women’s activism or involvement in the Kurdish political field. On the contrary, these two quotes are important in terms of showing how significantly the conditions have changed not only for Kurdish women but also for Kurdish men in the last forty years’ period. Thus, as stated earlier, the interviewees of this study define Öcalan’s “investment in women and youth” as a significant theme that helps to explain his leadership and PKK’s hegemonic position in the Kurdish political sphere today; which is also a theme that primarily refers to a ‘process of change’. Indeed, this is what has been clarified through the previous section: Despite the variety of perceptions regarding it, there is an agreement among the interviewees on defining the PKK as a movement that has changed the Kurdish society, regardless of their understanding of this change as being totally positive or negative. And women are the prior actors of the ‘story of change’. Besides defining the change that the PKK has brought to the Kurdish political and social field through the changing status and position of Kurdish women, Ocalan’s impact on women and youth, is regarded by the interviewees as being among the sources of the sacred political narrative that revolves around him. Therefore, in order to understand these theses in depth that refer to both a ‘change’ and ‘sacralization’; and to grasp the relation between these two dynamics, it is important to recall the status of Kurdish women in Kurdish and Turkish society before and after the PKK.

A. Women as Sacred Symbols of National Modernization

The women in Turkey, have always been the site and locus where conflicting ideologies and politics define and voice themselves as well as struggle with one another. In a newly founded nation state whose prior goal was to prove itself as being part of the ‘modern civilization’, women immediately became the most potent ‘sphere’ and ‘surface’ of the mission that the new
rule owners would like to accomplish vis-a-vis the old Ottoman rule and in the face/eye of modern states’ club.

In fact, the Republican modernizers were ‘...quite aware that European perception of the Turks [was] sharply conditioned by an orientalist view that saw the Islamic lifestyle as one that confines women behind harem walls and by images of veiled women as a symbol of oppression and barbarism’.\textsuperscript{591} Therefore, “in early Republican Turkey, the government’s nationalizing and secularizing project implemented many reforms related to women”\textsuperscript{592} in order to underline its break from the Ottoman past through the claim of saving women from ‘reactionary oppression’. Equality among men and women was the defining promise of the new regime so that the adoption of the Swiss Civil Code in 1926 abolished polygamy, granted equality for women with men in divorce, inheritance and custody over children.\textsuperscript{593} In 1934, women gained the right to vote and being elected. Unification of the national education in 1924 however, was the framework that had already granted the right to education for women. These reforms which empowered women in several ways, in fact, were strictly connected to the ideological and functional conditions of the modern national project in which ‘gender concerns were side-lined for the more pressing issue of “the national question”’.\textsuperscript{594}

As the prior topic under the agenda of ‘the national question’ was to prove the modern, progressive and civilized features of the Turkish state and society, shaping ‘the image of desired citizen’ was indispensable part of the Republican reform process. Accordingly, as Atatürk clearly defined it, the one “who says he is civilized should demonstrate it in his way of dressing”.\textsuperscript{595} Thus beginning from the early years of the Republic, while the public sphere has being reconstructed and secularized, a Republican fashion was invented on the basis of Western dressing codes and was officially supported by the state as an ‘appropriate way for citizens to appear’ in the public sphere. The clothing regulations were conducted to keep religious

\textsuperscript{593} However, it also preserved the male dominance within the family by, for example, identifying the husband as the head of the family, by ruling the necessity of husband’s permission for the wife to work outside the home, as well as the resignation of the family’s residence, and allowing custody to the husband in case there is a disagreement in the divorce process (Gül Çorbacıoğlu, Feminist Discussions on the Headscarf Problem in Turkey: Examination of Three Women’s Journal; Feminist Yaklaşımlar, Kadın Çalışmaları Dergisi, Amargi, Unpublished ME Thesis, Submitted to The Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University), 2008, p. 57 .
\textsuperscript{594} Niall Gilmartin, “Feminism, nationalism and the re-ordering of post-war political strategies: the case of the Sinn Féin Women's Department”, Irish Political Studies, 32: 2, 268-292, 2017.
symbolism out of public life and more importantly to produce a change in ‘social mentality’. The appearance of the citizen, her mentality and therefore her potential for the nation’s ‘progress’ was taken to be identical and according to Atatürk ‘to oppose Western dress was to choose to live with superstitions and ideas of middle ages, instead of embarrassing civilization that could dig holes in mountains, fly in the skies, and observe things ranging from molecules, which could not be seen with the naked eye, to stars’.596

Therefore, the veil of women and the Ottoman fes of men were both banished by the new legal framework.597 Although the fashion of Republic offered a Western appearance both for men and women, the women issue had always been pivotal. The veiling of women was ‘perceived to symbolize the sign of the rejected of Ottoman past and backwardness; while unveiling marked the commitment of women to new reforms, to the new secular regime, principles of gender equality, and development’.598 ‘The anxiety of belatedness’ among the Turkish modernisers, essentialized the mobilization of the women in the nation building project because women had the capacity to ‘rapidly’ make the Kemalist reforms visible to both the nation itself and also to the world. Therefore, women were imagined as the ‘bodies’ through which the struggle between the ‘old’ and ‘new’ order – which also referred to a struggle for transition from a ‘traditional’ to a ‘modern’ society- would be visualized as an ‘immediate evidence’ of change in favour of the new rule.

Women as ‘bodies’ were important not only because of being the ‘signifier’ of the modern but also being its ‘producer’. The ideal of creating the New Man of the Republic as part of ‘the national question’ was directly defined as the mission of women as they were imagined as the ‘kind’ who would give birth of the new future generations. As feminist studies adequately demonstrate it the national fictions and projects are gendered in nature and “nationalism has typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized

596 Ibid.
597 The Ottoman fes replaced with the Republican hat by The Hat Law of 1925, which was, indeed, one of the most resisted Kemalist reforms which resulted in many fes-wearers being sentenced of imprisonment, and even a few hanged. During Ottoman era, different religious communities were using different hat styles. Wearing different hats was the most important sign that distinguishes Muslim community from the Christian one. Every community member had to wear a hat according to its community code otherwise it was never welcomed. During the modernization reforms in Ottoman Era, when fes was first introduced as a wearing code by the Sultan II. Mahmut, as part of his modernization initiatives, he received negative reactions from the Muslim public that he was even called “gavur Padişah”, means non-Muslim or ‘infidel’. On the other hand, during the Republican era, when the Western style of hat became a rule, symbolically it was perceived as a sign of becoming non-Muslim. The Hat Law sought to erase these social differences among its citizens, as well as the difference between Turkey and other perceived ‘modern’ and ‘civilized’ nations (Cinar, 2008; 2005; Kandiyoti, 1997; Olson 1985).
hope” and this was also the case for Turkey. Therefore, through a patriarchal imagination that men performed the ‘father role’ on the basis of being the ‘war force’ behind the liberation of the nation, women were imagined as ‘mothers’ of the nation as the producers of the ‘moral force’. Overall, the importance of women as ‘bodies’ was not only biologically functional but symbolically too so that women in Turkey have gradually become the centre of the public attention as the figures whose bodies turned into a ‘conflict zone’ and ‘sacred symbols’ of competing patriarchal ideologies.

The Turkish woman who had to appear as modern as Western women however was certainly ‘Turkish’ which was defined through her sexual modesty. The ‘Turkish’ woman or the ‘woman of Turkishness’ was emancipated by the Kemalist reforms and was literally unveiled but as Kandiyoti describes it, all these necessitated “compensatory symbolism and a new veil – that of sexual repression”600. Although veiling was removed, it was replaced by an invisible metaphoric veil, which was ‘the veil of defeminisation’. This endorsed the ‘modern and modest’ characteristic of Turkish woman, which was also historically grounded in the ‘presumed (preIslamic) Anatolian traditional traits – thus they represented the nationalist project’.

The construction process of this ‘modern, modest and certainly Turkish’ woman also envisioned her as having urban origins, and clearly treated the women with rural, religious and ethnic components in their identities as ‘out of topic’, namely out of ‘the modern’. Moreover, these women gradually turned into the ‘others’ of modernization process in which they were seen as ‘primitive’, ‘reactionary’ and ‘backward’ figures of womanhood with their lack of education and the resulting lack of ‘agency’.

As a matter of fact, the national education which aimed to transform society had a particular interest in the education of women ‘because the backwardness of women could not only retard society as a whole but it could form an obstacle to the process of the modernization of the nation. The idea was that women should be enlightened for the enlightenment of the nation’602. In his speech given in 1923, Atatürk highlighted the importance of education to create the ‘new’ Turkish woman as follows:

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According to this, women had a mission to improve the happiness or well-being of society. The way of doing so or the condition for it, was to raise educated future generations. However, women’s domestic roles or duties were clearly taken for granted in this new discourse. Women were encouraged to be educated primarily for the benefit of educating their children who, in turn, would become the next generation of the new Republic. This illustrates the fact that women were not imagined as fully independent or active agents in society, but they were given attention because of their ‘instrumental role’ in changing society according to predetermined ideals of the new state. In other words, the change that was proposed to women refers to a process in which, alongside their traditional roles and duties, women were assigned additional communitarian ideals, collective duties and national mission that suggested them to take part in the national modernization project and improve it.

In the Kemalist project, as the mothers, daughters or teachers of Republic, women were mainly imagined as the biological and ideological ‘reproducers’ of the new order, ‘transmitters’ and ‘transformers’ of the Republican culture and the ‘definers’ and ‘defenders’ of the modern national norm through which they gradually became the symbols of community spirit. This refers to womanhood as a virtual zone of conflict through which patriarchal ideologies compete and struggle with each other so that women became the symbols of the dichotomy between the ‘progress’ and ‘deterioration’ of the community. This process can be also interpreted as the fragmentation of the womanhood in Turkey as it was a process that simultaneously signified the differences among women and employed exclusion towards specific women groups.

On the other hand, it is wrong to see women as the passive recipients and practitioners of the male order. As Chatterjee states, ‘women were active participants in the processes of nation state building even when their voices were not heard, and even if women found themselves subjected to a new patriarchal order. That only men’s voices were heard doesn’t necessarily mean that there were no other voices’.

603 Tezer Taşkiran, Women in Turkey, (Translated by Nida Tektas, Edited by Anna G. Edmonds), Istanbul: Redhouse Yaynevi, 1976, p.56. The speech was given in Izmir in 1923.

B. Fragmented Womanhood and Feminisms in Turkey

Although the first wave of feminism in Turkey that was later called as ‘state feminism’ was highly attached with the founding ideology of the newly established state, the second wave of feminism that emerged in the 1980s, following the coup d’état of 12 September, was independent from the state even though it still had a clear modernist Turkish approach. It was different from the first wave of feminism in terms of being ‘critical about the communitarian ideal [of the national project] that emancipated women as “citizens” rather than as “women”’. This critical stance mainly stemmed from women’s political experience in the male dominated political organizations of the 1960s and 1970s in which they were generally sexless or masculinized in order to be taken politically seriously by their male counterparts. So that, these educated women of urban origin were ‘consciously awake’ to the patriarchal essence of the competing modern ideologies and the coup d’état paradoxically brought an increase in women’s feminist activism by means of ruining the male dominant political field.

In the 1980s ‘women started to act as “women” on their behalf with demands concerning their oppression and subordination in the patriarchal and sexist social structure’. They mainly campaigned against the violence and discrimination that targeted women. However, the official framework that excluded ethnic and religious women identities was not challenged by this second wave of feminism. They were not immune from the ‘public transcript’ that was based on negative stereotypes so that at the time Muslim or Kurdish women could only find a place in feminist debates when there was a need to exemplify the oppression of women either by ‘reactionary Muslim men’ or ‘backward tribal men’. Therefore, the second wave of feminism was not capable of considering the diversified and fragmented women lives, problems and demands. Nevertheless, their dynamism ‘initiated a number of attempts to institutionalize the women’s movement’ in Turkey.

By the 1990s however, the third wave of feminism emerged through the input of Kurdish and Muslim movements. ‘Similar to the black and lesbian feminists’ challenge to the second wave of Western feminism for its white and heterosexual background, the Kurdish and Islamist

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605 The first way of feminism in Turkey “was dominated by urban, Western, middle-class, ethnically Turkish and educated women” (Diner & Toktas, ibid., 2010, p. 56). It is not wrong to say that those women were coming from economically and socially privileged classes and being perceived as the ‘trusted girls’ of the notable families who connected with Kemalist circles in terms of supporting modernization and Westernization attempts of the state.
606 Gül Çorbacıoğlu, ibid., p.58
607 Metin Yüksel, Diversifying Feminism in Turkey in the 1990s, A Master Thesis Submitted to the Department of Political Science and Public Administration Bilkent University, 2003, p. 39
feminists raised criticism against Turkish mainstream feminists for being ethno-centric and exclusionary of other identities. In this period, both the Kurdish and Muslim women began to express themselves through the civil society activism and by means of the publication of number of journals associated with their civil society organizations. Although they had been labelled in the public script as ‘eastern’, ‘uneducated’, ‘rural’, ‘reactionary’, ‘non-modern’, ‘backward’, ‘uncivilized’ or ‘domestic’ women, the Muslim and Kurdish women profiles in the 1990s were challenging the stereotypes and categorizations based on binary oppositions, by means of these women’s urbanized, educated and socially and politically active characteristics.

When it comes to the Kurdish feminism in particular, it is important to note that, as it was stated in their magazines frequently, Kurdish feminists, by and large acknowledged the impact of Turkish feminism on themselves. Despite this influence, as Çaha states, ‘Kurdish women’s groups advocated the idea that Turkish feminists showed indifference to their problems through ignoring the subjective problems of Kurdish women under the general template of feminism’.

Overall, the 1990s refers to a new phase for the feminist movement in Turkey by means of a new, differentiated, diversified and periphery-based knowledge provided to the feminist field by the Kurdish and Muslim women’s involvement. This also led the mainstream feminist groups to reconsider their existing approaches regarding women’s liberation, their relations with the official ideology and with other women groups in society. Beginning from the 1990s, it is not wrong to say that, a more plural women’s agenda by diversified women agencies was brought to the public space which contributed to the overall women’s interest. As a result, the Kurdish and Muslim women were acknowledged by the mainstream feminism in sense of feminist unity more than before. That is to say, gender identity and agency of the Kurdish and Muslim women began to be perceived prior to their ethnic or religious identities in this era.

609 Ibid., p.47
610 In the 1990s among the leading journals of Kurdish feminists there were Roza, Jujin, Yaşamda Özgür Kadın and Jin u Jiyan” (Taşdemir, ibid., p. 60) and four leading religious Muslim women’s non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were Baskent Kadın Platformu-BKP (Capital Women’s Platform, Ankara); Hazar Grubu (Caspian Group); Ayrımçılığa Karsi Kadın Hakları Derneği-AKDER (Women’s Rights Association Against Discrimination), and Hanımlar Eğitim ve Kultur Vakfı-HEKVA (Women Education and Culture Foundation).
611 Migration to the big cities was a factor for this.
612 For instance, “a woman writing in Roza puts this into words as follows: “we learned a lot from Turkish women. We learned how to perform an action by ourselves, to act with solidarity and to place reliance.” In a similar fashion, a woman writing in Jin u Jiyan states that they learned from Turkish feminists “that the private is political, that all women of the world are sisters and how the woman consciousness can be raised,” though their opinions on and solutions offered for the woman problem are different ( Ömer Çaha, “The Kurdish Women’s Movement: A Third-Wave Feminism Within the Turkish Context”, Turkish Studies, Vol. 12, No. 3, 2011, p. 439).
However, Kurdish and Muslim women’s criticisms about their counterparts and disclosure of hypocrisy of the men within these movements was another crucial aspect that the feminism in Turkey benefitted from. For instance, while the Muslim women accused the movement’s men of using the ‘headscarf card’ as a political tool with an unwillingness to solve the problem, Kurdish women were critical of the Kurdish patriarchy even in the realm of ‘modern revolutionaries’. The contribution of the presence, activism, rational, demands and criticisms of the Kurdish and Muslim women’s movement to the public sphere and the dialogical environment created during the time, resulted in a change in the political discourse and the organizations of these political movements.

C. Kurdish Women in Kurdish Society

Kurdish women are one of the most disadvantaged groups in Turkey in terms of being exposed to a multi-layered “oppression and subordination due to both their gender and ethnic origin”614. As elaborated above, they were exposed to the discriminative approach of Turkish modernization because of their religious, rural and traditional gender identity and they were translated into official vocabulary as the ‘eastern’ and ‘backward’ women figures. “The concept of the ‘east’ has a significant place in making the Kurds and the ethnic aspect of the Kurdish question invisible”615. So that ‘eastern women’ as phrase to call Kurdish women referred to “a category of women, which modernization has not as yet been able to reach; a category of women, which does not as yet benefit from the Republican reforms concerning women”616. With the emergence of the PKK however, they began to be discriminated and oppressed because of their ethnic identity, namely due to being ‘Kurdish’ women. In the Kurdish context however, they were subordinated compared to men because of the culture that was traditionally patriarchal. “Therefore, they were faced with family and social oppression due to their gender identity”617.

614 Mehtin Yüksel, Diversifying Feminism in Turkey in the 1990s, A Master Thesis Submitted to the Department of Political Science and Public Administration Bilkent University, 2003, p.iii
615 Handan Çağlayan, “From Kawa the Blacksmith to Ishtar the Goddess: Gender Constructions in Ideological-Political Discourses of the Kurdish Movement in post-1980 Turkey”, European Journal of Turkish Studies [En ligne], 14 | 2012, available at: http://journals.openedition.org/ejts/4657
616 Ibid.
As Çağlayan elaborates it, “geographically, Kurds are considered as the inhabitants of what is called the patriarchal belt” in which there is a clear distinction between men and women in terms of division of labour, status, gender roles and responsibilities. Religion (Mainly Sunni Islam in Turkey’s case) and communal culture are fundamental parts what it means to be a Kurd. As it is the case in many other traditional societies, the hierarchy of gender is in favour of men and women have a secondary status of the women. As Hassanpour claims, the gender inequality and patriarchal distinction between men and women is inherited in the Kurdish language too and the gender difference is briefly reflected in commonly used Kurdish sayings such as “jin jin e, mer mer e” that means ‘woman is woman and man is man’. In this linguistic context which disclose the cultural context, men are associated with power, honesty, brevity and women are depicted in the world of the weak and the needy. Therefore, Kurdish men are dominant in the public sphere, while the private sphere is defined as the home of the Kurdish women. The ‘holy trinity’, namely ‘the home-the family and the child’, is drawn as the ‘land of Kurdish womanhood’ and Kurdish women are mainly ruled by two fundamental virtues of Kurdish culture which are namus (honor) and shame.

In Kurdish nationalism of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, during the attempts to imagine and define a modern Kurdishness (and very much inspired by the Western orientalist writings) Kurdish women were mainly depicted ‘as strong figures on the basis them of being the symbols and boundary-markers of an imagined Kurdish nation’. Although in traditional Kurdish society there have been powerful women figures who run the tribal affairs or perform as peacemakers, until recently, it was hard to see Kurdish women as part of public life either though political or economic activity. The 1970s however was when Kurdish women, who were mainly coming from wealthy families and educated, began to take part in political activism with minor steps and following the military coup of 1980, like their Turkish counterparts, they ‘started to organise themselves more actively and started to take shape in metropoles independent of

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political parties, Turkish feminism and men"⁶²¹ and as communities of Kurdish women’s magazines⁶²².

As stated by many of the interviewees in this study, the emergence of the PKK was a landmark beginning from the 1980s for Kurdish women regardless of their being in favour of the PKK and Öcalan or not. But the PKK’s claim of creating a new modern Kurdishness by means of transforming society, in the long run, radically changed gender relations and roles in Kurdish society. Before the establishment and acknowledgement of a hegemonic gender norm by the PKK however, the destructive impact of conflicting violence(s) that surrounded Kurdish lives is stated as the prior reason that led Kurdish women significantly to take part both in legal and illegal fields of the political sphere. As one of the interviewees stated and has been quoted previously⁶²³, overall Kurdish women like the Kurdish people in general, ‘took to the streets primary to claim their memories’ in the 1990s which also refers to a raising Kurdish consciousness among them. For this reason, the second primary reason behind the increasing women dynamism in the 1990s, is defined as the ‘Kurdish Cause’ by the interviewees.

Thus, throughout the 1990s, Kurdish women significantly became visible and pioneering actors in political activities, protests, mass demonstrations, namely serhildan⁶²⁴ and Newroz celebrations. ‘The involvement in this process of the Kurdish mothers, namely Saturday Mothers, who waited for their children outside the prisons and who lost children to armed conflict brought the work of the Kurdish Women’s Movement in Turkey to the mainstream, thereby differentiating it from the earlier women’s movements’ ⁶²⁵. Particularly in the case of Saturday Mothers but as a general analysis too, the interviewees defines the unique contribution of women activism to the Kurdish field in the 1990s as an ‘enlightening impact’ on Turkish public since it ‘shattered the ignorance’:

“I think that the presence of Kurdish women in politics, helped Kurdish issue to become more understandable and favourable for the Turkish public. At least, this is the case for some of the segments of the Turkish society. Especially, the reaction of

⁶²³ Chapter III, under the title of Role of Violence, p.
⁶²⁴ See Chapter II
⁶²⁵ Münevver Azizoğlu Bazan, ibid., p. 4.
Kurdish mothers (meaning Saturday Mothers) was the first thing that shattered the Turkish ignorance regarding Kurdish issue…” (Personal Interview 22 March 2015, Diyarbakır, Female, Age 53)

Leyla Zana however was a significant woman figure in the 1990s as she was the first Kurdish woman elected to the Turkish parliament, and her 14 years’ imprisonment after adding Kurdish words to her official oath constitutes a landmark in the Kurdish women movement as she became the symbol of struggle for the rights of the Kurdish people. This incident, paradoxically encouraged Kurdish women to participate more actively in the political parties.

As legal and illegal Kurdish political fields mutually affected each other, the 1990s similarly indicated a dynamism at the illegal side of the Kurdish political sphere. The first women involvements to the PKK started in the late 1980s and it gradually increased during the 1990s when, as Çağlayan states it, reached ‘such a scope that it affected the overall gender composition of the movement’s militants'. It has been said that one third of the militants were women in these years. Compared to the women who were a few and had peripheral background in the 1980s however, in the 1990s ‘a huge number of politically conscious and educated women, also from Europe' joined to the PKK. Before the 1990s, the main driving force for women to join the PKK was ‘a growing awareness of the oppression of the Kurds in Turkey, searching for a Kurdish identity and a socialist life model. Women fled from unprivileged positions or forced marriages'. In the 1990s however, ‘women were also aware that the Kurdish movement addressed them as women who are assigned the responsibility of changing society and women who have the potential of fulfilling this responsibility'. Therefore, today, the PKK is said to be ‘the armed organization which has largest number of female guerrillas in the world'.

Consequently, motivations of women in both the legal and illegal fields look very much alike. The loss or imprisonment of family members, facing human rights violations, the effect of surrounding violence(s), mistreatments and discrimination were the defining reasons for the Kurdish women in the 1980s and the early 1990s to be part of the Kurdish political field in general. So, ‘the role of violence’ and reactions against the oppression of Kurds- which refers

626 Zana stated that women figures with guns in their hand under the roof of the PKK, was a factor that made her to have a courage to step in political activism.

627 Handan Çağlayan, ibid., 2012, available at: http://journals.openedition.org/ejts/4657

628 Özcan, 1999 quoted in Çağlayan, ibid.

629 Salima Taşdemir, ibid., p.84


631 Salima Taşdemir, ibid., p. 181.

632 Ibid., p. 83
to national issue as it called Kurdish Cause - was at the centre of these women’s agendas of involvement. With this regard, it is not wrong to say that, the armed conflict, physical and symbolic violence targeted Kurdish society and more importantly its ‘human cost’ obliged women to be part of the political sphere. As most of the interviewees mentioned, on the one hand, women involvement in political space in its early forms was a ‘compulsory participation’. It was ‘compulsory’ in the sense of being shaped predominantly by the violence factor but also left women very little space and time to think about their subjective agendas. On the other hand, however, it is also acknowledged by the interviewees that the ‘compulsory participation’ or involvement of Kurdish women in the Kurdish political field gradually turned into a ‘voluntary participation’ and they managed to transform the political discourse and organizational structures in the field.

“It might be valid for the early involvements but the women involvement to the PKK was not only because of escaping from the family pressure or forced marriage. There are many university graduates in the movement now, so how do we explain this? Of course this was a fact and I am telling you, at the beginning it might be a reason but after a stage it was something else. It was the national cause you know. After a stage Kurds clearly understood that the way they were threaten or die was because of their Kurdishness. Women also got this point. And Öcalan led them to confront with the situation that in this corrupted system they were the ones who were repressed the worse” (Personal Interview, 22 March 2015, Diyarbakır, Female, 36)

“… But it is not possible otherwise. Kurdish women have suffered so long. Perhaps, they know more than anyone that their freedom is directly connected with the Kurdish rights as a whole. They are the ones whose husbands were shot, their son went to mountain, they had to work for food in the absence of their husbands and sons. They had so much pain, therefore, of course they could see the link between their freedom and the Kurdish issue. They are the ones who speak in Kurdish in large and in the absence of men, they hold the families to stay together, they save the memory of Kurdishness by means of holding the family together” (Personal Interview 20 March 2015, Diyarbakır, Female, 42).

At this stage, among the complicated and diversified matrix of reasons that are valid for women today, ‘Öcalan’s success’ is defined as the third crucial factor by the interviewees of this study behind the sustainable women political activism in Kurdish society. As will be elaborated in the following section, Öcalan as a ‘sacred father figure’ is defined as the one who managed to change the gender norms in Kurdish society and establish a sustainable and continuous Kurdish women presence and mobilization both in Kurdish and Turkish political spheres today. Although Öcalan’s perspective on women has significantly changed over time, during the last

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decade, ‘assigning responsibility to women in transforming society’ is defined as the essence of the story of change story regarding women.

In the following section Öcalan’s gender discourse will be elaborated via his statements and writings under two different periods on the basis of the interviews in which his gender discourse is defined significantly different before and after his imprisonment, that is to say through ‘First Manifesto Era’ and the ‘Second Manifesto Era’.

D. First Manifesto Era: Saving Women via Liberating the Nation

The women in the discourse and the realm of the PKK has changed over time due to changing sociological and political dynamics. In the early years of the movement, as it is the case for other anti-colonial movements, in Öcalan’s First Manifesto of 1978, namely the ‘The Path of Kurdistan’, the ‘women emancipation’ was taken as an integral part of the national liberation. As the anti-colonial national struggle of the PKK was based on a prolonged people’s war which was also against the ‘enslaved Kurdishness’, the women issue was covered and understood in the context of the ‘enslaved Kurdish identity’ in which women condition was defined as the ‘slavery of the slavery’. According to this point of view, Kurdish women had to be emancipated from slavery alongside the Kurdish men through the Kurdish liberation movement in which creating a ‘New Kurdish Man’ was the principal objective:

‘Creating the revolutionary men and women refers to creating the most important process of equality…. In Kurdish society women has a deep problem of being self-ness not only because of their gender identity but because of the slavery and collaborative culture… Now rather than talking on women rights, we have to problematize the women issue as a matter of women salvation and re-involvement of women in humanity ranks. Since there is no personality of women, it is irrelevant to talk on women rights’

In the early writings and statements of Ocalan, as a result of the priority to given to the mobilization of the Kurdish men to become part of the PKK, the role or status of women was not discussed as a pivotal and particular topic. The socialist revolution was the framework to emancipate both the Kurdish men and women and Ocalan acknowledged the women issue as part of the equality problem, very much in line with the classical Marxist approach. Furthermore, despite claiming equality for women, the first appearances of the women issue in the official bulletins or publications of the PKK based on Ocalan’s speeches was quite controversial in terms of depicting women in large as ‘pulled-down’ figures. As Çağlayan

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634 Abdullah Öcalan, Kadin ve Aile Sorunu, Istanbul, 1992, p. 43- 52
clearly describes, the term ‘pulled down’ that was used to describe the Kurdish women had two meanings both of which were quite negative:

“Being pulled-down’ refers to degradation, being dishonourable, being deprived of social, political, economic opportunities and sources, having no choice other than being a wife to a man, being reduced to a sexual object and an instrument of production, and having one’s will disregarded. ‘Woman pulling a man down’ means a woman—who is thus weakened and deprived of will—using her sexuality to bind a man to herself and to family. It is implied that if a man is bound to a woman and to a family, this will prevent him from fulfilling his social and political responsibilities, and he will be deprived of his will, socially and politically, just like the women are. (‘Pulled-down’ (düşürülmiş) is derived from the Turkish verb düşmek, to fall. One can compare the term to English fallen when it used passively (pulled-down); yet, in the Turkish original, the verb is also used actively, as in to pull someone down, similar to its figurative use in English, denoting negative moral/emotional influence over some other person.)”

As clarified above, Kurdish woman was a problematic figure in Öcalan’s discourse at the beginning, who was portrayed as weakening the Kurdish man by means of her sexuality and thus preventing him from becoming part of the ‘national cause’. In other words, the woman was debated first of all as being an ‘obstacle’ to the men’s war and by extension to Kurdish liberation. In Ocalan’s view, Kurds had put the Kurdish cause above everything so that the Kurd had to be saved from his habitual attachments that were weakening and enslaving him. Therefore, beginning from the mid-1980s, women and family began to be the most debated and discussed theme in Ocalan’s speeches in the context of ‘equality/inequality’ and as a ‘patriarchal barrier’.

As a matter of fact, however, Öcalan’s emphasis on women issue was not only related to the ideological ideals or promises of the PKK but was about mobilizing the Kurdish human source for the benefit of his movement. As Çağlayan states it, “besides the ideological framework, the mobilization strategies of the movement also played a determining role in treating gender inequality as a problem which must be resolved. The PKK’s ‘strategy of long-term people’s war’ also placed women’s secondary and dependent position on the agenda as a practical problem. ‘People’s war’ necessitated both the support and active participation of women”.

The family issue was important for the same reason since it produced and reproduced a patriarchal barrier preventing Kurdish men and women from becoming part of the movement. Öcalan was complaining about the traditional family because of being in the orbit of relations

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635 Handan Çağlayan, ibid., 2012, available at: http://journals.openedition.org/ejts/4657
636 Ibid.
between women and men with the lack of having a social or political aspect, namely because of being an ‘apolitical institution’:

... When we focus on women-men relations, ‘establishing a family’ is in the orbit of relationship between women and men. Every relationship between men and women, in half an hour brings the idea of establishing a family in the minds of Kurds. And such relations are extremely weak in terms of their social or political aspect.637

If every family becomes a small cell of the party, then Kurdistan would be saved. If this cannot be achieved, it must be noted that salvation will be very difficult or that salvation will develop in proportion to the revolutionization degree of the families.638

Additionally, the traditional family structure because it did not favour a free relationship between men and women was questioned with regards to the requirements of an armed struggle that was based on the coexistence of men and women. In this view, for instance, the traditional patriarchal family structure in which women were perceived as carriers of Kurdish men’s namus/honour, belonged to the ‘corrupted’ and ‘enslaved Kurdishness’. In fact, according to Öcalan, it was one of the crucial ‘manufactured virtual products’ of the colonial rule which enslaved Kurdishness and prevented Kurds from being developed and independent. The patriarchal Kurdish rule that was produced in the family as a coercive and reactionary authority, was repressing and underestimating women’s capacity. So, the way to create the free Kurdish man, and so free Kurdish society, was possible through a reconsideration of the patriarchal Kurdish family rule and the gendered roles in it.

Nevertheless, Öcalan’s analysis had a significant impact in breaking the patriarchal framework of traditional Kurdishness. In fact, defining the ‘Kurdish Cause’ as the prior matter of honour – or in other words as the prior sacred for men was a powerful method that shattered the patriarchal rule over women. However, on the basis of a Marxist national agenda, women as matter of ‘human source’ and ‘human force’, and therefore, women as ‘bodies’ had a relevance, function and rational in Öcalan’s gender discourse particularly during its early years:

“What and how will be the free style of relation (between men and women)? This is not possible by means of legitimizing the traditional family structure. Men and women in our society negotiate and marry when they reach their twenties. This is a solution for them. In this regard, the traditional family is the biggest strength of the colonialism and the most fundamental sources of the problem. The traditional family was disseminated by the 12 September fascist regime too. It imposed the marriage as the most basic enslavement relationship. Kurdish society has been unable to raise

637 Abdullah Öcalan, Kadın ve Aile Sorunu, İstanbul, 1992, p. 77
638 Ibid.
As discussed earlier, the PKK’s armed struggle for Kurdish liberation which aimed to create the New Man even before establishing the united Kurdistan, was crucial in terms of indicating a departure from the traditional Kurdish past as well as referring to create a ‘modern Kurdishness’. In this regard, Kurdish women, had a symbolic function ‘in making the modern’ and defining PKK’s difference with the past. So, women were the figures that made the ‘newness’ visible in today that was projected to the future as well. In this symbolic context, Öcalan and the PKK was signified as the ‘modern’ leader and movement which promised equality for Kurdish women; also proposed them salvation through the national cause. So, at the beginning, in the PKK’s theory and practice, woman was a symbolic figure too which would highlight the modern feature of the movement and the leader. The idea was liberating women through the liberation of nation.

In this modern reading in fact, like in Kemalism, Kurdish women were positioned at the centre of the conflict between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’, ‘past’ and ‘future’ which directly refers to the distinction between ‘modern’ and ‘unmodern’. It may sound paradoxical for a movement which defined its struggle against imperialism and colonialism - that are named as inherent features of Western capitalism- while claiming to be a modern movement in Western sense. But it was the same love and hate relationship in which ‘the modern’ in local sense was seen embodied in Kemalism so that it was both the role model and the enemy. In fact, among the trinity of ‘imperialist-colonialist-collaborative’, Öcalan started from the weakest who was the ‘Kurdish collaborative’. So that, the anger and the desire to be modern was reversely reflected through the blame on traditional Kurdishness which was defined as the ‘collaborator’ and also as ‘extension of the colonialist’. In fact, like every national war, Öcalan’s war via the PKK was an ‘internal war’ too. As a result, the oppression of women was defined as a consequence of the system that was employed both by the ‘corrupted/collaborator Kurd’ and the Turkish colonizers whose wills were respectively believed to belong to the ‘Big Imperial Brother’. In Öcalan’s formulation via the PKK at the time, being modern through Marxism was consistent and functional as well as actual form of challenging the ‘oppressive modern’. Therefore, Öcalan claimed to be a departure from the ‘slavery’ by means of redefining Kurdishness in a modern sense; and this was a call for transforming society as a whole in which there would be a

639 Abdullah Ocalan, Eşitliğe ve Özgürlüğe Yürüyüş (Kadın Ordulaşmasına Doğru), Bilim Aydınlanma Yayınları, 1993, p.5
transition from a traditional Kurdishness to a modern one. Women and gender relations were at the focus of this transition process.

The party’s scientific and revolutionist education had a significant role in this transition as the school in which the ‘enslaved Kurd’ would be saved from his ‘false consciousness’. So, the political education conducted directly by Ocalan was a tool of creating the new modern Kurdish mankind. Beginning from the 1990s however, the New Man ideal of the party began to be imagined gradually through the women while a gendered perspective and education was deliberately elaborated by Ocalan. The education documents of the party gradually began to have a gendered content in this era.

As it is the case for many nationalist movements, in the early the 1990s, ‘Ocalan saw women as active agents in the nationalistic discourse. In his view, they were ‘mothers’ and ‘fighters’ in the guerrilla and their support was fundamental for keeping Kurdish national unity and protecting their homeland’. Therefore, until the second term in the First Manifesto era, namely until the second half the 1990s, women in the PKK’s discourse, were overall considered as ‘weak people whom cannot be trusted’ and the ones ‘who must be liberated through the national struggle’ while men were the main actors in the movement.

‘Killing the Men’, Liberating Women and Saving National Honour

“In fact, Ocalan said men that women were on the mountain to save Kurdish men’s honour too. He said Kurdish women was fighting side by side with men and trying to save the honour of men, as well as the honour of the nation. This implicated a message and call for the Kurdish men which meant: “Kurdish women are on the mountain for the national honour, so where are you Kurdish men?” (Personal Interview, on 19 March 2016, Diyarbakır, Female, Age 40).

“Even inside the organization, the women issue or women’s freedom and equality was problematic. OK, when Öcalan says something, nobody can dare to contradict him but during those years in particular, despite their silence due to the Öcalan factor, men did not believe that women were equal with men, especially in the field of war. Nobody expected women to stand mountain conditions for instance. OK, Öcalan opened the path for women but actually women gained their rights by means of fighting for their rights even inside the party. They proved themselves in the war field. They proved themselves, proved their ability in the war field, proved their loyalty to Öcalan; and in return, Öcalan supported them. First of all, you have to succeed in something in order to be taken seriously as a human by Öcalan”

640 Salima Taşdemir, ibid., p.75
641 Handan Çağlayan, ibid., 2007, p.108-109
“As it shattered the Turkish ignorance, at the international level, Kurdish women’s political mobility received a great attention and brought credibility to the organization.” (Personal Interview March 2015, Diyarbakır, Female, Age 53)

The quotes above indicate two points: First, beginning from the 1990s and increasingly in the later stage, Öcalan clearly understood that when he touched the women issue, he simultaneously touched the issue of men, and therefore touched the spinal cord that could radically change the overall society. In this regard, speaking to women was a way of speaking to men. Moreover, it was also an efficient way speak to the international public. Second, before becoming the leading figures of the story of change, Kurdish women managed to prove themselves in the war field since there was no unconditional guarantee given to them by the PKK or Öcalan; ‘success’ was the keyword to survive in the PKK.

The second half of the 1990s was when the increasing participation of women in the PKK necessitated Öcalan to have a particular and expanding interest in gender as it changed the inner party dynamics accordingly. He gradually started to emphasize the centrality of women’s rights in the PKK and began to reformulate the very concepts of femininity and masculinity in Kurdish society, mostly aiming to redefine the concept of ‘honour’. As stated earlier, according to this, women were not the honour of men – so that were not the objects of male control over their bodies, behaviours, and sexualities- but they were ‘fighters’ who took part in the national struggle to save the honour of men as well as the honour of Kurdish society. In his perspective, there was no bigger honour than being part of the PKK’s struggle, which was the only ‘true form/line’ of fighting for Kurdish rights. As he had started to criticise the traditional family structure in the early 1990s, in the second half of the era, he proposed a new concept of family which was the ‘party-family’ that is embodied in the PKK. Due to the popularization of the movement during the era and through young men’s and women’s involvement in the party, his proposal did not sound irrelevant; since regardless of individual preference a gradual link between the Party and society had been established through family members who joined the organization.

In Öcalan’s view, traditional family culture was a historical failure that resulted in Kurdish regression and slavery; and the PKK was the home for those Kurds who would be free and honourable members of the new Kurdish society. So as a response to the concept of woman in traditional Kurdishness, which was defined in relation to men’s honour and shame, Ocalan redefined the woman of the new Kurdishness through ‘love and beauty’.
"It is a great love that is being experienced in the PKK. A war of love is being carried out in Kurdistan; thousands of years of hope and passion come to life. This means, first of all, approaching to our country, to our people, to our history, to everything with love; to approach our people with a great love and respect since they have been apart for thousands of years..."  

This was a new conceptualization in which Kurdish women were imagined to be ‘free women’ as opposed to ‘victim/slaved women’. This ‘love and beauty’ discourse however, was not exempt from new conditions or duties for women; and was based on the dichotomy of ‘beautiful and ugly’. However, thinking through dichotomies has been a founding line in Öcalan’s discourse from the very beginning that he defines the history as a continuous war between the ‘beautiful and ugly’, the ‘slave’ and ‘free’, the ‘invaluable’ or ‘valuable’, the ‘dirty’ or ‘pure’ and the ‘human’ and ‘inhuman’:

"I have always distinguished the ugly, dirty, slaved one from the beautiful and free one. While hitting the first, I try reveal the other. This is a founding line at me and this line today divides the world into two: World of freedoms and world of slavery..."

For Öcalan ‘woman becomes free as she fights; as she becomes free, she becomes beautiful; and as she becomes beautiful she is loved’. So the fight for Kurdistan was the only independent variable in his discourse as the condition for women to be free, beautiful and loved. According to him, love was ‘pulled down’ by the colonial patriarchal system in which women’s beauty was disgraced to sexuality. And the only way to gain the ‘real beauty’ was becoming part of the PKK’s struggle with an active and alive consciousness on Kurdish and Kurdistan’s reality. Otherwise, all the women were ‘ugly’ due to their ‘enslaved and corrupted identity’ in which they tended use their sexuality as a way to ‘keep’ the men. The only form of being beautiful comes through freedom and in Öcalan’s discourse becoming free was not a freedom for the individual but it was the freedom of her people and homeland. These are the preconditions of women to be ‘loveable’. Thus, in Öcalan’s view, ‘love does not mean a romantic relation between men and women but it is a social love:

642 Öcalan, 1993:13
644 Abdullah Öcalan, Nasıf Yaşamalı, p.77 or Önderlik Gerçeği, p.39
645 Abdullah Öcalan, Eşitliğe ve Özgürlüğe Yürüyüş (Kadın Ordulaşmasına Doğru), Bilim Aydınlanma Yayınları, 1994, p.34
646 Salima Taşdemir, ibid., p.76
“Love is homeland. Love means freedom in the homeland, definite success in the organization. Love is struggle. Love means victory in struggle.”

As embodied in his quote above which is still valid, love is taken out of the world of individuals and defined as a transcendent virtue which is only relevant when it is collective. Accordingly, love is not only collective but also a movement towards collectivity /collective unity. Therefore, in Öcalan’s view it is beyond and too big for the ‘enslaved’ personalities. Before having the collective love and realizing it towards collective unity, there is no possibility of ‘true love’ between individuals since it is doomed to be ‘corrupted’. It can be interpreted that love seems like a heavenly matter for Öcalan but the historical error of the ‘enslaved’ Kurdish identity confronts him to define it without conditions. That is to say, before achieving freedom for the homeland or for Kurdishness, ‘real love’ cannot exist and cannot be deserved by Kurdish women or men. Indeed, love is something that must be earned according to Öcalan:

“Even the definition of love is expressed on a principle level with a great clarity that it is rooted in a patriotism, a freedom struggle, a party organization and a resolved militant truth. The answer for the questions ‘How to love, how to be loved, how to be liberated, how to be beautiful?’ is becoming with the approach we suggest as ‘you are liberated when you fight, when you are liberated you become beautiful and when you are beautiful you are loved’.

‘... I do not deny love, affection and family. Loyalty to these is a noble loyalty but these mean nothing without a free life. What I speak of is a social and communal love’.

Through his gender discourse, Öcalan proposes women ‘to break away from men’ and men to ‘kill their manhood’. In this regard, ‘Killing the men’, published in 1997, was a decisive work with regards to the women issue through which, in the later stage following his imprisonment, Öcalan would clearly position women at the centre of his ‘humanity project’. Before elaborating his women-centred humanity project, it is important to cover Öcalan’s gender discourse in relation with the issue of victory which is the ultimate goal of his overall narrative and refers to a political goal.

Öcalan's gender reading, in which women become active agents through the struggle for freedom and loveable, has its initial meaning in the context of victory. In other words, according to Ocalan’s definition, a woman who is free and beautiful is bound to be victorious:

648 Abdullah Öcalan, Eşitliğe ve Özgürlüğe Yürüyüş (Kadin Ordulaşmasına Doğru), Bilim Aydınlanma Yayınları, 1994, p.34
649 (Ocalan, 2015)
“For us, life is realized in success and victory. For me, any relation which does not aim for victory or ensure victory is a failure. And anybody who fails does not have any love, freedom, dignity or honour.”

According to this, there is no real love, beauty, freedom or life for the new Kurdish women without her to achieve or have the will to achieve a victory. This is what Çağlayan calls the ‘dialectic of love and victory’.

Actually in this new setup, woman is the one who is required to be free by means of struggling for the Kurdish goal but also against men’s dominancy; and man is the one who required to reclaim his manhood through women’s freedom. Therefore, they are both interdependent and competing figures whose interdependency and competition are overall re-imagined to work for the benefit of the Party and Kurdish society. In fact, this is where the gender discourse is also clarified to be a narrative which seems to be designed in accordance with the requirements of Öcalan’s political claims and objectives via the PKK. In his discourse the ‘new women’, ‘new family’ and ‘new society’ clearly imply a new and particular form of power that is embodied in the PKK which also determines all these categories. This is not totally negative by itself but it is important to note that in his reading, the Party benefit is prior to women benefit; meaning collectivity is prior to subjectivity.

This also implies a process in which the disciplinary mechanisms of the traditional Kurdish patriarchy over women have been removed but instead a modern, and therefore a new disciplinary mechanism for regulating women (and men) is simultaneously constructed. This modern framework is not immune from being patriarchal too as it ‘reduces such a universal phenomenon as gender inequality to political conditions. Therefore, it subjects the emancipation from patriarchal oppression, domestic violence and so forth, to ethnic/national liberation and calls women to political participation’. Accordingly, this is where individuals are obliged to realize victory of/for society since in Öcalan’s discourse there is an association between love and victory:

“Associate love with victory, victory with love. This is the dialectics of the Kurdish resurrection, of the Kurdish liberation.”

Any victory, however, has a dual meaning in Öcalan’s discourse that refers to both a military and a mentality fight waged against the enemy. And in its literal meaning, fighting includes sacrificing one’s self for the homeland and her people. ‘The end of the 1990s witnessed an

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650 Mahir Sayın, Erkeği Öldürmek, Zelal Yayınları, 1996, p. 59
651 Ibid.
653 Abdullah Öcalan, Kürt Aşkı, Istanbul: Aram, 1999, p.84, quoted in Çağlayan, H (2012),
increase in the extreme practice of self-immolations and suicide bombing by Kurdish activist as a form of protest. The first suicide attack carried out by a female militant with the code name Zilan (Zeynep Kıncı), killing 8 Turkish soldiers along with herself, was followed by self-immolations of other female members of the PKK in that era. Zilan however became the symbol for the PKK movement who was portrayed as female figure that ‘detonated the bomb on her body not only against the system, but also against the male-dominated system.’

“Zilan’s personality is the personality of war, organization, freedom, great life, passion and love. This is very clear and indispensable. No one has the right to fail to understand or to do the requirements of her path. We always say that Zilan’s style with her sense of life, her understanding of love, her personality as a fighter and her courage is a commander for us. She is a true leader for us. All these are worth since to realize in the personality of a woman. It is everyone’s responsibility to deserve this worthy task. Like Zilan, to the martyrdom of the hundreds of our young girls and men, one of the biggest loyalties is to show such a battle or life force.”

According to this ‘the real-life consequences of the mission symbolically given to women is to follow Zilan’s path and undertake sacrificial acts. Female martyrs therefore, are a symbol of the fearless and courageous female sacrifice for the ‘homeland.’ That is how a new constitutive myth of the PKK – the myth of Ishtar the Goddess- in the 1990s was invented ‘that began to constitute the mythical sources that served the construction of Kurdishness as a political identity alongside the myth of Kawa the Blacksmith.’

In this period corresponding to the second half of the 1990s, Öcalan’s gender discourse had a significant impact and changed the organizational structure of the PKK as well as the gender perception and norms that were valid among Kurdish society. In the PKK leg of the change however, the militarization of women was the most important issue for Öcalan.

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655 Abdullah Öcalan, Eşitliğe ve Özgürlüğü Yürüyüş ( Kadın Ordulaşmasına Doğru), Bilim Aydınlanma Yayınları, 1998, p.83
656 Evelian A. Taal, The dynamics of gender in the context of war: Towards understanding what scripts inform the way in which PKK female fighters perform gender in the recent war against the Islamic State, An MA Thesis Submitted to Utrecht University Conflict Studies & Human Rights, 2015, p. 52
In this regard, the first organisation for women calling itself Patriotic Women Union of Kurdistan (YJWK\textsuperscript{658}) was established inside PKK in 1987. The decisive organizational changes however initiated in 1992 by Ocalan and in 1993 a separate women’s armed organisation began to be formed in Botan area counting about 2300 guerrillas.\textsuperscript{659} The increased number of women among the guerrillas required a transformation of YJWK, which was reorganized under the name TAJK (The Liberation Movement of the Women of Kurdistan).

“During the first National Women's Congress in March 1995, YJAK\textsuperscript{660} (Association of Liberated Women of Kurdistan) the first military-political organization of Kurdish women was created under presidential control of the PKK”.\textsuperscript{661} The PKK formulated the foundation for a women’s army as part of multidimensional struggle of women which was against natural conditions in the mountains, against the “enemy” (Turkish state armed forces) and the patriarchal system. On the issue of a woman’s army PKK’s leader Ocalan however described the need and the importance as follows:

“A woman’s army is not only a requirement for the war against the patriarchal system, but is also a requirement in opposition to sexist mind-sets within the freedom movement. Instead of traditional lifestyles and relationships, relationships based on freedom must be adopted; the synthetic dependence of women to men must be overcome by free choice.” \textsuperscript{662}

\textsuperscript{658} In Kurdish it is \textit{Yekîtiya Jinên Welatparêzen Kurdistan}.


\textsuperscript{660} In Kurdish it is \textit{Yekitiya Azadiya Jinen Kurdistan}.

\textsuperscript{661} Massoud Sharifi Dryaz, “Women and nationalism: How women activists are changing the Kurdish conflict”, visited on 17/06/11 at \url{http://www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/ssemmse/file67896.pdf}

In his words defining the YAJK significantly, Ocalan underlined the fundamental function of YAJK in the national liberationist war, its transformative effect on militaristic and political paradigm of the PKK and defined its duty to do so as giving a struggle inside the PKK too:

“In First, YAJK means the attainment of the highest possible sentiments for one’s country. This means that even if everyone gives up on their country, YAJK continues the struggle. Second, YAJK is a reality of war. Here there is a national liberationist war. YAJK is well aware that this war is the fundamental component of its existence. War is a basic principle for YAJK. However, this does not only mean military war; this war is internal as much as it is external. Third, YAJK is a partisan force. It is most devoted to the principles and ideals of the party (PKK). Without the struggle of the PKK it is clear that the women’s liberation movement could not have taken these major strides. Therefore, the devotion and internalisation of the PKK is a vital responsibility for YAJK.”

While the separate women’s organization in the PKK strengthened well in the second half of 1990s, women became leading actors of Kurdish legal politics too. For instance, positive discrimination and a 40% woman quota has been adopted by the Kurdish political movement both in the legal and the illegal field. Before providing and discussing the reflections and the impact of this change on the political and social reality of the Kurds through the field work, it is necessary to elaborate the Second Manifesto Era in detail.

E. Second Manifesto Era: Women as Historical Agency

Beginning from 2000s there was significant change in Ocalan’s gender discourse. After his arrest and imprisonment in 1999, as part of his expanding gender discourse, a ‘science of women’ or ‘women’s science’, called jineology664, has been developed by Ocalan as he has explored his ideas on gender issue through his writings in prison and he put women at the heart of his model of Democratic Confederalism. In the Democratic Confederalism, which was his Second Manifesto, ‘the key concept of his new ideology is the Group of Communities in Kurdistan (KCK). This, however, is translated by Ocalan with the neologism Democratic Social Confederalism or Confederalism of the Democratic Society’665. This refers to an alternative model to the nation state in which people are suggested to be organized beyond the states. It is presented as a model by Ocalan ‘to solve the problems in the Middle East in general and for the Kurdish question in particular. It is the expression for the democratic unity of the Kurds who

663 Ibid.
664 “The term Jineology was concretely used for the first time by Ocalan in his writings from 2003 in his work “The Sociology of Freedom””. (Gönül Kaya, “Why Jineology? Re-Constructing the Sciences Towards a Communal and Free Life”, Jineology Conference in Cologne, Germany, 2014.)
665 Walter Posch, “The New PKK: Between Extremism, Political Violence, and Strategic Challenges (Part 1)”, (Translation: Christopher Schönberger, Austrian Armed Forces Language Institute), 2016, Available at: https://www.oemz-online.at/display/ENSPACE/The++new+PKK+Part+1
are spread in four countries and scattered throughout the world.”

Ocalan defines the project of Democratic Confederalism as follows:

“This project builds on the self-government of local communities and is organized in the form of open councils, town councils, local parliaments and larger congresses. The citizens themselves are agents of this kind of self-government, not state-based authorities.”

The significance of Democratic Confederalism from a gender perspective is that with the project of Democratic Confederalism Ocalan clearly defined and declared women as the essential builders of the new society. As Çağlayan suggests, beginning from the late 1990s women were reinvented as actors who liberated the society instead of being the subjects who need to be liberated. This was a new approach in terms of proposing more than equality for women and positioning them as the *primus inter pares* in the Ocalan’s humanity project. It is important to note that in 2005, the PKK was re-established as an organisation in its 9th Congress, which also redefined the movement’s aims based on Ocalan’s thoughts as the realisation of ‘gender liberationist democratic ecological society’, the establishment of democratic communities to eliminate all remnants of feudalism, the realisation of ‘the self-determination and national unity of the Kurdish nation’, the development of ‘a democracy based on ecology and liberation of women’, and democratic confederalism.

*From a Discourse to a Science on Women: Changing “Holy Trinity”*

As discussed in previous chapters, the era that started with the ‘Second Manifesto’ significantly beginning from 2000s referred to a new ideological framework and the organizational reconstruction of the PKK in which Ocalan’s gender discourse has assembled into a ‘science of women’ or ‘women’s science’ called *jineology*.

The gender discourse which began to be established as a separate and prior issue throughout the 1990s took the form of a science during the 2000s. Ocalan used the concept of *jineology* in

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666 Salima Taşdemir, ibid., p.:81
668 Handan Çağlayan, ibid., available at: https://journals.openedition.org/ejts/4657
669 Gülistan Yarkın, “The ideological transformation of the PKK regarding the political economy of the Kurdish region in Turkey”, Kurdish Studies, Volume 3, No:1, pp.22-46, 2015, p.36
his writings from 2003 in his work ‘The Sociology of Freedom’. Jineology is a concept invented by Ocalan based on the dual significance of the Kurdish word jin, which means woman but also derives from the root jiyen meaning life. Jineology is the ‘science of women’ or ‘women’s science’ according to which the given history is based on the oppression of women. It acknowledges women ‘as the first existence that has gained knowledge about her own self’ and as the builder of ‘natural society with its moral and political values’ and perceive the patriarchal system - in its traditional and modern forms- as the oppressor of women, and so, of the natural society.

According to this view, through the stages of patriarchal system starting with the Sumerian civilization until today, ‘the rulers have established their power positions initially in thought and the social science has been instrumentalized and exploited to maintain the sexist power. Besides, ‘the distinction between subject and object for social structures was first established by modern sciences in the minds. In this view, modern social science continues to produce the fiction of the oppressors and ‘imposed on society that man is subject, woman is object, state is subject, society is object…’ and this is how ‘women are made to play the passive role, while men are ascribed to an active role’. In this regard, jineology as an educational system for women and society is constructed and offered as ‘both for the solution of the greatest paradoxes’ of the 21st century stemming from sexism, ‘as well as a method for the development of the spiritual world of women. It is defined as an epistemological process with the aim of ‘the direct access to women and society in the realm of knowledge and science, which is currently controlled by the rulers’. Ocalan proposes to women a ‘total departure’ from men and asks them to create their own disciplines on the basis of their interpretations and meanings and to share these with the whole society. According to jineology the given ‘history is lifeless’ due to women’s oppression and since ‘the woman represents life, life symbolizes the woman’,

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673 Ibid.
674 Ibid.
675 Ibid.
676 Ibid.
677 Ibid.
678 Ibid.
679 Ibid.
the new history will be given life by means of the women. And the science of this new history is *jineology* as it is also called the ‘science of life’.

Ocalan through the science of *jineology* defines a historical woman who is the constructor of the ‘next stage’ of the humanity. This woman is clearly the new Kurdish woman who by herself constitutes the whole space of the New Man ideal proposed by Ocalan in the First Manifesto. It seems that the idealized agency in the New Man theory of the First Manifesto has completely become woman/female by the Second Manifesto. Moreover, by the Second Manifesto, the new Kurdish women gained an agency that would bring the freedom not only for Kurdish women, but also for the women of world. The new Kurdish woman fights for and heralds the freedom of all. She is a universal woman and since she is designated to change the Kurdish society, she is also designated to change all human societies:

“The women’s rights perspective of the leadership does not exist even in Europe today. Even Europe, the Western civilization, has not reached his level yet. Today in the world the most oppressed and excluded groups are women. The problems in the world are related with women’s problems. If women’s presence in politics were stronger, I don’t think that the problems of the world that we are dealing today would reach such a horrific degree. The world still calls for women’s rights, but Ocalan says and calls for women’s society, he asks for a feminized world. This suggests a paradigm change. There is no other leader who is as clear as him on women’s issue and voicing women’s claims high on this level.” (Personal Interview on 20 March 2015, Diyarbakır, Male, Age 52)

Clearly, such a woman is more than an ordinary human being and is imagined as the figure of a Goddess. This woman-Goddess in the name of Ishtar was posited by Öcalan to exist in the Neolithic age as the woman of a matriarchal rural society through which a mythological golden age of Kurds has been accordingly constructed. Through this woman-Goddess Kurdish history and agency have been rewritten in a way that shows the Kurds to be the ones who “contributed to the development of ancient civilization within a matrilineal social formation in which women were the main actors”

“When we came to Mesopotamia, the lands which are the symbols of plenitude were the lands between the Euphrates and Tigris. [...] Production developed with the unity of land and woman. In the history of humanity, Mesopotamia is the best known and proven example of the realization of primitive communal society. That is, it is revealed that this society was shaped between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. Animals were domesticated, seeded plants were cultivated, and women did the majority of these jobs. Ishtar was the goddess of this culture. [...] For me, Ishtar is

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680 Handan Çağlayan, ibid., available at: [https://journals.openedition.org/ejts/4657](https://journals.openedition.org/ejts/4657)
The myth of the Ishtar the Goddess of Neolithic age was Kurdified by means of Zilan’s self-immolation and it was the leading narrative of Öcalan’s gender discourse in the 2000s:

Kurdistan was a lost country where humanity died as the Kurdish people were murdered. It came to know and find itself in war. It is still fighting to define itself, and to also define humanity in that process. In Kurdistan, all values are reborn in the war. In this war hate dies, and love is created. And this situation is most embodied in the women. Women fighting in Kurdistan mean that a country worthy of respect and love is being created. The fighting women of Kurdistan are thus people who create. Their existence and creativity are acts that reflect one another. The values she creates for herself are the values for which humans have been fighting for centuries. The woman who is fighting in Kurdistan is a composition of all these values. She is the fiercest war of all. ⁶⁸²

As a struggle by herself, woman is imagined in the form of a God who is fighting for the good. Öcalan stated that ‘the woman would either exist in the sanctity of the Goddess or she would not have existed at all’⁶⁸³. This implies that, for Ocalan, it is only possible to save the woman by imagining and inventing her in the transcendental presence of the Goddess. This where the new Kurdish woman appears as the quasi-religious figure of an exalted atmosphere of struggle and liberation in which she is secular in aim but religious in spirit. As the creator of the Goddess, Ocalan appear in the space of the sanctity too, since in this reading he is ‘the creator’ of forthcoming female creator. Therefore, Öcalan appears as the mercy father of the Woman-Goddess.

However, when the periods of First and Second Manifesto are taken comparatively, it is seen that the change in Ocalan’s women discourse refers to the ideological changes of the PKK. According to this, the pioneer role of the proletariat in the First Manifesto is replaced by the women as they are defined as the most oppressed social and gender groups in the world. By the Second Manifesto, the transition from “the women who are liberated” to “the women who liberate” refers to the women who are being defined as the main driving force of the history instead of the working class, as they are understood to constitute the working class naturally. Furthermore, “women as the driving force of history” is a myth of a new world in which the ideological objective is more than establishing a nation state. According to this, a world that would be built through the women’s agencies would challenge the concept of nation state.

Therefore, women’s struggle is defined as one not for power and state but for freedom and humanity:

“What underlies sacredness is food. [...] What underlies food is mothers’ labor. She is the creator, the inventor, and the nurturer. [...] she works solely on production; she knows it; she sustains humanity through it. That is how she understands humanity. The mother’s humanity, the woman’s humanity means this. This is a notion of humanity that means sacred humanity. [...] The mother of these gods is the mother goddess.”

Consequently, beginning from 2000s Öcalan’s gender discourse implies a claim of ‘going back to the Kurdish essence’ which is reimagined through a Kurdified Goddess-woman agency of the matriarchal culture that existed in the Neolithic age and it embodies a pre-Kurdish history before it was being oppressed by the patriarchal colonial power. Accordingly, the Goddess-woman refers to a priori and ‘real’ Kurdish culture which is also taken as the reference of a universal democracy model for the humanity. This is where Öcalan re-established the link between ‘Kurdish agency’ and the world’s time; and invented Kurd as a universal agency by which he also overcomes the paternalism of the Turkish state through the power of women. Thus, the reflection and impact of this claim can be traced through the PKK publications and everyday life of many Kurds in which the 21st century is commonly referred as a ‘Kurdish Century’ and one in which the Kurdish woman appears as a universal woman working for the freedom of the humanity. In other words, the First Manifesto’s aim of establishing a free united Kurdistan for Kurds has been replaced by a heavenly future of humanity via the Woman-Goddess by the Second Manifesto. Therefore, the ‘holy trinity’ in making Kurdish womanhood has had a shift from ‘the home- the family and honour’ to the ‘party, freedom and victory.

F. Control Through Women Empowerment

In the introduction part of this chapter, it has been already stated that interviewees of this study defines the PKK as a movement that changed the Kurdish society and this change is primarily read by the interviewees through the changing status of women and gender norms in the Kurdish political and social realms. When this change is being elaborated through the narratives however, two primary arguments appears together while describing the impact of Öcalan’s gender discourse on the lives of Kurds:

“Particularly among the families who were in favour of HEP or HADEP political line, there was a significant trend that was absent before. For instance, beginning from the 1990s, the political mobilization made a dad and his daughter to work for

684 Abdullah Öcalan, Kutsallığın ve Lanetin Şehri, Istanbul: Mem Yayınları, 2001, p.21, quoted in Handan Çağlayan, ibid., available at: https://journals.openedition.org/ejts/4657
the party affairs together. So a girl who was forbidden to be outside at evenings had
the chance to be relatively free by means of becoming part of the party work and
political activism. Because if it is the party work, then all the strict rules could be
postponed. This was totally new and transformative in the long run since it
established a norm or culture in Kurdish society which is in favour of women
rights.” (Personal Interview on 15 November 2017, Istanbul, Male, 42)

Ocalan has a big impact on women’s right. In fact, women are more loyal to Ocalan
compared to men. Because he broke the spine cord of Kurdish patriarchy and
provided a freedom space for women. Kurdish women are deeply committed to
Ocalan like in in the case of Turkish women’s loyalty to Atatürk. Kurdish women
feel themselves obliged to Ocalan. After Ocalan’s opening, women became so
strong. But we have to see that women liberation has been used as a control
mechanism too. For instance, co-chairship... It is clearly a democratic principle in
time regarding gender equality that is adopted by all Kurdish political bodies
today. But you have to check it through its implementation in the field too… It has
been used to monitor and control over Kurdish political sphere, through which
mainly the men are being controlled by Kandil. It is a type of the PKK’s surveillance
over the legal political institutions. For instance, when they don’t like a co-chair or
when somebody is too much critical about the PKK, then the same co-chairship
mechanism give the chance to the PKK to remove that person from his position.”
(Personal Interview on 20 March 2014, Diyarbakir, Female, Age 57)

As clarified in the quotes above, it is the common sense among Kurds that Öcalan was a
transformative actor via the PKK who has radically changed the gender relations and
empowered women in a highly patriarchal society. This is regarded as a positive development
especially on Kurdish women’s behalf. However, the interviewees in large refer to a ‘process
of politicization’ rather than a ‘process of liberation’ while evaluation the change in the context
of Kurdish women. In other words, Kurdish women has been politicized but they are not
necessarily liberated. Despite the acknowledgement of women’s gain through the overall
PKK’s gender policy, there is a subtext detected in Öcalan’s discourse which refers to
instrumental use of the women issue. The interviewees suggest that women are at the forefront
of the movement but they are more or less instrumentalized for the benefits of the PKK in return
for having a relative freedom. The women empowerment is also seen as a part of the PKK’s
method to strengthen and maintain its control over Kurdish society including politics and even
in the private domain. In this regard, Öcalan is being attributed with a wider pragmatism in
which any priority in his approach is considered to be as part of a wider Party interest that at
the end will benefit his leadership authority:

‘In a world in which Marxism has been challenged and women has become the
symbols of democratic social movements, Öcalan did his second rising by means of
his theory on women... He is like Lenin, pragmatism is prior at him while analysing
the dynamics and his survival instinct is really strong. So maybe he could not save
the nation but he saved women at the end. And in today’s world, saving women is
much more important than saving a nation and maybe women is much worth to save...’ (Personal Interview, Male, Istanbul, 2017)

‘Women empowerment has been challenging especially for the traditional segments of Kurdish society. So from the beginning, the aim is to break down the power of the tradition in Kurdish society. I see the women issue as part of this initial strategy of the PKK. But if you ask me whether it works or not, I would say yes, women benefitted it a lot. However, I believe that Kurdish women is not free yet, in fact they have sort of soldier soul, especially if they are linked with the PKK. They have to be free from Öcalan too but at the moment even mentioning this sounds as a crime. But I believe that this door is open for the freedom sooner or later.’ (Personal Interview, Female, Diyarbakır)

‘The empowerment of women cannot be questioned and we have to accept that, whether we like it or not, the PKK has become the driving force of women to take part in the public sphere. Otherwise, our society is much more patriarchal compared to Turks and this patriarchy, the power of tradition could not be challenged without the deterrence of the PKK. Actually Öcalan has gained his power by means of investing on the most vulnerable sections of the Kurdish society. Kurds were vulnerable in general but Kurdish women were really the most vulnerable in it. On the other hand, is it really a liberation for women? I am not sure… But this is not my business, I cannot question this as a man since I am not brave enough, it is a taboo now and brings a cost (laughing)...’

Whether as an idealist or a pragmatic however, Öcalan is defined as a successful leader in terms of leading the potential women which has been already revealed:

“Manhood was already fallen before the PKK. The state violence and torture has already insulted Kurdish men, made him to lose his esteem and dignity. Öcalan reads this well. And in fact he insulted men one more time. This time, at least, he is not the only one benefitted from it but women did the most. Women got stronger and became part of the national movement and politics. By doing so she has gained identity and personality. And today the PKK is a kind of protection for women” (Personal Interview on April 2015, Istanbul, Male, Age 36).

“The history of Kurdish women is already a history of struggle. It was like this before the PKK. After every political conflict or massacres, the women paid the bill. In reality they paid for the war of men. They lost their kids, when the men in prison they worked and feed the family. So, in reality, Kurdish women were always in the fight. Öcalan took this reality as fact and adopted in his language, while doing so he added some beauty on it, that’s all...” (Personal Interview on April 2016, Diyarbakır, Female, 53)

The theme of ‘protection/insurance’ however is predominantly highlighted by some of the women. In their view, Öcalan so that the PKK, is a kind of insurance against the repressing state violence or the Kurdish patriarchy. According to them, this is the foundation that Kurdish women are extremely loyal to Öcalan. The loyalty emerges not because Öcalan asks for it but because women are very well aware of Öcalan’s hard work dedicated to women:
“The leadership did an opening for us which was at first big, too much for us too. Indeed, it is impossible for us to catch up his vision and foresight. Sometimes, I feel sorry for him since we understand him very little and we are usually late to do so. When it comes to the women issue... In fact, in our society, men had already been dead. So, he helped women, us to realize how much we could do on our own. He clarified the picture for us...” (Personal Interview on 23 September 2016, Diyarbakır, Female, Age 37)

“If you ask me what does this movement mean to you, I would say it is a family to me. I lost my father in a very early age and grew up in my uncle’s house. They were religious people. Before I came to the age of 18, they made me to get married with a man they chose. My husband was a rich man coming from a big tribe. He was so jealous and beating me time to time. We have three children during the marriage, two girls, one boy. I have to no home to go back, so there was nowhere for me to escape. After a stage I could not stand anymore, I decided to divorce. It became a big issue for him and his family too. They threatened to kill me. They tried to disparage me on the eye of my kids. Since there was nowhere to go, I went to the organization (the PKK). I told them what I had gone through. They became a family to me... (her eyes filled with tears). They went to my husband’s family and told them that if something happened to me, they would see them responsible for that. That’s how I could divorce and felt secure again. Imagine that, they are in the mountain but can solve my problem here in the city and they save me. They cared about me without asking any benefits. And no one apart from them could manage to stop my husband’s family to trouble me. I was like an orphan and they became a family to me. Now I am living with my two daughters and I hope to take back my son...” (Personal Interview on 22 March 2015, Female, Age 43)

’Who did we have next to us when we started to take place in politics except of Öcalan? Yes, he pushed society hardly to change but the opposite was impossible. Only Öcalan could change the mindset of Kurdish men and could do it by force’ (Personal Interview, Female, Diyarbakır)

In terms of his women perspective Öcalan is also taken as a distinguished leader in the world. He is defined as a leader who is beyond the available measurements when it comes to the women issue and described as a man who sacrifices his manhood for the freedom of women:

‘What is his personal interest in women issue, I am asking to you? Except of our goodness and freedom, he does not have any other personal interest or benefit in it. In fact, it was a risk for him. His way of thinking is not rare but was absent in Kurdish society. So as he risked everything to form the party first, then he has risked more than that for women issue. Because when he started to talk about on women issue he was already a leader. So for women issue, for us, basically he has risked his fame and rank in the PKK. He did all these things against the PKK too...’

‘The women’s rights perspective of the leadership does not exist even in Europe today. Even Europe, the Western civilization, has not reached his level yet. Today in the world the most oppressed and excluded groups are women. The problems in the world are related with women’s problems. If women’s presence in politics were stronger, I don’t think that the problems of the world that we are dealing today would reach such a horrific degree. The world still calls for women’s rights, but Ocalan says and calls for women’s society, he asks for a feminized world. This
suggests a paradigm change. There is no other leader who is as clear as him on women’s issue and voicing women’s claims high on this level.” (Personal Interview on 20 March 2015, Diyarbakır, Male, Age 52)

There is a general sense that Öcalan is the main figure who make the women gains sustainable in the Kurdish movement and in Turkey. If there is any progress regarding women empowerment of Kurdish women, this is not detached from the presence and the will of Öcalan:

“"We could not come to these days without him. It was impossible. His determination gives us determination. We see in his life that this struggle is sacred and must go on continuously. He gives us strength. After going through all those troubles, he did not give up given for a minute so how could we give up? His path is shaping our future.”” (Personal Interview on May 2016, London, Female, 29)

At this stage, it is important to cover the women’s view who had the chance to meet with Öcalan (there were two in this study). For them, Öcalan is a unique personality, as ‘the one and the only’. In these narratives, as it is the case in the letters that are continuously written to Öcalan by several Kurdish women following his imprisonment and published in different websites, Öcalan is defined as an idealized personality as if a ‘chosen person’ or ‘a prophet-like’ figure. He is perceived by the women as a unique person who has a distinguished wisdom and advanced leading skills. Therefore, Kurdish women could not compare him with any other contemporary or historical political figures:

“He is such an extreme, such a different person. It is impossible to compare him with any other political figures today or in the past since there is nobody like him. How can I tell you how much unique he was! For instance, when I went to the mountain, I went through Greece. I was so excited to meet with him and was preparing what to say to him in my mind repeatedly. Naturally, I was expecting a person who is authoritarian and rough. Since this what we learned from the existing leaders. This was the first surprise for me. He was so warm, so sincere and hugged us with a big love. He was like an ordinary man, was so humble. He had a great interest in our stories. One by one he asked us where were we from, how did we attend the movement, who was our family and so on. He listened us with a great interest. When I introduced myself, and told him that I stayed in Greece for two months before coming to the mountain, he asked me with a great excitement if I saw Acropolis. I said, ‘no’. He felt upset and told me that how was it possible for anybody to not have a curiosity in history when he/she had the chance to learn it from the first hand. I felt embarrassed and saw that he was ahead from all of us mentally and intellectually. He has a wide perspective and still I know that we cannot understand him well” (Personal Interview on 10 June 2016, Diyarbakır, Female, Age 42).

G. Transference of Sanctity from Goddess Women to Öcalan: Unchanged themes in Öcalan’s Changing Women Discourse

Öcalan’s theory is a theory of change much more than anything in the context of Kurdish women and regardless of criticisms his approach is appreciated in terms of changing the
hierarchical gender relations in Kurdish society in favour of women. From the First Manifesto to the Second, the changes took place in Öcalan’s discourse gradually served for the women interest. Then, what about the unchanged themes in Öcalan’s discourse with regards to women is required to be asked as a question at this stage. The answer to this question refers to two fundamental features of Öcalan’s overall discourse which is valid as a repeating theme in his women theory: Over the years of change, sexless features of women and the communitarian ideals loaded on her shoulders has not changed and carefully saved in Öcalan’s discourse.

As it is widely known, the sexual relationship among the PKK members is strictly forbidden by the party policy. This is a policy which has a positive impact especially on traditional families in terms of not seeing their daughter's joining the organisation as an insult to the ‘honour’ of the family. It is also discussed that Öcalan discourse on love and beauty is defined out of the relations between men and women. In fact, the concept of Goddess by itself refers to the sexless characteristic of the New Kurdish Woman which is defined by Öcalan as a stage or state of virtue that the mortal individual desires must be replaced by the imm mortal collective values. Positioning the communitarian ideals at the top of the hierarchy of values and performing a stable loyalty towards it, constitute the base and condition of being a ‘real free’ woman. Accordingly, the sexual needs and desires of the PKK members are underestimated as part of a natural selection-like process. This is a discourse which propose women to be sexless not by means of ‘becoming mannish’ but by means of ‘becoming goddish’. While emancipating women from being the subject of a male honour, the communitarian ideals that women are motivated through refers to the process of feminizing the honour. In feminizing the honour, the ‘natural society discourse’ of Öcalan provides a base for an alternative reading on sexual needs and desires:

“I know from my cousin that the sexual needs of the PKK members are neutralized by means of an intense education on it. She told me that in the nature only the weak animals need to have sex frequently but the ones which are strong and stable need sexual relationship only a couple of times in a year. It is capitalism and the patriarchal system which made people to think on sex continuously. It turns into a type of addiction and it is an addiction which degrade the women. From their perspective, ignoring sexual needs and desires are part of the war for nation and it is worth to sacrifice.” (Personal Interview May 2015, Istanbul, Female, Age 35)

H. Kurdish Youth and Öcalan

Öcalan so that the PKK has no specific theory on youth compared to women. In the first place this is related with the PKK not having a need to develop a youth theory because of a being a young organization by itself. Defining the PKK as a young organization however is not about its life time as an organization but rather is about the members who compose it and who are predominantly between the ages of 15 and 30. As a 40 years old organization, the average age participating the PKK is 19 and the life expectancy among the PKK members after joining the party is 7 years. So despite having a 40 years old history, the PKK has continue to stay at the age of 25 so that remains as a quite young party. However, either inside or outside of the PKK, Kurdish youth is one of the most dynamic actors of the Kurdish movement so that saving its prior position in any debates on the PKK or Öcalan.

The interviewees of this study acknowledge Kurdish youth as the leading actors of the Kurdish movement and observed a decisive role of Öcalan among youth which is also defined as one of the sources of the sacred narration emerged regarding him. Consequently, this section will provide a debate on Kurdish youth, this time not specifically considering Öcalan’s discourse but will predominantly cover the topic through the perceptions of Kurds through the outcomes of the field study.

Generation of Conflict

‘It is correct that the Kurdish youth is a significant category in Kurdish movement and in the PKK. And we can easily call them as a generation of conflict. At the end of the day, it is a generation who was born to war and the PKK is the first organization that they know in the name of Kurdish struggle. It does not mean anything them to hear about the previous leaders or the forms of Kurdish struggles. Öcalan and the PKK is real for them. They are real and they are here and for Kurdish youth they are the prior references when it comes to Kurdish nationalism or struggle.

‘In a way when it is compared to our generation, Kurdish youth is more Kurdish and more radical... These children were born to war and not because they choose it or want it so they are the victims... They are victims and today the best thing that they know is fighting. It is the reason that we call ourselves as the last generation that you [Turks, Turkish state] could make a peace. It is harder to control the new generation and convince them in peace’ (Personal Interview, July 2014, Yüksekov, Male 46)

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687 The life expectancy of the militants after joining the PKK has been increased from three years to seven.
“It is true that we are more Kurdish than the previous generations and yes, we fight for the Kurdish issue for no matter else and up to the end, but this does not mean that we don’t know how to make peace. Maybe the lack of Kurdishness in the previous generations was the reason not to manage to make a real peace. The leadership path gives us the way for peace as well as fighting and we also know how to make peace” (Personal Interview on June 2014, Yüksekova, Male, age 16)

As seen in the quotes above, the motive of conflict is prior when a talk tends to begin on Kurdish youth due to Kurdish youth is being perceived as a ‘generation of conflict’. Not surprisingly, it is the result of the clear fact that, two generations after the start of the armed conflict between the PKK and the state, has been raised either at the time when the conflict was in its most violent and destructive form or ‘grew up in a period where the scars of the conflict were recent and well-remembered’688. Thus, among the middle age interviewees (45 and above) in this study, Kurdish youth is acknowledged as one of the most vulnerable category in Kurdish society who have been caught up in conflict in which they were not merely bystanders, but also targets. Apart from experiencing the violence in the first hand, they are also seen as the victims of the overall consequences of the armed conflict such as the internal displacements, social discrimination, poverty and unemployment. “In addition to the concrete and physical scars of the conflict, on the psychological level, there is also a first-hand and transgenerational trauma aspect of the issue”689 agreed among the interviewees that is linked to the conflict. Therefore, due to being perceived as a generation emerged in conflict, Kurdish youth as a social category is also positioned as opposed to the idea of peace.

At this point, it is interesting to realize and important to highlight the commonality between the mainstream Kurdish and Turkish public perceptions regarding the Kurdish youth. According to the this, the ‘victimized’ and ‘radical’ Kurdish youth is the worse result or part of the Kurdish problem today. There is a shared pessimism about the Kurdish youth due to sharing a similar perception at both sides. In this regard the concept of ‘stone throwing children’ or recently formed the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (YDG-H) are the shared symbolic images which are at the centre of the arguments while rationalizing the pessimism regarding the youth. While Kurdish youth’s radicalism is a concern for the mainstream Turkish public because of

688 Zeynep Başer, Imagining Peace and Conflict: The Kurdish Children and Youth in Diyarbakır, Unpublished MA Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Sabancı University, 2011, p. 26
689 For further readings see: Kurban, Dilek, Deniz Yükseler, Ayşe Betül Çelik, Turgay Ünal, and A. Tamer Aker, Coming to Terms with Forced Migration: Post Displacement Restitution of Citizenship Rights in Turkey, İstanbul: TESEV, 2007.
Kurdish youth is being a growing population, the Kurdish mainstream concerns seems like to prioritize the level of Kurdishness among the youth as source their radicalism. This contradictory commonality results in discrimination of Kurdish youth at another level by both Kurdish and Turkish publics despite their changing reasons for that.

On the other hand, self-perception of Kurdish youth does not give priority to the terms like victimhood, vulnerability or pessimism in their vocabulary and any talk regarding the PKK and more specifically Öcalan, begins with a mood of self-confidence, clarity and optimism:

‘Leadership is the source of our inspiration, power and dedication. Apart from him there is nobody in the Kurdish history that could manage to make a positive change for Kurdish society. Maybe we don’t know the previous leaders but we know what our leadership has been accomplished’

‘If protecting the gains of leadership is radicalism, then right, we are radicals. There is nothing wrong to be radical in defending the rights of Kurdish society and when it comes to searching for a reference, we don’t have problem of reference. It is obvious and it is the leadership. We have found our answers in his way of thinking, in his path towards liberation. We don’t need any other reference other than him.

He is our leader. He lifted Kurdishness that was creeping on the ground. Our way is so clear, we will never fall again and we are not weak so that would not fall down

The Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (YDG-H) is thought to be a young armed group formed by the PKK as part of ‘The PKK’s Fourth Strategic Struggle Phase’ of 2012 in which the PKK declared in its intention to develop urban guerrilla operations by initiating a ‘revolutionary popular struggle’. YDG-H is the name that the group called themselves and took the attentions with its opening ceremony in 2013 during which nearly 90 young people participated in that ceremony wearing black T-shirts bearing a portrait of Abdullah Öcalan. They became popular in the Kurdish populated cities like Cizre and Diyarbakir in recent years by cutting off roads, doing identity checks and forcing shopkeepers to strike. Although the PKK does not acknowledge it, the YDG-H is thought to be the young armed organization of the PKK The group which is called as “youngsters” by the people is seen as the embodied form of the “radical Kurdish youth” which is thought to have nothing to do the with the peace. Regardless of the rightful criticisms regarding the YDG-H as an armed young group violates the idea of peace, it is noteworthy to notice the tendency among the Kurds to generalize the radicalism of YDG-H on the Kurdish youth account.
easily. His success is inspirational for us and it has been proven many times. If today there is something called Kurd, it is because of leadership. We are dedicated followers of his free society ideal and we work hard to increase the level of our struggle.

The use of hegemonic Kurdish political lexicon is very significant among the members of Kurdish youth and it seems like a natural part of their identity:

‘We are talking about a generation which was born in a political culture that has been mainly dominated by the PKK. Especially, as a consequence of the forced migrations, the Kurdish youth who grew up in the big cities embraces the ideas of Öcalan through the struggle of the PKK very easily. They don’t need to go to the Mountain to be part of this culture. The political culture of the PKK has become a roof for them under which they can feel stronger. They have developed a kind of solidarity or they gained a cause to dedicate their lives or basically help them to survive as meaningful actor in society. While dealing with the frustrating problems of the city that is stemming from poverty, illiteracy or social exclusion, the PKK is a centre of power through which they can be stronger... Basically, Öcalan gave a strong answer to the needs of youth and this cannot be replaced by the cultural codes or struggle forms of the traditional Kurdishness anymore. Religion, traditional cultural norms or family are not valid today and they cannot not replace the position of Öcalan.’

According to this, in a political climate in which Kurds were forcibly detached from their homelands and cultural habitus and migrated to the big cities, Öcalan’s invention of the modern Kurdishness provided youth a meaning and a reference world. The Kurdish youth that was exempt from the defining framework of the traditional and religious sources of Kurdishness who were besides dealing with the urban poverty and deprivation, discovered their Kurdishness as a cause by the mediation of Öcalan and his PKK. With Öcalan, the conversion of the Kurdish cause into a modern cause was a supportive driving force for the youth to become more attached with him and with the movement compared to the older Kurdish generations. Among the young members of Kurdish society, carrying Öcalan photos on their wallets, dreaming his release together with the dream of a free Kurdistan has significantly been common. It is said that the generation born after his capture, has grown up by the fairy tales in which Öcalan is a Kurdish sun and hero who saves the Kurds from all troubles and one day would make Kurds a free nation. So that Öcalan’s way is considered as a more organic ideology among the younger Kurdish generations which is claimed to bring the trend of participating the PKK as if it is a professional career. Especially the uneducated and traumatized members of Kurdish youth are
considered more tended to be part of the movement because of seeing it as a guarantee for economic income, social status and prestigious.

Going back to the theme of ‘Öcalan as a hero’ however, clarifies a transgenerational aspect of the Kurdishness in which Öcalan appears as a figure who meets the expectations of different generations in Kurdish society. By means of occupying the position of a Kurdish hero, he replies the old and contemporary; subjective and collective needs of Kurds at the same time:

“When you think on Kurdish youth you have to consider the reality of Kurds and Kurdish history. What is the relevance? The relevance is that: it is the context in which several generations of Kurdish youth has lost their heroes in very early ages... Imagine that your father is beaten in front of you and you see that your father does give any response to that, what would you feel? Many Kurdish children have the bad memories of seeing a father or brother or an uncle that was beaten by a soldier or a police and was overwhelmed by the violence or humiliation. So generally Kurdish children are offended in very early ages, anybody who is offended is also vicious.” (Personal interview on April 2014, UK, male, aged 62)

“When talking on the issue of youth, you have to consider a specific fact other than the social, economic and political conditions. Most Kurds do not have a childhood anyway... I mean, most of us did not experience a childhood in its real terms. Bullets, guns, violence ... Is there any childhood like this? Kurdish children have grown up early and they did not play with tools or have a normal childhood like others...’ (Personal Interview, Female, 41, Diyarbakır, March 2016)

As clarified in the quotes above, among the middle age Kurdish interviewees, Kurdish youth is defined in the context of a wider Kurdish history in which the conflict is central, and the youth is mainly perceived once again in the orbit of victimhood. This where the initial victimhood of a child is defined through the collective and moral victimhood of the Kurds in general. So, the continuum regarding the indivisible unity of subjective and collective Kurdishness appeared in the narratives on Kurdishness, is a common motive in the discussions with regards to the Kurdish youth. Moreover, regarding the particular case of Öcalan in this narrative of continuity, he seems like a mediator or a bridge between different generations of Kurds by means of reminding them their shared social and symbolic realms. That is to say, he replies the transgenerational needs of Kurdishness which at the same time means to mobilize Kurdish youth through the Kurdish cause. Therefore, he appears as a mediator and an interpreter between the youth and Kurdishness which attaching youth with the rest of the Kurdish society:

“At the end of the day, when the Kurds look back or look at the current situation the one at age 90 or at the of 9 can easily realize the problems that they have in common. Many things have changed but the problems that emerge because of being a Kurd is still alive and this has not changed much. On the other hand, the Kurd has changed a lot... Believe me, Kurds have changed a lot... What does it mean? Despite the
differences among Kurdish groups or generations... I mean the tone, language, rationales may change, may be diversified among Kurds but the consciousness of being a Kurd is more synchronized today. It is a solid way of being and a way of standing... And this is the success of Öcalan whether one likes it or not...”

Due to his crucial role in mediating the generations and historicities, there is a difference defined between Öcalan and the PKK for the Kurdish youth that Öcalan is evaluated more significant than the PKK in the eye of the Kurdish youth. This is also approved by the Kurdish youth members of the interviewees:

“For me there is only one single reference who is called Abdullah Öcalan who is the leader of Kurdish people and imprisoned in İmralı. Of course, I have a respect for the guerrillas who are the freedom fighters, but when it comes to having instructions, İmralı is the only place that I listened to” (Personal Interview on January 2016, Diyarbakır, Male, Age 21).

“The PKK is the name of the Kurdish struggle for us. It is like a stone that the Kurdish struggle has had behind. However, it is not possible to imagine a PKK without the leadership. This is undebatable and one day even if we lose everything, the leadership cannot be lost since he is the only person who would not sacrifice Kurdish society for personal interests.”

“There is very little what is left from the traditional Kurdishness and it has lost its impact at the current stage. It can be claimed that even the religious or traditional Kurds has exceeded their timidity regarding their Kurdishness by the PKK’s insistence on Kurdishness. Today, Öcalan is the only name that the youth know about Kurdishness. This is not the case only in Turkey but also valid in Syria, so that in London for instance. For the Kurdish youth Öcalan is the leader of the nation, he is a guiding figure just like Atatürk.”

As a transregional figure, Öcalan seems like to provide a contemporary discourse for Kurdish youth that they have the chance to be more synchronized with the modern world by means of holding their Kurdishness. So, Öcalan’s modern Kurdishness is understood as providing a more comfortable and maybe more peaceful Kurdish identity for the youth compared to older generations through which they could find contemporary responds to their contemporary problems. This the point where Öcalan’s modern Kurdishness formula appears as young too.
CHAPTER IV

Öcalan as a Modern Sacred

“This is at the same time my own tragedy. To both create such a cult and also to deny it. This is something amazing about me. To trace it all back to myself and to deny myself at the same time. To both, as you said, create this cult, and also to place explosives right underneath it. You might say that it’s crazy. But there is no other way... These are facts, sometimes you include them and sometimes not. When necessary, you tear them down. So from that perspective, I think I’ve stopped the danger... But it’s not possible to democratize these people in any other way, in societies where there is no culture of democracy, organization and commitment happen through cults of personality.”

In the above quote Öcalan defines his victory as a tragedy, which explains what he thinks of his own cult of personality as a living leader. It is a tragedy that he is a cult, but as far as his explanation goes, it is not entirely his fault or desire that he is a cult figure. The term ‘tragedy’ indicates that his own perception of the situation is one of sacrifice in the name of the people, despite himself. At the same time, this answer he gave to Mahir Sayın in 1996 also describes his own participation in the creation of his own cult, and his attitude towards it. In the previous chapters we looked at the role of violence in Öcalan’s emergence as a modern sacred figure, the place of the Kurdish cause and the effects of Öcalan’s investment in women and children, all within their historical context and based on the results of field research. These three topics also conveyed a narrative of change and transformation. This narrative of change and transformation included both Öcalan’s process of transformation through PKK, and also the changing perception of Öcalan among the Kurds. The first part of this chapter will look at Öcalan’s personal participation in the creation of his own cult through his autobiography. The second part will consider what has remained the same in Öcalan’s discourse. The sources that inspired Öcalan as he constructed his own discourse, or those that he adapted will also be discussed in this second part. In the final part of the chapter, the specific definitions Kurds have given of Öcalan through the field research will be used in an attempt to discover what Öcalan means for the Kurds as a cult.

A. Öcalan as a Narrator and Narrative

We covered some parts of Öcalan’s biography in the previous chapters. In this chapter we will focus on Öcalan’s autobiography, where he is present both as a narrator and a narrative; we will also analyse the relationship between this autobiography and Öcalan’s discourse, which is

691 Mahir Sayın, Erkeği Öldürmek [Killing the Male], Zelal Yayınları, 1996, p.71
embodied in the PKK. We will thus be able to discuss Öcalan’s role in the construction of his own cult of personality.

As shown mostly in Çözümlemeler (Resolutions) and sporadically in Prison Writings (Hapishane Yazıları), Öcalan includes his own life story in his ideological discourse. His life story is even described as the centre of Öcalan’s political discourse and as its point of origin. Among the prominent parts of this autobiographical narrative, the story of his family as the representation of the macro and micro contexts that he was born into is a very important one. Öcalan’s family narrative indicates a primal microcosmos wherein the discourse of Kurdishness and of women is formed. Another very prominent segment of his autobiography is the story of his childhood as a harbinger of his leadership qualities.

B. Embedded Kurdishness in Family and Öcalan as an Exceptional Child

From Öcalan’s family narrative, we first learn that he was born to a poor and religious family. His family lives in the village of Amara, part of Urfa’s Halfeti district and like many others in the village, Öcalan’s family subsists on farming; in such a life, “food means cornbread, and wheat bread and ayran drink equal a feast.” Amara is a village where Kurdish is spoken both in the family and also on the street, where the Kurds are the majority. In a lot of the families the women don’t know Turkish and the men have learned Turkish during their military service. Like the others, Öcalan’s family is also religious and namaz, the daily prayer, is a passion in Öcalan’s life during his childhood. One of the biggest indicators of the family’s poverty is their lack of acceptable power and means bestowed on traditional Kurdishness, due to a lack of fealty to a tribe or a sheikh. This narrative is like an archetype founding Öcalan’s class analysis. According to this narrative, Öcalan and his family are in possession of nothing apart from ordinary Kurdishness.

Kurdishness without any ties of tribe or sect is defined by Öcalan as a culture of conflict accompanying widespread poverty. This culture of conflict exists both in the family and also out on the street. The mother is the ‘fighter’ within the family, and outside, relations between families are determined by enmities and blood feuds. In this context, Öcalan’s representations of the mother and the father in his narrative of the family are important. Öcalan describes his mother as follows:

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“My mother, Üveys, was a person who fought without limits, she made me say ‘am I perhaps a little like that, I wonder.’ But her way of fighting made me feel ashamed, it was excessive and ungainly, she fought over such small things, she fought over a chicken and she never took her own power into account when she was fighting. I understood that I also had no power, and I entered a great fight, fighting in such strange ways. My mother was also like this. But later, I think I built on my mother’s pugnacity by planning, and by building my power.”  

This is obviously not just a simple childhood memory, and it coincides with the narrative of two-dimensional Kurdishness described through Öcalan’s biography. On the one hand there is the image of the Old Kurdishness described through the mother; this is a figure who fights over inconsequential things, both lacking and embarrassing in its manner of fighting, in its excess and inability to perceive its own strength. On the other hand, is a New Kurdishness embodied in Öcalan; this figure is also belligerent but conscious and in control of its own power, oriented towards results. It is understood that the Kurdishness which fights over unimportant things and cannot get results denotes Kurdish movements preceding Öcalan, which failed to cohere, fought against one another and always lost because of their “false consciousness” formed under conditions of colonialism; it also denotes the “slave Kurd”. The Kurdishness that has its origins in Öcalan is powerless like its predecessors, but it is able to analyse itself well and so it is a narrative of nothing-to-something leading to unity and success. This New Kurd is also belligerent; but since his fight is constructed to be rational, founding, constructive and result-oriented, he is a strong Kurd. In other words, the New Kurd does not represent powerlessness anymore; with Öcalan, he represents power. Öcalan describes the second defining quality of his mother as vengefulness:  

“I might also mention my mother’s vengefulness. My mother used to say to me, ‘don’t come home without having avenged yourself’. If we think of the country as the home, I kept true to those words of hers. She said ‘go, avenge yourself on those who raided your home and then come back’, and she didn’t let me in, she even kicked me out. And so I got out and fought this great fight. I am still trying to return on that basis. That is to say, I am fighting until the enmities are over. This might also be part of my mother’s will.”

These lines speak of his reaction against the Kurdish experience, and his need for justice; they also draw attention to how war and peace coexist in Öcalan’s discourse. By not leaving justice to the control of the unjust and making an active move towards it, Öcalan constructs his own identity as someone who demands justice through an active subjectivity, that is to say, through struggle. At the same time fighting or war - that is, violence- is described as the road to peace

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694 Öcalan, the last name, literally translates to “vengeance taker” or “avenger”.  
and making up. This formulation also implies that the Kurd insistent and strong enough to fight
will also be strong enough to make peace. This is also a synthesis of the “pen vs. sword” dualism
that has existed all through Kurdish modernity, and a way of overcoming this duality. This
dualism repeatedly occurs in Öcalan’s discourse through dichotomies such as “ugly-beautiful”,
“good-bad” and “freeman-slave”.

In terms of Kurdishness and the theme of powerlessness, Öcalan’s father takes the centre place
in this family narrative. Öcalan describes his father as “a religious, poor, quiet, calm man;
perhaps the weakest man in the village”.696 Because of all these qualities, Öcalan’s father Ömer
is a lonely man, he is ostracized to some degree. The mother fights with the father all the time,
is disdainful of him and even his relatives don’t take Ömer seriously. At the same time, Öcalan’s
narrative reveals that the source of his father’s powerlessness is that his tribe refused to
compromise or negotiate with the state in Ottoman times. Through this portrayal of his father,
Öcalan describes both the dignified Kurdishness refusing to collaborate, passed down to him
genetically; and also the general social situation of Kurds abandoned through their lack of a
relationship with the state.

The ostracisation of his father seems like to represent the demonization of Öcalan’s struggle
through the PKK by the state, but also how the Kurds didn’t find it important enough in the first
stages. The image of the mountain, conveyed through the story of the father “who goes up the
mountains and shouts as his biggest reaction against injustices”, is the centre of rebellion in
Öcalan’s discourse and practice. As different from his father, however, Öcalan indicates that he
counters injustice with as much fighting and daring as the violence and daring wielded by the
unjust. The prominent theme of loneliness in his father’s story is a founding block of Öcalan’s
leadership. In Çözümlemeler and elsewhere, Öcalan continuously underlines how alone and
misunderstood he is. Through this loneliness, he is both the “black sheep of the fold” and also
in touch with the masses of Kurds who are as alone as he is. This lonely figure of Öcalan,
without a tribe or a sheikh, recounts all these childhood memories after having become the
friend and the leader of the dispossessed and the lonely. At the same time, his talks reveal that
Öcalan’s loneliness is not assuaged by these masses following him. Öcalan often talks about
how misunderstood he is, how he does not even have one friend to confide in, and how he wants
a friend or a companion to share his ideas with, someone who would carry him further. This
theme of loneliness in Öcalan’s discourse is reminiscent of a sacred loneliness that is attached

to God, creator of the universe or to prophets guiding their flock. It appears that this loneliness does not originate in the merely mundane, and so it won’t be remedied in this world, despite the size of his following.

The belligerence of the dominant mother ruling the house and the powerlessness of the father, which is almost an indictment of his manhood, frames Öcalan’s childhood universe; in this context, Öcalan’s first rebellion is against his own father, who sides with Öcalan’s brother in a fight between the two brothers merely because he is the younger one, even though Öcalan is in the right. The mother’s belligerence supports Öcalan’s demand of justice. Fighting his father to protect his own rightness, Öcalan makes a radical move for that time period and runs away from home. In his own words, this is “daring to rebel”. At the same time, the father, whose positive aspects represent a dignified and lonely Kurdishness, is the first person to make a prediction about Öcalan:

“When I was a child, we were under a tree once and my father said something to me, which I often repeat: ‘Don’t touch Abdullah, he has the sign of conquest on his brow, he will conquer wherever he goes’, my father said. This description suits me. I am a conqueror; I am clear about that.”

Among his family members, apart from his father and mother, his older sister Havva is the person who had the most influence on Öcalan. Because of poverty and ignorance, Havva was married off “in exchange for a few sacks of wheat and a few pennies” according to Öcalan. He describes Havva as a victim of the traditional, patriarchal Kurdish culture and the female-centric quality of his political discourse is as much a reaction to the terrible powerlessness of the Kurdish women embodied in the person of his sister as it is a reflection of his mother’s power, who “never saw herself as beneath the male/the husband”. This is not the whole story in terms of the female discourse and his childhood. The marriage of his childhood playmate Elif at the age of 15 was also influential in the formation of his reaction against the patriarchal, traditional Kurdishness which sees women as part of its possessions. His “sense of unity” with the girls during his childhood seems to show that the militarization, and even deification of women in the PKK under his leadership is no coincidence.

Through his personal statements, he describes his family and the dominant framework of Kurdishness as such. His own position within this framework is defined as an “exception” by Öcalan. For instance, one of his closest friends is from a family which has a feud with his own

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697 Yalçın Küçük, Abdullah Öcalan ile Kürt Bahçesinde, Başak Yayınları, 1993, p. 28
family. Within the dominant paradigm, both families want the children to be enemies, not friends, but Öcalan denies this heritage by “befriending the enemy”. This symbolizes the moment when Öcalan destroys the family and through the family, the tradition of the slave Kurd, as he would later formalize in his political theory. Öcalan states that from that moment on, “it turned into a passion for [him] to unite with the enemy’s son”. This narrative is especially important in that it symbolizes the Kurdish-Turkish association in the founding of the PKK. Taken together with his statements during the 1990s such as “I’m looking for an interlocutor” or “we aim not only for Kurdish freedom but also for Turkish freedom”, this indicates that for Öcalan, war is a demand for peace.

Öcalan states that his most prominent feature as a child was his ability to start games and to make the other children follow him to the mountains through his games:

“I can tell you that this was definitely a passion for me. To establish groups of children, that was an incredible passion for me. I have a very vivid memory of this, let me tell you. I could hunt birds. I said to the children, ‘I have birds in the pockets of my clothing, come, I will feed you with birds’ and I lead a group of them to the mountain. What I gave to them was a bird’s leg, or a wing, I mean, what do they amount to? Give this to him, and that to her, this was how I led them on for quite a while. I still remember that very vividly.”

Öcalan’s passion for the mountains first starts as a reaction to the fighting of his parents, and later, it is solidified through their oppressive behaviour, and the network of feudal relations, which for Öcalan is the root of that oppression. As a result, Öcalan often goes to the mountains, on his own or accompanied by other children. The mountain for him is also a site of meeting with nature. One’s friends and enemies are more easily distinguished in nature. For instance, attitudes towards friends or foes encountered in nature make Öcalan either a hunter or an animal lover. Öcalan says, “I had bad fights with harmful snakes, I killed the harmful animals but I also protected the harmless ones”.

Embedded in this story is the message that the harmless ones are friends, and that friends are worthy of being loved and protected. As someone “very averse to killing or being killed”, he justifies the killing of the snakes in his childhood and later, his leadership of the PKK, an army whose members kill and are killed like any other, on the same basis: “On evaluating life, one sees that dying and killing are both inevitable!”:

“...I saw threats against my life. I saw national, class-based and even international threats. At the moment US imperialism, German imperialism, colonialism in Turkey...”

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699 Abdullah Öcalan, Sümer Rahip Devletinden Halk Cumhuriyetine Doğru II, Mezopotamya Yayınları, 2001, p.248
700 Yalçın Küçük, Abdullah Öcalan ile Kürt Bahçesinde, Başak Yayınlari, 1993, p. 27
701 Ibid., p.76
702 Ibid., p.77
His passion for the mountains earns him the nickname “off his rope” in the village, which is to say that he is not part of the system. When he wants to play with the children, their families often refuse by saying “you will make them like yourself in no time”. Öcalan stresses that his ostracisation and the reaction against his passion for the mountains during his childhood was due to his eccentric attitude and his refusal of the “vulgar belligerence forced on him”. This eccentricity makes him appear as morally weak as well. The friendships he established with his enemies and with girls during his childhood seem to have evolved into the relationships of comradeship between Kurds-Turks and men-women within the PKK. Öcalan, as it is well known, also reacted to the slavery imposed by the “corrupt feudal” structure through the family in later years through “revolutionary morality” and “PKK as a family”. These analyses of Öcalan, first made in the early 1990s, reoccur as consistent themes in his discourse in later years. Through his narrative of childhood, an endless fight between the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly is described. In the 2000s, the “good” and the “sacred” in this universe where dichotomies reign become more and more embodied in the woman. With the Second Manifesto, the woman in Öcalan’s discourse becomes a historical subject bearing the weight of humanity’s revolution as the goddess of the ecological, natural society. This woman, imbued with this holy purpose by Öcalan, is of course a beautiful woman worthy of being loved.

The most essential feature of this entire story is that through the rationalization of an entire childhood, it is transformed into and established as a narrative foretelling today’s Öcalan leadership, and indicating that the leadership serves a collective good. According to this story, the entirety of history is a narrative paving the way to make Öcalan into what he is. According to this story, Öcalan is not within history but rather, history is what exists to serve Öcalan. Like all sacred stories, Öcalan’s narrative also begins with childhood rebellion and refusal. The first rebellion against the father during childhood is transformed into the rebellion against the “father state” through the PKK in later years. This uprising is grounded in an intense practice of thinking guided by reason, and this practice enables Öcalan to respond to the problems of social structure by means of an analysis grounded in praxis. That is to say, Öcalan’s way symbolizes the way of liberation. This is why his title for everything he says and writes is

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703 Ibid., p. 77
704 As with the holy books, where there is a fall to the earth with the original sin, which is rebellion.
“Çözümlemeler /Resolutions”. “Resolutions” is the name given to Öcalan’s process of resolving the problems, mistakes and challenges through thinking, reasoning, planning and questioning each and every day. As a man who resolves problems through analysis, in this narrative Öcalan is imbued with the ability to remedy his people’s centuries of ill luck and loss like a magician combatting black magic, a sage unravelling difficult knots or a prophet healing the crippled. As a man able to change history and destiny, Öcalan is the profane embodiment of a divine sacredness in this narrative. From his childhood onwards, he has been burdened with the mission of fixing the problems or removing the wrong. This is why his childhood is a mirror held to today. This is why nothing is a coincidence and everything is part of a sacred plan. As it is a prominent theme of his childhood universe, so it is in his leadership that Öcalan is a figure forgetful of his own personal gain in the face of society’s gain, a person who sacrifices his own life for the liberation of others:

“I am a man with a mission. From my childhood I have been so. I am still not living, that is to say I am on a mission and a person with a mission cannot lead a normal social life.”

C. Öcalan’s School Life: Öcalan’s Success and Choice by Reasoning

With a childhood as exceptional as this, Öcalan’s worldly success first manifests in his life as a student, and this is where his exceptional qualities are first noticed. As different from those who, like him, started school without speaking Turkish, Öcalan succeeds in school and even though it is difficult for him, in time he learns to speak Turkish “not with an accent like his friends, but without an accent like his teachers.” Öcalan’s love of the school is reminiscent of Ataturk’s love of school in its prominence, and it is clearly not a coincidence that they both had an unbroken record of successes throughout their education. This is because in the lives of leaders who lead their people to the light with the guidance of positive science, there can be no flaw in their school records and their exceptional intelligence is always noticed by their teachers. At the same time, Öcalan remembers that during junior high school he went to Ankara, a teacher accompanying him drew his attention to a statue of Ataturk which he thought was very magnificent, and he also remembers thinking “what a man!” to himself. In this retrospective look at his autobiography, Öcalan formulates his school years as the time during which his class consciousness developed. For instance, during his junior high school years, he understands the distinctions between being a city-dweller, a provincial and a peasant, a

705 Ibid, p.77
706 Ibid, p. 43
707 Müslüm Yücel, ibid., p. 86
formulation in which he is a gundi. 708 He describes his going to Ankara to enrol in a high school as his “entrance to the bourgeois society”. Öcalan is religious throughout his high school years, but in his senior year, following an intense period of reading and studying, he decides which of the rising political movements of the period he will follow. In his own words, after reading The ABC of Socialism by Leo Huberman, “Marx wins and Muhammad loses”.

“It went through a great philosophical crisis during my high school years. I fought with God and after emerging victorious from the fight, I became a demigod.” 709

As we discussed in the previous chapters, his university years are spent socialising in an environment determined by the charismatic leaders of the Turkish left, where he wants to both belong and stand apart. Öcalan often speaks of the effect those leftist student leaders had on him. Their power and courage earns his respect and admiration. He speaks of Deniz Gezmüş and Mahir Çayan as the leaders of PKK. As mentioned above, Öcalan’s adoption of an entirely Kurdish course/line came relatively late. The main reason for this is described by his then close friend as follows: “At the back of his mind he always had a desire to become stronger and to lead. He would immediately leave anything he could not control.” 710 Öcalan’s going abroad prior to the coup of 1980 makes Öcalan one of the few remaining figures on the left still alive and free. His passage to Syria is recounted as a tale of sacred hegira in later years. One day, during training, a guerrilla asks him: “You have been away from Kurdistan for 17 years, is this an exile or a hegira?”. Öcalan replies:

“It is an interesting case. It is neither a classic exile nor a classic hegira. However, it does resemble the works of Prophet Muhammed in Medina”. 711

As an effect of the diversified profile of the PKK as it became more widespread throughout the 1990s, and also as an answer to the Islamic movements rising in Turkish politics, also favoured by the Kurds, Öcalan’s leadership and revolutionary status is clearly imagined through Prophet Muhammad from the second half of the 1990s onwards. Because Kurdish society is devoted to the prophethood and guidance of Prophet Muhammad, this is an attempt to build a bridge between him and Öcalan in order to transfer some of his sacredness to the latter. According to Öcalan, just as he himself is “making use of the revolutionary experiences of all peoples,”

708 “Gundi” means “peasant” in Kurdish and according to Mucahit Bilici, it is a cruel slur word among Kurds, a modernist shaming tool. It is a fear that becomes even more pitiful when united with ethnic shame.
710 Personal Interview, January 2018.
711 Nihat Ali Özcan, PKK (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi) Tarihi, İdeolojisi ve Yöntemi, ASAM Yayınları, 1999, p. 217
similarly “Prophet Muhammad is someone who absorbed the religious experiences of his time”, 712 which means that they have a similar style of leadership.

Apart from the transfer of sacredness, this also has to do with Öcalan being a pragmatic decision-maker who acts according to the circumstances:

“In our day, religion persists in societies advances in science and learning, even in the Soviet Union, where society is educated entirely on scientific principles religion exists to a considerable degree; all of which shows that people won’t give up on religion because of what they know. Religious leaders, figures, imams exist. It might even be a pressing duty to make sure that these people are utilized correctly, that they serve the cause of national liberation and that they are organized in that direction.” 713

Öcalan categorizes the Kurds as Sunni, Alawite and Yazidi according to their beliefs. Accordingly, in the Fifth Congress of the PKK in 1995, a Kurdistan Council of Solidarity for the Believers is established with the participation of two people each from the Association of Kurdish Alawites, Kurdistan Islamic Movement and Kurdistan Yazidis Association. 714 In his 1995 speech in Damascus, this is how Abdullah Öcalan addresses a group of patriotic Muslim youths:

“In fact, PKK is the simultaneous application of revolutionary socialism and revolutionary Islam to Kurdistan. Some, such as the fake leftists say “Socialism and Islam are opposites” and some fake Muslims say “Islam is the opposite of Socialism”. For me, they are not. Today’s PKK is the equivalent of Islam’s Golden Age. PKK is the Kurdish manifestation of Saudi Arabia’s Golden Age Islam. Let us make our own Islamic revolution, let us taste of its freedom, then there will be a time for daily prayers as well. I don’t say daily prayers are bad, you can do them, you can also fast, but jihad comes before all of that. Why did I quit my daily prayers? Because I am waging a war...” 715

This perspective, in which revolutionary violence and the idea of jihad in Islam are equated, is retained in Öcalan’s discourse in later years as well. The most current example to this is the Islamic focus in the language of the peace process started by the AK Party government in 2009. In the historic Newroz message of 2013 where he asked for the gunfire to cease and the PKK to leave Turkey, and announced that the armed resistance was going to be replaced by a process of democratic politics, Öcalan also named the prophets of the three Abrahamic religions and describes the union between the Kurds and the Turks as an Islamic union:

712 Nihat Ali Özcan, ibid., p. 217
713 Abdullah Öcalan, Aile ve Kabileciliğin Tarihsel Süreç içindeki Gelişimi, Şam, 1991, p. 1; 90
714 PKK 5th Congress Decisions, p. 66
715 Quoted in Nihat Ali Özcan, ibid., p. 219
Öcalan’s autobiography can be seen as an attempt to “align” and to unify the life story of a leader and the story of a nation. As a narrator, both the person and the perspective of Öcalan is at the centre of this narrative; the leader’s biography is politicized while the politics are personalized in the person of the leader. In Öcalan’s autobiography we encounter the modern Kurdishness as a master narrative, whereas the ancient narrative is Kurdishness as it was prior to enslavement and depersonalization at the hands of the colonizer. Reminiscent of “In the beginning there was the word”, Öcalan describes leadership as a “language of expression” from the beginning, and this language of expression has two prominent purposes: to mobilize and to persuade by making the leader’s story the nation’s, and the nation’s story the leader’s, and thus to build a new representation, new knowledge and a new law. This discourse, in which great ideals are accompanied by great pragmatism, is at the same time indicative of the process of creating an “I’Nation”, as Hulya Adak formulates. Secondly and more importantly, common elements in the shared consciousness of the Kurdish culture such as the “pen vs sword” dichotomy and the image of the mountain are successfully carried over to the modern resistance repertoire of the PKK. Accordingly, the war-peace dialectics of Öcalan’s modern political discourse replace the pen-sword dichotomy, the image of the mountain is preserved as a site of resistance and the “caş”, which means “traitor” in Kurdish, are branded as “collaborators” within the PKK. Öcalan is also successful at transferring the patterns experienced as repressed

identities by the Kurds into the culture of the organization. This is a way of building a proximate line between the organization and the people. For instance, secrecy, a shared experience of the Kurds, is also at the centre of the guerrilla culture and this is one of the elements that made the PKK “recognizable” both at the outset and as it became widespread. From this perspective, it is possible to describe Öcalan as a successful and gradual translator of traditional Kurdish values into a modern language as well as a synthesist.

Section II: Unchanged Themes in Öcalan’s Discourse

Up until this point we have looked at Öcalan’s discourse in the context of the transformation process undergone by the PKK, the changing historical conditions, the changing position of Öcalan within the movement, changing social perceptions of Öcalan and the PKK as well as the dynamics within the Kurdish society transformed by Öcalan. Accordingly, we saw that the PKK, even though it had limited support at its outset, became a mass movement in the 1990s and its militant structure both changed and became more diverse in terms of gender and social background, and that its ideological position evolved from a hard-core Marxism to soft-tone socialism. We also observed that in this process, armed struggle transformed into a more rational use of violence and that it was supported by strategies of social organization in the form of unarmed struggle; and that the goal of a united Kurdistan turned into democratic confederalism while the lead actor of the “Kurdistan Revolution”, the working class, was replaced by the lead actor of the “Humanity’s Revolution”, the woman.

Among the intellectual sources of Öcalan, guiding the structure and discourse of the organization during the first period are Marx, Engels, Mao, Lenin and Chernyshevsky, a figure who was influential on Lenin like on other Russian modernizers. These readings influence Öcalan greatly. All of the writings produced by Öcalan during the period of the First Manifesto are very reminiscent of works by these figures in their titles. Marx’s *Manifesto* turns into Öcalan’s *Manifesto*, Engels’ *The Role of Force in History* and *The Origin of Family, Private Property and State* into Öcalan’s *The Role of Force in Kurdistan* and *Woman and Family in Kurdistan*, Lenin’s Chernyshevsky-inspired *What Is To Be Done?* into Öcalan’s *How to Live*. As previously discussed in detail, apart from Marxism, Kemalism also has a profound effect on Öcalan’s discourse in the making of the PKK both as an intellectual framework and as a Turkish state cult.

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717 Chernyshevsky is the founder of Russian populism called Narodism.
During the Second Manifesto period of Öcalan, we see that inspired by Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks*, he calls his writings *Prison Writings* since he is in prison. This is an adaptation on Öcalan’s part of the literature belonging to the revolutionary movements around the world and the iconic figures of the post-Marxist era, and as discussed above, it indicates the Kurdification of the Marxist line through its changing faces. As discussed earlier, following the post-Marxist path, Marxism remains in Öcalan’s discourse as a way of connecting to the universal. Accordingly, we see that Öcalan constructed the PKK’s communication strategy along the lines of “uniqueness in the region,” but that this uniqueness establishes a common line with the rest of the world. This line, continuous in Öcalan’s discourse, is not merely pragmatic, functional or due to communication strategies. This line also indicates a mental continuity.

**A. Holy Nature, Sacred Unity, Communitarian Democracy**

Following his imprisonment, Öcalan’s thesis of a post-Marxist radical democracy comes to the forefront as a political strategy. The concept of “democratic socialism”, developed in both theory and programme, the “paradigm of ecological, democratic and gender-liberal society” offered as an alternative model, and the “communal economy perspective” that will be possible through a strategy of radical democracy all carry important traces of Laclau and Mouffe’s post-Marxist perspective, Murray Bookchin’s ecological, anarchist and communitarian ideas, Proudhon’s communality, Mao’s village communes and theories of figures such as Foucault, Wallenstein and Negri. In Öcalan’s discourse during the second period, the theses of Bookchin and anarchist autonomism become more pronounced as a “oppressed front” which does not aim to set up a state and to rule, which does not interfere with the state or make demands of it, which instead lays siege to the state and by resolving its own problems, forces the state to a compromise is defined in Öcalan’s synthesis. In 2005, the Koma Civakên Kurdistan or the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK)\(^718\), under which PKK and all related organizations were gathered together, was founded. In its founding document, which is the KCK agreement in which Öcalan’s Second Manifesto period is embodied, this idea is formulated as follows:

“I see our mission as a universal uprising in the name of the oppressed people...
The nation-state will be democratized according to our project. Society needs to be democratized despite the state... Until today, not much was thought about targeting

\(^718\) “Since 2005, the PKK and all-affiliated organizations have been restructured on the basis of the project under the name of KCK (Association of Communities in Kurdistan -Koma Civakên Kurdistan) which is a societal organization presented as an alternative to the nation-state”. Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya & Joost Jongerden, “Reassembling the Political: The PKK and the project of Radical Democracy”, European Journal of Turkish Studies 14 (2012), p.7. Öcalan describes the KCK as a wide and diverse system that can be an alternative for the state. For some people however, the KCK is a synonym for the PKK.
Accordingly, Öcalan formulates the real paradox and opposition within history, that is to say the historical struggle, as essentially between the state and democratic civilization. Patriarchal structures including the nation state and environmental destruction of the capitalist modernity have been the hallmarks of what has been presented as social progress today. In Öcalan’s discourse, stateless democracy as an idea of unity that does not require a nation state defines “real social development” as the direct self-government of the people through city and people’s councils, and the establishment of an ecological economy. In this model, where under the heading of democratic confederalism, democratic modernity is offered as an alternative to capitalist modernity, Öcalan gives bottom-up communal self-organization as an alternative to state-centred organization and offers the people to establish people’s assemblies everywhere, to develop self-defence, to fight for freedom, to organize the women and to make them leaders. It is also stated that as a bottom-up organization, this system is a guarantee for direct and real democracy. One of the most important promises of democratic modernity is to reverse the destructive relationship between humans and nature established by capitalist modernity and to create an ideal system based on the harmony and unity of the two. This is how Bookchin’s organic society finds expression in Öcalan’s discourse as the natural society, and again, parallel to Bookchin’s reading of history and serving the purpose of a natural society, Öcalan offers a new reading of history. In this new narrative, the source of democratic modernity is the Neolithic society where women were in power, which is defined as a “Golden Age”; accordingly, Neolithic society is the natural society that is intended by democratic modernity, and as such, it is the antithesis of today’s state-centred, hierarchical society:

“Natural society at the beginning of humankind forms the thesis contrasted by the antithesis of the subsequent hierarchic and state-based forms of society.”

“At the root of humankind’s regression, alongside class-based civilization is the hierarchical and human-centred perspective dominating nature, not seeing itself as a part of nature, as its equal and free component. In order to overcome this, an ecological revolution aiming to transform the hierarchical mentality which makes people dominate other people as well as nature, and to return to an understanding of nature as alive and sacred, is necessary. As different from other systems, the KCK

system will establish a radical and deep democracy with a transformation based on an ecological and gender-based revolution.”

As made clear by the above quotation of Öcalan’s statements, taken from the Preamble of the KCK Contract, the identification established between nature and natural society is significant. In this narrative, where an idea of nature “inherent in everything that is good for humankind” exists, nature is represented as a holy source that is the origin of everything, a source that is as real and right as it is natural. Nature is the source of “eternal, inclusive and organizing” qualities as well as the natural society movement. That is to say, the order of natural society takes its source and its legitimacy from nature. In Öcalan’s narrative, nature is the sole source offering “the recipe to humankind’s happiness and redemption”. It can be seen that the law of nature, “personalized, divine and giving people the power to move towards redemption” (evolution) is compatible with the law in history according to Öcalan’s theory:

“KCK is an update of the communal democratic stance of the people based on modern values. In this, it is different from the Western understanding of democracy, which is often based on the individual. It bases the origins of democracy on the communal democratic values at the outset of humanity and the struggles limiting the power of the state and its representatives throughout history. It is a line of democratization where an optimal balance is established between the individual’s will and freedom and the communal democratic life. It gives power and will to the people. It surpasses the Athens democracy or the understanding represented by Magna Carta where democracy is monopolized by the upper classes, and allows the people to establish their own systems.”

In Öcalan’s narrative, “the ‘laws of development’ governing nature and society as well as the promised moral and spiritual development of humankind” are transferred to the natural society via nature. According to this, a new world called Humanity Revolution will be created with the energy of this new, women-led natural society:

“Before, I said this: ‘where there is power, there is resistance and wherever power exists, there are uprisings.’ There is resistance all over the world but they are not connected to one another. I want to unify these movements and make them move in unison. So what I plan is for the whole world. This is why I use the concept of democratic society confederalism to denote those structures that will not aim for power.”

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721 KCK Contract, p. 5
“KCK, experiencing new revolutions everyday thanks to the women’s freedom movement, is a system suited to resolving all problems of the Middle East and humanity because of its understanding of deepening democracy.”  

In Öcalan’s Humanity Project, where democratic modernity is the ruling paradigm and natural society the aim, the status of the Kurdish society is also interesting. Based on the claim that the word “kom” in Kurdish means commune and the assumption that the word has its origins in the Neolithic communal social organizations where women ruled, Öcalan states that the communal social structure is inherent to Kurdish culture. Accordingly, it is said that Kurdish society, as a society which “did not want to submit itself to the centralization of the statist society, all through history from the clan system and the tribal confederations to this day”, was a natural society before being enslaved by capitalist modernity:

“...The KCK Contract aims to establish an understanding of democracy based on the communal democratic values, as well as an understanding of democracy historically rooted in all expressions of freedom and democracy in religions, sects, monastery and temples. ...”

As the above quotation shows, structures such as religions, sects and monastery, identified as the source of slavery and equated with traditional Kurdishness during the First Manifesto period are given a positive spin during the Second Manifesto period. In this narrative where the Kurdish movement evolves from a “national struggle of liberation” to a Humanity Revolution, the Kurdish society in Öcalan’s discourse is upgraded from the “slave Kurd” to the “chosen Kurd”. This also indicates that after 40 years, Öcalan is returning to authentic Kurdishness with the control of the hegemonic dominance of Kurdishness in his hands. Traditional Kurdishness, through Öcalan’s permission and interpretation, is unified with modern Kurdishness. Of course, the orchestration and legitimacy of this union and unification depends on Öcalan’s word being the law. That is because all through the period of the Second Manifesto, Öcalan explains that the problem is not religion or tradition per se, but the patriarchal mentality, which causes the misinterpretation of these structures. He says that democratic modernity and the natural society are prerequisites for the proper understanding and experience of “real religion” and “real...
Islam”. With this, Öcalan also claims that he is going to save religion and tradition as well. To traditional or religious Kurdishness, he promises the “real” version of both religion and tradition in the new system in which patriarchy will be overcome. According to this narrative, the democratic, free and natural society will reveal itself in the sovereignty of women. Öcalan says that the “land of Mesopotamia, where the Goddess culture and the natural communal life first rose still has the potential to lead the female Renaissance”. 725

The subject of the value system imagined within the framework of democratic confederalism of the Humanity Revolution, heralded to begin in Kurdistan, is the free citizen. This free citizenship is defined as the KCK citizenship in the KCK Contract and it is based on the principle of “self-empowerment and self-sufficiency”726, comprised of “patriotic, democratic, participatory individuals connected to the system with political and social ties, participating with their cultural identities and free wills”. 727 In this system, where “everyone born and living in Kurdistan or loyal to the KCK system”728 is a free citizen/KCK citizen, the citizens have their rights and of course, their obligations. The right to life, to equality, to freedom of faith and conscience, the freedom of press, the right to private property -provided it is not through unjust means or exploitation, and it does not cause unequal social positions or imbalances- all give this citizen to “live in an eco-community according to the ecological balance”729. The responsibilities are as follows:

1. To resist against oppression and exploitation
2. In a war of legitimate self-defence, to actively participate in the defence of the homeland as well as the fundamental rights and freedoms
3. To positively discriminate against all oppressed identities, especially women
4. To protect the environment, nature and the universe, all living beings, cultural and historical wealth
5. To abide the morality of a free and democratic society in democratic participation processes, especially in elections
6. All KCK citizens must pay their taxes according to their obligations
7. The KCK citizen living and working abroad have a responsibility to return, and to participate in the fundamental freedoms, rights and duties in the country.

725 KCK Contract, p. 6
726 Ibid, p.8
727 Ibid., p.9
728 Ibid. p.9
729 Ibid., p.11
8. All KCK citizens will participate in social life through organizations. Following these articles, it is stated that if a person acts in contravention of KCK principles and purposes, their citizenship will be revoked. This system finds its legitimacy in the centrality and authority of existing states, and indicates a mechanism acting as a state (taxes, military, judiciary) without a state. In a way, the people are becoming the state.

B. Politics as a Total Narrative and Slavery of Individual

This document is critical in that it questions the naturalness or givenness of the nation state; it also states that “the will of social groups will be expressed through communes, societies, assemblies and congresses” and offers the concept of a natural state as the antithesis of the authoritarian society. At the same time this argument, where the divine is transferred from the state to the society, is based on the presupposition that the confederal structure comprising the abovementioned components (communes, societies, assemblies and congresses) is in and by itself democratic, and that the natural society is an “absolute good” or a “sacred supreme being”. Apart from being crystalized in the KCK document, it can also be traced in Öcalan’s later writings that in this system, the individual has to participate in the life of the society through organizations and that the collective good is always above the individual good. This indicates that as far as the individual is concerned, Öcalan’s discourse has not changed much since the days of the First Manifesto:

“The democratic nation does not rest on the individual created by the state. The individual created by the nation-state is a slave. The creation of the individual, the citizen by the state is the origin of all these deadlocks. The democratic nation is a model where communities and individuals discuss problems and create solutions according to their local realities.”

This analysis, which sees the individual as an absolute result of the system in which he is living, and the citizen of the capitalist modernity categorically as a slave, intends to turn the “individual alienated from politics and his environment” by the current system into a component of the development process of “the fraternity based on a free citizenship and a vibrant political life based on self-esteem and will”. This understanding claims to challenge the mentality it is criticizing through the formation of a free citizen who is assumed to be democratic; however, in its understanding of politics as a total experience and, as evident from the name “Humanity Revolution”, its reconstruction of the totality of life as a spiritual revolution, it is not very

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730 Ibid., p. 9
731 Ibid., p. 7
732 Ibid., p. 6
733 Ibid., p. 6
promising in terms of antiauthoritarianism. In Öcalan’s discourse, “the slavery of people” turns into “the slavery of individual” and the individual cannot win his way out of slavery no matter what. Indeed, the individual, the free citizen of Öcalan’s democratic modernity, is an “unfinished” entity postponed to the aftermath of the salvation. In Öcalan’s narrative, any individual demand is always defeated against the sacredness and gravitas of the pioneering role assumed to be played by the Kurdish movement in the Humanity Revolution. Where there is no individual, the democratic modernity theorized as a bottom-up movement is in practice, under the undebatable centrality of Öcalan as leadership, refers to “instilling PKK’s orthodoxy in particular the various of ideas and values surrounding democratic autonomy and confederalism”.734 In Turkey, this situation is most commonly experienced in the imposition of a life suitable to ‘Apoist Behaviour’ to Kurds in every aspect of their lives, or how in legal politics someone not approved by the PKK cannot participate in local or MP elections.

The continued presence of the theme of force in Öcalan’s discourse also supports the PKK’s hegemony as a coercive power. The “revolutionary power” of the First Manifesto evolves into the “legitimate self-defence” of Öcalan’s Second Manifesto, but it stays the same in its function and its importance. As stated earlier, the most important change in terms of violence during the period of the Second Manifesto is related to Öcalan’s personal position. During the second period, the monopoly and responsibility of violence is handed over to the PKK firstly and militarily, and then to the free citizen candidates if conditions of “legitimate self-defence” require it. The reason violence departs Öcalan’s personality is, of course, his imprisonment. This departure, however, both places PKK in a position where it is the only and natural possessor of the repertoire of violence, and also absolves Öcalan from the responsibility of violence. 735 Besides, Öcalan appears as a peace maker in this new period, namely in the Second Manifesto era.

Based on these, looking at what has remained the same in Öcalan’s discourse in the changes from the First Manifesto to the Second Manifesto, the following may be mentioned: even though its subjects have changed, history is still understood and formulated as a holistic discourse, the historical subject is always imagined collectively, regardless of being working class or female, and historical subjectivities are moving towards communitarian ideals and salvation, imbued with communitarian missions. We see that the ideal of creating “a new

735 What made it possible for the state to envision Ocalan as a peacebuilder during the resolution process was the existence of this phenomenon as much as the pragmatic and instrumental mentality of the Turkish government.
human” and “a new society” is preserved as the myth of regeneration through politics, as the theme of “a people chosen to create new institutions that will save the world”. These are the holy words of Öcalan’s discourse. In both periods, it is clear that Öcalan sees politics as possessing the content and the function to resolve not only political problems, but the entire problem of existence. Furthermore, the idea of unity he aims for in both periods - the unity of Kurdistan in the First Manifesto, an “international front/union of the oppressed” in the Second Manifesto- indicates not only a political unit, but also an ethical and spiritual community that all citizens must belong to with the entirety of their beings. This repertoire of the unchanged also constitutes the founding blocks of the habitus commonly referred as the ‘leadership line’ in PKK’s organizational culture and in hegemonic Kurdish politics.

Thinking of these qualities alongside the sacred aura accompanying this discourse, composed of myths, images, symbols, rituals and ceremonies, and the definition of Öcalan’s charismatic authority as the highest authority, what emerges is a modern, revolutionary eschatology where faith is oriented not towards the divine/supernatural but towards a profane social transcendence; as Gentile defines it, a form of sacralization of politics. In both his own discourse and the entirety of PKK history, Öcalan is positioned as a fully sacred figurehead, almost a messiah. The most significant continuity feeding into this positioning and sacralization is the “geographic and symbolic inaccessibility of Öcalan”. During this 40 years process, Öcalan is both the nearest and the farthest person for the members of the movement. During the initial years of guerrilla warfare Öcalan lived not in Turkey but in his flat in Damascus or in the parties’ training camps in Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley and from 1999 onward, his imprisonment renders him inaccessible. Thus “for the increasing numbers of his sympathizers, and particularly for the young boys and girls in Turkey, he has become the distant demiurge about whom anything could be imagined”.

Öcalan is the first name anyone thinks of at the mention of the Kurdish issue and although the determinations or limits of his influence as a figure with transregional reach are open to debate, his position and sacredness within hegemonic Kurdish politics is not really debatable. Öcalan is a living sacred figure in whose name campaigns of freedom or “your will is our will” are organized; whose childhood home in Amara is visited by thousands on his birthdays. During

736 Emilio Gentile, Politics as Religion, Princeton University Press, 2006, p. 29
738 Ibid.
these celebrations, it is common among people collecting earth from the garden of the house he lived in, and the house is being circumambulated.

Even though it is not very often possible in Turkey, the name he is most associated with on a symbolic level whenever current political and legal constraints allow is Ataturk, who, like him, has a cult of personality and is the most significant face of the sacralization of politics in Turkey.

The most current example to the halo of sacredness surrounding him is the Rojava Revolution announced in Syria in 2014, which is accepted as the embodiment of Öcalan’s model of democratic confederalism and stateless democracy. The Rojava Revolution, announced in 2012 after PYD (Partiya Yeketiya Demokratik -Union Democratic Party), as a party defined under the KCK system and its armed forced YPG (Yekineyen Parastina Gel - People Defence Units) together with YPJ (Yekineyen Parastina Jinan - Women Defence Units) gained control of three separate regions in Syria in the fight against IS, clearly shows that in terms of the symbolic and ceremonial devices used in the administration of the cantons, Öcalan is a cult and his discourse

739 PKK rejected the nomenclature of “Rojava Revolution”. It said that the revolution should have been called the “Western Kurdistan Revolution”.
is a sacralization of politics. In Syria, where Kurds from Turkey are the majority, the pattern of Atatürk’s silhouette being engraved into the mountains and the countryside is replicating itself in the person of Öcalan.

Atatürk fills the public space of Turkey with his symbolic presence as the leader of the Republican revolution, the founder, the commander, the chief teacher and the father of the nation; Öcalan’s posters in the urban centres of Syria, his portraits hanging in educational and public spaces, and even his silhouette in school reports just like Atatürk position him as a modern sacred figure and the sacred face of the revolution, and this is how he is honoured.

Öcalan is in fact a secular religious symbol: this is due to his position as the profane manifestation of sacredness as a founding figure, as an ideological and strategic leader; to his expression of “a profession of faith and conferring an aura of holiness”, 740 and although he is not protected by laws as Atatürk is, there is a de facto unquestionability and autosuggestion with regard to his leadership and decisiveness.

Öcalan’s discourse as a religion of politics is, in Gentile’s words, a particularly modern and contemporary “form of sacralization politics that has occurred after gaining its independence from traditional religion”. In this context, as a secular religion, Öcalan’s discourse goes “so far as to claim for itself the prerogative to determine the meaning and fundamental aim of human existence for individuals and the collectivity” “by taking the religious dimension and acquiring a sacred nature”. In his discourse nation, class, party, movement and humanity “are all transformed into a sacred entity which means they become transcendent, unchallengeable and the intangible. As such, it becomes the core of an elaborate system of beliefs, myths, values, commandments, rituals, and symbols, and consequently an object of faith, reverence, veneration, loyalty, and devotion, for which, if necessary, people are willing to sacrifice their lives.”

At the same time, as a secular religion Öcalan’s discourse is more of a political religion than a civilian religion, particularly because of its approach to the individual, to religion and to violence. That is because according to Gentile, political religion is distinguished from civilian religion as a form of secular religion peculiar to democracies due to the following reasons:

“it does not except the other political ideologies and movements, denies the autonomy of the individual in relation to the collectivity, it demands compliance with its commandments and participation in its cult and it sanctifies violence as a legitimate weapon in the fight against its enemies and as an instrument of regeneration. In relation to traditional religious institutions it either adopts an hostile attitude and aims to eliminate them, or it attempts to establish a rapport of

741 Ibid.
743 Ibid.
symbiotic coexistence by incorporating the traditional religion into its own system of beliefs and myths while reducing it to a subordinate and auxiliary role.”744

Even though Öcalan’s discourse claims that it is open to all differences with the Second Manifesto and the ideal of democratic confederalism, actual practice indicates “a tacit legitimation of, and not-so-tacit reaffirmation, of the PKK hegemony at all levels of organization”745 and so, according to Leezenberg, there is “something very much resembling a Leninist one-party statelet”746; and although the systems it is reminiscent of may vary, the lived experience reflects a clear desire with regards to Öcalan’s modern sanctity.

Section III: Öcalan as a Signature

A. Öcalan Readings and Öcalan’s Meaning

Reading the discourse through what has stayed the same, Öcalan is revealed as both the theoretician and the cult of personality in a modern political religion that is authoritarian and totalitarian in terms of its control over the social even as his rule is becoming secularized; looking at him in the context of historic personalities associated with him, he refers to a manifestation of political religion:

“I don’t know who he is like, but the leadership in Kurdish is ‘Ayet’ (a verse from the Koran). And Koran’s verses cannot be debated.”

“For me, Öcalan is the greatest leader in Turkey after Ataturk. I mean, who else is there when you look at it. There is Ataturk, and there is Öcalan…” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 38, Istanbul, March 2014)

“If you were to ask Öcalan, he probably sees himself as Mandela but in fact, Öcalan is an Atatürk. He developed as a reaction to Kemalism and in this process, copied Kemalism in official historiography, in its authoritarianism, in its oppression and its immortal leader… To conclude, no, Öcalan doesn’t have a state but where he reigns, he behaves like a state and Öcalan is both the mind and the face of this state authority.” (Personal Interview, Male 39, Diyarbakan, April 2015)

“In terms of leadership, I think Öcalan resembles Lenin the most. His Marxist readings followed an entirely Leninist perspective. Apart from that, in practice his pragmatism and the importance he gives to leadership positions, chief among them his own position, makes him very similar to Lenin. For instance, Öcalan’s own life is very important to him. That is, it is very important that he live, and he is not afraid to say it aloud. Because according to him, if there is no leader, then there is nothing. He is a little right about that, too… Like with Lenin, a natural rule brought about by revolution is that the life of a leader, compared to the life of a shepherd or a militant

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746 Ibid.
is much more important, because the fate of the revolution depends on the leader; militants have to die anyway. This is how he looks at things…” (Personal Interview, Male, 69, December 2017)

“Especially in terms of his leadership, Öcalan is most like the Prophet Muhammad. Just as Prophet Muhammad destroyed the idols in a revolutionary gesture, siding with the poor, so did Öcalan act…” (Personal Interview, Male, 66, Brussels)

“As a theoretician, he is most similar to Mao and Lenin. As a practitioner, however, I think he is most like Arafat and Mandela. At the same time, he is unlike any of them.” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 32, Istanbul, April 2014)

“Öcalan is not really like the leaders of today. He has a unique position. But to me, his leadership is most reminiscent of the Abrahamic tradition. In a way, Mr Öcalan is like al-Khidr…” (Personal Interview, Female, Age 39, Istanbul, April 2016)

“The past before Öcalan reminds me of Gandhi. In terms of political activity and repertoire that might come into existence within the realm of traditional circumstances… Öcalan is a bit like Nehru, he took the potential energy within the society and in a very strong organizational framework, and with a little help from state violence too, he gave it a new form.” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 32, Istanbul, April 2014)

How, then, do Kurds position themselves in relation to Öcalan as a modern sacred? What is the sacralised; is it the cult or does the cult of Öcalan by itself provide us a further content in the field?

“Öcalan is an answer to everything missed and wished for by the Kurds psychologically, sociologically and historically. He is the person who realizes the things people cannot realize on their own, both in his own life and in the life of the Kurds as a society. Identifying with him is a way of expressing or explaining one’s self. That is why someone may be working for the Turkish state but also feels a belonging to his leader in one part of his mind.” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 50, Brussels, December 2015)

“For Kurds, Öcalan means power and success. Öcalan succeeded where many other leaders or movements failed. With the PKK, Öcalan placed the Kurds on the map, he made the world learn about the suffering endured by the Kurds. He gave to the Kurds the reality of a successful society.” (Personal Interview, Female, Age 37, Diyarbakır, March 2015)

“He is a leader who understands the world’s system well, who reads and analyses very well, who criticizes and offers practical alternatives, who knows how to implement these alternatives in his own society. In this, Öcalan is a sense of self-esteem for the Kurds. He is a leader who identifies a problem and offers its solution.” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 54, Brussels, December 2015)

“Öcalan succeeded where the Turkish state failed for centuries: he modernized the Kurds. In doing so, he took away a lot from Kurdishness, both as a person, but also in terms of language, belief and culture. But you need to accept that the state is
taking him seriously today only because he is talking to the state in a language that it can understand. Even though he is in prison, the state recognizes him. He sacrificed the Kurds the most in doing this, but he succeeded. The irreligious was beaten by the faithless, as the saying goes…” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 67, March 2016, Diyarbakır)

“Both personally and on a social level, Öcalan is in everyone’s mind as the process of regaining honour and dignity. This is why the only organization able to negotiate with the state in Turkey that Kurds agree on is Öcalan and the organization. Nobody can do anything to weaken the organization’s hand at the moment, and they won’t be able to do so for quite some while… Even the most critical person has to accept its power of representation, otherwise they will be isolated from society.” (Personal Interview, Male, 32, Istanbul, April 2014)

“Leader Apo has put forward a universal yet Kurdish theory. Other Kurdish movements are local, PKK is general and universal. He created a theory for the societies that Kurds are living together with as well. The PKK is first and foremost a modern movement. This is why Öcalan is an exemplary Kurdish cult.” (Personal Interview, Male, Age 54, Brussels, December 2015)

Connected or disconnected with his absolute authority that is manifested through his discourse and cult and as a changing phenomenon both at emotional and cognitive levels, as these extracts make clear, Öcalan is a figure considered in terms of Kurdishness before anything else. According to the interviewees, the cult of Öcalan gains its original value through Kurdishness. Kurdish politics under his guidance has made Kurdishness definable and recognizable in Turkey and in the region despite all of its problems. The success of the movement, accepted even by those who do not wholly agree with its methods or discourse, makes it possible for Kurds to heal the traumas, failures and repressions by thinking of the past of Kurdishness and its today in a continuum. As a result of power and success, Kurdishness gains self-esteem through Öcalan. All of these, however, indicate a relationship of representation rather than submission between the Kurds and Öcalan. That is to say, “charisma” or “personality cult” does not refer to the irrational act of the people or to a lack of national explanation when used in the context of the relationship between Ocalan and the Kurds; rather, it refers to a tactic which is used by Kurds to influence the nature and consequences of the power bargain that is between Kurds and Ocalan, Kurds and PKK, Kurds and Kurds as well as Kurds and Turkish politics. According to this, in exchange for gaining the best for Kurdishness, there is a decision to acknowledge Öcalan as a modern sacred. As the above quotations make clear, Öcalan is a sacred symbol; but he does not represent just himself anymore, he also represents other values apart from and beyond himself. These values, described as power, success and self-esteem above signify Kurdishness as a single value. In this context, the diverse content provided by the

747 In fact it is a bargain between PKK and Öcalan too.
feedback spectrum constituting the field research says that Öcalan is understood to be the signature of a Kurdishness that is modern, universal and in sync with the world’s time - a Kurdishness that is part of the world and in dialogue with it, therefore an actor in its own right.

Signature, as described by Agamben in a manner reminiscent of Foucault’s concept of the statement, refers not to the simple relationship between the sign and the signified: “rather, it is what – persisting in this relation without coinciding with it- displaces and moves it into another domain, thus positioning it in a new network of pragmatic and hermeneutic relations.” As an image, the cult of Öcalan possesses a particular recognisability belonging to the particular time of today, and is synchronized with this “now”. As such, the cult of Öcalan as a signature is “not a light falling from the past to today or from today to the past in the historical index, but rather, it is a cult wherein what-has-been come “together in a flash with what-is to form a constellation”. In other words, the image of the cult of Öcalan is “dialectic at a standstill”.

Therefore, what appears as the trend of Öcalan among Kurds today refers to Öcalan as a signature through which the belonging and ownership of Kurdishness has continuously benefited. To put it otherwise, the cult of Öcalan is a notation on history in the name of Kurdishness; the proof of the existence of Kurdishness is recorded in history through Öcalan’s signature. In this regard, he is a signature in Agambenian sense which “represents the process whereby a doctrine, discourse or practice is transferred or transposed from one sphere or domain to another through a series of shifts, substitutions and displacements”. That is to say Öcalan is a signature in which Kurdishness is being transformed or making a shift from the traditional towards a modern framework. Therefore, this is a process that indicates remaking (modern) Kurdishness in the face of Öcalan:

“I feel like the Jew in that movie, The Pianist. There’s a scene in that movie. Two Jewish men are walking towards the train in the station, and meanwhile, one asks the other: “Why didn’t we resist? Why didn’t we fight back when these things happened to us?” Right at that moment, the other man looks back over his shoulder towards the station and what he sees is a void, there is nobody there. I’m like that man in that I don’t see anything when I look back. Or, to be more precise, the only thing I see that is left there is the PKK. I think this is a pretty good summary of the relationship a lot of Kurds have with the PKK.” (Personal Interview, Male, 35, Istanbul, October 2016)

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749 Ibid., p. 72
750 Ibid.
751 Ibid., p. 46
CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to understand Ocalan, Turkey’s most significant modern cult of personality next to that of Ataturk in the 21st century, within the framework of Turkey’s Kurds’ perception of him. Basing its arguments on the results of field research, it has endeavoured to discuss the sacralization of politics, positively or negatively, in its changing forms through the person of Ocalan. In doing so, it has prioritized the viewpoints of ordinary people and therefore, tried to understand the sacralization of politics not just as a top-down process, imposed by manipulative authoritarian or totalitarian leaders and endured by the masses but also as a field of power and sovereignty that is formed bottom-up, collecting new and different meanings than intended, and taking on new functions in the process.

Of course, “through history and since the most ancient times, political power has been shrouded in holiness” but in the modern era, the relationship between religion and politics, and therefore between power and sacredness indicates a new period. Some of the many new features brought about by this new period are the dominance of the state as a sovereign whose legitimacy is based on the people’s will, the secularization of culture, the waning of the power of religious authorities in the fields of state and social governance, and the banishment of all religious symbols and signs from the public space as a sacredness of the sovereignty. In terms of the identity between the sovereign and the sacred, however, even though it claims otherwise, this new period represents a replacement rather than a transformation. Accordingly, the sacred continues to be sovereign or the sovereign continues to be sacred. Most importantly, however, within the secularized political and social spheres, the principle of the sovereign power’s right to decide life and death is carried into the modern era. Thus, as Koyre describes it, the modern political order and structure of sovereignty, based on the ontological features of god, creates models of godly sovereignty and in the passage from religious politics to bio-politics, sacrality is not destroyed but transformed.

This process, called the sacralization of politics by Gentile, is different from the previous eras in that the political realm becomes independent of traditional religion. “By taking over the religious dimension and acquiring a sacred nature, politics went so far as to claim for itself the prerogative to determine the meaning and fundamental aim of the human existence for individuals and the collectivity, at least on the earth”. Within this process, as it happened in

752 Emilio Gentile, Politics as Religion, Princeton University Press, 2006, p. xiv
754 Emilio Gentile, ibid., p. iv
the various different modernization experiences around the world, something or the other becomes a sacred entity with a mission to make history and change the society --- sometimes this is the nation, sometimes the state, sometimes race, sometimes class, a party or a movement. This is to say that modern politics, just like the periods it claims it has broken away from, has its holy scriptures, prophets and martyrs. Secular religion, which is a general name for the attribution of sacrality to profane phenomena, has its manifestation in the political arena as the sacralization of politics. Within this process of sacralization, those politics which desire to mobilize the masses create modern sacralities and as such, this “is not a unique, atypical phenomenon but lies at the heart of modern politics.”

Two ideal types are defined within the realm of the sacralization of politics in its modern sense. Of these two, civil religion is often considered in connection with democratic regimes because it is accepted as provides a greater space for plurality and individual freedoms, and because it is guaranteed by a secular state. Political religion on the other hand is the “sacralization of an ideology and of a unifying political movement which deifies the mythic secular state.” As systems in which an unchallengeable monopoly of power and an ideological singularity reign and the individual is subordinated by the collectivity, political religions are often associated with totalitarian, authoritarian or illiberal regimes. Political religions are decidedly different from civil religions in that they are “laboratories in which a revolutionary anthropological experiment is carried out with the intent to create a new kind of human.”

755 “Newton is the first cult of personality created by the Enlightenment mind. In addition to this, Newton’s belief in God will turn into an argument which Voltaire will then use to strengthen his deist theses and for several decades, a Newtonian deism enhanced by Voltaire’s personal interpretation will dominate Enlightenment. Voltaire, the person most responsible for the deification of Newton, is met by a similar fate, while he is still alive, too. Thus, two of the most discerning examples from both “priesthood” classes of reason (scientists and philosophers) are deified in this period”. See: Onur Atalay, İki Dünya Savaşı Arasında Türkiye’de Siyasetin Kutsallaşması [ In Between Two World Wars Sacralization of Politics in Turkey], Unpublished PhD Thesis Submitted to Galatasaray University, Department of Political Science, 2016, p. 62.

756 Joost Augusteijn& Patrick Dassen& Maartje Janse, Political Religion Beyond Totalitarianism: The Sacralization of Politics in the Age of Democracy, Palgrave Macmillen, 2013, p.2

757 “At the same time, there are those who claim that the distinction has its origins in a fundamental difference between a Durkheimian understanding of “civil religion” as followed by Bellah and Rousseau’s understanding of “civil religion”. This claim has crucial significance in understanding the different manifestations of “civil religion” in democratic and nondemocratic countries. The “civil religion” described by Bellah (for America, at least) is, (just like Durkheim argues) a bottom-up phenomenon. The “civil religion” proposed by Rousseau, however, is a faith imposed from top to bottom. The Durheimian “civil religion” is after integration and cooperation whereas the Rousseauian “civil religion” demands loyalty and full compliance. Thus it can be argued that while Durkheimian “civil religion” is more of a culture, the Rousseauian “civil religion” is an ideology. And in this sense, the Rousseauian “civil religion” is a “political religion”, to phrase it in the lately popular parlance of political science”. See: Onur Atalay, İki Dünya Savaşı Arasında Türkiye’de Siyasetin Kutsallaşması [ In Between Two World Wars Sacralization of Politics in Turkey], Unpublished PhD Thesis Submitted to Galatasaray University, Department of Political Science, 2016, p.86.

758 Emilio Gentile, ibid., 2006.
the concepts of civil and political religion are not opposed to each other; rather, they are in a relationship of continuity, and both are different aspects of the sacralization of politics in the modern era. In this sense, despite fundamental differences between them, modern totalitarianisms and modern democracies, both based on Enlightenment values, feed from similar sources of thought and patterns of modern sacrality are inherent to both of them. At the same time, the differences between them indicate something beyond the dichotomy of “bad totalitarianism” and “good democracy” since these represent the dual character of modern democracies, or in other words, the two faces of modernity. This is because modernity does not only create democracy; also, democracy is not just a rational and ideal type of politics as it has been idealized, but also contains non-rational elements and in this sense, it is not just constructive but also deconstructive if we consider the recent wars waged in the name of democracy (those in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and others).

Considering cults of personality in this context, it is not really possible to see these figures as exceptional or accidental figures specific to political religions and especially to the fascist and communist totalitarian state regimes of the 20th century. The phenomenon of the cult of personality has its roots in the premodern societies where religion and politics were not yet separate, most prominently in ancient Greece and Rome; during the French Revolution and Napoleonic era, it takes on a modern appearance in the context of political leaders and during the 19th century it establishes a philosophical meaning on a line extending from Hegel to Nietzsche. The political cult of personality reaches an apogee in the 20th century with Soviet Communism, Italian Fascism and German National Socialism. In a lot of non-Western modernity experiences during the 20th century (such as in Central Asia, Latin America and the Middle East) cults of personality are figures embodying the resistance against the expansionist or exploitative Western modernity but they were also the “faces” of their own unique alternative modern revolutions or searches for modernity. Following the disappearance of religion from the political and social spheres, cults of personality, as the expressions of modernity’s transference of sacredness in the area of sovereignty from the divine to the profane, are transnational phenomena that secular religions continue to produce in the 21st century as well.

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760 “Through public ceremonies and civil rituals,” both “sacralise the commonly ‘profane’ parts of social life” and again, “both unite the people through shared sets of belief.” Marcela Cristi, From Civil to Political Religion: The Intersection of Culture, Religion and Politics, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001, p. 235.
761 Onur Atalay, İki Dünya Savaşı Arasında Türkiye’de Siyasetin Kutsallayması [In Between Two World Wars Sacralization of Politics in Turkey], Unpublished PhD Thesis Submitted to Galatasaray University, Department of Political Science, 2016, p.87.
Exactly for this reason, in order to understand the relations of power and sovereignty in the modern era, cults of personality are quite significant and explanatory phenomena.

Today, cults of personality are put “in a broader context of person-centred modern symbolic politics, opening up vistas for comparisons with Western democracies.”762 According to Arfon Rees “embryonic cults exist even in relatively open, democratic political systems”763 and although they are not formed in the full form anymore, they continue to resemble the gaze of the fully formed cults of personality. “So the spectre of the cult of personality is not peculiar to non-democratic states, but the political and social conditions in non-democratic states serve as a more comfortable hotbed in which it can grow”.764

This study will be concluded right at this point, asking questions that will hopefully engender new studies. In it, personality cults have been analysed as part of Turkish modernisation, a non-Western experience of modernity, and through the lens of Kurdish modernisation and the figure of Öcalan. However, personality cults are a universal phenomenon that we encounter in both totalitarian and democratic regimes; as such, could their function be closely related to the “problem of detranscendentalisation of authority”765 in the modern era as Lefort describes it in that perhaps they are a manifestation of the attempts to resolve this problem? According to Lefort, the problem of detranscendentalisation of authority does not indicate an emptiness left over by the ancient habits and beliefs of humans and the irrational desire bred by this emptiness but refers to a process in which “the embodiment of social unity overthrown and the symbolic place of power falls to society”766. Lefort also writes that in modern politics, “the political is a realm of representation and it always includes an element of the imaginary”767 which refers to an unceasing gap between a society’s self representation of its unity and its real divisions. That is to say, there is an unsurmountable gap between representation and reality that cannot be overcome by modern politics, and this gap causes political alienation, or an empty space of power. Lefort defines political alienation or empty space of power as a necessary limit for

766 Ibid.
767 Ibid.
democracy, and says that democracy is a way of leaving the symbolic space of power left by the departed divine sacreds. When we think of the phenomenon of personality cult and the sacralization of politics in conjunction with this line of thought, where Lefort defines as the empty space of power and draws attention to the relationship between modern politics and democracy, other questions also arise: in democratic or anti-democratic regimes where this representational gap is perceived as a problem to be resolved, and secular religions try to resolve this problem on the level of representation and visibility through their civilian or political aspects, are personality cults figures on which this common political mentality is projected? As well as the authoritarian, totalitarian or antidemocratic features of a state, regime or movement, do personality cults also demonstrate a context or framework in which the ways and possibilities of a society to participate in politics is manifested?

In the introduction, borrowing from Michel de Certeau, it is said that personality cults are the primary cornerstones of the strategy of centralized power, and they are also tactics used by ordinary people to express their needs and desires for being in the orbit of the power that rules them. The aim of this statement was to draw attention to the relationality (relational dynamics) between society and politics, and the fact that politics is formed by the dynamics of this relationship.

Lefort writes that in the modern era “politics in the broad sense involves not only the shaping (mise-en-forme) of collective life, the self-production and reproduction of society, but also the staging (mise-en-scène), the self-representation and interpretation of those relations”. Continuing this line of thought, is it possible to think of these personality cults or these modern sacreds, as surfaces on which this process of staging is represented, and reinterpreted by society at the same time? In other words, can the modern sacreds of Western or non-Western modernities be seen as inventions to fill the empty space of power in the form of civilian or religious politics?

770 Ibid.
And finally, what would the answers to these questions tell us about the dialectical relationship between Western modernity and non-Western modernities? Do these personality cults, especially encountered in non-Western modernities with modern claims and their sacred political haloes, as well as the identity they establish between sovereignty and sacredness have their foundational sources in their own traditions of old, or in the ideological sources of Western modernity itself? And is it also possible to consider these cults being as a modern answer to the hegemonic Western modernity that is experienced under the non-Western contexts?
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APPENDIX I: In-depth Interview Questions

A. Subjectivities – Life Stories

1. Where are you from? (Date and place of birth)
2. What do you at the moment? (job, affiliation profession etc)
3. How does your childhood look like? What do you remember about your childhood? (Daily life, family members, social environment etc.)
4. What is your mother tongue? What is/was the language used in family and in street?
   How do you describe your school life?
5. Any memories remarkable about the childhood?
6. What did Turkey look like when you were a child?
7. How do you define the relation between your identity and the place you live?
8. What does/did your social life look like?
9. How do you describe the region you live in terms of the dynamics of the era?

B. Personal History – Social History

1. Do you have an interest in politics? How and when did your interest in political movements begin?
2. How do you define the factors that shapes your political position today?
3. What kind of books do/did you read? Which newspapers or magazines do/did you read? Which radios do/did you listen to?
4. What does /did your political socialization look like? (Meeting places, debates, family members, friends, etc)
5. What was/is defining economic, social and political characteristic of the region you live in? What is the impact of that on your political preference?
6. How do you assess the politics of Turkey that has an impact on your political preference?
7. Were/are there any political organizations or movements to which you felt close or distant? What were/are they? What is the reason of your interest? In what ways, those political movements catch you?
8. How do/did you evaluate the Kurdish political movements of that period?
9. How do you asses the Kurdish movements other than Turkey?
9. What are / were the factors that has an influence on your political preference?
10. Were/are there any difficulties in terms of expressing your political identity? If yes, can you please describe it.
11. What is the state of Kurdish political movement in Turkey?
12. What was/is the characteristic of the political movement you supported?

C. Kurdishness

1. How do you define Kurdish identity? Who is a Kurd? What is the history of Kurds?
2. Are there any historical Kurdish figures that leaves a scar in your memory? If yes, who are they?
3. Do you define yourself as Kurdish?
4. Are the Kurds a homogenous group? How do they differentiate among each other?
5. Were/are the Kurds majority in your place of residence?
6. What does it mean to be a Kurd in Turkey?
7. Have you been discriminated because your identity? If yes, in what ways? Is there any specific period that you experience it more?
8. How would you describe the relationship between Kurds and Turks?
9. What are the main elements of Kurdish identity?
10. How do you assess the conditions of Kurds who live in Turkey?
11. Was there any discrimination against Kurds in your region? How and by whom?
12. Have you ever felt threatened because of your identity?

D. The PKK

1. What is the place, relevance and meaning of the PKK in Kurdish history?
2. What is your first memories about the PKK?
3. What did/does the PKK mean to you?
4. What is your assessment on the PKK according to the Kurdish and Turkish historical context?
5. How was/is the PKK being perceived by Kurds? Is there a homogenous perception regarding PKK or not? Why?
6. What is your subjective definition of the PKK? Where do you put the PKK in the Kurdish history and Turkey’s context?
7. What is the place, importance and difference of the PKK compared to other Kurdish movements in Turkey and in the region?

8. What were the conditions that raised the PKK? How do you define the factors that creates the PKK?

9. If you take part of the PKK, how did you decide to do that? Any specific reason?

10. How did your immediate environment respond to your decision?

11. What was and is the PKK aiming for? Is there any changes take place in the PKK itself? If yes, how do you define it?

12. What are the basic principles of the PKK that you are familiar with?

13. How would you describe the relationship between your personal story and the story of the PKK?

14. Can you tell us “that day”? What have you experienced?

15. What task and responsibility did/do you have in the movement?

16. What are the movements which have similarities with the PKK in Turkey or in the world?

17. How would you describe the PKK tradition? How can this tradition connect with other traditions in the Middle East? Is it possible for the PKK to be a model for other Kurds?

18. What is the PKK and what is it against?

19. How would you describe the PKK’s contribution to the Kurdish movement?

20. What type of relation exist between Kurds and the PKK?

21. Is there continuity between the PKK and former Kurdish movements?

22. What is the impact of the PKK outside of Turkey?

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E. Everyday Life and the PKK

1. What does your everyday life look like?

2. Is there any impact of the PKK on your everyday life? If yes, please describe.

3. If you are member of the PKK, what is the function of party education and discipline with regards to everyday life?

4. What are the daily activities that you have in the PKK?

5. What is the place of the individual in the PKK?

6. How do you define the gender relations in the PKK?

7. What does the PKK mean in terms of Kurdishness?
F. Abdullah Öcalan and Leadership

1. What is the place, meaning and importance of leadership / leadership in the Kurdish movement?
2. Who are the figures that you would describe as the leaders in Kurdish history?
3. How would you describe Abdullah Öcalan?
4. How would you describe previous Kurdish political figures?
5. What was/is the position of Abdullah Öcalan in the PKK?
6. If you define him as a Kurdish leader, how do youasses Öcalan’s leadership?
7. What may be the meaning of Öcalan for non-PKK Kurds?
8. What is the meaning of Kurdishness for Abdullah Öcalan? How do you describe it?
9. What is the importance of Öcalan for the PKK members?
10. What is the meaning of Öcalan in the context of Kurdishness?
11. How do you assess the evolution of Öcalan’s leadership in the last forty years?
12. Do you define Öcalan as a taboo or cult? If yes, why?
13. Would you describe any kind of sanctity with regards to Öcalan among the PKK members or Kurds? If yes, please describe the reasons and consequences.
14. How would you define the relation between the PKK and Öcalan?
15. Is it acceptable to criticize Öcalan in Kurdish society?
16. What are the values that are considered as sacreds for the PKK and Öcalan?
17. Does Abdullah Öcalan look like any other Kurdish or Turkish leaders? If yes, to whom and why?
18. Is there a difference among Kurds with regards to their Öcalan perceptions? If yes, why and how?
19. What did Öcalan mean for Kurds in the past? What does he mean for Kurds today? Is there change between past and today in this regard? Why?
20. What is new about Öcalan with regards to Kurdish history?

APPENDIX II: Interview Samples

Sample I

Ersa: XXX sizin yaşam öykünüzle başlamak istiyorum öncelikle. Nerede doğdunuz?
Görüșmeci: Ben 1980’de Erzurum’da doğdum, ama Erzurum’un Tekman ilçesinde. Tekman sosyolojik olarak tamamen Kürtlerden oluşan bir ilçe ve Palandöken Dağı’nın güney sırına

Esa: Burada bir es verelim pardon...

Esa: Ayni zamanda iki kültür birbirinden ayırıyor demiştiniz?

Esa: Peki Erzurum biraz şeydir aslında, merkezden bahsediyorum, pek Kürt hani bulabileceğimiz ya da Kürt’lük kendini ifade eden bir şehir değildir. Erzurum’a bağlı Kürt bir hani yerleşim yerinden, Kürtlerin daha yoğunlaşıp yaşadıkları bir yerden olmak nasıl bir duyguydu?

Esa: “Bahanesi” niye diyorsun?
Görüşmeci: Kaçmışım çünkü ilk sefer. 86’da beni getireceklerdi de ben kaçmıştım. Yani şey…

Esa: Niye kaçmıştın?
Görüşmeci: Kaçmışım dediğim şey, o gün köyden bir araba geliyordur. Araba saatinde kaçırdı, tamam yeterli bu…

Esa: Niye peki sen gitmek istemiyordun mesela?
Görüşmeci: Niyesi çok basit. Bir çocukun alışı olduğu dünyadan kopmak istememesi meselesi… Yani şehre daha önce bir sefer falan gitmiştim, bir iki sefer, gayet yabancı bir yerdi. Esra: Yani okula gitmek şehre gitmekti senin için daha çok dolaylısyla direniyordun? Peki o güne kadar ana dilin?
Esra: Hiç yoktu?
Esra: Öğretmen seninle dalga mı geçiyordu? Senin en özgüvenli cümleni kurduğun anda?
Esra: Peki ben şeyi de çok merak ediyorum. Kendim hiç bilmediğim için çok merak ediyorum. Şimdi insan ilkokula gittiği zaman hani benim kendi tecrübeyle sonuçta benim bildigim dille bana okuma yazma öğretmeye çalışıyorlar ki o bile zorlu oluyor hani. Hiç Türkçe bilmeyen birine nasıl Türkçe öğretiyorlar, okuma yazma öğretiyorlar ve bunu sen nasıl yaşayanın?
Esra: Böyle bir psikoloji oluyor yani?

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Esra: Yani ilk aslında senin de biraz etkilendiğin, okula gitmemekte enme meselesi de aslında herhalde zaten seni ayrıştırız, iteleyen, ikincisi sınıftımız gibi hissettiren bir şeyden kaçınıyorsun? İkincisi geldiğinde de bu sefer Kürtliğin üzerinden olmaya da Müslümanlığın üzerinden ikinci bir kırılma yaşıtıyor muy tremendous.

Görüșmeci: Benim hikayemde şey, birkaç tane daha başka öğe var.

Ses 032: 71 Dakika 25 Saniye.


E: Yani doğduğu şeyi aynı zamanda seçtin belli bir süre sonra içine doğduğu şeyi


E: Yani sen o dönem'in Nurculoğunun bir şekilde 28 Şubat’a yeterin tepki görmemesesini bir kırılma olarak yaşadın.

G: Evet. Şimdi buraya kadar mesela benim hikayem Kürt yaşamının kendi doğallığı dışında henüz Kürt bir siyasal faallık yok. Yani o faallıklere de ben sanırım 93-94’lerde falan rastladım ilk. İşte şeyi yeni aktör olarak ve kültürel unsurlar olarak mesela Ahmet KAYA girmişti bize, bizim kültüre. Bu yeni Kürtçe kasetler vs vardı siyasi şarklar ve siyasi kültürel şarklar vs jeste. E: Kim gibi mesela Ahmet KAYA dışında

G: Ahmet KAYA mesela Kom Ahmet vs gibi gruplar vardı Şakiro vardı eskiden de vardı ama Şakiro eski dönemin şeyi idi. denkleşmişti. bir siyasal faallık yeni dönemde çok
çağrıştırmıyordu ama eski dönemde mesela bir Şakıro’nun kasetleri saklanırdı bizim köylere de ve gizlenirdi. Mesela ortam eminse aile üyeleri, akrabalar vs beraber dinlenirdi. Ben hatırlıyorum amcam saklardı mesela onun kasetlerini şeyinde çanta...

E: Zaten Kürtçe’nin hani bir şekilde yasak olmasına hiç politik bir içeriği olmasa da hani var oluşu itibariyle başka bir politikanın müdahale ettiği bir şey olarak karşımıza çırıyor di mi?

G: Hı hı… Yani modern bir siyasal faallik değildi bu ama bana kalırsa çok güçlü bir koruyucu faallikti. O haliyle de bir siyaset içeriçyordu daha sonraki bütün zaten mesele birazçık bu koruyucu faallıklar üzerinden yüklesecek.

E: Peki… Yani senin döneminde aslında bir yandan da hani o siyasi faallin Kürt hareketi hani bugün bildiğimiz Kürt hareketi üzerinden çokça sahip olduğu bünü hani gündemde olduğu büyük oranda yaygınlaşmaya başladığı bir dönem… Senin hani bu dönemi yaşam biçimini neydi? Sana ulaşıyor muydu bunlar? Siz dışında mı kalyordunuz? Nasılsı yani?


E: Ailen neden haberdar değildi? Niye saklayarak, gizleyerek mesela? Bir yandan…

G: Biraz şeyle alakalı geleneksel bir toplulukta her halükarda kendi çocuğunun başka bir grupla yani bu çok siyasi bir grup olarak görülmesine gerek yok ama herhangi bir grupla bu kadar çok vakit geçirilmesi hoşlanılan bir şey değildir. Ailen peki hangi gruba mensuptu ya da bir grubu var mıydı?

E: Ailen peki hangi gruba mensuptu ya da bir grubu var mıydı?

G: Dışında kalıyordu. Bu beni birazcık şey dışarı çekmişti. Ama benim daha sonra gelen üzerinden… Gazeteler ve şeyler üzerinden o operasyon vs haberleri daha sonra bir şekilde zihnimde birikmiş

E: Onu soracaktım ben de. Hani bir yandan dışında kalıyorsun. Sol ya da milliyetçi bir gelenekten öyle bir kültürel habitustan geliyorsun, fakat dışarıda aktif olup bitenlerin Osmanlı dönemiyle birlikte délşerleriyle birlikte, hali ki Kürtçe bir müziği saklayarak dinleme, ki Kürt'lükten ötürü hani ötelenme vs bu tecrübeyle nasıl baş edilmişdi bu tecrübeyle nasıl kodlanıyordu mesela Müslüman Kürt daha merkez sağ bir aile zihninde? Neyin parçası olarak gür…?


E: Dolaysıyla sorun devletin kendisinde değil ama devletin modern ve Kemalist çehresinde daha çok herhalde bulunuyordu


E: Yani hem yakından hem uzak hissettğiğin aynı anda bir figür o zaman

G: Evet.

E: Peki o koptuğun sosyal ilişkiler üzerine biraz konuşabilir miyiz? Hani mesela nasıl bir sosyal ortam içinde sen büyündün?

G: Birkaç tane var. O son koptuğum 94-96 içerisindeydi. Zamanının çok büyük bir kısmı içinde geçirdiğim şeydi birazcık hatta adanmayla alakalı bir şey E:94-96 arası?

G: Hı hı. Adanarak içinde yer aldığım bütün zamanımı verdiği bir şeydi gruptu. Yani her işine koşturduğumuz, her zaman orada olmak ihtiyacı hissettüğim bir şeydi. Orası Fethullah Gülen’in domine ettiği bir alandı. Tamamen onun camiasıydı ama ben sanırım oraya daha çok

E: Siddik?


E: Yani bir şekilde Kürtülük üzerinden bir ayrılma aslında bu di mi?

G: Kürtülük artı 28 Şubat ikisini yani o konuştuğum o ayrıma sürecimde iki mesele vardı 1) Risalelerin değiştirilmesi, yani çünkü risaleler bir şekilde bir hakikati ifade ediyordu bana göre o zaman hakikatin değiştirilmesi bir, 2) bunun siyasal düzeyde de doğrudan devletten yana tavır almaya yönelen bir şey vardı. Bu bir hele de Nakşibi kültür içerisinde yetişişmiş bir Kürt için çok rahat kabul edilebilecek bir şey değil. Bugün aynıni söyleyemem ama o zamanlar öyleydi.

E: Bugün risalelerin sadeleştirilmesi de çok büyük bir tepki ile karşılandı falan peki yani o sorun öyle havada mı kaldı sonrası yani hiç bu soruyu tekrar edebileceğin karşılaştığın bir an ya da bu soruya dair sonrasında oradan üretilen bir cevaba den geldin mi mesela?

G: Yok ondan sonra işte orası ilginç koptuk biz hakikaten yani çok uzun yıllar koptuk yani 17 yıl sonra beni aradılar sadece çünkü şey sanırım ben bunu şöyle yorumluyorum cemaat içerisinde olup biten her şeyle ilgili her şey tolere edilebilirdi ama Kürtülük meselesine ilişkin bir şeyin tolere edilemeyeceğini deneyimlemiş oldum. Yani gayet nezaketti bir ayrılma oldu. Ama buna rağmen bir daha arama sorma vs gibi bir şeyin olmaması ki o cemaat yapısında çok mümkün değil bu. Bu şeyi gösteriyor yani Kürtülükle ilgili bir şeyi ve Erbakan’la ilişkin bir şeyi ben dile getirdiğimde köprülerin atıldığını gösteriyor.

E: Kürtülük ilişkin ya da Erbakan mı dedin?

G: Kürtülük ve Erbakan hakkında ilişkin. Çünkü Erbakan da aynı derece şey orda kötüz dışındır onlar için

E: Peki… 17 yıl sonra nasıl ulaştılar sana

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G: Görüşmek istediler ben de buyurun zaten yazdığım çizdiğim her şey belli ortadayım yani elbetteki görüşürüm dedim ama gelmediler
E: Anladım. Peki 94…
G: Bir kapı aradılar herhalde bilmiyorum yani…
E: Onlar senin yazıp çizdiklerini o zaman hala takip ediyorlar mıydı?
G: Tabi takip ederler onların çok güçlü bir teşkilatı var.
E: Peki bu 94-96 öncesi sosyalleşme haline ilişkin ne söyleyebilirsin? Yani gerçi köydeydim dedin uzun süre ama yine oradaki şeyde merak ediyorum yani…
G: Yani köy ahalisi o ilk atamasının yapıldığı çünkü bir Türk köyüne gitmişler o mesela şey bir cevap veremediğim bir meseleydi
E: Ve hala hatırladığın bir mesele tabi
geçmeye başladı. Doğal olarak akraba ilişkilerinden de biraz çekik koptum. Kürtçe’nin değil yoğun olarak Türkçe’nin konuşulduğu ve Türkçe düşünüldüğü bir iklimde geçmiş oldum ben. Ama o süreç de biraz benim kendi rıza pulsuzda gerçekleşmiş bir şeydi. Ve şey Kürtlük üzerinden herhangi bir şey bir yara falar pek fazla almadi.

E: Peki bu dönemlerde ne izlerdin ne okurdun? Böyle geriye dönüp hatırlamaya kalktığında senin kimliğini de şekillendiren…


E: Peki şeyi merak ediyorum. Bu eş zamanlı okumalar bir yandan da hani İslamiçlık ve diyelim ki Öcalan okumaları o dönemin siyasetinde de birbirine karşıt siyasi pozisyonları olan hani şeyler neyler politik aktörler olarak yansıdır sen bunu nasıl yaşiyordun?


E: Evet bu hala senin Kürt ve Müslüman kimliğinin çelişkisi olarak da bu yani sonucu sen adalet temelinden baktığın için kendi Müslümanlık kimliğinin böyle bir referans noktası olduğu ama hiç birinle tam olarak bütünleşemediğin gibi o hareketlerin de kendi adalet arayışlarının hep bir birine dokunamamak bir birini yok saymak üzerinden eksik kaldığını da düşünüyor yani söylemiş oluyorsun aynı zamanda. Peki senin gerek sosyal ilişkilerin vesilesiyle gerek aile akraba ilişkilerinin vesilesiyle tanıştığın yanında yordamında olan insanların bu hikayeleri yaşamaya şekillerini nasıl değerlendirdin? Hani senin yaşadığın hikaye buyken gene aynı nedenlerden ötürü bak bunda da bu sonucu yol açmış, şunu da şuna şöyle bakmasına neden olmuş dediğin hani durumlar belli başlı başka aklına gelen hikayeler var mı?

G: Epey hikaye var …………. içerisinde

E: Şunun için soruyorum bunu bazen neyin eksik olduğunu tespit ederiz ya kendimiz açısından sonra bir takım çelişkili durumların başka kimlikler karşılaştığımız başka insanların başka kimlikleri ya da duruşları üzerinden aslında aynı nedenin başka sonuçları olduğunu görünür farklı farklı kişilerde. Mesela bizim ortak noktamız da Kürt olmaktır ya da işte solcu olmaktır her neyse ama marazaları başka başkadar herkeste hani bu bütün bu süreç ben de bu sonucu yaratmışken çok insanda şunu bazılarında bunu yarattı gibi hani tespitler yapabiliyor musun hiç ya da böyle bir şey hani kendi kendine düşündünü mü?

G: Yani tabi düşündüm bir çok şey ama benim hikayem birçok şey sıkıntısı şu benim çok fazla kendimi kriyaslayabileceğimi sağlayacak şey yok uyumsuzluklar var çünkü ben biraz kötü tarih ama gayet başarılı biriydim şey olarak eğitim süreci içerisinde de. Çok iyi bir okula gelip çok iyi bir derece yapıp çok iyi entelektüel camia yakınına konumlanabilme imkanı olması biriydim hep yabancı hissetsem de yani o okullarda okuyamasam da bırakıp gittim mesela ama yani şey

E: Hangi okuldan bahsediyoruz?
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E: ve 28 Şubat’tan sonra başörtü…

G: Önce girmişim evet sonra bıraktım

E: Bıraktın, başörtüsü eylemlerinin akabinde bıraktın sonra nereye girdin?

G: Hı hı… İstanbul Sosyoloji. Bunun getirdiği şey olarak bunun benim kendi aynı hikaye yaşadığım gençlerden hiç biri böyleşine bir eğitim süreci yani dikey yükselme imkanına kavuşamadı. Kavuşamadığı zaman ne oldu diye baktığında ben arkadaşlarımın çoğunun hayatının bir şekilde çok başka bir mecraya aktığını gördüm.

E: Mesela?

G: Mesela… birisi yine yaklaşıklar olarak aynı hikayeyi yaşayan ama ailesi siyaseten daha faal daha miliyetçi olan bir arkadaş vardı akrabamızdı mesela o, ona birazcık şeyden, onu söylemedim değil mi?

E: Hayır.

G: Onlar 91 mi 92’de köyden ayrıldılar biraz başısı işkence göre babası işkence göre bir ailede köyden ayrıldılar İstanbul Sultanbeyli’ne yerleştiler mesela onların hikayesinde hemen hemen yaklaşık aynı gerilimler ama benim farkım şu biz ben Erzurum’a götürdüler ailem Erzurum’daydı onlar köyde kalmıştı daha sonra direkt Sultanbeyli’ne geçtiler Sultanbeyli biraz Kürt sosyallığı̇nin çok yüksek olduğu bir bölge, oradan gerillaya katıldı mesela o, ona birazcık şeyden, ona birazcık şeyden, ona birazcık şeyden, ona birazcık şeyden...

E: Anladım… Peki senin hikayenin çevresi hikayelerde ben eğitimin sanki şöyle sanki geliyor benim kulağıma ama yanlış kodluyor olabilirim sanki aile içerisinde çocuğunun koruma kollama sistem içerisinde sokma aracı gibi kodlandığını sanki algılıyorum.

G: Biraz öyle özellikle yani şey 80’den sonra bu tamamen yeni bir durum olarak düşünmek gerekçiyor çünkü daha güneyde başka baskılarla vs birleşince aileler sisteme katılmayi o kadar razi olmadığı için gerillaya katıldı mesela o, ona birazcık şeyden, ona birazcık şeyden...

E: Şimdi 80’nin ne önemi var?

G: 80’den sonra bunun ne önemi var muhtemelen 70’lerle falan şehre gitmiş çalışmak için gitmiş birçok göçmen var Almanya’ya gitmiş göçmenler var bunların yavaşça bir kültürel etki
taşıması muhtemelen böyle bir şey var özellikle bizim olduğumuz bölgede sonra 80’le beraber böyle eğitime katılım oranı arttı mesela köylerde okullara gönderilen çocuk sayısı bizde çok fazla arttı 80’den sonra biz biraz o kuşağın şeyız ama bizi mesela benim bir iki tane arkadaşımı hatırlıyorum aynı dönem öğrenciydik. İmam Hatipli onlar, İmam Hatipli olmanın getirdiği sıkıntıyla mesela üniversiteye gitmediler onlar da, Onlar gitmedi ve hepsi şey oldu yaklaşık olarak Kürt siyasetinin etki alanına girdiler. Bu kendiliğinden, tercihleri olan bir şeydi ama şeyi hatırlatmak… rahatlıkla söylenebiliyorım yanı o imam hatipler üzerinde getirilen kısıtlamalar olmasaydı tercihlerini başka bir şekilde yapabilirlerdi. Ya ben de yapabilirdim aslında. Ama yapmadık.

E: Sen nasıl yapardın? Mesela?


E: Sen imam hatip mezunu olarak mı kazandın oraları?


E: Peki niye sen böyle dedin onlar imam hatip o üstüne o baskı gelmeseydi?

G: Onlar 98-99’da beneden bir yarı yıl geç mezun oldular aynı yıl başlamamıza rağmen

E: Onları anlıyorum ama seni hani benim de benim için de farklı olurdu demeni anlamıyorum.

G: Yani şöyle bir şeydi

E: Marmarayı mı bitirirdim diyorsun mesela

G: Ya muhtemelen eğitim yoluna devam edebilirdim. Yani burada başarılı öğrencinle karşılaştığı şeyi karşımyoruz ben okula giderdim yanı o okulu bitirirdim ama girmeye razı olamadım bir türlü derslere vs

E: Şimdi burada enteresan bir şey var tabii senin ailenle de ilgili olduğunu bunun anlamıyor da merkez sağ hani muhabazakär bir aile ama bir yandan imam hatibe gitmeni istemiyorlar çünkü o İslâmcılıkla da bir mesafeleri var anlamıyorum kadarıyla

G: Yok benimkisi özel yani dahi çocuk muamelesi imam hatipte harcanmasın daha şey

E: Heee… Anladım.

G: Yani biraz cioè bir sıkıntı ben mesela alt kardeşlerim şeye imam hatibe gittiler ve şey biraz cioè onun sıkıntısi hiç de öyle olmak istemezdim aksine

E: Zekan başına iş açtı (gülüyor)

G: Ya ben zekam değil devlet başına iş açtı yani Türkçe bilmediğim bir ortamda okumak mecburiyetinde braktı o ortaya çıkan semboller üzerinden işleyen zihin arkadaşları tarafından görüldü sonra da durmadan misyon yüklemeye kalkıştilar.
E: Peki bir soru daha soracam. Müslümanlık acaba Kürtleri Müslüman olmayan daha sol milliyetçi Kürtlere oranla daha korunaklı bir şeye alıyor mu? Yani daha korunaklı bir pozisyona sokan bir şey mi?

2000’lerden sonra tekrar Müslümanlık eksenli bir Kürt milliyetçiliği çıkmaya başladı Türkiye’de.

E: 2000’lerden sonra diyorsun

G: Hı hı… Şimdi mesela yani güçlü bir şekilde ise Kürt Nurcular arasında var. Eski Türk olup Milli Görüş içerisinde yer almış insanlar içerisinde var. Bazı İslami camialardan ayrılan Kürtler arasında var ve hatta PKK’den daha şey daha radikal bir milliyetçi güzergâh seyretmeye başladı teorik olarak da

E: 90 öncesinde peki nasıl Müslüman bir Kürt’in durumu çok farklı mıydı Müslüman olmayan, yani Müslümanlık kimliği belirgin olmayan bir Kürt’ten?

G: Ya biraz benim kendi hikâyemden ayrı başka büyük bir resim var. 90 öncesinde yavaş yavaş gelişmiş adına daha sonra Hizbullah denilen bir hikâye var yani geleneksel tarikat ilişkilerinin güçlü olduğu yerler vardı onlar Nakşı ağılar üzerinden birazcık Türkiye’nin sağ siyasetiyle birazcık da Milli Görüş’le ilişki içerisindeydiler. Onlar muhtemelen basıççe şuunu düşünüyorlardı: eğer Türkiye’dede sağ siyaset ya da Milli Görüş muktedir olabilir ise Kürtlükle alakalı sorunları konuşabilecekleri bir düzlem oluşacak bunu erteliyorlardı. Ama Hizbullah hikayesi 80’de Türkiye’de başlayarak bütün o militan İslamiçlaşma hikayesinin şeyi olduğu Kürdistan’daki bir etki oldu. Fakat onlar mesela Kürt milliyetçiliğinin söylemsel alanına hiç girmeden olup biten bütün meseleyi sadece benim biraz önce o devletle zalimliği gâvurluğun hepsini bir biriyle özdeşleştirdip bir dış şeytanîlefleye maruz bıraktılar. Ondan sonra da şey yeniden olan inkilâp olan olursa zaten devlet gitmiş olanı zamanda gâvurluk zulüm hepsi bitmiş olacak Kürtlüğümüzü de yaşayacağız

E: Şöyle bir analoji yapsam mantıklı olur mu? Bu şeye benziyor mu Türk solun içindeki…

G: Benziyor bence, benziyor çünkü şey bana kalırsa PKK ile başlayarak da yükselen şey hareketi hatta PKK’den önce o bütün Kürt sol örgütler aslında Türk solundan kültür bir kültür alarak koştular. Hizbullah’la başlayarak hikaye de aynı kültürleme ikliminin bir sonucu dır. Çünkü İslamiç örgütler sol örgütlerden o militanlık kültürünü aldilar daha sonra İslamiç örgütler kendi içerisinde birazcık ayrışırken Kürt İslamiç gruplar da aynı kültürü İslamiçlık ve Kürt ekseninde taşdılar. Sorunun çözümü yönündeki perspektif de aynı devrim devrim sonrasında ertelemeye meselesi idi. Ama bunu ben çok fazla suçlama … söylemiyorum

E: Hı hı… bir tespit olarak

G: Hakikaten orada bir sağok savaş dönemi getirdiği bizim siyasete çok fazla ontolojik tercihlerin etkisi göz ardı ediliyor ya bu aslında insani da özne ve fail olarak itibarsızlaştırıyor. Sürekli olup bitenin etkisinde kalan bir şey edilen bir konuma biz getirmiş oluyoruz ve ontolojik tercihlerin çok baskın olduğunu dönemin o siyasal sağok savaş döneminin siyasal
kutuplaşmasının içerisinde kendini ifade edebilecek bir birikimden yok oluşturması nedeniyle böyle bir erteleme dönemde geçtiği düşünüyorum.

E: Bu kapasitesizlik ya da becerisizlik durumu değil alt yapının belki G: Evet yani değil modern devletin çok güçlü bir baskıya sahip olma, baskı gücünü insanların beslenebilecekleri bütün alanları şey yaptı yok etti. Bunun üzerinde belki çalışmaya gerekşiz yarısını yapan ya da 60-70-80'lerde ilk tercihlerini yaparak bir yer almaya çalışan siyasal aktörler hakikaten nasıl bir yetersizlik içerisinde şey yaptılar konularını biçim… yapılandırılsın. O biraz çok güçlü bir, daha sonrası zaten 84 sonrasında o çok güçlü devlet baskı ile basıncı şöyle bir şeyi yapmış başka bir baskıya maruz kalan aktörden yana olmaya başlamış gibidir bu durum olmuş ama o aktörün siyasal çizgisine yandaş olmak mesela istemiyorsan nasıl karşı çıkacaksın yani o devletin zulümüne hem o siyasal aktörün vizyonuna, ara bir yol kalmadı. Kalmayınca da 92’den sonra başka bir şiddet şekli başladı, İslamcılarla şeyi karşısında PKK arasında

E: Burda şeyi mi kastediyorsun Hizbullah’ın…

G: Hizbullah’ın PKK kavgası yani o şekilde bize aktarılıp hikaye. O hikaye içerisinde çok fazla ayrıntı var aslında da kimse yazmadı henüz onu E: Mesela?

G: Ya mesela şey yani ben bu hikayeyi mesela PKK’lı bir aktör, şeyi hazırlayıcı kalkıp bu hikayeyi inceleyen bir toplumda şeyi demişti, ya bu kavgayı PKK başlatılı Hizbullah başlatmadı arkadaşlar dedi. Alanna giren yeni aktörü gördüğü daha önce diğer aktörlere karşı işlediği şiddet mekanizmasını ona karşı da işlererek onu da atacağını ve alanın tek hakımı olacağını düşündü. Fakat mesela genç çocukların hepsi buna itiraz etti ve şiddetini KENDİLERinden daha önce hani PKK saflarında iş yapmış bedel ödemiş olan bir araştırmacı bile kalkıp sen nasıl olur da hainlerin burada söz söyleme hakkı olduğunu söyleyebilirsin ya da işle onların Kürtlük’tü aday siyaset yapmasını meşru olduğunun söyleyecek bir yere götürsün tarzi feci bir saldırya uğradi ve bu saldırıyı yapanlar da 18-19 yaşındaki çocukları. Yani bu şiddet hikayesi yaşamamışlar aslında yani sadece hikayeleri biliyorlar ama…

E: Bir Hizbullah şey yani hep Türkiye derin devleti ile de hani özdeşleştirilir bu acaba PKK’nın algısıyla, algısına da hani böyle dolaşır giren bir şey mi? Yani gerçeklik payı olduğunu da biliyoruz tabi de

G: Gerçeklik payı var. Yani herkes herkesle ilişkili zaten ama şu hikayeyi kurup bu bunu bütün ağlar üzerinden topluma yayacak bir güç sahibi örgütsel bir güç sahibi çok güçlü söylemsel araçları da var. Bu hikayenin halka karşısında bulmasını sağlayabilecek yeteri kadar şey de var hafıza da var ve onun etkisiyle ortada olup biten her şey tek bir potaya atıldı yani devletle olan
iş birliği meselesi ama şeyi biliyoruz ortada çok fazla farklılıklar var yani bütün şiddet hikayelerinin yanı örne olay üzerinden gittiğimizde kaç şekilde yorumlanabileceğine dair sürüyle farklı tanıklık alabiliyoruz mesela. O tanıklıklarını kıyaslalımdı dediğimizde şudur diyebileceğimiz kesin bir şekilde yeniden bir hikaye kuramıyoruz. Çünkü hikayenin içerisinde aktörlerin hiç birine biz hakim değiliz. Asla hiç birinde şey yapmayacağız, bulamayacağız ama çok kesin bildiğimiz hadiseler var yani çok kesin bildiğimiz hadiseler üzerinden tarafların karşılıklı olarak aslında özür dilemesini talep etme hakkımız var. Şu anda buunu Hizbullah’tan talep edebilecek seyeye özgüne sahibiz hepiniz ama PKK’dan talep edebilecek özgüvene sahip değiliz hiç birimiz. Fakat Öcalan çikarsa bunları konuşacağız. Ya ben o yüzden çıkmasını çok istiyorum çünkü normallenecek için liderin dışarıda olması ihtiyacımız var ve lider biliyor partinin güçlü isimleri de biliyor bu hikayeleri çünkü bazları fail bazıları hatalarını dönem dönem de itiraf da ettiler ama şey_gençlik ya da şeyle söyleme doğru olsa uzun uzun dominance olmuş toplumsal kesimler bilmiyor ya da bir kısmı biliyorsa da unuttu, unutmayı tercih etti.

E: Peki o zaman biraz PKK konuşabiliriz bu noktada. PKK nasıl çıkmıştır ortaya yani nasıl bir şeyi temsil eder, Kürtlüğü nasıl temsilcisi haline gelmiştir hani senin baktığın yerden bu sana nasıl gözüktü. Şimdi sen zaten bir sürü eleştiriyi de söylemiş oldun karşılıklı farklı gruplar içi...

G: Ya şimdi PKK’nın kendi sen baktığın yerden böyle bir şey var toplum kendisini bu órgüte ödediği bedeller nedeniyle borçlu hissediyor ve temsilcisi olarak yükseltmek istiyor aynı zamanda komşusu olan Türkler nezdinde de bunu itiraf ettirmek istiyor. Biz şu anda bu konumdayız. Bu açıdan bunu tartışılabilir bu hiçbir şey yok. Yani toplum buını istiyorsa öyledir.AMA bu nasıl bu noktaya geldi diye baktığımıza muhtemelen gelecekte konuşacağını belirtmek meselerler arasında bu yer alacak. Çok da büyük bir yolla gelmedi. Ben 84 öncesi hâlâ 84 sonrası ayırrıyorum PKK’nın 84 öncesi dönemde işlettiği şiddetin topluma hâkim olması üzerine çok kritik bir rolü var ve o şiddet meşru değil bana göre. Onu konuşabilsek bu çünkü bundan sona nasıl davranışرعا da etkileme potansiyeli olan bir şey çünkü Hizbullah’tan ben kişisel olarak şeyi bekliyorum hala bir bütün topluma yönelik genel bir özür bekliyorum çünkü bazı hadiselerde tamamen haklı olmasına rağmen yaptığını işin çok ağır bir sonucu oldu. Toplumun kaldırılamayacağını kadar ağır bir sonucu...

E: Mesela neyi kastediyorsun bunu söylerken? Spesifik bir olayı mı kastediyorsun?

G: Bazı noktalarda saldıriya uğradı gerçekten kendisini korumak kastrıla bazı işler yaptı ama kendisini koruma kastrıla verdiği karşılıklar dalga dalga büyüklerek bütün toplumun şeyini varlığıını tahrik etmeye yönelik yani insanların onur ve haysiyetlerini incitecek kalıcı bir şekilde
incitecek noktaya kadar gitti ve bundan dolaylı bir özre ihtiyaçımız var ve toplum isteyecek yani bunun, bu özrü dileme… açıkça ikrar etmeden de şey olmayacak meşru bir siyaset aktöre dönüştürebilmek zaten

E: PKK’nın de 80 öncesi şiddetiyle ilgili böyle bir özre ihtiyacı var diyorsun?
G: Hı hı… Var ve hala o 80 öncesi şiddeti yaşayan insanlar yaşar… hala sağ ama onlar 84 sonrası unutmaya tercih ettiler fakat mesele şey o şiddettir değerlüğünün toplumun içerisinde yerleştirdiği bir kültür var o nedenle PKK’nın bir özre başvurması gerekiriyor simdi fakat topluma hakim olmasında bu nasıl etkin olduğu diye sorarsan bana kalırsa şey oldu işte olmamızın bir anlamı olmaz hepinde PKK’dan yok. Olmadığı için de hakikaten yani o bir özre ihtiyacı söz konusu bir şekilde işlerinden iki aktör kaldı devlet ve PKK.

E: Peki özderinizlikli insan maliyeti göz ardı etme derken spesifik olaylar geliyor mu aklına çünkü hani PKK’dan bu haberler takdim etmekta o 80 öncesi şiddeti dönemini takdim ederken işte devletin süreçlerini tanımlıyor. Neden bence böyle bir şey var mı? Ya da böyle bir olay oldu modern PKK’e de yok? Olmadığı için de hakikaten yani o bir özre ihtiyacı söz konusu bir şekilde işlerinden iki aktör kaldı devlet ve PKK.
G: Yani basitçe PKK şuunu yapmasa, kendi hikayesini kurarken üç soruya cevap vermek mecburiyetinde. Türk toplumunda daha önce görülmemiş bir şiddet işleterek siyasal aktöre dönüştü. Niçin o eşiğe geçtiğini zaten herkes kendisine herkesten önce açıklamak mecburiyetinde. Açıklama yolu olarak bunu deniyor ama ben bu şey başka alternatif yok mu diye düşünüldüğünde varır çünkü şeyi biliyoruz işte Ağrı’yi sanırım Batman’ı ve Diyarbakır’ı alırsak 80’den önceki belediye seçimlerinde ve bütün Kürt siyasal örgütlerine ortak tercihi ile Mehdi Zana mesela gelmiş yani bizim 95’lere kadar falan başaramadığımız bir şey daha sonra tekrar ve tamamen şiddet dışı yollar şey yapılarak. Bir de o şiddet pratiği böyle biraktığı işte örgütleri ve örgütüne işte örgütleri ve örgütüne işte örgütleri ve örgütüne işte örgütleri ve örgütüne işte örgütleri ve örgütüne işte örgütleri ve örgütüne işte örgütleri ve örgütüne işte örgütleri ve örgütüne işte örgütleri ve örgütüne işte örgütleri ve örgütüne işte örgütleri ve örgütüne işte örgütleri ve örgütüne işte örgütleri ve örgütüne işte örgütleri ve örgütüne işte örgütleri ve örgütüne işte örgütleri ve örgütüneri ortak tercihi ile
ateist öğrenci böyle hikâyeler var bu arkadaş ala rizgariciymiş 80’den önce hasta in oğluna sınu söylüyor oğlu bana doğrudan hikâyeyi aktadır benim babam diyor PKK’den çok fazla nefret ederdi ben bunun da nedenini anlayamadım bir türlü. Mesela bu molla daha sonra 91-92 yıllarında Hizbullah’la ilişki içerisinde olmuş. Yani 80 öncesi ateist bir fekıh, fekıh deriz biz ona şey medrese talebesi anlamında iken 91-92’den sonra Hizbullah’la ilişkili olmuş ama Hizbullah’in işlettiği şiddet pratiği nedeniyle oradan da ayrılmış 93’te falan şimdi hastayken ve ölüme yakık men oğluna aktarıyor PKK’den niçin o kadar nefret ettiğini hikaye şu benim yaklaşık 70 arkadaşızı öldürdüler ve isim isim götremiş yani tabi 70’in gençken ne kadar şey olduğuunu bilmiyorum ama bu kişinin hafızasında ne kadar güçlü bir bir bırakıldığı göstermesi açısından ki ala rizgarici biri o 80 öncesinde. Böyle çok fazla hikaye var mesela benim babamı PKK vapuru kaçırdı ama 94’ten sonra toplum öyle bir zulüm yaşamış ki tek örgüt olarak PKK kalmış oradan da ayrılmış 93’te falan şimdi hastayken ve ölüme yakık men oğluna aktarıyor PKK’den niçin o kadar nefret ettiğini hikaye şu benim yaklaşık 70 arkadaşızı öldürdüler ve isim isim götremiş yani tabi 70’in gençken ne kadar şey olduğuunu bilmiyorum ama bu kişinin hafızasında ne kadar güçlü bir bir bırakıldığı göstermesi açısından ki ala rizgarici biri o 80 öncesinde. Böyle çok fazla hikaye var mesela bu amca hikayeyi sadece oğluna aktarıyor. Başka bir yerde konuşma hakkı görmüyor kendine. Bu sadece PKK’nın gücümle alakalı bir şey değil aynı zamanda 84’ten sonra toplum öyle bir zulüm yaşamış ki tek örgüt olarak PKK kalmış onu da itibarsızlaştıracak bir şey söylediğiniz anda toplum tamamen savunmasız kalıyor. Bu nedenle söylemenin ahlaki bir temeli bulamıyor insanlar. O çok özel sohbetlerde falan ortaya çıkabiliriyor bütün hikâyeler.

E: Yani aslında şeyde söylemiş oluyoruz dimi yani bugün işte Türk devletinin ya da Türk ortalama batılı işte vatandaşın aklındaki homojen Kürt kitlesinden bahsetmek mümkün değil gün de aslında bugün de. Buna dair ne söylersin yani bugün bakıldığında Kürtler diye genel bir kategoriden bahsediyoruz biz ama Kürtler homojen midir? Hepsi aynı siyasal partiye oy verip aynı siyasal hareketin bir parçası olup işte aynı kişi, lidere bağlı, bağlı mıdırlar?


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çok yakında yer alacak. Çok fazla farklılık var şu anda fakat bu farklılığı örten bir hegemonik güç var. Bu hegemonik gücün bence bir yararı var bir de ciddi bir sıkıntı var. Toplumun kendini savunabilmesini sağlayanabilecek bir örgütSEL şeye ulaşıyor, örgütSEL donanma ulaşıyor ama o örgütSEL donanma aynı zaman toplumun kendi içerisinde farkları daha öncesinde alışık olduğu meşru yollarla işletmesini o farkların bir birlerine karşısına düşüp ilişkiye girmesine engelleyecektir. Bu şeye de sahip baksıçılığı da sahibi. O şey yapıyor çünkü farklardan bir tanesini örgüt içerisinde hâkim kılarken aynı zamanda toplum içinde de hakim kilmaya çalışıyor ve bu da siyasal bir parti olarak normal ama PKK bugün siyasi bir partiden daha fazla bir şey. Daha fazla bir şey olduğu için de yaptığı tercihler toplumun tamamını ciddi şekilde etkiliyor fakat insanlar muhalefet ettiğinde ne yaparlar muhalefet etmek istediklerinde. Şu anda düşkücü düzeyli muhalefet etmeyi tercih ediyorlar. Ya bunun mesela liderin temsiliçilik gücüne etki edebilecek bir muhalefet olmamasına insanların kendisi dikkat ediyor. Yani aynı sıkıntı mesela Alevilerde de var. Alevi Kürtler şu anda çok sıkıntılı ve gerilimli yani geçen 21, 2012 21 Martında okunan mektuptan sonra Aleviler tekrar Alevi Kürtleri kendilerinin Sünni Kürtlerin liderliğinde gerçekleşen bir barışın yan aktörü olarak konumlandırılacağına yönelik ciddi bir endişe taşıyorlar ve bu aynı zamanda azınlığın azınlığı olarak tekrar baskılanacak mıyoz diye bir şey etmelerine neden oluyor.

E: Endişelere… Şimdi bu önemli bir nokta. İki şeyi konuşalım istiyorum. İlk önce şeyi şimdi PKK artık bir siyasal partiden daha fazla bir şey dedin ve aslında 80 öncesindeki o sınırsız şiddetin nerdeyse hani bugün belki bunu kamusal alanda söylemesi de Kürt hareketinin içindeki de ya da Kürt olan pek çok insanca teslim edildiğini söylediyan yani bunu bilir herkes ama hani 84 sonrasında tek bir örgüt kaldışi için de itibarsızlaştırırmak istemez. Peki sen nasıl oldu da PKK bu kadar farklı gruplarını işte nevroz alandında olduğu gibi temsilcisi olmasını hem Türkiye siyaseti açısından hem dünya siyaseti açısından hem de Öcalan’ın hani kullandığı stratejiler açısından nasıl görüyorsun, bu süreci nasıl değerlendirdiyorsun, yani böyle bir yani sürekli bir lineer bir çizgide ilerledi ve ilerledi, büyüdü ve büyüdü gibi bir şey mi yoksa kırılmalari var mıydı bu süreçin?

G: Kırılmalari vardı yani 90’dan sonra bir takım ideolojik seyrelme halı var gibi geliyor benim, o ideolojik seyrelme toplumun daha geniş kesimlerine ulaşmasını sağlayan bir şey olduğu ve aslında tercih yapmak mecburiyetinde kaldı 90’a doğru. Güçlü bir savaş makinesini işlettiğinde ulaşabileceğini kesimlere zaten ulaştı 91-92’ye doğru ama bu ulaşıldığı kesimler Kürtlerin meşru temsilcisi olmasına yetebilecek bir genişlikte değildi. Öcalan sanırım şu nu fark etti basit bir şekilde hegemonik bir belirleyiciliğe ulaşmak mecburiyetinde hem dünya sistemi içerisinde muhatap alısmak için hem de devletlerin çeşitli istihbarat organları üzerine ilişkin bir örgütten


E: Burada istersem bir es verelim mekan değişirelim bir şey içelim…

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Ersa: Pkk’nın değişiminden bahsediyorduk. Leninist, Marksist, evet.
Görüümeci: Evet değişimi… İdeolojik seyrleme.
Ersa: Dindarlarla daha bir şey yapma ama ülke Alevilerin de aslında bir, Alevilerle de başka bir ilişiye girme…
Öcalan Müslüman bir Kürt’e, Alevi bir Kürt’e, daha seküler bir Kürt’e aynı anda nasıl hitap eden bir liderdir? Ya da böyle bir lider midir?


Esra: Bu arkadaşlar şey mi? Yani kimlik olarak seninle benzeşen mi yoksa daha örgütli kişiler mi?

Görüşmeci: Daha örgütli... Yani cezaevinde yattıysa, çıkmış, vesaire kişiler.

Esra: Peki Öcalan sizi birleştiren bir figür olduğunu anlıyorum, Öcalan’ın. Ya da şöyle sorayım: Sizi Kürt’lük mü birleştiriyor, Öcalan mı birleştiriyor, PKK mı birleştiriyor?
Görüșmeci: Ben işte orada yokum, biliyor musun? Yani ait olamıyorum bir türlü. İnsanların bir olma ihtiyacını gayet müşter, makul görüşüyorum ama birileri dışarıda kalmalı ve toplumun kendi hikayelerinin her zaman adaletli işlemeylebileceğini yönelik bir sorgulama dinaminiğini hazırda tutmalı diye düşünüyoruz. O yüzden özellikle…

Esra: Senin pozisyonun böyle bir şey, ben onu anladım. Ama ben sadece şuunu demeye çalışıyorum ideolojik olarak bir siyasi bütünleşme var olmadan bahsetmiyorum. Aynı masada oturma pratiginden… Çünkü belki de seksen öncesinde hatta doksanlarda bile zor gerçekleşen bir pratik olduğunu biliyorum biz. Hani daha Müslüman bir kimliği bir Kürt’ün, hani daha hareketin içindeki örgütli bir Kürt’le oturup bir masada, birbirinin hatta işte, sizin burada, sen acıtmamak için sormaman gibi, hani birbirini de kollayarak oturabildiğine çok şahit olmuyorum.

Görüșmeci: Bence işte o hikaye tam o şey, seksen öncesinde aynı masada oturmama diye bir şey yoktu. Sadece yetmiş beş, seksen aralığında o Türkiye’deki bütün ideolojik tartışmanın Kürdistan’a aktarılması haliyle de bazı çatışmalar var ama onlar sadece militanlar arasında çözülmiştir… Ve şey değil toplumda yok böyle bir şey. Yani ben işte bir ateist molla. Bu ateist molla medresede… Ve yani ateizmi ilk tercihi nasıl? Onu sormuşum. Ya ne bileyim işte ben kitaplardaki Allah’a pek inanmamıştı, çok adaletsiz geliyordu bana. Falan ama medresede okuyorsun, devam ediyorsun. Bu nasıl bir tercih üstelik yani, hani ideolojik tercih yapmaktan korkacak biri de değil bu kişi. Çünkü yaşamIFI itibariyle her an ölebilecek bir yerde duruyor. Bir işler yapıyor. Fakat halkla ilişkili olmak için mesela bir o medresede, medresenin kurullarına da uyumlu bir şekilde davranmamız gerektiğini düşünüyorduk. Bu da bir şey,

Esra: Mantık…


Esra: O hatalar bugün ne söylüyor?

Esra: Peki o zaman Kürt’lük, belki, yani ya da o Kürt kimliğinin yaşadığı eziyet mi Öcalan’dan ziyade? Ve şuan onu temsil ettiği için Öcalan’a itiraz etmeye hali mi Hizbullah’ta bile?


Esra: Sürecinin bir parçası gibi mi geliyor?

Görüşmeci: Bunun için de bu işi başarabilecek tek bir tane yapı var. Yani iki toplum tarafında, üzerinde mutabık olanabilecek… O yapının şuan da elini zayıflatacak herhangi bir şey yapmuyor kimse, yapmayacak da bir süre.

Esra: O zaman biz bir toplumsal onurdan bahsediyoruz aslında herkesi ilgilendiren değil mi?

Görüşmeci: Yani Pkk’nin muhatipleri de aynı noktada. Şey değil yani diğer muhatipler de var. Onlar açısından çok önemli bir şey değil ama Hizbullah, aynı zamanda başka bir örgütsel gücü olan işleyebilecek, o gücünü işletebilecek, kendini ayrıtırabilecek bir aktör olmasına rağmen…

Esra: Rağmen bunu böyle kabul ediyor.

Görüşmeci: Hı hı… Bu, çünkü şunu biliyor; Bunu kabul etmezse ki yani belli ki hiç sevmez, onlar da hatıraları nedeniyle sevmez ama o bu süreci kabul etmezse toplum kendisini şey yapar…

Esra: Dışlar.


Esra: Peki bir şey daha soracağım. İki şey soracağım aslında. Kendimme hatırlatmak için şuraya yazıyorum. İlk şeyi sorarım, Öcalan’dan konuşmaya devam edelim diye; Öcalan’ı, yani sonuçta Öcalan ilk isyan eden diyelim Kürt lideri değil. Şeyh Sait’ten, Sait Rıza’dan ayrıran ya da onlarla benzeştiren, o gelenekle ilişkili bulabilmişin ya da hani ilişkisizi gördüğün neler var? Yani bütün o figürlerle beraber düşündüğünde nereye oturuyor, Öcalan? Ya da Barzani?


Esra: Ölmemesi belki değil mi?


Esra: Yani “Kürt’lerin Babası” aslında bir nevi Öcalan şuan değil mi?

Görüşmeci: Şuanda evet, bir ulusun Babası.

Esra: “Bir Ulusun Babası…”


Esra: Peki ben sana şöyle söyleyebilirsem, Ben sana desem ki “bugün Kürt kimliğinin temel bileşenleri nelerdir?” desem, “dün nasıldı, bugün nasıldı?” desem, değişen sürekli arz eden neler söyleyebilirsin?

Görüşmeci: Mesela şeydi, geçmişte benim hatırladığım, yani bu Kürt coğrafyasının tamamına genelleştirilemez bir şey ama bir bölgeyi kıyaslama açısidan, sadece kendi bölgesinde ilişkin,

Esra: Neydi?

Esra: Kim geliyor aklına mesela böyle…

Esra: Kim?
Görüşmeci: Ciwan Hajo.

Esra: Ha Ciwan Hajo, O.K

Esra: Şimdi, Daha…
Görüşmeci: Şuanda Kürtçe yani…
Esra: Kürtçe, bu da siyasal mücadeleyle çok ilgili?
Görüşmeci: Şeyler, gençler ve siyasal mücadeleyle alakalı bir süreç.
Esra: Peki bu 20. yüzyılda yayılan hani Kürt hareketlerini düşünҮgünüzde yine 25’ler, 50’ler, 60’lar 70’ler… Yani Pkk de dahil, ne tür benzerlikler, farklılıklar görüyoruz? Yani sence mesela şöyle soruyum aslında; Pkk, bir kopma mı, bir devamlılık mı? Bu hareketlerle kıyaslandığında?
Esra: Ve barışmaya yeniden belki?
Esra: Yani asında şöyle bir ilişki de Sevgi andan itibaren geri dönük… Artık koştugu şeye ona tabi değil mi? O, ona tabi değil. Yani ondan kopmuş kendi var olunumu kurmuş ve “efendi”
haline gelmiş ve şimdi diğer yani o hiyerarşide Pkk daha üst bir yerde. Dolayısıyla barışmak mümkün bunun için.

Görüşmeci: Artık barışması kendisine bir şey kaybettirmeyecek, kazandıracak. Çünkü o toplumsal kesimlerle bağsızlık, devam ederse kaçınılmaz olarak şey olacaktır, marjinalleşecektir uzun vadede.

Esra: Peki sen bu Pkk’nin başarsında diyelim “örgüt” olma halini nasıl bir fonksiyon olduğuuzu düşünüyorsun? Yani bir aşıret, bir aile olmamak ama bir örgüt olmak, modern bir örgüt olmak halini…


Esra: Karşısına dikilmedi yani?

surgilediler. Ama bu pratiği toplum yeniden anlamaya çalıştı, yorumladı ve basıçte şu; devletin
yakamadığı tek bağlılık şekli bu oldu. Bu halkaya eklemenebiliriz. Ve eklemendiler. Bunu
yeniden yorumladilar. Yoksas Öcalan’ı ilk halkanın atfettiği Mitik rolü toplumun tamamı aslında
atfetmiyordu. Ama şey birinci halkanın atfettiği rol, Öcalan’a atfettiği rol, toplumun geri
kalanının tek yapaya bağlanmasını sağlayan bir şey oldu, kolaylaştırıcı oldu. Fakat bu yorumun
tersi bir şey var. Şimdi on, yirmi hatta 10-25 yaş arası genç Kürt kuşak var. Bunların karşılaştığı
tek bağlılık tarzı bu lider ve örgüt şeyi, örgütün lidere atfettiği rol ve liderin kendine bağlı
tuttuğu örgüt… Karşılaştıkları tek bağlılık tarzı bu… Yani onlar BDP’yeye falan tabi değil.

Esra: Lidere tabiler öyle mi?

Görüşmeci: Demirtaş ya da Ahmet Türk ya da Osman Baydemir “Çocuklar şunu yapmayın”
dediginde “ben Apo’nun söylediğini böyle anlıyorum, yapacağım” diyor. Yani bunu da
gelleyebilecek şeyi de yok.

Esra: Yeni bir kuşak var yani bu anlamda?

Görüşmeci: Yeni bir kuşak… Ya tabi 25 yaş üstü için benim söylediklerim geçerli ama 10-25
yas grubu için biraz farklı bir şey var. Onlar çok fazla o duruma tabi değiller.

Interview Sample II

Esra: Şimdi benim aslında dört farklı grubum var. Sana biraz nasıl yaptığımı da anlatayım.
Onunla ilgili de bana feedback verebilirsin. İn, illegal alan aktörleri, legal alan aktörleri,
semptizanlar ve karşılard gibi kabaca dört grubum var. Hepsinin soruları da farklı farklı tabi.
Seni sempatizanlar kategorisine aldım tatlim örgütleye örgütleye geçeceğim. Bi böyle dört farklı şeyden, başlaktan
oluşuyor. Bir öznellikler dediğimiz işte nerelisiniz, çocukluk hatırlarları, şu, bu. Kişisel tarih ya
da tarihsel dönem konuşacağımız bir ikinci bölüm. Sonra kurt kimliği üzerine hani soru
sorduğum bir bölüm. Sonra pkk’ye pkk’ye iliskin soru sorduğum bölüm ve en sonunda da
“Öcalan’la ilgili sorular sorduğum bölüm var. Böyle bir yakalalım var ama hani buna bağlı
kalmak zorunda değildir. Eee, şimdi senin özel bir durumun var ya sonuçta.. hani sen Şeyh Sait
geleneğinin içinde gelen birisin yani. O ailenin bir mensubusun. O yüzden öznellikler
konuşulurken, hani asinda nerelisin, şu, işte doğdun eyvallah, hani bir kurt ailenin çocuğu
olarak belli bir geleneğin içinde gelen ailenin çocuğu olarak, yani o hani dünyaya gelişin, o
büyüğünün dönem, senin şu çocukluk hatırlarları, şu yaşadığın aileye dair biraz konuşalım
aslinda ben de bilmiyorum bunları benim için de iyi olur yani.

Esra: İkinci kez nereye?

Görüșmeci: İki kez. İkincisinde Kırklareli Rize Sergen’e herkes oraya gönderiliyor. Eee, bir de 60’lı darbesinden sonra önemli İşte erkek, yani şey olan, ii, belli başlı ailenin şeylerini gönderiyorlar. Tek tek gönderiyorlar. Bir tanesini işle Isparta’ya gönderiyorlar, bir tanesi başka yere gönderiyorlar.

Esra: Ayırarak yani?


Esra: Nasıl bir şeydir o his? Yani, sürgün ailesinin mensubu olmak, “bizi sürmüşler” nasıl bir şeydir?


Esra: Niye veriyorlar acaba?


Esra: Ne sebepten ötürü?
Görüşmeci: Yani o zaman çok algılayamıyorum. Beş altı yaşlarındaydım. Hatta sonradan sordum da şey işle bunlar Kürtler, şunlar, bunlar…

Esra: Peki o sitede oturanlar ne?

Esra: Bu aynı zamanda bir böyle sınıfsal da mı bir çatışma içeriyor muydu? Yani birbirine eklemlenmiş bir şey miydi? Önceliği neydi yani Kürt olmanız mı yoksa işte…


Esra: Birbirinizle daha çok diyalog içindeyiniz?
Görüşmeci: Evet, evet. Ve onun tabi bir sürü dezavantajı da oluyor, her neyse.. değişik yani değişik sosyalleşmeye ve kültür, kültürelmeseye yol açıyor. Ee, sonra benim sek, dokuz yaşındayken babam Erzurum işte çalıştığı yerin, kurumun lojmanı çıktı. Oraya gitti. Bu sefer
gittiğimiz yerдрес我們終點地更靠近終點。會，經済上難以達成現代比讓我們做著。是的，從經濟角度來說，我們是現代最富裕的地區。因為現代最富裕的地區是土耳其。而我們正在做的是，因為我們正在做著。

Esra: Peki orada ilkokuldaki durumun neydi? Okuldaki sır, hani okula mesela o eski mahallende hissettiği bir benzer bir ne bileyim, dışlanma ya da en azından bu Kürt'tür diyen kulakların gerisinde bir bilgi eşlik ediyor muydu sana?


Esra: Hımmmmm…


Esra: Çocuk diyor yani? Sana arkadaşın diyor bunu?
Görüşmeci: Evet. Bana çok güç vermişti mesela Teyzem. Ben gittim dedim ki “Git söyle, herkese söyle.” O bana için, böyle bir, nasıl söleyeyim bir atlama taşı gibi, atlama taşı denilmeyce de neyse atlama...

Esra: Eşiktı nani


Esra: Hı bu dayının çocukları mı?


Eser: Peki bunu neye bağlıyorsun? Bu siyaset ilgini?


Eser: Peki evde böyle konuşulan bir şey mi? Yoksa


Eser: Tartışma Programlarını
Görüşmeci: Haa, öyle bir şey.

Ersa: Peki bu senin aynı zamanda hani ailenin dışında, akrabalar, bu gidip geldiğiniz çevrede de siyaset böyle yaşayan bir şey miydı? Sürekli evde konuşulan bir şey miydı?


Ersa: Hani senin bu ilgini kendi yaşıtlarınla kıyaslayınca buna bağlayabilir misin? Yoksa kendi, bir yandan da tamamen insanların kendi özelliğiyle ilgili de olabilir tabii.

Görüşmeci: Şöyle bir şey. İlk dediğin husus var ama nihayetinde benim işle kuzenlerim, amcamın oğulları falan şunlar benim yaşıtlarım onlar o kadar benim gibi değildi yani.

Ersa: Benzer koşullarda büyük nihayetinde…


Ersa: Mesela radikal, niye radikal diyorsun mesela şimdi?


Ersa: Yani PKK’ye negatif bir eleştiri geldiğinde sen sen savunuyordun?

Görüşmeci: Evet, ooo, ben şey gibiydim işle. Duş altıyordum bir gün de…

Ersa: Peki nasıl bir bağ bu sence? Nasıl yani bu kadar sempati duymuş olabilirsin?

Esra: Peki nasıl bir şeydi o, ilk gördüğün zamanı hatırlıyor musun mesela? İlk gerilla gördüğün zamanı… Nasıl bir duyguydu?

Esra: Çat’ta mı?

Görüşmeci: Evet Çat. Çat aslında Kürt bir il ismi…

Esra: Yer isim?

Görüşmeci: Çat ilcesidir ama asimile olmuştur çوغşnulukla. Yani mesela şuanda hiç şeyi yoktur. Aslında bu .....

Esra: Yer isim?


Esra: Aslında Ermenilerin…”


Esra: Onlar PKK’lı miydi?

Görüșmeci: Yok, yani öyle örgütlü…

Esra: Yakalandı derken? Niye yakalandı?

Görüșmeci: Gözaltına alınıyor. Yardım, şey yapmış.

Esra: Hı, hı anladım.


Esra: Kim, kim diyor bunu?

Esra: Özeleştiri yazııyoruz derken bunu neye istinaden yazıyorsunuz?

Görüşmeci: Yani mekanizmaları var özelleştiri mesela bir şey yanlış bir şey yaptım diyor, özelleştiri yazıyor. Yani artık böyle sanki örgütlüyüşüz gibi yaşamaya…

Esra: Yaşamaya çalışılıyor muyuzu?

Görüşmeci: Evet. Yani o çocuğun o kadar bence çok şeyi de yoktu. Biraz kişisel…

Esra: Ama şöyle bir şey mi? Sözünü kesiyorum, mesela “Dağda böyle, böyle böyle şeyler yapılıyor” diye muhtemelen siz duyuyorsunuz. Onların pratiklerine dair birtakım bil, onu kendi hayatımızda kopyalıyorsunuz aslında, doğru mu anlıyorum?


Esra: Onları uygulamaya çalışıyorum?


Esra: Peki aile ne diyordu? Siz bunları, bu duyguları yaşarken aile nasıl bakıyordu?


Esra: Uğraşıyorsun?


Esra: Yani sen sınava girdim, il birincisi olunca bir dakika hani üniversiteye gidip öyle bir siyasi belki başka türlü devam etsem gibi mi?


Esra: İstanbul’da da akrabalalar var?

Görüşmeci: İstanbul’da Dayımgilde kalıyorum.

Esra: Hı, hı onlar geldiler.

Görüşmeci: İstanbul’da Dayımgilde kalıyorum.

Esra: Hi, hi onlar geldiler.

Görüşmeci: Var, birkaç tane daha akrabalakmız vardı. Yani İstanbul artık daha başka bir aşamaydı. Çok farklı işte geldim buraya tabi etkileniyorsun İstanbul’da böyle bir şey oluyorsun. Bakırköy’de oturuyorsun falan... Çok farklı bir sosyallık, çok farklı... Belli bir süreç olduğu sonrarda benim böyle bir şeyim var. Adapte olabiliyorum, oldum yani bir şekilde. Ama farklılaşmıştı ve tabi bunlar artık şöyle de zaman olarak da 97ler, artık daha durduğu yerler. Tabi bunların da çok ciddi etkilenmesi oluyor yani. Zaman ne kadar şiddetli aktıysa sen de öyle...

Esra: Zaman ve mekan senin aslında algını da şekillendiriyor galiba?
Görüşmeci: Evet. 94-95 savaşın en yoğun olduğu 93-94.

Esra: Peki İstanbul’a, Bakırköy’e geldiğinde hani “Kürt’lük” meselesi açısında nasıl bir şey duyumsamıştın?


Esra: Hümanist belki?

Görüşmeci: Yani.

Esra: Daha radikal değil belki daha yumuşatıyor belki yanı?

Görüşmeci: Yumuşatıyor biraz ya da daha farklı neticelerini görüyorunsun. Bir de savaşın şartlarını da dediğim gibi değiştmişti. İşte buraya geliyordum de artık o şey var her zaman ama çok açık da değil.

Esra: Peki sana bakış nasıldi o açıdan? Hani Erzurum’daki mesela durumla kıyasladığında İstanbul’da bir Kürt’e insanların daha mı anonimsin, daha mı yoksa oradaki gibi mi?


Esra: Kürt’ten sayılmayan bir yer, memleket yanı?

Esra: Bu İstanbul’daki grupta?


Esra: Dayımlar geldiklerinde nerede oturuyordu peki?

Görüşmeci: Dayımlar şeyde, bu, Türk-İş blokları, şey tarafından Dudulu

Esra: Dudulu, ha…

Esra: Şimdi bu olurken Erzurum‘dınız?


Esra: Çakmağı?


Esra: Zaten bir çevreye geldin yani?

Yurtsever gençlik falan… ama tabi şöyle bir şey, örgütülüyüz diyorum ama mesela bir Marmara, İstanbul gibi değil Boğaziçi. Çünkü çatışma yok, böyle ülkücülerle kavgaydı ya da bir şey olmuş… ya da bir eylemlilik olduysa “sen git buyu yap” öyle çok yoku. Sonradan bir şeyler oldu o ayrı mesele. Çok detayına da girmeyelim ama girmeyim ama ee, ama biz örgütülüyduk. Yani ben geldim tabi Boğaziçi’nde de falan onun sıkıntılarını da başardım ilk defa.

Esra: eylemsizliğin mi?


Esra: Hi, örgütülüğun katılığı seni ne yapıyor?


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Esra: En son şey demiştirin yani “örgütülüyüz ama o örgütün katılığı da hani esnemek istiyordum bu yandan. Fikirsel olarak değişim yetmedi. Tam o sıradan da Öcalan yakalandı.”


Esra: Nasıl bir etki bu?

Görüșmeci: Hakaret gibi algılanmıştı. Yani insanlar, bizimkiler falan, ailedeki şeye yakından uzak olan hiç fark etmiyordu, öyle bir şey oldu. Bütün o tarih depreşti sanki. İşte o evlat çocuklara gerçekleştirdiği kötü görüntüleri geldi sen iste, Kürt’lerden birleri alımyor, şeye alımyor. O his çok etkili oldu, aşırı etkili oldu. Çok ciddi şey oldu ve ondan sonra çok ciddi çatışma şeyi oldu biliyorsun
belki İstanbul’da. Bizim de biraz artık şeydi o dönem biraz, ne diyeim ee, polisiyeydi yani bizler için bir şeyler olan yapıyordu. Biz de yapıyorduk.

Esra: Nasıl mesela ne demek istiyorsun?

Görüșmeci: Vallaha bir şeyler yapıyorduk İşte.

Esra: Siz de çatışma yaratıyordu? İçine giriyordunuz, çatışıyordunuz yani?

Görüșmeci: Artık yavaş yavaş öyle şeyler daha aktif olan şeyler vardı. Bir sürü eylemlilikler olan…

Esra: Bu hissi biraz daha böyle açar mısın? Yani aslında çok iyi anlıttın yani özette. Hani bütün o tarihi yeniden çağrın, yeniden hatırlatan… bir hakaret gibi hanı… Liderin, uzak olan bir insan için bile Öcalan’ın yakalanışı aslında Kürt’ler için bir yenilmişlik duyguunu hatırlatan galiba bir şey?


Esra: Yani Kürt’lerin özgürlüğesiyle Öcalan arasında bir ilişki var?

Esra: BBC’de Türkçe?

Görüşmeci: Türkçe servisinde... Başka bir yerde de yok tabii. Yani onların bir şekillendirmesi var.

Esra: Erivan’dan peki nece dinliyorsunuz? 03,15dk.

Görüşmeci: Erivan’dı Kürt radyosu vardı.

Esra: Kürt Radyosu dinliyorsunuz.

Görüşmeci: O Erivan radyosu şeydir yani daha eskidir. Yani onun bir... Her neyse şeyden devam edelim. Şimdi bu bir şekillendirme oldu. O sene öyle çok şey geçti yani. 99, benim hazırlık döneminin de denk geliyor. Ben Inter okuyorum falan... Çok doğru dürüst derslere giriyorum falan da belli sayıda giren...

Esra: Intern okuyorum mu?

Görüşmeci: Intermediate okuyordum.

Esra: He he he, şey İngilizce...

Görüşmeci: İngilizcemiz var ya biraz ama şey çok iyi şey var. Ben o hala şey dönemi İşte geziyordum ve böyle şeylerle geçti. Oturuyordum, konuşuyordum falan... Nihayetinde bir şey var. Ne yapılabilir? Falan, bir örgütlenme şeyi var. Sol gruplar da falanredicate...

Esra: Yani Öcalan’in yakalanışı sizin için aslında bir bitti olmamış diye anlıyorum. Değil mi?

Görüşmeci: Yok, çok şey oldu. Ama bir farklı döneme girdiğimizi herkes biliyor yani.

Esra: Nasıl anlatsın onu?

Esra: Kötü etkilendin, hayal kırıklığı?

Görüşmeci: Hem tarihe yönelik şeyler, hem de İşte çok alttan olması falan tabii şuanda çok çok farklı düşünüyorum da…

Esra: Mesela seni o zaman en çok hayal kırıklığına mesela uğratan nasıl bir şey bekliyordun mesela? Sen Öcalan’ın nasıl bir savunma yapmasını bekliyordun?

Görüşmeci: Yani ben, biz haklıyız, bizim mücadelemiz haklı. Bunun için mücadele verdik. Siyasi bir savunma yapmasını ve İşte tarihi şahsiyetlere İşte, Kürt isyanları biraz da şeyden dolayı oldu falan gibi biraz Kemalizme karşı şey olması İşte, Atatürk’e karşı böyle yani…

Esra: Eleştiril olmasına bekliyordun?


Esra: Çünkü ihanete uğramış gibi mi hissediyorsun?

Görüşmeci: Evet, öyle hissediyorum, aynen öyle hissediyorum. Yani şey bunu bir şekilde oldurdu. Bir ruh halı vardı. ama tabi ondan sonra yavaş yavaş şey oluyor ama şey değil…
Esra: Peki şey sorabilir miyim? Anladım kopma değil. Mesela bu arada oy kullanırken kime oy veriyorsun? Bir yandan böyle bir eleştirii...

Görüșmeci: Ben aslında şey oy vermedim. Çok az oy kullandım.

Esra: Yine Kürt siyasi hareketine oy veriyorsun yani?

Görüșmeci: Evet, evet orada hiçbir değişiklik yok. Yani PKK’yle ilgili de şey yok. Algımda değişiklik yok. Ama...

Esra: Öcalan konusunda bir eleştirii şeyi oldu?


Esra: Duygusal bağ galiba kopanlar? Yani fikrisel bağdan ziyade duygusal bağ koptu?


Esra: Hani sempati mi duymaya başladılar?

belediye seçimlerine. Yani hele SHP çok daha farklı bir deneyimdi. Çünkü SHP şey hissi yaratmıyordu böyle, “Aa SHP’ye oy verilir mi” falan… Öyle bir muhabbet yoktu. Şuan “CHP’ye nasıl verirsin?” falan der yani bir sürü şey… Öyle bir muhabbet yoktu. İşte AKP’nin ilk dönemi olanı çok daha farklı bir farklılaşmada olanı böyle.

Esra: Nasıl bir şeyler değişiyordu da hani pozitif bir sempati oluştu sence? Hani “baktılar bir şey değiştiriyor” dedin.


Esra: Gündelik hayatta galiba bir rahatlama oldu?


Esra: 2006 sonu 2007…

Esra: Bu çözüm süreçleri sence nasıl yaşandı? Mesela ilk defa işle demokratikleşme programı, yok işle çözüm süreci, çözüm paketleri falan… Bunlar sence Kürtler açısından nasıl bir durum yarattı?


Esra: Neyi eleştiriye 2009’dan?  


Ersa: Peki ben biraz soru sorabilirim mesela… Şimdi o zaman biraz şey konuşsak. Önce PKK’yi konuşşak biraz. Hani şimdi sen Şeyh Sait ailesinden de gelen biri olarak, ilk önce şey sorayım. Başka hani PKK’den önce, Öcalan’dan önce senin hafızında yer etmiş Kürt sımları kimler? Yani kuşkusuz ki Şeyh Sait hani zaten belli bir yerde ama onun dışında sen böyle Kürt tarihi vesaire düşünmeye başladığında çocukluğundan beri hani konuşulan, ismi geçen, önem atfedilen figürler kimler?


Ersa: Nasıl bir etkidir o?

Görüşmeci: Yani işte 100 yıllık bir mücadele, üç dört defa gidip barışılmaya yakın taa dedesi, onların dedesi de Nakşi’dir. Şey yani ta Şeyh Ahmed’ler falan. Çok uzun bir mücadele gelegate işle Mele Mustafa Barzani’nin peşmerge geleneğini, Kürdistan’da çok ciddi hareketlenmeler oluyor, 60’larda 70’lerde.

Ersa: Sen Barzani hareketinin mesela PKK üstünde bir etkisi olduğunu düşünün müsün mesela bu anlamda? Peşmerge figürü işle ya da işle sonucu ilk önce edinilen bir başarı hani sonra bir yenilgi gibi başka bir alçı yaratısa da bunların ilişkili olduğunu ya da “inspire” ettiği en azından ilham verdiği…

Görüşmeci: Yani şöyle söleyeyim ilham tabi ki veriyordur yani. Şeyde de yani nihayetinde işle Kürdistan’daki yani şeyler, Şeyh Sait hareketinden de etkileniyor, şey yapıyor ama tabi

Esra: Ha değişmedikçe mi diyorsun?

Görüşmeci: Evet Yani, olmaz yani.

Esra: Yani anladım. Genişledikçe o tabanın özelliklerinin de daha çok almaya başılıyor?


Esra: Nasıl pardon?

Görüşmeci: “Ya bu peşmerge, Barzani’ye, şeye” falan…

Esra: Kim, kim diyordu bunu?


Esra: Türkiye’de?


Esra: Yani ben, ilişkili aslında… PKK, PKK’yi konuşuyoruz hala. Ayy bunu da biri Türklere “PeKaKa” Kürtlere “PeKeKe” demekten cevap alabilmek için ağzım karışıyor.


Esra: Sembolik bir anlamı var çınkı?

Görüşmeci: Çok var. Var, evet.
Esra: Çünkü dilin, ana dile değil mi referans veren bir şey. Yani kendi dilinde “pronounce” etmeye ısrar etmek, böyle bir mücadele…

Görüşmeci: Adlandırma hakkı. Hatta yazdım, Bahar’la yazmıştık. “PeKaKa’nın PeKeKe’ye dönüştürülmesi” fakan adlandırma hakkını da senden alıyor, sen tanımlayamıyorsun. Öyle bir sıkıntı, böyle bir arka planı var.


Esra: Ama genel olarak şey pozitif bir şey miydi yani? Devlette daha çok hani işbirliği yapmış, ağalık, şeyhlik sistemini eleştiriyor olması pozitif bir şey miydi mesela PKK için? Yoksa daha dindar bir yerden kendini tanımlayan bir kuşak için rencide edici miydi?


Esra: Ki siz bayağı da dindar bir ailenin çocuklarının yani?


Esra: Peki PKK neyi hedefliyordu? Size de hitap eden şeyi neydi?

Görüșmeci: Kürdistan’ın kurulması canım, o açıktı yani. İşte dört parça, birleştiriceğiz. Bağımsız, birleşik, sosyalist Kürdistan… 78 ilk şeyin bildirgesiydi. Hedef bu işte; ağalık düzeni...

Esra: antenleri sökmek için mi geliyorlar?


Esra: Evine çekiliyor herkes yani?


Esra: Kim? Müzik deyince mesela kimleri en çok dinliyordunuz?

Esra: Dille olan ilişkisi bağlamında da değil mi? Herhalde öyle bir önemi var? Yani Kürtçe müzik olmasıyla ilgili?

Görüșmeci: Evet. Kürtçe müzik olmasıyla ilgili tabi çok…

Esra: Peki mekanlar, mekanlara ilişkin ne söyleyebilirsin? Mesela sonuçta sen bir de karşılaştırmalı böyle gidip geldiğin için hani bir fırsatın olmuştur. İşte Erzurum, İstanbul, Antep… Kürtlerin bir araya geldiği mekanla ra dair ne söyleyebilirsin? Nasıl sosyalleşiyordu insanlar senin dönemde?


Esra: Yani siz Diyarbakır’a, Cizre’ye mi bakıyordunuz yanı? Merkezde daha…

artması da öyle... 94’lere falan geliyor. Arada mesela şeyler falan var yani. 91’ler, 92’lerde de başladı. Ama gittikçe 94, 89’da pek yoktu.

Esra: Peki gerilla mesela nerelere gelirdi? Gelince nerede toplanırdıınız?


Esra: Ama siz görmek istiyorsunuz? Onun için kızıyorsunuz?


Esra: Demokratik…


Esra: Peki yine PKK hani üzerine konuşurken sen mesela kendi dönemin, kendi jenerasyonunla senden bir önceki jenerasyon ya da şöyle diyelim; daha böyle şeyh, ağa ailelerinin çocukları arasında PKK’ye yaklaşım olarak bir fark yani gözüne çarpiyor muydu? Yoksa…

Görüșmeci: Bizim kuşak en ciddi destekleyen kuşaktık yani biz, bizim…

Esra: Yani şeyh ailesi, ağa ailesi fark etmeden bir şey mi vardı?

Esra: Peki sence PKK geleneği Ortadoğu’da diğer geleneklerle hani bir bağ var mı? Orada bir rol model, yani sonuçta dört parça Kürdistan diyorz. Onlar için bir rol model oldu mu? Olabilir mi?


Esra: Irak’ta ne diyosun?


Esra: Meşru ama bir figür değil mi artık?

Görüşmeci: Yani meşru tabi… Şuanda zaten KDP ile şey arasında da öyle bir olay var, sürekli. Şimdi orada bir Goran hareketi falan da olduğu, üçüncü bir hareket olarak. Ama şey farklılıklar var yani işte, ideolojik farklılıklar şuanda tam PKK, çok açıkçasi şey değil yani. Öyle sürekli sosyalizm falan zaten öyle bir şey demiyor artık. Ha antikapitalistim diyor işte, kapitalizmin şeyini aşacağım falan muhabbetleri… Onlar var ama işte “Marksist’im” falan öyle diye bir hareket değil artık.
Esra: Yani ilk ortaya çıktığı dönem gibi değil?

Görüşmeciler: Yok, değil.

Esra: Peki son iki sorum PKK ile ilgili. Mesela sen PKK’yi dünyadaki ya da Türkiye’deki diyelim, başka hangi hareketlerle benzer olduğunu söyleyebilirsin? Ya da böyle bir benzerlik var mıdır yani?


Esra: Peki sen, PKK’nın Kürt Siyasal Hareketine katkısını, etkisini ne şekilde, yani bütün tarıhsellik içinde nasıl değerlendirirsin? Nasıl bir şey kazandırdı? Kazandıysa?

Görüşmeciler: Yani şöyle bir şey kazandırdı ilk önce artık yani Kürt dediğin... Kürtler şöyle bir söyleyeyim, şimdi 25-38 mesela Türkiye Kürdistan’ı üzerinden gidersek, 25-38 çatışmalara, İşte isyanların olduğu bir dönem. Sonra uzun bir sessizlik dönemi oluyor. İşte örgüt şey oluyor ama bitmiyor yani. Böyle şeye birikme gibi... Sonra 70’lerle birlikte başlayan bir şey var,

Ersa: Yani o Kürtlerin belki dindarlıklarından kaynaklı muhafazakarlığı gerçekten değiştirmiş, dönüşütmüş bir hareket mi diyorsun?


Ersa: Yani sen hem değişen tarihsel, toplumsal, ekonomik koşulların hem de PKK’nın sonuçta iste bütün bu mücadelede rağmen bir ödenmiş bedel olduğunu da söylemek adına bunları söyleyorsun?

kurtulamayacak. Bu, çünkü bu mümkün olacak bir şey değil yani. O zamanki cunta yönetimi falan hiç…

Esa: Yani “silahsız bir mücadeleyle, sadece siyasetle olmazdı” diyorsun?


Esa: Peki böyle şey eleştiriler de var. Şey deniyor mesela PKK’yle ilgili değerlendirmeler yapılarırken işte o dönemde hani ortaya çıkmadan önceki dönemde de aslında çok farklılıklar içeren çok çeşitli bir Kürt hareketliliği, Kürt siyasi hareketliliği vardı. Çok geniş bir yelpazedede hani değişen ve hani bu çeşitliği, bu çok halliliği de şiddet yoluyla yani sadece bir devlete şiddet değil, hani o yani domine etti ve hani tek bir Kürt siyasi hareketi kali ortada diye eleştiriler de var. Sen ne düşünürsün?


Esa: Dışarı çıkmakla aslında önemli bir, kritik bir karar aldı?


Esra: Karşılkılı?


Esra: Ve daha da bir araya gelme… Yani PKK etrafında bir araya gelme… O koşullar da onun tarihsel aktörlüğünü daha da pekiştiren nedenler haline geldi yani?


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Görüşmeci: Öngörü sahibi, evet çıkarıyor.
Esra: Diğerlerinden farklı olarak hani “başarısız” olmamasının diyelim ya da “yok” olmamasının nedenini iyi bir siyasi zekası olmasına mı bağlırsınız?

Görüșmeci: İyi bir siyasi zekası ve iyi bir örgütlenme gücü... Yani geliyor, sahaya iniyor mesela ilk baştan iniyor mesela öyle bir muhabbet vardır. Öcalan hiçbir zaman inmedi, hatta eleştirenler... Ama Öcalan nihayetinde kuruluşundan önce sahada olan bir adam... Urfa’ya gidiyor, şuraya gidiyor, bir sürü yerde örgütlenmeye çalışıyor ve tabi bir sürü kadro da oluşuyor. Şimdi surf yani ...’nin üzerinden konuşulduğu için yani nihayetinde bir sürü önemli figür var. İşte mazlumlar var, cezaevindekkiler, Mahsun Korkmaz’lar falar var. İlk kadrolar zaten hala bir sürü var yani. Hala yöntem şeyinde olan... Bunlar gerçekten Öcalan’a bir şey yaptular yani, Öcalan’ın onlar üzerinden çok ciddi bir etkisi var. Onu kabul etmişler yani. Sonra bir şekilde halk da bunu çok net benimsemeye başlayınca artık yani bir 30 yılda oluşan bir şey var yani bir 90’lardan bile daha fazla Öcalan şuanda “lider”dir yani Kürtler için. Çünkü 90’larda bile savaşın içerişindeken bile bu kadar geniş kitleler tarafından benimsenmiyordu. Bu kadar geniş değildi yani.

Esra: Bu kadar genişlemesini neye bağlıyorsun?

Esra: Yani senin söylediğlerinden anlamıyorum ki PKK’yle aslında Öcalan’ı ayrı düşünmek pek mümkün değil?


Esra: Peki sen mesela bu gerillalarla karşılaşmanızı falan da anlattığında sonuçta sen Öcalan’ı, belki sordüğunuz bir şey miydi “Öcalan nasıl biri?” Nasıl bir işte, hani Öcalan’a dair de bir merakınız da var mıdı o zamandan gelen?

Esra: Ne demek “Seyda”? 


Esra: Peki Melik Amcan mı diyor Öcalan’a “Seyda” diye? 

Görüşmeci: Yok, Öcalan Melik Amcama diyor. 

Esra: HA, Öcalan Melik Amca’ya diyor. 

Görüşmeci: Yani onun mesela anlattığı şeyler vardı, böyle değişik. Nihayetinde… 

Esra: Sıra dışı bir insan? 

Görüşmeci: Yani o çok tabi öyleydi. Çok da nasıl söyleyeyim, yani merak ediyorsun tabii “Nasıl, nedir, neyin nesidir?” 

Esra: Peki sence Kürt hareketi için, PKK için önderliğin liderliğin önemi nedir yani çok belirleyici midir? 


Esra: “Akil Adam” gibi mi oldu biraz?

Esra: Yani PKK’yı aşan bir lider artık?


Esra: Peki PKK Öcalan’ı eleştirebilir mi?


Esra: 15 yıl önce nasıl bir fark vardı?


Esra: Yani şöyle mi demek istiyorsun? “eskiden örgütün baskısı yüzünden belki eleştiremezdi. Çok daha katıydı örgütlülük vesaire. Ama şimdi de hapiste yani adam, eleştirmez”


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Esra: Demokratikleştii yapısı diyorsun yani?
Görüşmeci: Tabi, tabi… Yani aktörler de şey oldu, o hale geldi. Ama tabi bazı kritik noktalar var yani, sorun olan noktalar var yani, aşılması gereken ya da dönüşmesi gereken. Kendi içinden bir çoğunlaşmayı yavaş yavaş başardı. Bir de PKK o kadar aşırı sert değil artık yani. Şeyler yani “ya tamam bizi eleştirebilirsiniz” ya tamam belki retorik boyutu da var onları, o tarafların…

Esra: Peki bu dönüşümde sen Öcalan’ın etkisi olduğunu düşünüyor musun? Partinin çoğunlaşması kendi içinde çoğuncu bir yapıya kavuşması, demokratikleşmesinde?

Esra: Siyasetin belirleyeni?

Esra: Peki sen Öcalan’ın liderliğini dünyada mesela kime benzetirsin? Var mıdır böyle bir örnek?


Esra: Hatta bugün aşiret dediğimiz şeye tekabül edecek bir kabileden de geliyor?

Görüşmeci: Kabileden geliyor. Şimdi, ama şimdi şeyler benzeşiyor İşte o kaç sene yatıyor işte güya ondan sonra yani Kürtlerin hayalinde İşte çıkacak da şey oluyor. Tabii ki çok farklı ama… Yani böyle gerçekten çok böyle, aklına şu falan diye bir isim gelmiyor.

Esra: Peki Öcalan’ın liderliğini Türkiye siyasetinde mesela kime benzetebilirsin? Ya da işte hani şimdi konuşuluyor sokakta bazen, konuşuluyor, bazen pejoratif anlamıyla kullanılıyor falan ama mesela Öcalan ve Atatürk liderliklerini nasıl değerlendirirsin? Benzerlikleri ve farklılıkları açısından?

Görüşmeci: Şöyle bir şey söyleyeyim, bu şeyde de çok konuşulan bir şey idi. Hatta işte Melik Amca’nın PKK ile arası falan bozulunca o çok şey diyordu işte “Kürtlerin Atatürk’ü” öyle laflar söylemişti. Şöyle bir şey söyleyeyim, şimdi şöyle bir zeminde bir benzerlikler falan var mesela. İşte bir devletin kurulması işte mücadeле, şey figürü, önderlik figürü falan… Onun üzerinden çok bir benzeşim alanı ve şey olması ikisini de şekiller olmasını tabi onlar şey yapıyor. Fakat şöyle bir ciddi ve şeylerı pragmatik insanlar olmaları falan, konjonktör… Mesela Atatürk’ün

Esra: Yani bu insanlar fikirsel olarak birbirine benzemese de algılar düzeyinde kendi toplulukları için benzer bir şeyi ifade ediyor olabilirler?

Görüşmeci: Olabilirler tabi ve yani tabi bazı ortak şeyler var nihayetinde. Sekülerizm, onun da çok ciddi etkileri var.

Esra: Modernleşme?


Esra: O en başta...
Görüşmeci: O sonradan değiştiriyor. O en baştan nihayetinde sol gelenekten geldiği için, o sonradan bir dönüşüm yapıyor.

Esra: Barışıyor belki? Daha kabul ediyor vesaire.


Esra: Evet ulus devlet kurmak istiyordu.

Esra: Peki ben sana bir şey sorayım, son soru olarak. Öcalan yani hapiste falan ölse değil… Yani çıksa etse de Öcalan’dan sonra Kürt hareketi, Kürt siyasal hareketi, PKK nasıl olur yani?


Esra: “Tabu değil” yani diyorsun?


Esra: O anlamda da bir açıklık var yani?


Esra: Diyemeyiniz, “Atatürk diktatördür” diyemediğin gibi mesela?

Görüşmeci: Evet, evet… Ama zaten…

Esra: Ama zaten şuan ki yani geldiği nokta itibariyle de o fevr olmaz herhalde?

Görüşmeci: Öyle, öyle çok işlemiyor. Şöyle bir şey var tabi şimdi şey temel, şey Türkiye’de yani sevilip sevilmeme dışında ya belli kesimler tarafından Nietzsche olduğu yani. Lider nedir? Herkes Türkiye’de üç tane önemli şey var işle Tayyip Erdoğan, Fethullah Gülen, şey gibi…

Esra: Öcalan gibi?

Eser: Evet, peki bir şey soracağım, son soru hakikatten mesela. Şimdi doğum günlerinde falan kutlamalar yapıyor ya Öcalan’ın… Şimdi tabii ki senin şimdi şeyin ne yani aldığın ettiğin formasyonun şu bu bir sürü etken var tabi. Biz görüyoruz orada işte hani evinden toprak almaydı, işte tavaf etmekti vesaire vesaire… Bu süreci sen nasıl görüyorsun?

Görüşmeci: Ben çok hiç benimsemiyorum. Çok ilkel buluyorum. Bence bu hiç doğru değil. Ama bunun şuanda…

Eser: Bu hakim olan peki şey midir?


Eser: Yani eleştirse bile söylemez diyorsun?

Görüşmeci: Yani çok söylemez. Yani söylemeyeabilir, söylenenler de var bazıları falan hatta ama yani çok da çok dillendirilmez. Tabii ki eğer ceza evinden çıkar falan ya da başka bir şey olursa o nasıl gelişir…

Eser: Göreceğiz mi?

Görüşmeci: Göreceğiz yani bilmiyorum.

Eser: Çok teşekkür ederim vallaha, çok aydınlatıcı oldu benim için!