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Editorial

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The development of a field of studies such as our own, Kurdish studies, depends to a large extent on the existence of an institutional infrastructure of specialised academic departments, libraries, journals, etc. Only very few academic institutions in the world have a well-established tradition of Kurdish studies, and not surprisingly they are found in those countries that have had an imperial interest in Kurdistan: Russia, Great Britain and France. The general marginalisation of area studies in academia in favour of the more strictly discipline-oriented organisation of academic research has affected these established institutions too. The best specialised libraries in Europe are not in universities but in private Kurdish institutes in Paris, Stockholm, Berlin and Vienna, and they were established and funded by members of the Kurdish diaspora with incidental governmental support. The decline of Kurdish area studies in academia was compensated to some extent by the establishment of endowed chairs at various European and North American universities and scholarship programs funded by the Kurdish Regional Government and Kurdish parties of Iraq. The precarious economic situation of Iraqi Kurdistan gives reason for concern about the future of these Kurdish-funded initiatives.

The increased interest of politicians and policy-makers in the Kurds due to their increased political significance in the Middle East has not been translated into a noticeable rise of public research funding earmarked for studies of Kurdish society. There has, however, been a sharp increase in publications on the Kurds by various think tanks and international NGOs. Inevitably, these reports have mainly focused on very contemporary developments and primarily on security-related issues.

Most academic research on Kurdish subjects, in the past few decades, has been carried out at university departments of such disciplines as history, sociology, economics, law, education, geography, migration studies, linguistics, or religious studies, and the scholars concerned have worked in relative isolation from colleagues interested in other but related aspects of Kurdish society. Very few research groups have developed a degree of Kurdish expertise that

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exceeded the individual research projects. The Kurdish Studies Network and this journal serve to some extent as a virtual alternative to the physical institutional infrastructure many of us miss in our direct academic environment.

The emergence of a semi-independent Kurdish region in northern Iraq and the establishment of several new universities in this region, besides the older Salahuddin University in Erbil, appeared to give an institutional boost to Kurdish studies, although most of the investment obviously was directed towards education in other fields and disciplines, and the universities like everything else under the Kurdistan Regional Government became embedded in pervasive patronage relations that made academic independence illusory.

Until very recently, Turkey seemed to be on its way to becoming the most favourable environment for Kurdish studies. Since the taboo on mentioning the Kurds was lifted, there has been a steady stream of publishing on Kurdish history, society and politics, besides an outburst of Kurdish-language publications. More importantly, the AKP government allowed several universities to open departments of Kurdish language and literature. Artuklu University in Mardin, which was especially favoured, recruited to all departments in the humanities and social sciences young scholars who specialised on the peoples and cultures of the region. Several universities, including the most prestigious ones, allowed students to write MA and PhD theses on Kurdish subjects, although this remains a risky career choice. The number of young scholars involved in Kurdish studies in Turkey soon came to exceed that of all other countries. Scholars from Turkey have made numerous contributions to English-language scholarship in Kurdish studies, but the really impressive growth was in Turkish-language scholarship on the Kurds. There are now high-quality specialised journals in Turkish (with occasional contributions in Kurdish) such as the glossy popular history journal *Kürt Tarihi* (Kurdish History) and the social research journal *Toplum ve Kuram* (*Society and Theory*), and the volume of serious books on Kurdish society, history and culture produced by Turkish publishers is truly impressive.

However, the past year has seen dramatic changes in the government's or, more precisely, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's attitude towards the Kurds. Overtures towards a peace process were abruptly suspended and the war against the PKK was resumed with renewed vigour. Independent television and print media were brought under government control, resulting in a silencing of dissident voices. Control of the universities was also tightened, and independent-minded administrators replaced by more trusted persons. As a series of incidents has shown, academic freedom is now under serious threat in Turkey. The best-known affair concerns the persecution of academics who signed a statement condemning the excessive violence with which the army and police

suppressed urban uprisings in Kurdish cities. Some of them lost their jobs, others were detained for weeks, many are being harassed and threatened, and all are under investigation for "support of terrorism." As such, this case was nothing to do with Kurdish studies; most of the academics concerned work on different subjects. But it has resulted in a widespread fear in academic circles of being associated with Kurdish issues; since the beginning of this affair, most universities have been extremely reluctant to touch upon anything related to Kurds and Kurdish. Conferences and lectures were cancelled; scholars have been urged to keep a low profile until the storm blows over. Unfortunately, this may not happen soon. Our colleagues in Turkey deserve our solidarity and moral support.

• • •

The articles in this issue show again the wide range of work that is currently being done on Kurdish society, politics, history and culture. All of them concern the Kurds of Turkey but they address very different aspects.

Sheikh ʿUbaydullah of Nehri (on the Ottoman-Persian frontier) is best known for the rebellion he led in 1880 and his communications with the American missionary doctor Cochrane, in which he appeared to express nationalist sentiment. In his contribution to this issue, Kamal Soleimani draws attention to an important source for the sheikh's religious and political ideas, which has only recently come to light. It is a literary work in Persian verse that the sheikh left behind, his *Mathnavi*, previously only known in the circle of his family and their close associates. As Soleimani shows, this work offers important insights into the world view of a Kurdish Muslim leader living on the eve of the radical transformation of the Middle East.

The revival of Kurdish as a written language and vehicle of modern communication in Turkey is a remarkable phenomenon that has few if any parallels among non-state languages elsewhere. The status of Kurdish in education and broadcasting has been a matter of contention between the Kurdish movement and the state, with some symbolic gains for the former. The extent to which Kurdish is being spoken in actual everyday communication is, however, an entirely different matter. Sinan Zeyneloğlu, Ibrahim Sirkeci and Yaprak Civelek present in their contribution an analysis of the available demographic data on languages known and spoken and suggest that the actual use of Kurdish has contracted over the past half century, raising questions about the future of Kurdish in spite of its improved legal status.

Thomas McGee's paper on the efforts to bring relief to the people of Kobani has the most direct relevance to the current crisis in Turkish-Kurdish relations.

In another relevant contribution, Joost Jongerden, who has published extensively on the PKK before, shares his reflections on research as a form of active engagement with this movement.

In a different mode of literary analysis, inspired by the philosopher Martha Nussbaum's work, Joanna Bocheńska focuses on a short story by a modern Kurmanci author based in Sweden, Hesenê Metê. Her intention is to go beyond the focus on identity and social context that has been predominant in studies of Kurdish literature and explore, in a broader comparative context, how literary works are expressive of moral imaginaries. She takes Hesenê Metê's story, in which one of the protagonists is a village guard (*korucu*) and another makes the difficult choice between seeking protection with the Kurdish guerrillas or with the Turkish army, as a point of departure for reflections on ethics and Kurdish moral imagination.

In the following issues we hope to be covering an equally broad range of subjects, as well as maintaining a balance between the different regions of Kurdistan.

Utrecht, May 2016

Editors' Acknowledgment

We are delighted to publish the latest issue of our journal, a product of a strong collaboration involving numerous authors, reviewers, editors, proof readers and translators. We are indebted to all of our friends and colleagues who made this issue possible and we hope that it will will be useful addition to the growing field of Kurdish studies. Special thanks go to Hashem Ahmadzadeh and Seevan Saeed for translating the abstracts into Kurdish. We are also delighted to welcome on board our new associate editor Djene Rhys Bajalan.

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Islamic Revivalism and Kurdish Nationalism in Sheikh Ubeydullah's Poetic Oeuvre

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Abstract

This article investigates Sheikh Ubeydullah of Nehri's Kurdish-Islamic revivalist project based on a close reading of his *Mesnewi*. This article primarily focuses on the fusion of the Sheikh's Islamic revivalism with his Kurdish nationalism in his poetic work. A close reading of the *Mesnewi* leaves no doubt that in the mind of his author both the future of Kurds and that of his revivalist project depended on the creation of an independent state.

Keywords

Kurds – Ottomans – Islam – religious-nationalism – state

Vejîna dînî û neteweyî ya kurdî di dîwana şi'rên Şêx ʻUbeydullahê Nehrî de

Ev nivîsar lêkolînek e li ser bîr û bernameya Şêx ʻUbeydullahê Nehrî ya vejîna dînî û kurdî bi rêya tehlîlkirina berhema wî ya bi navê *Mesnewî*. Nivîsar bi taybetî dikeve dû têgihiştina têkilbûna hizrên vejîna îslamî û netewegeriya kurdî di şi'rên Şêx ʻUbeydullahî de. Xwendineke hûrbînane ya *Mesnewî*yê çu şikekê tê de nahêle ku li gor nivîskarê wê berhemê, hem paşeroja kurdan û hem jî bernameya wî ya vejîna îslamî bi damezrandina dewleteke serbixwe ya kurdî ve girêdayî bûn.

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ئیحیای بیری دینی و ناسیۆنالیزمی کوردی لە شعرەکانی شێخ نەهریدا

ئەو نوسراوە لێکۆڵینەوەیە لەسەر مژاری زیندوکردنەوەی بیری دینی – کوردی شێخ عوبەیدوڵای نەهری لە دوا ساڵەکانی سەدەی نوزدەدا. پرۆژەی شێخ، نمونەیەکە لە هاتنە کایەیی ڕەوتێکی نوێ لە جیهانی ئیسلام کە بریتیە لە تێکەڵاوییەک لە ئیسلامی لاوەکی (پریفێریاڵ) و ناسیۆنالیزم. بێگومان خوێندەوەیەکی وردی شوێنەوارەکانی نەهری ئەو تێکەڵاویە دەسەلمێنی، هەر بۆیە ئەو نوسراوە کە لە بەردەستاندایە هەوڵێکە بۆ هەڵسەنگاندنی پرۆژەی شێخ نەهری شیکردنەوەی نامەکان و دیوانە شعرە فارسیەکەی. بە پێی ئەو خوێندنەوەیە کە لە بەر دەستاندایە، دەردەکەوێ کە نەهری چارەی بێ هیوایەکەی بە گۆڕانی وڵاتانی موسوڵمانی هاوسێ لە لایەک، داهاتوی کورد و ئیحیای دینی لە لایەکیترەوە، بە تێکرای بەستووەتەوە بە دامەزراندنی دەوڵەتی سەربەخۆیی کوردی.

The Rise of Sheikh Ubeydullah and His Disillusionment with the Ottomans

This paper aims to shed light on the Sheikh Ubeydullah Nehri's religious nationalism through a close reading of his unexplored poetic work, *Mesnewi*.[1] One of the most important characteristics of the Sheikh's revolt was the collective religious self-differentiation that signified the rise of a new socio-historical phenomenon in the modern Middle East. Except for Wadie Jwaideh (2006), scholars of Kurdish nationalism have generally overlooked the Sheikh's Kurdish-religious self-differentiation. Nonetheless, this tendency in the Sheikh's movement is the most important factor that distinguished it as a religious nationalist movement. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to show how the Sheikh perceived the Kurds and their Others and how he downplayed the religious bonds between the Kurds and non-Kurds. The very stratification of people's religiosity based on their ethnicity (as per the Sheikh) unveils the fusion of religion and ethno-nationalism, which in turn reflects the difference between the periphery and the centre in their interpretation of Islam. Now, there is an important body of scholarship documenting the rise of Nehri in 1880. Yet, except for a few letters, the Sheikh's other work, i.e. *Mesnewi* was not available to those who had previously studied his uprising. The lack of attention given to the *Mesnewi* was partly due to the fact that it was not available in print. It existed only in the form of a manuscript available to the close relatives and followers of the Sheikh. It was also written in Persian, a language most

1 Unless otherwise stated, all translations in this article are my own.

likely to constitute an important barrier for the new generation of the Sheikh's relatives living on the Turkish side of Kurdistan. Furthermore, except for the work of historian Sabri Ateş, most of the existing scholarship concentrates on non-Persian documents concerning the Sheikh's uprising. It is for this reason that the *Mesnewi* has remained a manuscript unknown to people other than the close relatives and followers of the Sheikh in Eastern Kurdistan. It took this poetry book over a century until it was printed and presented to the public audience in 2000. Before addressing the Sheik's Mesnewi, I shall briefly outline the historical context that gave rise to that poetic work.

Sheikh Ubeydullah (d. 1883) was a Kurdish Naqshbandi[2] Sheikh. He was one of the most prominent Kurdish community leaders and religious scholars of his time. Describing the place of the Sheikh among Sunni Muslims, Robert Speer (1911), the biographer of renowned missionary figure Dr. Cochran, states that "next to the Sultan and the Sheriff of Mecca the Sheikh was the holiest person among the Sunni Mohammedans. Thousands were ready to follow him as the vicar of God … He was a man of some real virtues of character, vigorous, just, and courageous" (p. 74). In British Parliamentary papers, the Sheikh was described as someone who was "entertaining daily at his gates from 500 to 1000 visitors of all classes. His character stands out in clear contrast with that seen in Persian officials as well as Turks" (Turkey. No. 5.; 1881. Inclosure 4 in No. 8). The personal life of the Sheikh, we are told, was fairly simple and he or his son would personally see "all who come to them on business, no matter how trivial it may be … From early morning to late at night he [was] employed in the interest of … his people" (ibid).

Sheikh Ubeydullah rose to prominence on the Kurdish political scene, especially during the Russo-Ottoman war (1877–78) as he received a request from Abdulhamid II to join the "*jihad*" against the Russian Army. According to the Sheikh's personal account (2000: 108), he was able to gather thousands of armed men.[3] This event was to become one of the major factors in the Sheikh's growing nationalist sentiment and his disillusionment with the Ottoman state. The Kurdish-Turkish interaction and the Ottoman army's treatment of the Kurds during the Russo-Ottoman War seems to have had a profound impact on the Sheikh's views with respect to non-Kurdish Islam(s). Moreover, this

2 Naqshbandi is a major Sunni Sufi order, which emerged in the 12th century.

3 Ateş (2006: 311), a scholar of Kurdish and Ottoman history, states that "Sheikh Ubeidullah, in his correspondence with the Sultan Abdulhamid, claimed he headed a force of 30,000." The Ottoman Commander of the Caucasian and Eastern front, Ahmed Mukhtar Pasha, maintained that Sheikh Ubeydullah organised seven *redif* (reserve force) battalions, with battalions coming from other districts as well. In addition to regular troops, he wrote, "Sheikh [Ubeydullah] Efendi [from] Hakkari raised 50–60 thousand irregular soldiers, both infantry and cavalry, from his districts of Van province."

interaction appears to explain his subsequent political activities against both the Ottoman and Qajar states. Consequently, in 1879, just a year after the War, the Sheikh led an unsuccessful uprising against the Ottoman state. However, seeing the superiority of the state forces and an inevitable defeat at hand, he found a way out of this situation and convinced the Sultan that the uprising was not a rebellion against the Sultan himself, but rather an outbreak of the people's frustration and against the local officials' corruption. In the following year, perhaps in the hope that the previous year's rebellion was the end of the Sheikh's anti-state political activities, the Sultan bestowed his decoration[4] upon him.[5] Yet, only a few months later, using his Kurdish league[6] which was a broad union of Ottoman and Persian Kurds, the Sheikh took control of major parts of Kurdistan that were under Qajar rule. However, at a time when the Kurdish-Qajar war increasingly became understood as a *Shi'i-Sunni* conflict, the Sheikh was defeated and squeezed between the Qajar and Ottoman armies amidst rumours of the possible arrival of Russian troops to support the Persians (*Vakit*, No. 1860. 1880). Later on, the Sheikh, particularly upon Qajar insistence, was removed from his own region and sent to exile in Istanbul. After his escape and return to Hakkari, this time the Ottomans sent him into exile to Hijaz, where he remained until his death in 1883.

It is important to note that in the Sheikh's poetic work, the portrayal of the two communities, the "*Rômî*s" (Ottoman Turks) and the Kurds, as two distinct groups of people is clear. The "us" versus "them" dichotomy is defined in both religious and ethno-nationalistic terms. The Ottomans were also generally suspicious of the nature of peripheral Islam.[7] The Kurdish reaction to the

4 A medal or award conferred as an honour.

5 Clayton, a British colonial officer in the region, reports to his superior, Trotter that "Sheikh Obeyd Ullah is working hard to extend his influence. He is ingratiating himself with the Christians and large numbers of the latter have migrated from Gever into the Sheikh's immediate neighbourhood in order to enjoy his protection from other Kurds. There can be no doubt that he still meditates throwing off the Turkish rule. On the other hand Bahri Bey, Samih Pasha's aide-de-camp, is to start this week to bear to the Sheikh the decoration that the Sultan has bestowed upon him" (FO 195/1315 No. 20, Van, 25th May 1880).

6 Apparently the news about the establishment of the Kurdish league very much troubled the Armenian nationalists in Istanbul and outside the Ottoman territories. The Armenian nationalist elites were trying to paint it as a threat to the Armenians. That is why the British Parliament held an official session to make an inquiry about this league by requesting explanation from members of the British cabinet. See, *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*. No. 673 and 678 (1880). They seem either to have understood or tried to portray the formation of the League as an "instigation of the Central Government, which desires to stifle the Armenian question by raising a new one that of the Kurds" (Letter from Monseigneur Krimian, Turkey No. 5. 1881. Inclosure in No. 6).

7 For more on the difference between the centre and the peripheral Islams see Makdisi (2002 and 2002), Dringle (1998 and 2003).

centre's religiosity as suspicious, contaminated, and inauthentic is repeatedly expressed, even by Sa'id Nursi, the most renowned Northern Kurdish religious scholar in the first half of the twentieth century (2009: 169–71). Simultaneously, the subtexts of these claims to purity, superiority or authenticity of religious interpretation were connected to each group's claim to some sort of ethnic or cultural superiority. Hence, the religious understanding and devotion of the "in-group" is celebrated and that of the "out-group" is condemned or its authenticity is strongly questioned. The fusion of religion and nationalism is visible in these groups' criticism of their others, especially of the states, who are blamed for their failings or lack of desire to educate the Kurds.[8] The Sheikh's *Mesnewi* and his views on Ottoman Turks are significant as they reveal the shortcomings of some aspects of the existing scholarship on Sheikh Ubeydullah's revolts against the Ottoman and Qajar states in 1879 and 1880. As noted earlier, students of Kurdish nationalism have generally overlooked the Sheikh's distinct religious self-referentiality and his unequivocal questioning of the authenticity of non-Kurds' Islam and therefore they dismiss his nationalism. For instance, scholars such as David McDowall who, without sharing any credible evidence,[9] calls the Sheikh's enterprise "a scheme cooked up in Istanbul which offered Sheikh Ubayd Allah undisclosed official sponsorship to form a movement that could act as a counterbalance to the Armenian threat" (2004: 58). Similarly, Hakan Özoğlu attempts to portray the Sheikh's revolt as a mere religious reaction that is only connected to Istanbul (2011: 203–15).

The existing Ottoman state records present a contrasting picture to what has been portrayed by the aforementioned scholars. The Ottoman records explicitly report that there was state anxiety over the possible consequences of the Sheikh's revolt on the Ottoman side of the border. For instance, the Ministry of Defence reported that the Sheikh, with 70,000 armed men under his command, had secured the control of entire West Azerbaijan and declared Kurdish independence. The report also predicted that the Persian State was unable to defeat the Kurds. Hence, "considering *this event's enormous impact on our side of the border*",[10] as per the report, "necessary measures must be taken instantly. The local officials must immediately gather and dispatch a reinforcement that is *solely composed of* [*ethnically*] *Turks and Laz*."[11] The Ottoman documents also

8 Some of these criticisms are reiterated decades later in 1925 Sheikh Said's proclamation of a Kurdish caliphate in which he blames the Turkish state's purposeful abandonment of Kurdish education, see Strohmeier (2003).

9 See for instance the following state document that stands in a clear contrast to McDowall claims: BOA. Dosya No: 5; Gömlek No: 99/2; Fon Kodu: Y.PRK.ASK. 10/21/1880.

10 (halen bizim terafa olacak sui-te'siratı pek büyüktür). Emphases added.

11 Cf. BOA. Dosya No: 5; Gömlek No: 99/2; Fon Kodu: Y.PRK.ASK. 10/21/1880. Emphasis added.

indicate further complications that the Sheikh created for the state. In order to spur groups who were only half-hearted in their support for the revolt, the Sheikh spread rumors that the Ottoman government was supportive of anti-Qajar agitation. Therefore, the Ottomans found those rumours dangerous and believed they had to repudiate the Sheikh's claim in every possible way.[12] Some British officials in the region also believed that the Sheikh's "movements ought to be narrowly watched, as being likely to cause embarrassment for both the Persian and Turkish Governments."[13] Also, in one of his reports Captain Clayton writes that the Sheikh "has a comprehensive plan of uniting all the Kurds in an independent state. [The current] circumstances have turned his attention first to the Persian side. [He will later] turn to this side and try to obtain the same from the Turks."[14] Perhaps the situation was best described by Major Trotter when he stated "that the Sheikh's … move into Persia [was probably made] under the impression that the Persian Government was more rotten than that of Turkey, and it would be easier to obtain independent authority there than in Turkey."[15]

Kurds vs. Romîs

As indicated earlier, the goal here is not to rewrite the chronology of the historical events of the 19th century, which has been extensively dealt with by several scholars (Ateş, 2006; Jwaideh, 2006; Olson, 1989), but to show how nationalist discourse fuses with Kurdish religious discourse into the "narration of the nation" in the Sheik's poetic work. (It should be noted that such a fusion was taking place in various places and forms. By the late 19th century the interplay between religion and nationalism is observable in sporadic writings of Kurdish intelligentsia in Istanbul with their emphasis on ethnic Kurdish contribution to Islamic civilisation,[16] Kurdish migrants and religious leaders from Iran[17] and by Sheikh Ubeydullah himself, particularly in his poems.) The Sheikh's poetic oeuvre is providing us with ample evidence on how he regarded non-Kurdish Islam as questionable. He therefore believed the Kurds needed to create a state of their own to live their "true religiosity." After over a century, his poetic work, *Mesnewi*, has been rediscovered and is now available to Persian readers.

12 Cf. BOA: Dosya No: 486; Gömlek No: 62; Fon Kodu: A.MKT.MHM Tarih: 29/Ca/1298 (Hicrî) [28.04.1881].
13 Parliamentary Papers. Turkey. No. 5. (1881. Inclosure 2 in No. 8).
14 Ibid. (Inclosure 3 in No. 54).
15 Ibid. (Inclosure in No. 22).
16 See Soleimani (forthcoming, 2016).
17 See Celîl (2007: 56).

In his introduction to the Sheikh's *Mesnewi*, the editor, Seyid Islam Duagû (2000) explains how after years of research he was able to locate three copies of the manuscripts, each of which had been reproduced from earlier copies that were only available to the family and followers of the Sheikh. The entire collection is a little over 6,000 couplets composed in Persian. Until 1920s, Persian was one of the common languages of instruction in Kurdish *medreses* (Kurdish religious schools). In writing his poetry, Nehri imitates and tries to reintroduce the *Masnavi* of the famous thirteenth century Sufi poet Jalal al-Din Rumi (Nehri: 129). Rahman (2002) describes Rumi's Masnavi as a "great poetic work of surpassing beauty" that has achieved immense popularity and has, indeed, been hailed as the "Qur'an of the Sufis (164)." Nehrî's Mesnewî has been judged to be of equal depth. In his introduction, Duagû notes that this published version of the Sheikh's *Mesnewi* is the very same as a copy of the manuscript that was first replicated in 1962. Disparities with other unpublished versions are rendered in the footnotes.[18] The section that reflects the Sheikh's political perception consists of over four hundred couplets through which he narrates his and his followers' interaction with the Ottoman army. The Kurdish-Ottoman interaction during the War seems to have had a very negative impact on the Sheikh's views about the Ottoman Turks in general.

In this poetry book, the Sheikh attends to political issues with some degree of hesitation since, he informs us, the book is strictly about religious matters. It is supposedly an instruction for the revival of Islam in Kurdistan, with a clear Naqshbandi inspiration (Nehri: 126). Whenever there is a discussion about worldly matters (*aḥvāl-e donyā*), claims the Sheikh, it is hardly void of ill intent (ibid). However, he contends that he discusses "such issues to tell the story of the Kurds and the *Rômîs* [Ottoman Turks]" (ibid). "I could be accused", he states, "for backbiting, which is of the grave sins (Ibid)." However, "the *maẓlūm* (the oppressed or the subject of injustice) has the right to talk about the oppressor (*ẓālem*), especially if what s/he says is identical to what actually happened (*ṭebq-e mājarā*)" (Ibid). The Sheikh further explains his intention for relating his experience during the War, in the last two couplets of his poem (on this story) as he writes, "it is for the sake of the beloved (*vidād*) Kurds that I allowed my pen to suffer, write, and [for their story] to be inscribed on the pages of time (*rūzgār*) to become a memory (*yādgār*) for the world (*'ālam*)" (ibid: 127). The Sheikh's poems about the Russo-Ottoman War and preparation for it, some of which must have been composed after the war,[19] illustrate his admiration for Abdulhamid II (ibid: 110). Unlike his personal letters to Abdulhamid II, in his

18 See the introduction to Nehri (2000: 1–2).

19 He indicates that he delayed finishing the book because of the War (Nehri: 104).

poetry the Sheikh does not refer to the Sultan as the caliph.[20] According to the Russian Officer, P. I. Averyanov, the Sheikh did not believe in the legitimacy of the Ottoman claim to caliphate (1995: 214–216). This, Averyanov claims, was also accepted by the Kurds whom generally believed that "the Ottomans had taken the Islamic caliphate by force and violated the law of Islam" (ibid: 214–216). Nonetheless, the Sheikh did not hesitate to call him an *imam*[21] or as the promulgator of the religion and of justice (Nehri: 130).

It can be inferred that in the beginning of Russo-Ottoman War the Sheikh felt a significant amount of respect towards the Sultan. This becomes particularly clear in the Sheikh's narration when he hears that the Sultan could not control his outburst of emotions when he read the Sheikh's letter calling on Kurds to join the *jihad* against Russia in 1877 (Nehri: 110). The Sheikh had been told that the letter was so moving that the Sultan was incapable of reading the letter in its entirety. Therefore, Abdulhamid asked an *imam* to sit next to him to read the rest of the letter to him (Ibid). It is clear that Ubeydullah perceived the Sultan's reaction as a sign of his great religious devotion and piety. The Sheikh thought that Abdulhamid concurred with him and that the calamities that had befallen the Ottoman state were the result of the abandonment of Islamic laws and traditions and the spread of a great moral laxity (*bar kabā'er moṣerr*).[22] However, he was of the opinion that the Ottoman state was too corrupt for Abdulhamid to reform it. It was beyond his ability to make the required and necessary structural changes (*tabdil in hay'at*) (Nehri: 110). Nehri claims that the spread of this non-Islamic culture had reached a point where Abdulhamid could no longer exert his power or rule affectively.[23]

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20 In some of his personal letters to the Sultan, the Sheikh uses the commonly employed term *Khilafet-panahi* (the refuge of *Khilafa*) Cf. BOA: Dosya No: 1525, Fon Kodu: PRK.ASK. Tarih: 7/Temuz/1296 (Hicrî) [7.19.1880]. There are other letters in which the Sheikh does not even use this term. Cf. BOA: Dosya No: 1492, Fon Kodu: PRK.ASK. Tarih: 20/Haziran/1296 (Hicrî) [7.1.1880].

21 Unlike *Shia* Muslims, *Sunnis* have used the term *imam* very loosely. Mostly *Sunni*s consider the word *imam* to have a general (*'aam*) application. However, the word *khalifa* (caliph) has particular (*'akhass*) applicability. Many prominent *Sunni* scholars contend that title caliph cannot be used for any ruler other than the first four successors of the Prophet. It is worthy of noting that Seyyid Bey, a prominent scholar of Islam and a staunch anti-caliphate Turkish Justice Minister in 1924, reminded his pro-caliphate colleagues in the Turkish parliament that "the 'ulama of Kurdistan had never took the Ottoman caliphs very seriously." See, TBMM Zabıtları (Turkish Grand National Assembly's Debates). VII. 1 Mart 1340 (1924): 55–65.

22 (*garche sultan ma*ʿ*yay-e fath ve zafar – did dar ejra-ye shar'-e namvar*). (Nehri: 110).

23 (*kardeh bidinan salbe ikhtiyar – bar sare mellat ze daste shariyar*) (ibid: 110).

Such assertions not only illustrate the Sheikh's great disappointment with the entire Ottoman state apparatus, but also shed light on the incompatible appropriation of Islam by the centre and by the periphery, which in turn signifies ethnic and communal differences as well. Such incompatibilities become clear in the Sheikh's encounter with the Ottoman army, which to him manifestly represented the state apparatus' lack of real ties with Islam. Even though the Ottoman elite usually viewed Islam of the "*Oriental peoples*" in a negative light, they tolerated some aspects that could be put into the service of more effective governance.[24] Necib Ali, an Ottoman official in 1873, in remarking on Sheikh Ubeydullah's Kurdish religiosity showcases this dual approach to religion in the periphery on the part of the elites:

> [the Sheikh] works *to bring the Kurds, who are inclined toward idolatry, onto the straight path of Islam*. The township [*naḥiye*] of Shamdinan where the Sheikh lives is on the path of tribal migration routes and on the border [i.e., on the periphery of the Ottoman domains]. The *order and security of this locality* would have required three or four battalions. However, *because of the Sheikh's presence and help … only a local supervisor* [*mudīr*] *and eight police forces* [*żabṭiye*] are enough to govern and collect all … [the] taxes on time (rendered in Ateş, 2006: 332. Emphasis added).

The passage above, as emphasised in the text, denotes how certain views and perceptions regarding the Kurds become even more negative when expressed by Persian *Shi'i* elites. For instance, an Iranian bureaucrat, Askandar Qurians, describes the Sheikh as "the religious leader of the nomadic tribes that are ignorant of any tradition and religion" (Ateş, 2006: 332). The Kurds were seen as a group of people which lived on the borders of the sublime Qajar and Ottoman states. In his memoir Alikhan Afshar, who personally fought against the Sheikh, writes that this "imprudent, ignoramus-like, vile, and ungodly people are nomadic *Sunni*s, residing in high and unreachable mountains, most of whom blindly follow the misguided Sheikh Ubeydullah" (2007: 30, 221).

As far as Nehri was concerned, "all the calamities that had befallen the Ottoman Empire", were the direct result of what he viewed as the cultural and moral degeneration of the state and its subjects (Nehri: 110). Thus, he contends that "the faith (*iman*) fades away when the religion (*din*) is gone and how can there be a victory (*nusrat*) when there are no faithful (*mu'min*)" (ibid).

24 See Makdisi (2002: 768–96).

According to him, the Ottoman Turks had lost their moral compass and this was why they had sustained such a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Russians (ibid). Nehri argues that there is a direct correlation between the degree of people's religious devotion and their worldly failings and triumphs. It should be remembered that such an attitude was not uncommon among the nineteenth and twentieth century revivalists.[25] However, that being said, the Sheikh did not believe that the whole community had become "degenerate" in the same way or had strayed to the same extent from "the straight path." He believed there were different attitudes toward Islam and morality between different ethnic groups. The Sheikh was of the opinion that the Ottoman Turks' defeat, notwithstanding their greater numbers, more than anything else was a sign of their moral failure and "the Muslims are now controlled by thugs" (ibid: 111). He was especially harsh on the army and the bureaucrats and had no problems with defining them as "imprudently hostile to the religious people [i.e.; the Kurds]" (ibid: 120).[26]

During the War, from the Sheikh's perspective, the Ottoman side was composed of two opposing groups: The *Rômî*s (Ottoman Turks), "a morally lax group" and "the poised Kurds, who had strong religious devotion" (ibid: 117–23). The Kurds were portrayed as a devoted religious people, from among whom he had assembled tens of thousands of fighters as he called on them to join the *jihād* against the Russians' invasion (ibid: 108). With the Kurds' arrival (the only force that actually fought, according to the Sheikh), the Russian army sustained many humiliating defeats, one after another:

> When in Abgha[27] *our fighters*[28] faced the Russians[29]
> Russians sustained a mortifying defeat
> The Kurds, just like roaring lions in the fight;
> The Russians, like deer seeking a way out of sight
> The Kurds' thunderous roars turned them into a [formless] cloud
> Down the plains streamed Russian blood,
> Russian heads, like hail began to fall (ibid: 116).

The details and the horror of the fights are explained meticulously and the fighters' motivation is linked to their ethnicity and religious devotion. Hence, the Sheikh describes the Kurds' role in the war as follows:

25 Cf. Sayyid Qutb's introduction to al-Nadawi (1945: 10–11).
26 (*bi muhaba bar goruh-e ahl-e dīn*).
27 A place near the city of Van, in Northern Kurdistan/Turkey.
28 Emphasis added.
29 It should be noted that all the poems are translated by the author from Persian to English.

For our lions, even mountains were too small
The bright glint of Kurdish swords
Flashing like lighting, indescribable in words
The enemy forces falling as they sought safe haven
Kurdish roars echoed up to highest heaven
The [Kurdish] *Gazi*s'[30] roars and shouts
With the Russians' fears and self-doubts
And the Russians' bodiless souls filled the air
For their soulless bodies turned red everywhere
As the Russians' cries reached the sky
Angels praising the *Gazi*s from on high (ibid).

The Sheikh claims that the "*Rômî*s" would have been unwilling to fight, even if a soldier of theirs had dared to join the Kurds to fight against the Russians, he would have been severely punished by his superior upon sight. For instance:

One of [the Ottoman] soldiers, brave and upright
Having joined us during the Kurdo-Russian fight,
Was beaten with a stick, gravely punished
Lost his food ration, his honour tarnished
His sin unforgivable and so grave
Having joined the Kurds, so brave was he (ibid: 117).

According to Nehri, the Ottoman army's unwillingness to fight the Russians along with the Kurds exemplified their lack of religiosity, as well as their lack of regard and sympathy for the Kurds (ibid: 117–24). The reasons behind the army's displeasure with the followers of the Sheikh are unknown. What is known, however, is that the Sheikh and his followers perceived the Ottoman military as an irreligious, spineless, and corrupt army that represented the true nature of the Ottoman state (ibid). The Ottoman role is mostly seen as a destructive one. The impression they left on the Kurds was that they were full of hate for the Kurdish people. The Sheikh sees the "*Rômî*s" as a group of people that did nothing but squander the Kurds' support and enthusiasm in the fight against the Russian incursion. He further states that the Ottoman army and its commanders awarded the Kurds' bravery and sacrifice with hatred, mockery, jealousy and by cutting their food rations. In this regard, Nehri notes that:

30 *Gazi* is someone who fights in the cause of religion. However, here the Sheikh uses the term exclusively for the Kurdish fighters who fought along the Ottomans, in the Russo-Ottoman war in 1877–78.

> Despite that spectacular fight by the *Gazi*s
> There was no support to come from the *Rômî*s
> …
> The Kurdish reinforcements alone defeated the enemy
> [Turkish] commanders awarded them with hatred and envy
> They tried to get rid of the Kurds and cut their food rations
> Days passed without bread, the fighters lost their patience
> …
> The *Rômî*s hatred scarcely knew any limit
> Their hatred and jealousy, who can relate? (ibid: 117–20).

The Sheikh explains how the *Rômî*s represented all that was wrong with the Muslim world. He sees them as the classic example of "Muslim degeneration", "vile (*sofleh*), lacking a heartfelt religion, and wolves disguised as shepherds (*az gorgan, ra'i pustin*)" (ibid: 111). The Turkish army's mockery and ridicule of the Kurds, whom are described by the Sheikh as the *qowm-e pāk dīn* (the people of the true religion), made them consequently leave the battlefield. The Sheikh saw the above as signs of Ottoman hostility towards the Kurds, whom in his view had shown a great deal of bravery and displayed their moral superiority.

Furthermore, there is a sense of bitterness found in the Sheikh's narrations of Kurdish-Ottoman interactions during the Russo-Ottoman War. Accordingly, the Sheikh sees the Ottomans as nominal Muslims; in their hearts they lacked strong religious feelings. He contends that the Ottomans or *Rômî*s, as he refers to them, were *münāfiq*, lacking any faith, while pretending to be Muslims. He recounts a *ḥadīth*, attributed to the Prophet of Islam, of whose content the Sheikh believes the Ottomans' religiosity to be an embodiment (ibid: 109, 127). According to this *ḥadīth*, the Prophet declared that there were three criteria by which one can tell if a person is a *münāfiq*: a) if s/he is untruthful when speaking b) if s/he breaks a promise made c) if s/he deceives another person that trusted her/him.[31] In this regard, the Sheikh explains how he feels about the Ottomans:

> No matter how much I say about their injustices, it would not be more than a tiny bit of what actually took place. The *Rômî*s dishonored every single promise they made to us at the beginning of the War. They squandered all that we had done for them. They promised to take care of the Kurdish fighters' food rations, and they broke their promise … The *Rômî*s' actions rendered all the Kurdish sacrifice to be in vain (ibid: 127).

31 *Alāmātul munāfiqi thalāthatuṅ: 'idhā ḥadatha kadhiba, wa 'idhā wa°ada 'akhlāfa, wa idh*[*ā*] *'utmi'una khāna*.

While the Ottomans' religiosity is painted by the Sheikh as almost non-existent, pretentious, and insincere; the Kurdish religiosity is said to be otherwise. Only the Arabs' bravery and piety was equivalent to that of Kurds since, according to the Sheikh, they have a common origin.[32] In this vein, he notes that:

> They are born with natural sagacity
> They are lions, symbols of bravery
> Epitomes of heroism in warfare
> They are Hatims,[33] icons of generosity
>
> 'd' in Kurd stands for *dīn* (religiosity)
> 'k' stands for *kamāl* and perfection
> 'r' for *rushd*, spiritual maturation
> Only in Kurds can you find[34]
> All these virtues combined (ibid:120–21).

The rise of Sheikh Ubeydullah signified a new era in Kurdish politics and presented a modality of its development in which the fusion of nationalism and religiosity were clearly visible. This fusion in Kurdish political movements, which in some cases lasted until 1960s, endowed them with a unique characteristic.[35] This is explained due to the fact that the Kurds simultaneously represented the religious and ethnic peripheral "Other". The Kurds were generally portrayed as "backward" and "ignorant" in the late Ottoman period.[36] Therefore, their religiosity, in the eyes of the Ottoman elite, was also represented as a "backward" form of Islam.[37] This was because the Ottoman elite believed that "without receiving light from the Istanbul's enlightenment"[38] no nation could possibly leap to their stage of modern comprehension of Islam. They

32 This is not uncommon for the Kurds to claim that they have common origin with Arabs. Even Said Nursi (2009: 579) had a similar claim. These views, however, change among the Kurds in the face of Arab nationalism; especially after the creation of Iraq.

33 Hatim al-Ta'i, is a symbol of generosity in Arabic literature and culture.

34 *Ke nadarad hich aqwam-e degar*.

35 Suh as tendencies are visible in Sheikh Said's uprising in 1926, in Mahanadi republic in 1946 and to certain extent in Mostafa Barzani movement in 1960s.

36 Such a perception of the Kurds remains influential in the later republican era (see Zeydanlıoğlu, 2008).

37 These negative views had made their ways into the common Turkish proverbs and expressions. For instance, "*The God of the Kurds and dogs is one* (*Kürt ile itin Allahı birdir*);" and "*God and the Kurds don't like each other* (*Allah Kürdü*, Kürd *Allahı sevmez*)" (Alakom, 2010: 33–4). For more the general attitude toward the people in periphery see, Makdisi (2002 and 2002), Dringle (1998 and 2003).

38 See, *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*. No: 595 (Jun 7, 1880).

viewed Kurdish Islam or non-Turkish Islam in general, as "outdated" and "backward". The Shafiʿi school (being one of the four major legal schools of *Sunni* Islam) had shown persistent stubbornness in its refusal to follow the officially propagated *Hanafi* school of law in the Empire: "This branch of Islam had not followed the Hanefis, the main Ottoman *mezhep* (school of law) in its supine attitude towards the state" (Mardin, 2006: 60).

A Kurdistani Islamic Revivalist Project

The Sheikh's *Mesnewi* offers a first-hand account of his political and nationalist thoughts, which helps us to better grasp how his religious and nationalist views intersected. Aside from his *Mesnewi*, there is not much literature available to provide us with the specifics or particularities of the Sheik's revivalism. His *Mesnewi* is meant to be a religious revivalist project. He claims that he wrote his own *Mesnewi* to present a solution towards understanding and reviving the works of Rumi.[39] The Sheikh's *Mesnewi*, however, mostly concentrates on the Naqshbandi branch of Islamic Sufism. The book is a poetic detailing of the history of the Order and a guidebook for the followers of this *Tarīqat*. His new poetic account, in a sense, was a reconstruction of the Naqshbandi Order's history to differentiate "its original and uncontaminated teachings" from the existing and prevalent misrepresentations of it by the contemporary generation (Nehri: 130). According to the Sheikh, the distance of people's knowledge about the Order from its "original teachings" had reached a point where one could hardly find any resemblance between the two (ibid).

Sheikh Ubeydullah's views resemble those of other contemporary Muslim revivalists. He was disturbed by the general direction of the contemporary state of affairs. He had very pessimistic views of the Ottoman state. It is evident that the Sheikh believed that the Ottoman state's deficiencies were rooted in its indifference toward Islamic laws and its teachings. He considered the Ottoman laws to be in direct opposition to Islam and (*khelāf-e*)-*Shariʿa* (ibid: 110). To him, Islamic laws were nothing more than the Qurʾanic verses and the Prophetic tradition; and therefore, anything incompatible with them was forbidden innovation (*bidʿa*) (ibid: 111). This illustrates a somewhat Mohammed ʿAbduh (1849–1905) and Mohammed Rashid Rida (1865–1935) type of *Salafi*-ism, conflated with Naqshbandi teachings in the Sheikh's approach to the

39 The ultimate aim in writing his *Mesnewi*, maintains the Sheikh, was to explain the *Masnavi* of Rumi since "the deep meanings in the poems of the prince (Amir) of this *tarīqat* had yet to be revealed to the ʿavām" – the common people (Nehri: 133).

religious revival. He even invoked the idea of commonality of the Islamic *umma*'s laws when he contends that "the laws of this *umma* – which are the best of all laws – are grounded in the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition (ibid)." Nonetheless, it seems that his brand of revivalism differed from that of figures like ʿAbduh and Rida in the sense that Ubeydullah was solely focused on reviving religion among the ethnic Kurds. The Sheikh was mostly concerned with the state of affairs in Kurdistan, which is an area that separates him from other Muslim revivalists. The Arab revivalists too had their own nationalistic agenda. ʿAbduh also believed that "the Ottomans had usurped the caliphate and the Turks were unable to grasp the spirit of the Muhammadan message since they were late converts" (Enayat quoted in Satan, 2008: 39). Yet, unlike Nehri, at the same time they concerned themselves with the Muslim world in general. The Sheikh, however, did not seem to pay much attention to the Muslim world beyond Kurdistan.

Sheikh Ubeydullah held particularly positive views about Kurdish religiosity but was simultaneously highly critical of the Sufi Orders, including his own Naqshbandi Order. He saw the degeneration in Kurdistan as the degeneration of the Sufi Orders. This is why he felt an obligation to revive the previous generations' Sufi tradition[40] in twofold: a) the degeneration of the Sufism itself and, b) the existence of an exceptional degree of religious enthusiasm in Kurdistan, which required guidance and spiritual leadership (Nehri: 130). Without real guidance, asserted Ubeydullah, all this religious enthusiasm and excitement could lead to a wrong path (ibid). He claimed that it is the obligatory nature of the religious (or *tariqat*'s) following that necessitates writing a second *Mesnewi* that abides by the first and revives it (ibid: 129). From the Sheikh's perspective, the Sufi tradition in Kurdistan was losing its meaning and internal dynamism. Instead of achieving higher stages of spirituality through required training and obtaining the necessary knowledge it was becoming a matter of inheritance. To pass the stages of Sufism, a Sufi no longer needed long years of study and deep personal spiritual endeavours (ibid: 130). Therefore, despite their religious passion, "the Kurds were roaming in the plains of religion (*ṣaḥrā-ye dīn*)" (ibid). According to Nehri, contrary to the tradition of the pious forbearers (*Salaf*), which required being critical of oneself and tolerant of others' shortcomings (*be her kes ḥusn-e ẓann*), the contemporary Sufis regarded themselves as paragons of piety and charged others with mischief (ibid: 131).

40 "The descendants have moved astray form the ancestors' tradition and they have introduced forbidden innovations (*tark karde har kas āthār-e salaf – mukhtariʿ gashte be bidʿat har khalaf*)." Therefore, I "ventured at revealing [or reviving] those pious people works (*lā ʿalaj āmad jasārat dar miyān – ke konam āthār-e īn pākān ʿayān* [Nehri, 131])."

Another area that sets the Sheikh apart from other Muslim revivalist groups and figures is his approach to the Islamic past and its "golden age". The Sheikh belonged to a tradition that believed in the constancy of *tajdīd* (renewal)[41] in Islamic history. Therefore, he believed that, in addition to the exceptional era of the Prophet and Rashidun, Muslim history had witnessed many golden ages one of which was discernible in the recent past of Kurdistan. The Sheikh called for "the return to a pristine Islam, defined in the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition", which was practiced and revived in "'the great' Sufi tradition", including the previous generation in Kurdistan. Its memories were still vivid, only several decades earlier "*Ḥażrat*" or Mawlana Khalid, the founder of the Khalidi branch of the Naqshbandi Order, was still living. Unlike other Muslim revivalists such as Jamal ad-Din Afghani (1838/1839–1897) and ʿAbduh, the Sheikh believed that the Muslim "degeneration"[42] in Kurdistan was not rooted in the Umayyad's rule.[43] Rather, it began with the death of his own father and of Mawlana Khalid in the first half of the nineteenth century. He believed Kurdistan was going through a two way process of degeneration: at first, Kurdistan's loss of vigour that began over a half a century earlier when, according to the Sheikh, Kurdistan was a centre of learning attracting all those in pursuit of knowledge from around the world. Kurdistan was a garden of knowledge, people "from every region and every ethnic origin (*qawm*, Arabic, and *qowm*: Persian)" came to Kurdistan to harvest its fruits of knowledge. Undoubtedly the Sheikh's claim contains some elements of truth about Kurdistan being a centre of scholarship. The Ottoman historian, Katib Chelebi, recounts that:

> the market for learning in Turkey slumped, and the men of learning were nigh to disappearing. Then the novices of scholars who were working

41 Concepts such as *iḥya'* and *tajdid* have long roots in Muslim history. Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni (1028–1085) and Abū Ḥāmed al-Ghazālī (1058–1111) are considered to be precursors in introducing those concepts. However, it was Jalaluddin Al-Suyuti (1445–1505) who became the major exponent of these concepts. For more see Al-Suyuti (1972).

42 Even when it was not explicitly stated, the idea of degeneration was already embedded in attempts for revival. In the 19th century, this sense of Muslims' digression from the right path was one of the major explanations for the European military, technical and scientific superiority over the Muslim world. In the 1940s, Abu al-Hassan al-Nadawi wrote a book on the same subject, which very well represents this view of degeneration and Muslims' distance from the golden age of Islam. Sayyid Quṭb himself wrote a forward to al-Nadawi's book in which he states that this book was the best work he had ever read on the subject (al-Nadawi, 1945: 10).

43 For the representation of this approach to Islamic history that seeks to locate "the genesis of Muslim degeneration" in history see, Maududi (1985).

> in some outlying places, here and there in the land of the Kurds, came to Turkey and began to give themselves tremendous airs. Seeing them, some capable men in our time became students of philosophy. As a student, I, the humble writer of these lines, in the course of discussion and study, was encouraged by some men of talent, as Plato was encouraged by Socrates, to acquire knowledge of the truths of things (1957: 26).

According to the Sheikh "those seas of knowledge and illumination" have faded away and what is left is nothing but a façade (Nehri: 130). The spirit of the previous generation's legacy had been lost and, as previously mentioned, many of the existing Sheikhs and *khalīfa*s are accused of being ignorant and of indulging in "nonsensical claims of having access to the unseen world" (ibid). They are described as lacking in any real mystical experience or spiritual acquisitions. This is how, in the Sheikh's view, Kurdistan lost its vibrancy and "its seas of light are dried up" (ibid). The second aspect of this process of degeneration, to which Jwaideh devoted close attention, is the absence of a sovereign Kurdish state and the overall deterioration of the socio-political situation. The Sheikh does not say much about whether or not the first situation was caused by the second. However, the scholarship on Ottoman Kurdistan during the nineteenth century unveils the devastating impact of the destruction of the Kurdish principalities on the socio-political conditions in Kurdistan.[44] The Sheikh not only viewed the state as an institution that could establish order and security, but also as a civilising or modernising agent. To him, one of the most important roles that a state could play is to educate the populace. This aspect of the state's role is almost always alluded to in the Sheikh's statements, letters, and poems. It is one of the most important factors to sway the Sheikh in his drive for an independent Kurdish state.[45] This approach to the state becomes evident particularly in the following excerpt from the Sheikh's letter to the American missionary Dr. Cochran:

> Among other evil things, you have probably heard of the [Kurdish] tribe of … Shikak, who are famous for their evil and ruin-causing deeds … and [who] will *remain in their savage state* … The Ottoman Government also, like the Persian, either *has not the means of civilizing these people or else neglects them*. Kurdistan has got *a bad reputation* and *has been disgraced,*

44 For more on Kurdish principalities see, Jwaideh (2006).

45 Cf. The Sheikh's letters to Iqbal ad-Dowleh in Celîl, *Kürt Halk Tarihinden 13 İlginç Yaprak/ Thirteen Interesting Pages of the Kurdish Nation's History*: 38–43.

> *distinction is not made* between *peaceable and evil-disposed persons.*[46] (Emphasis added).

In the above letter, the Sheikh contends the Ottoman and the Persian governments intentionally avoided educating those Kurdish tribes. He argues that by keeping the Kurdish groups in "their savage state" it could help the two respective governments perpetuate their policies in Kurdistan. Therefore, he accused the Ottoman and Qajar states of doing two concurrent things against the Kurds. On the one hand, they refrained from educating Kurdish people while also allowing some tribes to commit all sorts of crimes; on the other, they used this to "*paint all the Kurds as savage*."[47] This is why, argues the Sheikh, all Kurds are infamously known as "savages." Thus:

> [b]e it known to you for certain that this has all been caused by the laches of the Turkish and Persian authorities, for Kurdistan is in the midst between these two countries, and both Governments, for their own reason, do not distinguish between good and evil characters. It is thus that bad characters remain unreformed, respectable people get an ill repute and become ruined.[48]

In this regard, it can be argued that the Sheikh saw the creation of a state as instrumental to the success of his revivalist project as well. He not only saw the state as the provider of law and order but also as the grantor of an educated nation. It is evident that to the Sheikh, education was a panacea for the Kurdish plight. In addition, to him, the lack of public education in Kurdistan was the principal reason for Kurdish exclusion. In his letter to Iqbal ad-Dowleh,[49] the Sheikh writes "we admit that there are bad Kurds along with the good ones but there is no one *who even thinks of educating*[50] [the bad and therefore it is impossible] for the Kurds to right their wrongs without education" (Celîl, 2007: 42). Accordingly, the Sheikh saw public education held the key to a more decent and humane life and a way for the Kurds to escape from their present miseries.

The instrumental role of education is frequently reiterated, to a degree that even the Sheikh's surrogates seem to subscribe to the importance of public

46 Parliamentary Papers. Turkey No. 5. (1881. Inclosure 3. No. 5/61).
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 The governor of Urmia in the 1880s.
50 Emphasis added.

education. In his meeting with the British General Consul Abbott, Khalifeh Sayyid Muhammad, the Sheikh's brother-in-law, also echoed his concern and declared that Ubeydullah, "if successful, undertook to suppress brigandage, restore order within the borders of Turkey and Persia, place Christians and Muslims on equal footing of equality, *promote education*,[51] and allow churches and schools to be built" (Jwaideh: 85).

It is apparent the Sheikh believed that the materialisation of the aforementioned projects would necessitate state power. Undoubtedly, he also believed that the objectives must be appealing to Europeans, and thus, "modern."[52] Khalifeh Sayyid Muhammad, while asking for the moral support of the Europeans in creating a Kurdish state, presented these stated strategic goals. He went as far as to say that if Ubeydullah reneged from the *promise*s he made, "he was prepared to be judged by the tribunal of Europe, and to abide by the consequences" (Turkey No. 5; 1881. Inclosures in No. 56). Simultaneously, the Sheikh was making the case, through his surrogate, that neither the Persians nor the Ottomans were willing to take such important steps for the welfare of the Kurds and the Christians. As can be inferred from the above documents, the Sheikh sees a direct correlation between the lack of public education and the existence of such a phenomenon as brigandry that the Sheikh, if successful in creating a state, promised to eradicate. In his *Mesnewi*, in which he had no foreign interlocutors, there is no acknowledgement for the existence of Kurdish brigandry. However, he asserts that no matter how great one's capabilities are or how noble one's ancestry (*aṣl-e najīb*) might be, one needs a proper education to fulfil one's potential (Nehri: 121). Gold is thus used as an analogy to represent the Kurdish people, where he states that despite the fact that raw gold is the same substance that is made into jewellery, it needs refinement to take on lustre and value (ibid). To him, the Kurds are a 'unique ethnic group' (*qowm*) in terms of their "mastery in art and in their sophistication (*fazl u honar*): No one can be as talented as the Kurds if they are properly educated" (ibid). If they were "united under one leadership, they would have had a unique state (*bî-masal va bî-nazīr*)" (ibid). Here the Sheikh's emphasis on the unity of the Kurds under a Kurdish leadership commensurate with his more outright nationalistic views found in his personal letters (see Celîl, 2007: 45–58). This

51 Emphasis added.

52 All the evidence indicates that the Sheikh had a fair understanding of what was going on in the world. Dr. Cochran remarks that the Sheikh "seemed to enjoy conversing on all subjects with me. During the week that I stayed at his house, I had many very pleasant talks with him. He was very much interested in hearing about the new inventions and other wonders of the Western world" (quoted in Speer, 1911: 80).

is particularly significant since in his call for political unity, the Sheikh overtly excludes non-Kurdish Muslims.

There is a dearth of information concerning the details in which the Sheikh conceptualised a modern state and the scope of his grasp of it. However, the above denotes that the Sheikh believed in the necessity of a state in order for the Kurds to obtain an education, defend themselves against foreign aggression, and to ensure their internal security and overall safety (see, Nehri: 121).

Conclusion

To conclude in this regard, the impact of ethnic background and cultural context are visible in the Sheikh's understanding of Islam. In many ways, the boundaries of his Islamic interpretation coincide with his ethnic and his "imagined", as per Benedict Anderson, national boundaries. The Sheikh redrew his religious boundaries in accordance with that of the Kurdish ethnicity. The Sheikh's previously unexplored poetic work, provides us with rare information about the Sheikh's perception of the Kurds and their Others. It helps to settle the dichotomous approaches to his uprising as his poetry evidences that his religious views were compatible with his nationalism. The Sheikh was a Kurdish Muslim revivalist. Yet, his religious revivalism was an exclusionary one. Unlike most anti-colonial Muslim revivalists, *Islamic umma* had no place in his political imagination. His imagined state was a religious one of some sort. Yet, it would have been created only to deal with the Kurdish predicaments. At most, it would be a state only for the Kurds and Armenians. According to the Sheikh, it was better for the Kurds to have a state of their own.

Despite the vagueness of the Sheikh's concept of the state, like many modern Muslims, he viewed the state as the main agent for change. Such an approach signifies the main characteristic of modern Islamic revivalism, which differs from other pre-modern and medieval forms. Moreover, the Sheikh has also attached great value to the role of the state in educating the populace. He deemed the state not only as a grantor of security and law and order, but also as an instrument for the dissemination of his "true" form of Islam. However, as indicated, the Sheikh's interest in reviving and spreading "true" Islam only occurred within limited ethnic and geographic boundaries, that is, Kurdistan. Such emphasis on the ethno-national boundaries of his "imagined" Islamic state was indicative of the rise of nationalism in Muslim societies and the impact this rise had on Muslim political thought.

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Language Shift among Kurds in Turkey: a Spatial and Demographic Analysis

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Abstract

This study explores language shift and interregional migration among Turkey's Kurdish-origin population using census data as well as TDHS data. First, the geographical retraction of the Kurdish language between 1945 and 1965 is depicted using respective censuses as data sources. Second, patterns of intergenerational language shift and the effects of migration and education on this shift are elaborated utilising 2003 TDHS data and the 2000 Census data. Interregional mobility by birth regions and language concentration across Turkey has also been mapped. The Kurdish population in Turkey appears to be on the verge of near-universal bilingualism prompting concerns about the future of the language.

Keywords

language shift – ethnicity – internal migration – Turkey – Kurds

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Guherîna zimanî di nav kurdan de li Tirkiyeyê: Nirxandineke mekanî û demografîk

Ev xebat, bi rêya tehlîlkirina daneyên serjimêriyê û herwiha daneyên TDHSyê, dikeve pey têgihiştina guherîna zimanî û koçberiya nav-herêmî di nav nufûsa kurd-regez a Tirkiyeyê de. Pêşiyê, bertengbûna coxrafî ya zimanê kurdî di navbera 1945 û 1965an de bi rêya tehlîla daneyan hatiye nîşandan. Paşê, awa û qalibên ziman-guheriya ji nifşekî bo nifşê din û tesîra koçberî û perwerdeyê li ser wê guherînê hatine nirxandin bi rêya bikaranîna daneyên TDHSya 2003yan û serjimêriya 2000an. Herwiha, hereketa mirovan ya ji herêmekê bo herêmeke din li gor herêma wan a jidayikbûnê, û paye û belavbûna zimanan li seranserê Tirkiyeyê hatiye bi nexşekirin. Wisa diyar e ku gelê kurd li Tirkiyeyê li ber duzimaniyeke seranserî ye, ku ev yek fikaran li dor paşeroja zimanî durist dike.

گۆرانکاری زمانی لە نێو کوردەکانی تورکیا: لێکدانەوەیەکی شوێنی و دیمۆگرافیانە

ئەو لێکۆڵینەوەیە بە کەڵک وەرگرتن لە زانیاری سەرژمێریانە و هەروەها زانیاری ت دە س، لە گۆرانکاری زمانی و جێگۆرکێی نێوان هەرێمیانەی کوردە خۆجێیەکانی تورکیا دەکۆڵێتەوە. لە هەنگاوی یەکەمدا بە کەڵک وەرگرتن لە سەرژمێریە پەیوەندیدارەکان وەک سەرچاوەی زانیاری پاشەکشەکانی زمانی کوردی لە نێوان ساڵانی ١٩٤٥ و ١٩٦٥ باس دەکرێت. لە هەنگاوی دووەمدا بە کەڵک وەرگرتن ت دە س لە ٢٠٠٢ و زانیاری سەرژمێری ٢٠٠٠، نموونەکانی گۆرانکاری زمانی لە نێوان جییلەکاندا هەروەها کارتێکەریەکانی مەهاجیرەت و پەروەردە لەسەر ئەم گۆرانکاریە باس دەکرێت. هەروەها جێگۆرکێی نێوان هەرێمی لە رێگای شوێنی لە دایک بوون و قورسایی زمانیی لە سەرانسەری تورکیادا نەخشەکێش کراوەتەوە. وێدەچێت کە دانیشتوانی کوردی تورکیا وەک دیاردەی دوو زمانی لە ئاستی جیهاندا بێت. کە هەڵگری نیگەرانیە لە مەر داهاتووی زمان. ت دە س: چاوپێداخشاندانی سڵامەتی و دیمۆگرافی تورکیا

Introduction

Analysing population patterns and behaviour of ethnic groups in Turkey is a challenge due to the persistent refusal to collect information on "ethnicity", as such, in censuses and surveys. Many scholars have used language as an ethnic marker though the apparent language shift among Kurds and other non-Turkish ethnie has diluted the link between mother tongue and ethnic identity.

O'Driscoll (2014) comparing the Irish and Kurdish cases claims that "Kurdish is facing danger of being eradicated" due to the politics of "linguicide".[1] Thus, we are set to identify this language shift with the help of large scale statistics from censuses and surveys. The diffusion of Turkish, the language of the majority, as well as the reciprocal retreat of the Kurdish language can be observed mapping at least two census data (1945 and 1965), though interestingly, to our best knowledge, this has never been done in the context of demonstrating language shift in Turkey. The retreat of the Kurdish language in the 20th century resembles that of Irish in the 19th century, even without an ethnically Turkish settler population in the predominantly Kurdish areas like the Protestants of Ulster or the "Old English" of the Pale in the Irish case (Hindley, 1990; Carnie, 1995). Interregional migration flows in Turkey have generally been from eastern to western provinces. Accordingly, population movements from the predominantly Kurdish areas head to the western parts of the country, while the spread of the Turkish language points to the opposite direction.

Apart from the geographical retreat of the Kurdish language, intergenerational language shift can also be observed within families and across generations. A portion of Kurdish parents do not transmit their mother tongue to their children or do so only as second language similar to the case of international migrants as mostly analysed for migrant groups in the United States and other receiving countries (Stevens, 1985). Alba et al. (2002) noted that languages spoken at home by third-generation immigrant children are affected by factors such as intermarriage. These arguments are not exclusive to the international migration context, and thus, may well be relevant to internal migration of ethnic groups such as Kurds moving from the east to the west of Turkey. Migration to outside the predominantly Kurdish areas and/or rise in the educational achievement of children of Kurdish families apparently dissuades retention of the Kurdish language. Interestingly though, apart from studies using language for analysis of demographic features of "ethnic/language" groups, where language is a marker rather than the main focus of analysis (e.g. Hoşgör and Smits, 2002; Koç, 2008; Mutlu, 1996; Dündar, 1998), or a few examples of small-scale qualitative fieldwork (Çağlayan, 2014; Civelek, 2015), until now no work has

1 Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar (2010: 80) define linguicide in the context of cultural genocide which refers to "any deliberate act committed with the intent to destroy the language" among other cultural elements based on Article III of the draft of the Genocide Convention that was excluded from the final text mainly due to opposition from Western countries such as Canada or the United States with arguments that the inclusion of cultural genocide could inhibit the assimilation of cultural or linguistic groups as well as give way to claims by indigenous groups.

been exclusively dedicated to probing the language shift among Turkey's Kurds as a separate, quantitative and country-level investigation.[2]

In awareness of background and data limitations the purposes of this paper are threefold. First, we depict the geography of the shift from Kurdish to Turkish using census data from 1945 and 1965. Second, we analyse intergenerational language shift differentiated according to educational attainment and migration status (as an indicator of context), particularly focusing on migrant (allochthon) Kurds compared to the non-migrant (autochthon) majority using the 2003 Turkish Demographic Health Survey (TDHS) data. As a prerequisite for the above stated objectives we have mapped the geographical distribution of languages other than Turkish from the latest available census of 1965, and further, analysed interregional migration currents in the second half of the 20th century using Census 2000 data. Finally, our third aim is to present a critique of studies that have, so far, resorted to the unverified assumption equating language to ethnicity in the Turkish context and to present an assessment of alternative markers, as discussed in the next chapter.

Language as a Marker of Ethnicity in the Turkish Context

Fishman (2010: xxviii–xxix) points out that the equality between language and ethnicity has rarely been discussed and that it is imperative to consider the context and the conditions that lead language to become a proxy for ethnicity, a process depending on circumstances and contrasts that modify, create or recreate this association over time. Moreover, he argues, that not only the connection between each other but also both "language" and "ethnicity" themselves are highly contextual as well. May (2012: 134–138) criticises the assumed association of language and ethnicity as he discusses the relations between ethnie, nation, language and culture. Yet, as Smith (1986: 27) remarked "scholars persist in regarding language as the distinguishing mark of ethnicity, a standpoint that leads to gross simplification and misunderstanding". Such simplification has been dominant in Kurdish studies despite massive language shift and widespread bilingualism[3] among Kurds in Turkey (Zeyneloğlu et al., 2014; Zeydanlıoğlu, 2013). Unfortunately, many studies using historical census or contemporary TDHS data have assumed responses to the 'mother tongue' question as a proxy for ethnicity (e.g. Mutlu, 1996; Sirkeci, 2000; Gündüz-Hoşgör

2 Smits and Hoşgör's (2003) work on linguistic capital comes close but lacks a historical and geographical frame.

3 See Skutnabb-Kangas and McCarty (2008) for a comprehensive terminology on bilingualism.

and Smits, 2002; Koç et al., 2008) though the validity of this assumption has never been probed empirically in the Turkish context.

First to mention in this regard is the ambiguity of the meaning of "mother tongue" in the Turkish language as "*anadil*" literally means "mother tongue" but is also used in the meaning of 'main-language'. In all Turkish census forms since the first in 1927 the explanation of *anadil* following in brackets reads as "the language spoken at home and/or among family".[4] In the 1985 census questionnaire, the question was even directly formulated as "*Ev içinde ve aile arasında konuştuğunuz dil?* (The language you speak at home and among family?)" without using the term *anadil* at all, which, for a grown up person, can certainly be different from the language learned in childhood from his/her mother, especially after experiences of migration, intermarriage and/or entrance into higher education (Zeyneloğlu et al., 2016). In other words, the census has aimed at the 'function' dimension of language as classified by Skutnabb-Kangas (2008: 86) as opposed to the 'origin' dimension.

In the TDHS, no explanation follows the corresponding question on "mother tongue" which leads to ambiguity on this matter. The perception of scholars using TDHS data concerning the responses on this question is revealed by Dündar (1998: 33–34) who gives the definition of mother tongue as "the language first learned in childhood and still understood", which is in sharp contrast to the description used in Turkish censuses, and probably also incongruous to the subconscious perception of most members of the general population. While TDHS claims to have collected the language learned first in childhood, that is focusing on the "origin" dimension of language (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008: 86), without a clear explanation some respondents interviewed during the successive surveys may have referred to their current language, which may be different from the one learned first in childhood due to assimilation; or, that the language learned first in childhood may not be identical with that of the parents' first language due to language shift. We do not deny that there is a bijective link between the Kurdish language and the Kurmanji as well as the Zaza population groups both in terms of self-designation as well as outside perception (Haig and Öpengin, 2014), though not all Kurds speak a Kurdish dialect so that knowledge and/or use of the Kurdish language does not necessarily constitute an operational ethnic marker. As Fenton and May (2002: 15) remark language can certainly be "the expression and focus of" ethno-political claims, however, their discussion also reflects the complexities of using language as

4 Şeref Hoşgör, the former head of the Social Statistics Department (1996–2003) of SIS, confirms that instructions given to census interviewers were also in that direction (Personal interview on Apr. 2nd, 2009 in Ankara).

an ethnic marker and the temporality and relationality of both identity and its markers.

The negative correlation of educational attainment and language retention among Kurds (Smits and Gündüz Hoşgör, 2003)[5] may be a reason why Koç et al. (2008) found strong "demographic differentials" between Turkish and Kurdish speakers. Since the odds of an individual of Kurdish origin stating Turkish as her main language increases with her educational attainment, it is highly probable that Kurds who in terms of demographic indicators are closer to the general Turkish population may have been raised in, or later on have shifted to, the Turkish language. In that case, main language, as a marker of ethnicity, will fall short of indicating a possible convergence of Kurds and Turks. Koç et al. (2008: 448) (unfortunately referring to an MA student's work, albeit a very good one, i.e. Dündar, 1998) state that "mother tongue/spoken language is only one potential variable … as a proxy for ethnicity, but in the Turkish context it appears to be quite sufficient". Actually Dündar (1998: 2) explicitly refrains from equating language to ethnicity, literally stating that "mother tongue and second languages of the respondents … are not sufficient to identify an individual as belonging to a specific ethnic group". However, Dündar (1998: 33) also discloses that for the sake of analysis of "significant differentials in reproductive patterns between ethnic groups" information on language has been collected during TDHS 1993 "as a proxy of … ethnic background, because ethnicity is a sensitive issue". We point to Dündar's work since her exploratory MA thesis forms the basis to almost all subsequent studies using TDHS language data as a proxy of ethnicity. It is difficult to comprehend how a proxy becomes "quite sufficient" just because it stands for a "sensitive issue", and it is certainly unfortunate that this proposition, which has never been empirically verified in the Turkish context, still finds its place in recent studies (for instance Eryurt and Koç, 2015) blankly rejecting the apparent language shift and disregarding the emergence of monoglot Turkish speakers among Kurds with higher levels of formal education.

Alternatives to avoid this fallacy are obvious. One method is to include parental language use to identify ethnicity of an individual as Gündüz-Hoşgör and Smits (2002) have done as well. Another option would be to employ 'birth region' as a proxy for ethnic origin, assuming that persons born in the

5 An inverse relationship between language and minority language retention has been observed in many other cases such as the Nenets in Russia. Kazakevitch (2004: 10–12; cited in Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar, 2010: 63) notes that "as a rule, children of well-educated Nenets parents (even those who are concerned with protection and preservation of the ethnic language) … have poor or no command of Nenets".

predominantly Kurdish-speaking provinces are of Kurdish origin which is justified by the geographic concentration of the Kurdish population in Turkey as is shown in the relevant sections of this paper and as has been shown elsewhere (Zeyneloğlu et al., 2016). The third and ultimate option is, of course, asking explicit and direct questions about outright self-reported ethnic identity as used in censuses and surveys in many other countries. We do utilise birth region from Census 2000 and parental language from TDHS 2003 since outright self-reported ethnicity is unfortunately not available in any large-scale national survey in Turkey. Before that, however, the distribution of languages other than Turkish from Census 1965 (including references to the 1945 Census) is presented in the next section together with an assessment of data quality regarding language data from the census.

Distribution of Minority Languages in Turkey

Beginning with the first in 1927, Turkish censuses included questions on first and second languages until 1985 though the tabulation of language use was not published after 1965.[6] In other words, the 1965 census is the most recent one from we can obtain that information.

Map 1 shows the distribution of minority language groups (excluding non-Muslim groups which were never meant to be integrated into the Turkish core) according to the "main language spoken" variable, clustered indicating the origin of migrant populations as in the case of those originating from the Balkans and the Caucasus. Kurdish (Kürtçe), Kirmanc (Kırmanca), Kirdash (Kırdaşça) and Zaza (Zazaca), as literally stated in the 1965 census booklet, have been summed as Kurdish dialects, as had been done in the 1945 census booklet. The mentioned ethnie are not confined to the speakers of the corresponding languages, however, at least for autochthon ethnic groups the geographical distribution of the corresponding language is expected to indicate the traditional homeland of an ethnie, different from allochthon groups, who, as migrants, generally are more thinly dispersed across a wider geography.

6 The practice of asking questions on language in censuses was discontinued after 1985 in a national frenzy in which prominent journalists (e.g. Güneri Cıvaoğlu) and mainstream politicians (e.g. Ülkü Söylemezoğlu) accused the SIS (State Institute of Statistics) of treachery for daring to record Kurdish as a "mother tongue" (Zeyneloğlu et al., 2011). Due to similar delusions the tabulation of language had already disappeared from census publications after 1965 though the question itself remained in the census forms until 1985.

At the time of the 1965 census, Kurdish speakers were mostly concentrated in the south-eastern provinces lying south of the Erzincan-Erzurum-Kars line and east of the Elazığ-Urfa line, with the exception of the Kurds in inner central Anatolia settled in the Ottoman era in the 18th and 19th centuries. While there are Kurdish populations beyond these lines, those as such, were and are in the minority (see also Mutlu, 1996). By 1965, Kurdish speakers were not yet sizeable in large cities such as Istanbul and Izmir as well as in other western and southern provinces.[7]

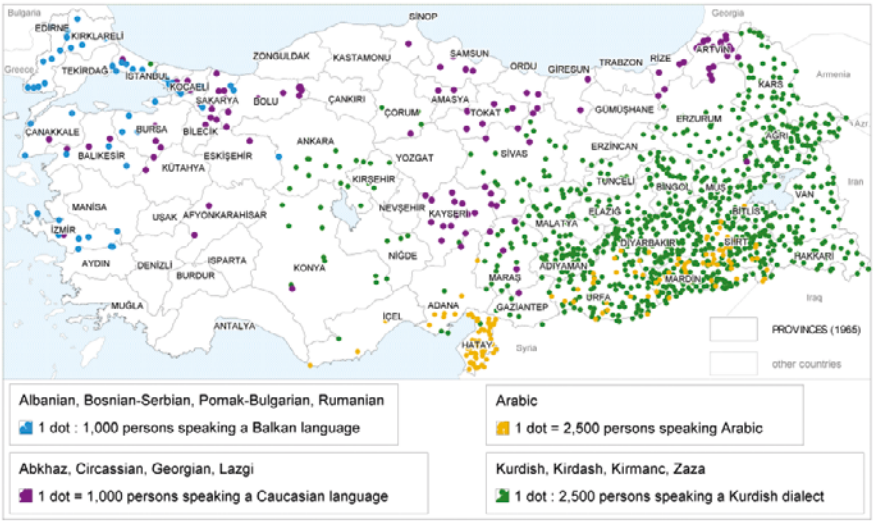
As shown in Map 1, migrants from the Balkans, many of them accepted in late Ottoman as well as early Republican periods, were settled in the northwestern part of the country. Migrants from the Caucasus as well as from the eastern part of the Black Sea region are found in the Western Black Sea region and the eastern parts of Marmara, the Circassians constituting an exception to a certain degree as many of them were settled in strategic zones of the Ottoman Empire as a loyal *Sünnî* ethnic group with warrior qualities (Özbek, 1989). Significant Arabic speaking populations were found only in three provinces bordering Syria, namely Hatay, Urfa and Mardin.

Apart from the Kurds in Central Anatolia (re-)settled during the Ottoman period, migration of Kurds to western Turkey is relatively a recent phenomenon. This population move has been part of the general framework of post-WWII rural-to-urban migration in Turkey but also significantly affected by the ethnic conflict disadvantaging the predominantly Kurdish region from the early 1980s onwards. Resettlement as a result of village evacuations affecting over 900 villages (*köy*) and 2,000 hamlets (*mezra*) saw between 400,000 and 1.2 million people forcibly moved to western provinces,[8] mainly to the Mediterranean and Aegean regions.

In all censuses in which tabulation of language is published, there are provinces with Kurdish speakers (including all dialects) in the majority, while no other language group (even if its speakers as second language are added) forms

7 In 1965, only 0.1% of the population of both Istanbul and Izmir spoke a Kurdish dialect as a main language, of which at least some portion were soldiers fulfilling their military service who had not yet completed their three month long basic training and the education in Turkish which accompanied it. In other words, by 1965, Kurds were either not yet present in these cities or those who resided there had adopted Turkish as their main language.

8 A numerical inventory of evacuated villages is given by Bekir Sıtkı Dağ from the Ministry of Interior, in "*Köye Dönüş ve Rehabilitasyon Projesi*" presented on 23 February, 2006 in Ankara at the UNDP workshop "*Yerinden Olmuş Kişiler Programının Geliştirilmesine Destek Projesi*", stating the number of expelled persons around 380 thousand while Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies (2006: 61) estimates the range of all internally displaced persons to be between .9 and 1.2 million.



MAP 1 Language groups according to main language spoken other than Turkish (Census 1965)
SOURCE: ADOPTED FROM ZEYNELOĞLU ET AL., 2016, P. 144

a majority in any province. In the 1945 census 10 provinces (out of a total of 63 at the time), namely Ağrı, Tunceli, Bingöl, Muş, Bitlis, Van, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Siirt and Hakkâri had a majority of speakers of Kurdish as their main language, forming a unified space, which the current provinces of Batman and Şırnak seceded from Siirt are also part of. When speakers of Kurdish as either a main or second language are combined[9] as comprising the minimum total population of Kurdish origin, Kurdish speakers are found to constitute more than two thirds (68%) of the population of these 10 provinces by 1945.[10] While provinces like Tunceli or Bingöl located closer to predominantly Turkish areas exhibit percentages as low as 56%, in Hakkâri at the south-eastern tip total Kurdish speakers amount to 92% of the population. We define these 12 provinces, out of 81 by the year 2000, as the "predominantly Kurdish speaking region" (KSR) as indicated in Map 1 and Map 5.

Within the mentioned region a striking rural-urban dichotomy can be observed in that persons who have declared a main language other than

9 Scholars who use language tabulation from Turkish censuses should note that in Turkish census booklets the marginal total of speakers of a second language does include those who do not speak any other language than the one indicated, a figure also included in the marginal total of first language speakers of that particular language.

10 Only in the Census 1945 booklet is second language tabulated for each province separately.

Kurdish during the 1945 Census are almost exclusively concentrated in urban areas so that all province centres in the mentioned region have a majority of speakers of Turkish (Karaköse-Ağrı, Kalan-Tunceli, Çapakçur-Bingöl, Muş, Bitlis, Van and Diyarbakır) or Arabic (Mardin and Siirt) except Çölemerik, the administrative centre of Hakkâri province. The rural areas, on the other hand, exhibit a clear Kurdish majority. That the language of the demographic, economic or political power group gets its first foothold in cities is no surprise. This urban-rural dichotomy has also been observed in the Irish case as English had become dominant in the big towns in the 18th century when large provinces still had majorities of monoglot Irish speakers (See Hyde, 1892; Filppula, 1995; Riagáin, 2015).

Some portion of Turkish speakers in cities are public service workers such as doctors, nurses, teachers and military personnel, however, a significant segment of crafts- and tradesmen also speak Turkish as a main language according to the 1945 Census in which the cross tabulation of main language and occupation is given for each province. Most government officials fulfil their 'compulsory service' and reside only temporarily in the region since trained personnel is otherwise hard to find. They are definitely not expected to be native inhabitants there, while persons employed in local trade and production are most likely permanent residents of each particular city, either born there or having migrated from the rural periphery. As a result, a portion of Turkish speakers residing in the KSR is not born there so that the percentage of Kurdish speakers among persons born in KSR should exceed the percentage of Kurdish speakers among those who reside there at any time. Cross tabulation of birth place and main language is not released in any census, but we are able to draw this from the TDHS. According to the 2003 TDHS, 86% of ever married women who have spent most of the period aged 0–12[11] in the KSR provinces speak Kurdish as either main or second language or have parents with Kurdish as their mother tongue. The remaining population, who may also be of Kurdish origin, speaks either Turkish or to a lesser extent Arabic, besides small Christian fractions speaking current dialects of ancient Aramaic.[12]

However, part of the difference between the university administered TDHS and the state run censuses in terms of the share of Kurdish speakers may be

11 The individual questionnaire of the TDHS does not include questions on place of birth, however, the longest place of residence before the age of 12 is recorded as such, which we take as more or less equal to birth place.

12 According to TDHS data less than 2% of ever married women nationwide speak Arabic as a main language, furthermore, more than two thirds of Arabic speakers live outside the region defined as KSR, particularly in the provinces of Hatay and Şanlıurfa. In the KSR, only Mardin province accommodates an important Arabic speaking population.

due to the former practice of recording many Kurds as speaking Turkish as a main language in the census if they had at least some knowledge of Turkish as mentioned by Mutlu (1996). Furthermore, minority languages are generally stigmatised and can be regarded as a handicap (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000: x–xi) by both the majority as well as members of the minority. Thus, it is possible that many Kurds might not have disclosed any knowledge of Kurdish in the census if they also speak Turkish. It was not uncommon that Kurds refrained from disclosing their mother tongue or ethnic identity in surveys due to the fear of negative consequences such as being blacklisted by security forces (Civelek, 2015: 359). Moreover, language can become an issue if ethnic relations are strained. Because of the symbolic place of language within ethnicity, answers to questions on mother tongue might reflect a political attitude (Ozolins, 1996).

Nevertheless, we believe that whatever bias there is regarding the absolute number of Kurdish speakers in each census, the tabulation of language can safely be utilised for the assessment of any change in these figures. A series of Kurdish uprisings beginning in the early 1920s had been suppressed by the late 1930s. Thus, the intercensal period covered in this paper, between the 1940s until the 1970s, was relatively quiet compared to the earlier period and the decades from the 1970s and the 1980s, when the PKK movement had gained momentum. Fahrettin Kırzıoğlu, the creator of the *kart-kurt* 'theory', then a history teacher and amateur scholar, had propagated 'the Turkishness of Kurds' as early as 1946,[13] but he had to wait until the mid-1960s to be taken seriously and then publish his junk thesis *Tarih Bakımından Kürtlerin Türklüğü* [The Historical Turkishness of Kurds] in 1964 (Beşikçi, 1969: 259). Kırzıoğlu's views did not become state policy until the 1980 military coup after which he was 'awarded' with a professorship in 1982. Contrary to popular belief, in the early decades of the Republic the existence of the Kurdish language was never seriously denied, though assimilation of Kurds was heavily propagated and the language was severely restricted to the private sphere, with the only exception that Kurdish translators officially served at courts in the Kurdish populated regions. Despite perhaps a will to suppress and assimilate, the Turkish state continued collecting mother language data including Kurdish and systematically published the census results with detailed language breakdown until the results of the 1965 Census published. These census reports were available in public libraries and even after the ban on Kurdish in the 1980s, there was no official attempt to withdraw these reports.

13 Kurmanç Kürtlerinin Aslı. *Tasvir*, 1 and 22 May, 14 June, 1946 in Andrews, 1989: 643.

The legal ban on the Kurdish language came in 1983 with a cunning wordplay not even mentioning the name of the language to be banned. Article 2 of the "Law on Broadcasting with Languages Other Than Turkish"[14] (which consisted of only two articles the first of which was an introduction) stated that "thoughts cannot be expressed, disseminated and published in any language other than those which are the first official languages of all states that Turkey has recognized". Kurdish was Iraq's second official language and a formal regional language in Iran at the time, however, it didn't enjoy first-language status in any country. It was obvious to everyone that this clause was to ban the public use of Kurdish. This law was abolished in 1991 when the "Kurdish reality" was acknowledged by Süleyman Demirel, then Turkish Prime Minister. Thus, we are confident that a comparison of the 1945 and 1965 censuses will reliably reveal the extent and the pattern of the language shift we are investigating in this paper. We assume that a vast majority of KSR-born persons are probably of Kurdish origin, though not all Kurds are KSR-born or Kurdish-speaking.[15] Nevertheless, we argue that demographics of the KSR-born population might be indicative of overall patterns of the Kurdish population without the need to recourse to language variables which are unreliable and missing in censuses after 1965. According to the 2003 TDHS, less than 3% of ever-married women living in West and South regions combined who had not spent their childhood in the East region did have a connection with the Kurdish language while more than 97% neither spoke Kurdish as a main or second language nor had parents speaking Kurdish as a main language. While a large Kurdish population does exist in the western regions it appears that even at the beginning of the 21st century most of them still had the East as their birth and/or childhood region. Hence, we are confident that in the 2000 Census data, the vast majority of KSR-born persons will be of Kurdish origin though in later censuses[16]

14 https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc066/kanundmc066/kanundmc066602932.pdf (Retrieved: 10/01/2016).

15 According to the 1945 Census 53% of Kurdish speakers (as either a main or second language) were living in KSR, 36% in the rest of the East region, while 9% resided in Central Anatolia and the remaining 2% were scattered over the rest of the country.

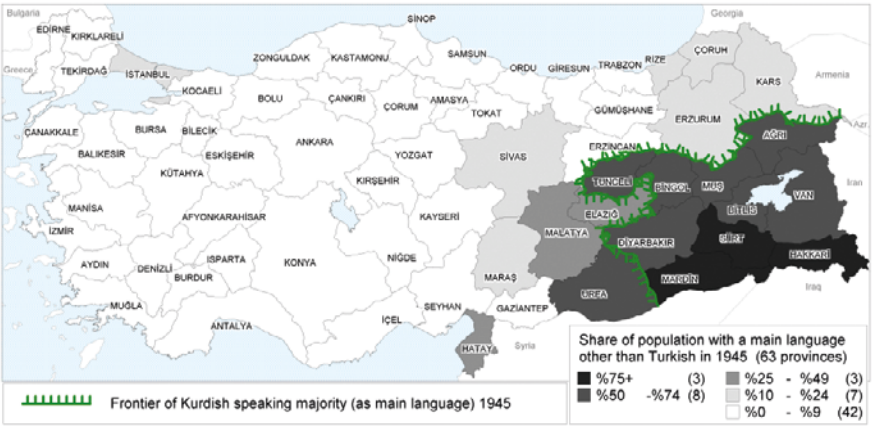
16 Until the year 2000, Turkey conducted de facto censuses, however, this practice has been discontinued since the establishment of the address based population record system in 2007, whose yearly outputs are merely a tabulation of population according to domicile. The recent "2011 Housing and Population Census", on the other hand, is in fact an 11% sample survey of the population whose data set was not yet available as of May 2015. Similar to all other censuses after 1985, the 2011 Survey does not include questions on language.

the distinction based on birth region will probably be blurred due to second generation Kurdish migrants outside KSR reaching adulthood. In the next section, using the language data released until the 1965 census, we outline the language shift.

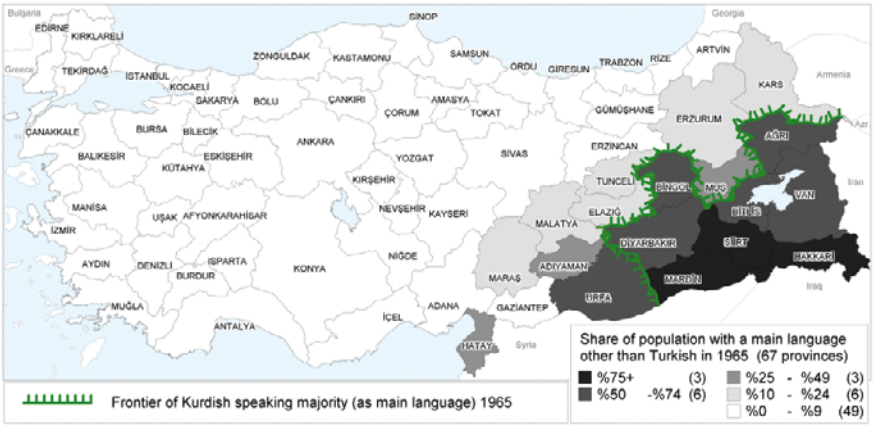
Geographical Diffusion of Turkish and Retreat of the Kurdish Language

The share of the population with a main language other than Turkish in 1945 and 1965 is shown in Map 1 and Map 2, respectively, while Map 3 indicates the advance of Turkish in the given timeframe. The frontier of the provinces where Kurdish was spoken by the majority is highlighted with a symbolised green line. All provinces where Turkish had a share of less than half did have a majority of Kurdish speakers with the exception of Urfa where, both in 1945 and 1965, Turkish speakers amounted to less than half of the population, though Kurdish speakers, the largest group, did not constitute the absolute majority due to the presence of a large Arabic speaking population as well.

Comparable to the Irish case between 1851 and 1891 (Hindley, 1990; Riagáin, 2015) the retreat of the Kurdish language can be observed in the direction from the centre to the periphery. Map 3 shows that the strongest advance of Turkish between 1945 and 1965 did happen in provinces close to the Turkish-Kurdish language frontier (such as Tunceli, Elazığ and Muş, and to a lesser extent also Diyarbakır, Malatya and Urfa on both sides of the line) suggesting a diffusion



MAP 2 Share of population with a main language other than Turkish in 1945



MAP 3 Share of population with a main language other than Turkish in 1965

in the form of waves. If census figures after 1965 had not been censored, most likely the Diyarbakır-Van line would have appeared as the next wave of provinces with the swiftest retreat of Kurdish until the 1980s. Together with the fact that almost all province centres with the exception of tiny Çölemerik were already Turkish (or Arabic) speaking by 1945, the geographical retreat of Kurdish insinuates dynamics of trade and commerce in addition to schooling and assimilationist policies. This is not to deny the obvious policies of assimilation and linguicide[17] towards Kurds pursued by the Turkish republic; however, the signs for a language shift are also evident.

If forced assimilation was the only reason, we would expect a decreasing share of Kurdish speakers in all provinces. Within in each province, diffusion of the Turkish language would be observed from the centre to the rural periphery in accordance with the expected strength and influence of the state. Due to relatively large Turkish military, administrative and cultural presence in province centres, Turkish should be dominant in all of them. However, this is not the case as we identify geographic patterns in the region.

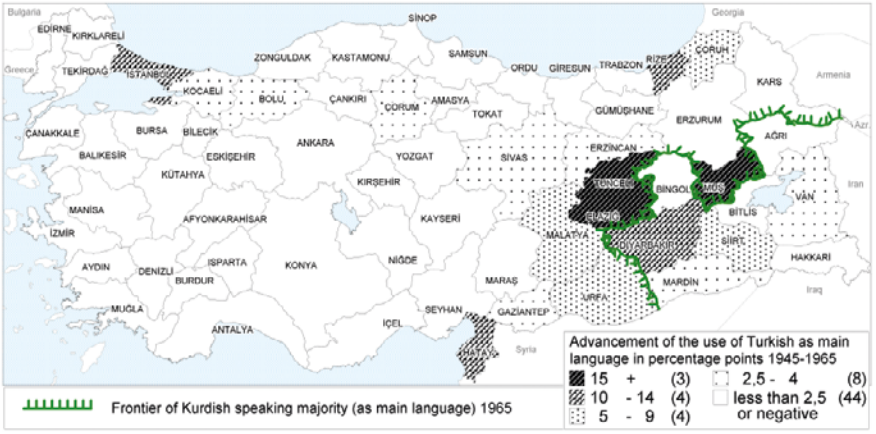
In the Irish case, Odlin (1994) showed that in Galway in the west of Ireland in 1851, there was a massive language shift towards English despite unschooled

17 Zeydanlioglu (2012) offers an account of the politics of linguicide in Turkey while Bayir (2013: 19) underlines the indirect methods of repression of the Kurdish language. See also Taylor and Skutnabb-Kangas (2009), Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar (2010), Çağlayan (2014), Coşkun et al. (2014), and Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1995). For a comparison of the Kurdish and Irish cases see O'Driscoll (2014).

bilinguals clearly outnumbering schooled bilinguals. In other words, Odlin argues that the acquisition of English took place with little or no help from schools. Trade and commerce seem to play a role in spreading the English language in Ireland rather than caused by schooling alone (Carnie, 1995). This was also the case in Cornwall where the retreat of the Cornish language spans over five centuries (Spriggs, 2003).

A similar situation can be said for the predominantly Kurdish provinces in Turkey in the 20th century. For instance, according to the 1945 Census, in Muş province, where the vast majority of the population is of Kurdish origin, 34% of males indicated Turkish as their main language while only 27% of these "Turkish-speaking-Kurds" were literate. Among females, of which 33% were reported as Turkish speaking, the figures are even more striking in that only 5% of Turkish speaking females were literate. As another example, in Diyarbakır province 29% of males had been reported as speaking Turkish as a main language though only 40% of them were literate. For females, the literates among Turkish speakers (25%) were only 8%. Thus, one can imagine that some Kurds must have learned Turkish from non-native Turkish speakers outside of schools as it was the case in Ireland (Filppula, 1995). On the other hand, literacy does not guarantee that Turkish is adopted and expressed as main language, though that is mostly the case. Still, 5% of males in Muş province who had reported their main language as Kurdish were literate in 1945 while the corresponding figure for Diyarbakır was above 8%.

We elaborate, in the next section, whether migration might have facilitated the contact-induced changes as well as language shift in general.



MAP 4 Advance of Turkish as main language between 1945 and 1965

Inter-regional Migration of Kurds in Turkey

The second part of the 20th century is a period of massive uprooting characterised by internal as well as international mobility and urbanisation in Turkey, though there are striking differences between different regions in terms of in- and out-migration. Boundaries of the eight regions indicated in Table 1, Table 2 and Map 5 differ from the conventional seven geographical regions commonly used in describing Turkey's geography. Our spatial zoning of provinces is to reflect cultural and ethnic similarities and is not intended to represent an ideal or alternative regional classification. Marmara (Mar) is the most industrialised region of Turkey including Istanbul, the largest city and the economic capital of the country, while the Aegean (Aeg) region is the second most developed both in terms of economy as well as human development. The Mediterranean (Med) is economically better off than the remaining regions with a strong tourism sector concentrated in Antalya and agricultural and industrial centres in the eastern section of the region. Ankara, the capital city, is the centre of the Central Anatolian (Cen) region. The Black Sea region, and eastern and south-eastern regions are relatively deprived and accommodate many provinces ranked towards the bottom of the socio-economic development level rankings (Dinçer et al., 2003) and therefore out-migration propensity is higher (Sirkeci et al., 2012). The Black Sea region is considered in two parts: the Western Black Sea (WBS) and Eastern Black Sea (EBS). We divide the eastern and south-eastern provinces into two regions: the predominantly Kurdish speaking region (KSR) and the rest of Eastern and South Eastern Anatolia (ESA).

Table 1 shows the distribution of population born in each region according to region of current residence indicating the destinations of out-migration from each region based on the 2000 Census data, differentiated into age groups and gender. Some regions have retained the native born to a large extent. For example, 90% of the population in all analysed cohorts and each gender born in the Marmara region continued to live there at the turn of the century. Similarly, around 90% of population born in the Aegean region remained in that region with a small decline among younger age groups. However, in Central Anatolia while 80% of the 55–64 age group have remained in their region of birth, more than a quarter of both men and women aged 25–34 have out-migrated. Northern regions, WBS and EBS, also have relatively high out-migration levels. In Eastern and South Eastern Anatolian regions, the percentage of those remaining in their birth region was below two thirds for all age groups and both sexes. The percentage of KSR-born population

living in their birth region ranged from 57% to 68% differing by age group and gender.

The out-migrating population from Eastern and South Eastern Anatolia was destined to several regions. While 18% of men and 15% of women at ages 25–34 born in KSR lived in the Marmara region, 9% of males and 8% of females resided in the Aegean, and a further 8% of males and 7% of females in that age group lived in the Mediterranean.

Table 2 demonstrates the distribution of population living in regions according to birth region indicating the origins of the population of each region. The Marmara region, as the nodal and economic centre of the country had the most diversified population with 8% of males and 6% of females aged 25–34 born in KSR. In the Aegean, 7% of males and 6% of females among the 25–34 age group were born in KSR while in the Mediterranean the share of KSR-born persons in the 25–34 population was 7% for both males and females. Central Anatolia and the Black Sea regions lacked the presence of any significant KSR-born population. It appears that KSR and ESA, along with EBS have not been preferable destinations for internal movers over time. In other words, there is no population movement from the predominantly Turkish regions into the predominantly Kurdish ones.

TABLE 1 Distribution of population born in regions according to region of residence and age groups (column % within each region of birth)

Region of birth	Region of residence in 2000[a]	Age group							
		55–64		45–54		35–44		25–34	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Mar	**Mar**	**90.3**	**89.9**	**91.4**	**90.1**	**91.8**	**90.7**	**90.7**	**90.1**
Aeg	Mar	4.7	4.9	5.5	5.9	5.3	5.7	5.7	5.8
	Aeg	**92.6**	**92.3**	**91.1**	**90.4**	**90.5**	**90.0**	**87.2**	**87.8**
Med	Mar	3.8	3.4	4.6	4.0	4.7	4.1	5.6	4.5
	Med	**89.6**	**90.4**	**87.9**	**88.9**	**87.1**	**88.7**	**82.6**	**86.2**
Cen	Mar	10.5	9.7	13.4	12.4	14.6	13.7	15.8	14.7
	Aeg	5.3	4.4	6.0	5.2	5.9	5.4	5.4	5.2
	Cen	**80.2**	**82.6**	**75.8**	**78.0**	**74.1**	**76.0**	**71.4**	**74.1**

a Only those regions of residence with a share of over 5% in any age or gender group are indicated.

TABLE 1 Distribution of population born in regions according to region of residence (*cont.*)

Region of birth	Region of residence in 2000	Age group							
		55–64		45–54		35–44		25–34	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
WBS	Mar	20.0	19.9	26.6	26.2	30.6	29.9	33.4	32.1
	Cen	4.4	4.7	5.1	5.3	5.5	5.3	5.8	5.4
	WBS	**72.6**	**72.6**	**64.6**	**64.9**	**59.7**	**60.8**	**55.0**	**57.7**
EBS	Mar	24.0	22.5	31.3	29.7	34.9	34.7	36.0	35.5
	WBS	7.1	7.3	6.7	6.9	5.7	6.6	4.3	5.2
	EBS	**61.6**	**63.9**	**53.3**	**55.8**	**50.3**	**50.4**	**49.7**	**50.8**
ESA	Mar	18.9	18.3	21.7	20.2	23.3	21.9	23.1	21.2
	Aeg	5.6	4.9	6.1	5.5	5.8	5.7	5.3	5.1
	Med	5.8	5.2	6.8	6.2	6.5	6.4	5.8	5.9
	Cen	5.6	5.6	6.0	5.9	5.9	5.7	5.3	5.0
	ESA	**62.4**	**64.3**	**57.3**	**60.3**	**56.3**	**58.3**	**57.6**	**60.7**
KSR	Mar	12.3	11.9	15.0	13.6	16.4	14.4	18.1	14.6
	Aeg	7.6	7.0	8.8	7.9	9.1	8.3	8.7	8.0
	Med	7.3	6.8	8.1	7.5	8.0	7.8	7.5	7.3
	KSR	**66.1**	**67.9**	**60.1**	**64.1**	**58.3**	**62.3**	**57.4**	**63.6**

SOURCE: CENSUS 2000 DATA (ADOPTED FROM ZEYNELOĞLU ET AL., 2016, P. 150)

An interesting difference between age groups has to be noted for the KSR. While in the groups above age 35, regardless of gender, more than 95% of the population has been born in that region. Among males aged 25–34 this percentage drops to 87% whilst measured as 92% among females in the same age group. This could be due to the fact that most government officials (civilian as well as military) in the KSR are made up of non-locals fulfilling their compulsory service at relatively younger ages who often leave the region upon completion of their term.

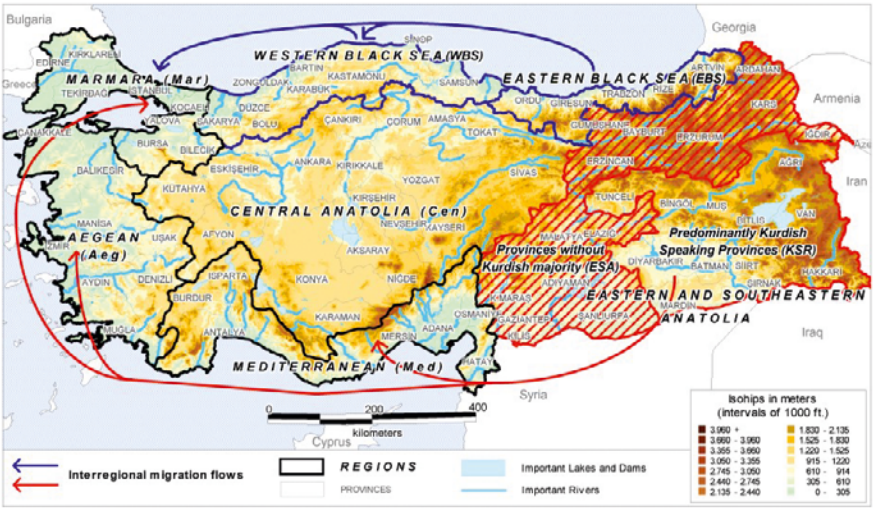
In summary, interregional population movements of Kurds originate from ESA and KSR and are directed towards the Mediterranean, Aegean and Marmara regions. Another strong population movement from EBS to Marmara is evident as illustrated in Map 5. The Western and Southern regions require further analysis as these are the regions where local Turkish and allochthon

Kurdish populations co-exist. We expect that in these regions, stronger language shift trends exist among allochthon Kurds compared to their autochthon ethnic fellows in the East region. However, before probing the effects of migration, we will first analyse the language shift in the next section.

TABLE 2 Distribution of population living in regions according to region of birth and age groups (column % within each region of residence)

Region of de facto residence in 2000	Region of birth[a]	Age group							
		55–64		45–54		35–44		25–34	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Mar	**Mar**	**42.6**	**44.8**	**37.9**	**39.8**	**34.6**	**37.0**	**35.2**	**37.6**
	Cen	13.7	12.7	15.5	14.8	15.9	15.2	15.9	15.5
	WBS	9.2	9.5	10.8	11.0	11.1	11.5	10.7	11.1
	EBS	10.1	9.6	10.8	10.3	12.0	12.0	10.6	10.9
	ESA	14.7	13.9	14.8	13.8	15.6	14.4	15.4	14.4
	KSR	4.8	4.5	5.2	5.0	6.2	5.3	7.9	6.3
Aeg	***Aeg***	**76.9**	**79.8**	**73.7**	**75.9**	**71.3**	**73.3**	**68.3**	**70.3**
	Cen	8.3	6.9	9.8	8.6	10.3	9.6	10.5	10.2
	ESA	5.2	4.5	5.8	5.2	6.3	5.9	6.8	6.3
	KSR	3.5	3.2	4.3	4.1	5.6	4.8	7.3	6.4
Med	***Med***	**76.2**	**78.6**	**74.0**	**75.6**	**73.2**	**74.8**	**71.6**	**74.0**
	Cen	6.9	5.8	7.8	7.1	7.7	7.3	7.9	7.2
	ESA	8.3	7.6	9.2	8.3	8.9	8.4	8.8	8.3
	KSR	5.3	4.8	5.5	5.4	6.3	5.8	7.3	6.6
Cen	**Cen**	**89.1**	**89.2**	**87.6**	**87.9**	**86.8**	**87.4**	**85.6**	**87.0**
WBS	Cen	2.6	2.2	3.6	3.1	4.2	3.6	5.1	4.2
	WBS	**85.7**	**86.2**	**83.6**	**84.8**	**82.2**	**83.0**	**80.4**	**82.4**
	EBS	7.6	7.8	7.4	7.4	7.4	8.1	5.8	6.7
EBS	***EBS***	**97.6**	**97.4**	**95.7**	**95.8**	**94.1**	**94.4**	**91.1**	**92.1**
ESA	***ESA***	**96.0**	**95.9**	**94.9**	**94.8**	**93.2**	**93.7**	**89.2**	**91.5**
KSR	***KSR***	**97.6**	**97.2**	**96.6**	**96.9**	**95.0**	**96.3**	**87.0**	**92.2**

a Only those regions of birth with a share of over 5% in any age or gender group are indicated.
SOURCE: CENSUS 2000 DATA (SOURCE: ADOPTED FROM ZEYNELOĞLU ET AL., 2016, P. 151)



MAP 5 Interregional migration flows (Census 2000)
SOURCE: ADOPTED FROM ZEYNELOĞLU ET AL., 2016, P. 145

Generational Language Retention vs. Intergenerational Language Shift

In Table 3 and Table 4, we present an overall picture of language retention versus language shift in Turkey using TDHS 2003 data. In Table 3 the respondent's own language use is tabulated according to parents' language use. More than 3% of children with both parents speaking Kurdish as a main language expressed themselves as not speaking Kurdish. At the same time, Kurdish speakers are almost non-existent among the children with neither parent having Kurdish as mother tongue. Furthermore, Kurdish is only the second language among 5% of children whose both parents speak Kurdish as main language. This figure declines below 2% among the children of persons whose main language, as reported by their children, is not Kurdish. It appears that some of the children of Kurdish parents have been raised primarily in Turkish speaking environments or have adopted Turkish as their main medium of expression at a later time.

Education seemingly plays a role in language shift (Hinton, 2014: 414) which is also the case in Turkey as summarised in Table 4, in which the cross-tabulation of language and level of education is given only for those respondents whose both parents speak Kurdish as their main language. Thus, all persons indicated in Table 4 are expected to be of Kurdish origin. The four

categories of Table 3 have been regrouped into three in Table 4 to concentrate on the divide between bilingual and monolingual Kurds. The higher the educational attainment the lower the use of Kurdish language as it declines from over 99% among the unschooled to 87% among secondary school (including middle school [*ortaokul*]) or above graduates. Kurdish is not even a second language for 13% of secondary school graduates. As Smits and Gündüz-Hoşgör (2003) have noted, there appears to be a "strong relationship between going to school and speaking Turkish" among the Kurds. In the reverse analogy, it is also possible and actually more probable that children who have been raised in the Turkish language by their Kurdish parents are more successful in the educational system so that Turkish speaking Kurds can be found disproportionately more at the upper steps of the education ladder. It was not possible to tabulate language use for graduates of higher education in Table 4 as there are only 9 persons in the whole sample of the TDHS in this category, making up less than 1% of all persons with Kurdish-speaking parents.

Smits and Gündüz-Hoşgör (2003) argue that there are ethnically non-Turkish parents "prefer to speak Turkish at home to teach their children the country's official language, because they believe that this may increase their children's upward social mobility chances", while one can also link it to the dominant ethnicity's language being the medium of instruction in formal compulsory education. Since most Kurds in Turkey are bilingual (Zeyneloğlu et al., 2014), a Kurdish individual may also easily opt for Turkish as her main medium of expression during early adulthood and Kurdish drops to second position even if that was the language she first learned from her parents. Upward social mobility and economic opportunities are also known major drivers of language shift (Anthonissen, 2013; Hinton, 2014; Kandler et al., 2010) which is usually preceded by bilingualism (see Field, 1980; Backus, 2004).

On the other hand, language retention is not a prerequisite for retention of a minority ethnic identity. A prominent example, for instance, is Selahattin Demirtaş, the current co-chair of HDP, the pro-Kurdish party in Turkey. Demirtaş was raised solely in Turkish by both of his Zaza parents in urban Diyarbakır,[18] but this did not deter him from developing a strong Kurdish ethnic identity and learning Kurdish at a later age despite being raised as a

18 Selahattin Demirtaş interviewed by Fatih Polat, *Evrensel*, 1 August 2014: "*Annemiz babamız Kürtlüğün o ağır yükünü de yaşatmamak adına kendi bakış açılarıyla bize iyilik yapma adına bize Türkçe öğretmişler. Bu devlet içerisinde başarılı olalım, iyi yerlere gelebilelim, eğitimde başarılı olalım, diye.* (Our parents taught us Turkish from their own perspectives as a favour to us not to let us bear the heavy burden of Kurdishness. So that we succeed in this state, so that we can achieve a good position, succeed in education.)" http://www.evrensel.net/haber/89193/demirtas-secilirsem-mgkyi-calistirmam.

TABLE 3 Cross-tabulation of parents' language versus respondent's language[a]

	Parents' language		
Respondent's own languages	**Both parents speak Kurdish as main language** Column %	**Only one parent speaks Kurdish as main language** Column %	**Neither parent speaks Kurdish as main language** Column %
Main language Kurdish, does not speak Turkish as second language	21.3	3.8	0.0
Main language Kurdish, does speak Turkish as second language	70.0	25.7	0.1
Main language not Kurdish, but does speak Kurdish as second language	5.4	26.3	1.5
Does not speak Kurdish at all	3.3	44.1	98.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	*1,203*	*62*	*6,805*

a Ever married women aged 15–49.
SOURCE: TDHS 2003 DATA (SOURCE: ADOPTED FROM ZEYNELOĞLU ET AL., 2016, P. 142)

monoglot Turkish speaker.[19] Of course this is also likely to be linked to the Kurdish ethno-political revival since the 1970s gradually encouraging many Kurds to reconnect with Kurdish language. To complicate things further, his

19 Interviewed by Kübra Par, *Habertürk*, 19 July 2014: "*Türkiye'de kendi kendini asimile etme çok yaygın. Kürtler Kürt olduğunu sakladı, çocukları öğrenmesin diye ellerinden geleni yaptı ... Etnik olarak Kürt olduğumun farkındaydım ama siyasal ve sosyolojik olarak bunun ne anlama geldiğini lise yıllarında anladım.* [Self-assimilation is very prevalent in Turkey. Kurds withheld their Kurdishness, tried hard to prevent their children from figuring out ... While I was aware that I am an ethnic Kurd it was in my high school years that I apprehended what this means in political and sociological terms.]" http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/971550-iyi-utu-yaparim-guvecte-iddialiyim-album-cikarabilirim-.

TABLE 4 Cross-tabulation of educational attainment versus respondent's own language among the Kurdish origin population[a]

	Highest graduation level of respondents		
Monolingualism vs. bilingualism among Kurds	**No graduation** Column %	**Primary** Column %	**Secondary or above** Column %
Monoglot Kurdish speaker	32.1	0.9	1.6
Bilingual	66.8	92.8	85.9
Monoglot Turkish speaker	1.1	6.3	12.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	*786*	*348*	*64*

a Ever married women aged 15–49 whose parents both speak Kurdish as their main language.
SOURCE: TDHS 2003 DATA

strong affiliation with the Kurdish ethnic identity does not restrain Demirtaş from continuing to speak Turkish at home to his also Turkish speaking Kurdish wife as well as to their two daughters with Kurdish given names. We have to emphasise that with criteria used in most previous work, utilising TDHS or census data, even a well-known Kurdish leader would be classified as Turkish.

Çağlayan's qualitative study (2014) has captured similar parent-child experiences in which concerns regarding education where environmental effects reshaped daily routines and language use. Narratives of the second generation include anecdotes about how Turkish frequently interrupted their after-school stories at home, while talking to grownups during their childhood. Coşkun et al. (2010) even found parents who had limited or no proficiency in Turkish registering for Turkish language courses to be able to help their children at homework and other school problems. Civelek's (2015) study reveals conflicting motives as well: One Kurdish parent, for instance, referring to her daughter states that "*Turkish let her to be successful at school and to be loved by other children and her teachers*", but at the same time hopes that "*She will understand what Kurds have gone through for years, sooner or later*". Both context (i.e. migration to a different linguistic environment) and motives regarding education and social mobility affect language shift.

Dynamics of Intergenerational Language Shift: Education and Migration

In the previous section (Table 4) we had presented the language use of persons whose parents both have Kurdish as mother tongue so that persons in this category could safely be assumed of Kurdish origin. Here, we continue with this filter and differentiate individuals with Kurdish-speaking parents into autochthon and allochthon groups to demonstrate the effect of both education and migration on language shift using TDHS 2003 data. Autochthon Kurdish speakers who live in their traditional homeland in the East region (roughly equal to our ESA and KSR regions combined) are shown in Table 5[20] while in Table 6, we summarise allochthon Kurds living in the West and South regions (roughly equal to Marmara, Aegean and Mediterranean regions combined). Some of these persons might well be "locals" that have never migrated outside their birthplace. On the other hand, many Kurds living in the East may well be internal migrants who have moved within the region. Our autochthon-allochthon differentiation is based on context (that is, whether a Kurd lives in the East region comprising the traditional homeland of the Kurdish ethnie where they constitute the majority, or whether they live in regions with a Turkish majority) rather than any individual experience of migration.

A very clear difference between Kurds in these two contexts is evident in terms of bilingualism. While in the East only persons with at least primary school graduation have near universal knowledge of the Turkish language (either in form of bilingualism or monoglot Turkish use), among migrant Kurds in the western regions even those with no formal education are universally bilingual. In the East 43% of Kurds without any graduation are monoglot Kurdish speakers, while this proportion is only 9% among allochthon Kurds. In both settings, the East and the analysed western regions alike, most Kurds with some education do speak Turkish as a first or second language. The percentage of monoglot Turkish speakers of Kurdish origin, on the other hand, differs not only across graduation categories but also according to context. While 11% of secondary school graduates of Kurdish origin in the East do not speak Kurdish at all, among those living in the western regions more than 17% are monoglot Turkish speakers.

Apparently, both education and migration lead to an increase in the share of monoglot Turkish speakers among Kurds. Also bilingualism is considerably

20 In both tables 5 and 6, figures in the secondary or above category are to be interpreted cautiously due to the low number of observations, the reasons of which elaborated in the preceding chapters.

higher among Kurds in the West (where Kurds are a minority) compared to the East (where Kurds are majority). While the context effect can be explained by linguistic theories of minority versus majority, the education effect is largely linked to the assimilationist policies and practices (see Zeydanlioglu, 2013), including self-assimilation.

These results are no surprise. Similar effects of internal migration are observed in multilingual societies such as India where many are obliged to learn two or more languages including English, although minority languages are protected by the constitution (Sridhar, 1996; Mahapatra, 1990; Laitin, 1993). Thus, movers migrate and carry their languages with them while switching to other languages by necessity. In some countries, such as the US, language shift was experienced with relatively less conflict between English speakers and others including indigenous peoples while in Canada language shift became an issue between the English- and the French-speaking communities (Lieberson and Curry, 1971; see also Fishman, 1966; 2001 for the US). Veltman (1983; 1988) showed for Hispanic immigrants in the US that language shift of adults is related to the duration of stay while for children the age of arrival is the main determinant. Similar to our findings, Veltman (1988) demonstrated that approximately 10% of the children of immigrant Hispanic families became English-only speakers while almost none of them remained monoglot users of Spanish.

TABLE 5 Cross-tabulation of educational attainment versus respondent's own language[a] among the autochthon Kurdish origin population in the East region

	Highest graduation level of respondents		
Monolingualism vs. bilingualism among autochthon Kurds living in the East region	**No graduation**	**Primary**	**Secondary or above**
	Column %	**Column %**	**Column %**
Monoglot Kurdish speaker	43.2	1.1	2.6
Bilingual	56.7	96.0	86.8
Monoglot Turkish speaker	0.2	2.8	10.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	*533*	*177*	*38*

a Ever married women aged 15–49 whose parents both speak Kurdish as their main language.
SOURCE: TDHS 2003 DATA

TABLE 6 Cross-tabulation of educational attainment versus respondent's own language[a] among the allochthon Kurdish origin population in Western and Southern regions combined

	Highest graduation level of respondents		
Monolingualism vs. bilingualism among allochthon Kurds living in West and South	**No graduation**	**Primary**	**Secondary or above**
	Column %	**Column %**	**Column %**
Monoglot Kurdish speaker	9.0	0.8	0.0
Bilingual	89.1	87.7	82.6
Monoglot Turkish speaker	1.9	11.5	17.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	*211*	*122*	*23*

a Ever married women aged 15–49 whose parents both speak Kurdish as their main language.
SOURCE: TDHS 2003 DATA

Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Analysis

In this study, we laid bare the rapid language shift among Kurds across Turkey, a process correlated with the level of education (assimilation) and experience of internal migration (context) at the individual level, while at the territorial level it appears to be related to economic geography. Our study utilises available data in detail and maps the shift experienced by Kurds in comparison to other minorities, migrant and indigenous groups in the US, several European countries and elsewhere.

After three decades of armed conflict and an era where education and broadcasting in Kurdish was severely prohibited both legally and in practice (Taylor and Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009: 172–173), a short but relatively peaceful period, up to the recent rise in violence in the summer of 2015, together with cultural steps such as the initiation of Kurdish broadcasting by the state run network in 2009 and the recent introduction of Kurdish elective courses in secondary public schools, has shown that there is a possibility of preserving the language. Nevertheless, the simple mathematics of demography, the dictates of the market and the influence of socio-cultural life favouring the language of majorities

remain the main driver of language shift among groups who are in the minority. For the Kurdish population in Turkey, the shift towards the Turkish language increases with formal schooling. Furthermore, migration from the predominantly Kurdish provinces to the western regions of the country increases the odds of language shift, while the diffusion of the language of the majority into the periphery does not necessarily require human movement.

Considering language shift as well as widespread bilingualism among Kurds we reject the approach equating mother tongue to ethnicity in censuses and surveys in Turkey. Birth region together with second language as well as parental language use can be employed as complementary ethnic markers, though this method will probably be inappropriate with more recent data considering children of Kurdish migrants born in the western regions in the last few decades. Some of these offspring will adhere to the Turkish identity but some might retain their Kurdishness even with good educational achievement. Some might retain their mother tongue; others may shift during their lifetime or ensure their children do. The time has come for ethnicity, as such, to be openly asked and recorded in Turkish surveys and censuses. Until then, most researchers including the authors of this article, will have to utilise proxies as a substitute.

Decades of mass schooling since the 1960s, diffusion of the coverage area of the national as well as global economy penetrating even to the most peripheral areas since the 1980s, and rapid mass internal migration throughout the second half of the last century ought to have eroded the bijective link between mother tongue/main language and ethnicity in the contemporary Turkish context. There is clearly need for further investigation of the process of language shift and its individual and group dynamics among Kurds in Turkey. The advantages and disadvantages of such a shift for the groups themselves and for the universal cultural heritage are of concern too. Assessment of risks and benefits associated with this process require better quality information on ethnicity which goes beyond weak proxies commonly resorted to in the literature on the Kurdish population in Turkey.

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Mapping Action and Identity in the Kobani Crisis Response

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Abstract

This article compares humanitarian operations associated with Turkish state and pro-Kurdish movement actors in response to the large cross-border displacement of Kurdish-Syrians into Turkey from the September 2014 Kobani crisis. Analysis draws on actor mapping methodologies and fieldwork conducted in the Kurdish-majority town of Suruç in southern Turkey. Parallels with the 2011 Van earthquakes highlight the ethno-national complexities and potential controversy encountered when responding to humanitarian needs of predominantly Kurdish populations in Turkey. The alternative territorial identities generated by practices of Kurdish municipal-level "governmentality" (through camp management and humanitarian assistance) trouble the assumed hierarchy between Turkish state authorities and Kurdish challengers.

Keywords

Kobani displacement – humanitarian action – Suruç – Turkey

Bi nexşekirina çalakî û nasnameyan di hewldanên qeyrana Kobanî de

Ev gotar wan hewl û çalakiyên mirovî yên dewleta tirk û akterên hereketa kurdî berawird dike ku di hengava muhacirbûna kurdên Sûriyeyê bo nav Tirkyeyê de, anku dema qeyrana Kobanî ya îlona 2014an, hatine encamdan. Tehlîlên gotarê xwe dispêrine

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metodên bi nexşekirina akteran û xebata meydanî li Suruça piranî kurdnişîn. Hevterîb ligel zelzeleyên Wanê yên 2011an, gotar îşaretê bi hebûna aloziyên qewmî-neteweyî û dubendiyên cor bi cor dike gava li Tirkiyeyê hewl ji bo qetandina pêdiviyên jiyanî yên kom û xelkên kurd tên dan. Nasnameyên herêmî yên alternatîv ku encama siyaset û kiryarên "hukûmraniya" kurdî ya di asta şaredariyan de ne (bi rêya rêvebirina kempan û arîkariyên mirovî) zorê dide wê hiyerarşiya ferazî ya di navbera rayedarên dewleta tirk û berhelistkarên kurd de.

نەخشەکێشانەوەی چالاکی و ناسنامە لە روبەڕووبوونەوەی قەیرانی کۆبانیدا

ئەم ووتارە چالاکیە مرۆڤدۆستانەکانی دەوڵەتی تورکیا و ئاکتۆرەکانی لایەنگری بزوتنەوەی کورد لە تورکیا لە پەیوەندی لەگەڵ جێگۆرکێی کوردەکانی سوریا لەسەر سنورەکانی لە کاتی قەیرانی کۆبانێ لە ساڵی ٢٠١٤ دا لەگەڵ یەکتر بەراورد دەکات. لێکدانەوەکە پشت بە نەخشە کێشانەوەی شێوازیانە و مەیدانیانە کە هاوتەریب لەگەڵ بومەلەرزەکانی شاری وان لە ساڵی ٢٠١١ دا ووتارەکە ناکۆکیە نەتەوەی و ئێتنیکی و ئاڵۆزیە جۆراو جۆرە شاراوەکان لە پەیوەندی لەگەڵ ڕووبەڕووبونەوەی پێداویستیە مۆرفیەکان لەو شارانەی تورکیا کە زۆرینەی دانیشتووەکانی کوردن دەخاتە ڕوو. ناسنامە ناوچەییە جێگرەوەکان کە دەست کەوتی سیاسەتی «حوکومرانی» کوردی لە ئاستی شارەوانیەکاندا (لە ڕێگای دامەزراندی کەمپ و یارمەتی مرۆڤیانە) دەبنە هۆکاری کێشە لە نێوان هیرارشی فەرزییانەی کاربەدەستانی تورکیا و بەرهەڵستکارە کوردەکان.

Introduction

> "People don't want to go to the tents of AFAD (Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Agency). They lack confidence as they are the tents of the state. They come to the tents of the municipality. At the moment around 3 thousand people are awaiting tents. AFAD negatively responds to our demand for new tents. We demanded that the tent cities be built by us. They only provide some small aid despite our initiatives. For example, there is a problem of electricity. We have electricity here, but TEDAŞ (Turkish state Electricity Company) is not undertaking its responsibilities for the other tent cities." Olcay Kanılbaş, member of Democratic Regions' Party (*Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi*, DBP)[1] (ANF, 2014).

1 DBP is a successor party of the perhaps better-known Peace and Democracy Party (*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi*, BDP).

The above statement by a local Kurdish official speaks clearly to the sense of mistrust, competition for resources, and conflict in perceived mandates between key actors engaged in the provision of relief assistance to displaced Syrian Kurds taking refuge in Turkey. The passage also neatly introduces two broad actor identities: on the one hand the state and its associated institutions (referred to here as "they"), and the localised "we" of the Kurdish movement and its municipal representatives. Building on a contextual understanding of Turkish-Kurdish relations, this paper draws on actor mapping methodology to examine the impact of evidently complex social and political dynamics upon the humanitarian response.

From mid-September 2014, Syria's Kurdish region of Kobani, also referred to by its Arabised name, Ayn al-Arab, became the tragic subject of global headlines. The extremist jihadist group, the Islamic State (IS),[2] which had long surrounded the area, suddenly launched an intensified three-front offensive towards Kobani town. Heavy weapons IS had plundered from gains in Iraq left the Kurdish People's Protection Units (*Yekîneyên Parastina Gel*, YPG) unable to effectively resist such advances. Prior to this, Kobani had received little attention from the international community during the protracted Syrian conflict, despite a year-long siege and suffering a severe lack of resources.[3]

In Sunni-Arab areas of Syria previously taken over by IS much of the unaffiliated population had remained and submitted (sometimes reluctantly) to the new Islamic leadership. However, awareness of violations committed against Kurdish Yezidi civilians during the August 2014 take-over of the Shengal region in Iraq motivated the people of Kobani to flee *en masse* (Amnesty International, 2014). This led to the largest single population influx across the border into Turkey since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011 (Montgomery, 2014). Indeed over 138,000 people were reported to have crossed the border during the first few days of displacement alone (UNHCR, 2014a). Although many Kurds had left Syria for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, where the refugee population was already reported to be approximately 200,000,[4] prior to the Kobani crisis there had been no Kurdish-specific influx of significant size into Turkey. Rather, the increase in Kurds entering the country had to that point been gradual and

2 The group was previously and alternatively known as the Islamic State in Iraq and Sham (ISIS) or Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

3 It should be noted that at the start of the 2011 Revolution in Syria, Kobani was the site of regular anti-government demonstrations. Protesters made a name for the town in Arab and international media by being some of the first to take to the streets, beginning their weekly mobilisations even before Friday prayers, which elsewhere served to mark the start of marches.

4 This figure is based on UNHCR registration data, August 2014.

largely proportionate to the growing numbers of the overall Syrian displaced population.

News coverage of the Kobani crisis mostly focused on the narrative of Kurdish resistance (Abdo, 2014; Salih, 2014),[5] in addition to military developments (Gee, 2014; James and Letsch, 2014), including the subsequent campaign of airstrikes against IS by the international (US-led) coalition, and reinforced support to YPG coming from both the Free Syrian Army (FSA) battalions and *peshmerga* fighters sent by the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq (Spencer and Samaan, 2014). From the onset, commentators have penned advocacy pieces calling for greater international awareness of, and support to, the Kurds (e.g. Graeber, 2014). With the battle to dispel IS ongoing,[6] far less media attention was given to the humanitarian situation of the civilian population, which had almost entirely left the Kobani region, mostly seeking refuge across the border in Turkey. This article aspires to present a contribution to fill the information gap in existing literature on the dynamic relations of relief aid providers to this displaced population, extrapolating on actor engagement in "official", as well as "alternative", delivery and coordination architectures.

While part of the affected community had moved further afield, the present study will focus on actors providing assistance to the displaced population based in Suruç (Pirsûs in Kurdish): the area directly bordering Kobani itself on the Turkish side.[7] Elsewhere, those displaced from Kobani are considered as "new arrivals" within the general Syrian "refugee" caseload in Turkey and, following such logic, are integrated into established assistance programmes.[8] In contrast, the Kobani population in Suruç was sufficiently concentrated and visible to constitute its own distinct (sub-)community. While appreciating the international legal definition as a person outside his/her country due to a "well-founded fear of persecution", this author recognises the especially problematic connotations carried by the term "refugee" in the context of displacement for a trans-border stateless nation. In respect of manifest resistance against such identifications by members of both displaced and hosting Kurdish communities, I seek, as much as possible, to avoid reinforcing normative labels that clearly trouble the human subjects in question. When the term "refugee" is

5 Indeed, #BerxwedanaKobanê (Kobani Resistance) became a popular twitter hashtag to draw world attention to events taking place in the border-town.

6 At the time of field research, significant advances were being made by Kurdish forces seeking to "liberate" Kobani from IS control.

7 Excluding those settling in Urfa, Gaziantep or further afield, the number of individuals left in Suruç was roughly estimated to be 50,000.

8 For further details on the temporary protection regime concerning Syrian refugees, see Özden, 2013.

used in this article, it is in order to underline the particular rights to assistance and protection conferred by its recognised legal status.[9]

Case Study Justification

The anticipated value of the selected case study is two-fold. Firstly, observing the challenges faced by external actors in navigating the complex stakeholder relations, it was evident that there remains a general lack of contextual knowledge about the actor dynamics implied by engagement in this field. Of the large number of established international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) who quickly descended on Suruç in order to conduct initial needs assessments in the wake of the Kobani crisis, disappointingly few succeeded in implementing a rapid response. Reasons cited by the organisations' representatives included limited understanding of the "local access situation", little prior contact with, and few available entry points into, the community, as well as apprehension about "selecting the 'wrong' channels through which to work."[10] Applying a more comprehensive actor mapping methodology to this case study is pragmatically important for evaluating the inadequate Kobani response, and the challenges still faced in similar contexts. Indeed, observations from this study have been requested by, and shared with, representatives of a number of international humanitarian organisations active in the region.

As such, while sharing the goal expressed by one group of local humanitarian practitioners to "inform and contribute to more coordinated and strategic implementation and assessment processes" with respect to interventions in Suruç (Bihar, 2014: 2), the present article is also driven by a second motivation: namely, to reflect more broadly and conceptually on the implications that actors of "contentious politics" can have on a humanitarian response (Tilly, 2008), and how their relations with others may determine questions of humanitarian access. The particular Kurdish-Turkish identity dynamics in this context further complicate the inherent asymmetrical power relations existent between humanitarian "agencies" and the beneficiaries they are mandated to serve. Little academic work has been produced on the challenges posed to the coordination of humanitarian action by tensions between state and non-state challengers. In comparing the approaches of actors associated with the Turkish

9 While Turkish law considers Syrians as "guests" rather than refugees, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) regularly refers to the population of "Syrian refugees in Turkey."

10 Explanations provided in author's interviews with INGO representatives present in Suruç during October 2014.

state and those responding with a visible pro-Kurdish identity, this article contributes a compelling case study to expand knowledge in this very area.

Given the somewhat contemporary nature of the Kobani response, case-specific academic literature remains scarce. While news articles were often accompanied by images from the camps in Suruç as a result of the relatively easy and secure access for photo-journalists, the textual content of most media pieces focused on military developments taking place on the Syrian side of the border. Those publishing on the relief response are in the most part humanitarian actors themselves. Among them, we find two largely distinct political narratives propagated, which tend (if at all) to acknowledge each other's existence only through criticism and accusation. Firstly, the reports most forcefully reflecting the "official" position of the Turkish state are by the Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (*Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetimi Başkanlığı*, AFAD) and the Turkish Red Crescent (*Kızılay*). On the other hand, pro-Kurdish relief narratives are transmitted by the Kurdish-led municipalities (see *Güneydoğu Anadolu Bölgesi Belediyeler Birliği*, GABB, 2014), as well as the Kurdish Red Crescent (*Heyva Sor*)[11] and other affiliated actors. Meanwhile, international organisations, including the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), have generally been cautious in publicly mentioning these dynamics, preferring to do most of their advocacy through "quiet" diplomacy with the parties in question.

This article builds on the currently very few contributions that bring together the Turkish and Kurdish narratives (e.g. Bihar, 2014; IMPR, 2014). It is this author's view that a more balanced and faithful description of reality will more justly serve academic analysis of the situation in Suruç. Independent study should account for and comment on, rather than reproduce, the polarisation that governs the logic of aid distribution within this crisis. With generally little consideration given to mechanisms of relief assistance in the Kobani response, even in daily media, this paper draws on literature highlighting actor dynamics after the 2011 Van earthquakes for a comparative perspective.

Methodological Notes

This study draws broadly on methodologies of actor mapping: that is the process of identifying and profiling individuals and/or groups whose actions

11 This includes both *Heyva Sor a Kurdistanê* founded from Germany in 1993 as well as *Heyva Sor a Kurd* of 2012, which works especially in Rojava/Syria.

are considered to be of significant impact on a given subject.[12] While these approaches are employed in fields as diverse as business and project management, conflict analysis and public policy, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights usefully describes such mapping as a "common tool for understanding key actors, identifying and mapping out power relationships and channels of influence" (OHCHR, 2011: 24). Actor mapping and analysis has useful pragmatic applications in informing and determining "context-sensitive" engagement strategies. In situations of conflict and/or significant hardship, this function is even more crucial given the accepted humanitarian imperative to "do no harm" (Anderson, 1999).

Mapping exercises are often used normatively to establish clear parameters that individual actors must respect for the sake of effective systems coordination. While appreciating the need, for example, to "ensure clear division of responsibility of refugee protection actors and the importance of complementarity" (Reach Out, 2005), this article seeks not to limit its analysis to formally mandated roles and officially prescribed inter-institutional relations. Rather, I use material collected through ethnographic field enquiry in order to more accurately describe the complex, and often untidy, reality. Research for this study was conducted with the assumption that daily actor engagements significantly deviate from the ideal-type coordination systems that exist on paper. Moreover, it is noted that much literature on humanitarian coordination mechanisms is produced by actors operating within, or even setting up, such systems, and consequently the bias promoting their predominance is unsurprising. As such, effort is made to consider what are often referred to as non-traditional actors (including pro-Kurdish ones), who due to their extra- (or even counter-) systemic nature are frequently left out of the schema drawn by authoritative commentators in the aid industry.[13]

In addition to a literature search on the specific case, as well as Kurdish-Turkish relations and regional humanitarian action more generally, regular field visits were made to Suruç during the months of September–December

12 While the terms "stakeholder" and "actor" are often used somewhat synonymously, the latter is conscientiously employed in this article to refer to those who not only have an interest (i.e. stake) in decision-making, but indeed are also positioned to influence outcomes.

13 The expression "non-traditional actors" is frequently used by humanitarian professionals to refer to those operating outside, and independently of, the most prestigious global coordination bodies: the somewhat exclusive Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and/or the UN-convened Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). According to this dominant usage of the term, many non-western and local actors are in practice thus labelled as "non-traditional."

2014. The first visit took place on 21st September as the town was suddenly forced to deal with the mass arrival of people fleeing Kobani. Initial observations indicated a number of actors responding to the crisis, visible in Suruç, for example, through the distribution of cooked meals in the town square. Based on these details, a preliminary inventory of actors was developed. Contact was made and research meetings set up in order to discuss the situation of assistance provision through semi-structured interviews. While all those encountered were open to discussion and dialogue, it should be noted that conversations with Turkish officials were comparatively limited given the author's ability to communicate in Kurdish and Arabic, but not Turkish. Most of the international NGOs encountered requested non-disclosure of their organisation's identity due to political sensitivities. They have been anonymised accordingly.

During the meetings, respondents were questioned about their activities, interactions with others, and views about the overall crisis response. Finally, they were asked to recommend other actors and/or respondents as a form of "snowballing" (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Following initial engagement, multiple return visits were made to the representatives of relief groups, during which further discussions were held, and aid distributions, as well as interactions with other actors, were observed.

The Context of Humanitarian Action in Turkey

Recognising that the Kobani crisis came about as a direct result of the ongoing Syrian war, which has led to considerable changes in Turkey's humanitarian policy, the following section presents an overview of the national emergency response system, with particular focus on post-2011 developments. The historic impact of Kurdish-Turkish relations on instances of displacement and humanitarian crisis is also briefly traced, as it is considered relevant to understanding the Suruç/Kobani case study.

In parallel with its growth as a regional and world power, the last decade has seen Turkey develop as a humanitarian actor both at home and overseas. Transforming itself from being principally a recipient of external aid, Turkey has in recent years emerged as a significant international donor, indeed it was the fourth largest globally in 2012 (Çevik, 2014),[14] and has built a reputation as a "humanitarian state" (Keyman and Sazak, 2014). Propelled by the ambitious

14 Based on 2013 Global Humanitarian Assistance Report results.

foreign policy approach of key ideologue and statesman Ahmet Davutoğlu, the ruling Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP)[15] government has used aid assistance as an entry point to consolidate Turkey's "soft power" influence over strategic geographies under the banner of "humanitarian diplomacy" (Tank, 2015).

With aid transactions and national interests largely coinciding, commentators note that Turkey's various interventions have historically been underpinned by a (sometimes understated) logic of ethnic and/or religious solidarity, and focus primarily on the Turkic and Islamic world (Binder, 2014). The post-Cold War emphasis of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency's (*Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı*, TİKA) overseas development aid on the new Turkic states of Central Asia and the Caucasus has latterly expanded to reflect the country's increasingly multi-regional foreign policy strategy.[16] Following humanitarian and peace-keeping engagement in the Balkans from the mid-90s, the period of AKP rule since 2002 has seen Turkey re-orientate its policy to embrace both geographies of Africa and the Middle East. In the former, high profile exposure for Turkey's "on the ground" approach was gained with the unprecedented visit of then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Mogadishu, Somalia, in August 2011 (Ali, 2011).[17] The bilateral nature of Turkish aid engagement was also highlighted in the context of the Arab Spring revolutions, which presented a unique opportunity to build relationships with emergent powers across the region (Altunışık, 2014: 340–2).

In this context, Turkey showed early and outright support for the popular uprisings of 2011 that preceded the humanitarian crisis in Syria. Moreover, it took a sympathetic position towards political and armed bodies of the opposition, actively hosting the Syrian National Council in exile. An initial policy characterised by "hospitality" to those forced to flee regime repression was enacted to include an "open door" border system and provision of "temporary protection" to Syrians as "guests" (*misafir*) since October 2011 (Kirişçi, 2014).[18] Despite the Turkish humanitarian system mobilising a high capacity

15 AKP is a socially conservative political entity founded in 2001 from a number of existing reformist and Islamic groups.

16 TİKA was founded in 1992 to coordinate project engagement in the newly independent Turkic/Muslim republics of Central Asia.

17 In contrast, western representatives and aid workers tended to work on Somalia remotely from a base in more secure, neighbouring Kenya.

18 At the time of field research, roll-out of the newly established General Directorate of Migration Management (GDMM) under the Ministry of Interior had not been fully implemented, though it was anticipated that the institution focus on regulating the "temporary

response,[19] it became clear that the measures implemented were predicated upon the flawed assumption that the conflict would swiftly conclude, thereby facilitating mass repatriation to Syria (İçduygu, 2015).

Turkey now hosts the largest community of Syrians displaced by the conflict, while its border simultaneously provides vital access routes for aid to many of those internally displaced in northern Syria.[20] As a result, domestic humanitarianism has been forced to evolve from its previous emphasis on preparedness against occasional natural disasters to addressing large-scale, sustained refugee support and cross-border assistance programs.

Humanitarian Actor System

While much of the literature on the Syrian refugee crisis in Turkey has been policy-minded, for example, advocating for migration law reforms (Kirişçi, 2014; İçduygu, 2015), Anglophone academia, as Binder points out, "know[s] little about Turkey's rapidly increasing humanitarian engagement" (2014). Moreover, far more attention has been paid to TİKA's role in overseas development projects (Ali, 2011; Özkan and Demirtepe, 2012) than to the system of actors involved in implementing humanitarian action within the country. Historically, the devastating consequences of the 1999 Marmara earthquake represent a revelation in Turkish disaster management, highlighting the state's dominant top-down attitude and "lack of local involvement and empowerment" of civil society actors (Özerdem and Jacoby, 2006: 59).

Peculiar to Turkey's highly centralised humanitarian model is the active role played by state ministries and bureaucracies in the daily administration of assistance programs. While the AKP-dominated Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) leads on political aspects of aid and high-level coordination, it entrusts AFAD to be the face of crisis response in Turkey. Founded in 2009 under the auspices of the Prime Minister's office as a result of a decade-long process to reform emergency response institutions in Turkey, AFAD is now responsible for registration of Syrians as well as establishing and directly administering camps to accommodate them. Treating the refugee response as a

protection" regime and harmonising the status of various groups of non-Turkish nationals within the country.

19 The comparatively high quality of Syrian refugee camps in Turkey has been widely recognised, with the New York Times even praising Turkey for the "Perfect Refugee Camp" (McClelland, 2014).

20 By August 2014, UNHCR estimated that 815,000 Syrians had already sought refuge in Turkey.

predominantly sovereign issue, Turkey's decisive leadership and insistent non-reliance on the international community has empowered AFAD to perform functions elsewhere associated with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). The latter in Turkey has chiefly played a consultative and advisory role since the start of the Syria crisis.

Besides the AKP-led government, Binder highlights two other key forces within the Turkish humanitarian assistance model: i) the conservative business community and ii) the movement of wealthy Islamic philanthropist Fethullah Gülen (ibid). All three of these influential entities generally reference Sunni Muslim ideas of charitable action, and lend their support to respectively associated faith-based national NGOs.

As the diagram below illustrates, the Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (known commonly as İHH)[21] is considered strongly affiliated to the ruling AKP and receives the ideological, if not also organisational, backing of head of state Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.[22] Indeed, privileged access, including to refugee camps in Turkey (Özden, 2013: 8–9), has allowed the organisation to become the principal provider of relief aid to Syrians on both sides of the border. However, İHH's explicitly Muslim-focused origins and scope,[23] with a somewhat militant identity, render it a controversial entity in the eyes of mainstream actors in the international humanitarian community. Questionable trans-national connections to internationally prohibited and extremist groups (including Hamas and al-Qaeda) have added to this notoriety, further complicating the perceived uncritical proximity between the organisation and key state politicians (WSJ, 2010).

Meanwhile, two other Turkish NGOs *Deniz Feneri* and *Kimse Yok Mu?* have been perceived as humanitarian implementers for the Gülen Movement. The usually high degree of support and facilitation by Turkish officials for national faith-based charities noted by several academics (Keyman and Sazak, 2014: 10; Tank, 2015) was complicated somewhat by intensification of the public dispute between former allies Gülen and Erdoğan in 2013. Most remarkably, tensions culminated in the exceptional raid on İHH's Kilis office on 14 January 2014 by the *Jandarma* (military police), with Gülen's movement perceived to have exerted pervasive influence on the latter (Vela, 2014). In light of the tensions

21 İHH is an acronym from the Turkish name: *İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri ve İnsani Yardım Vakfı*.

22 This relationship is confirmed by İHH's own website, which hosts an article entitled "Support from Erdogan for IHH": www.ihh.org.tr/ru/main/news/0/support-from-erdogan-for-ihh/2439 (last accessed 7 May 2016).

23 Founded to provide aid to Bosnia's Muslims in the mid-90s, the organisation continues to treat causes and conflicts affecting Muslims as the core of its work. In Syria, its partner organisations are mostly affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood.

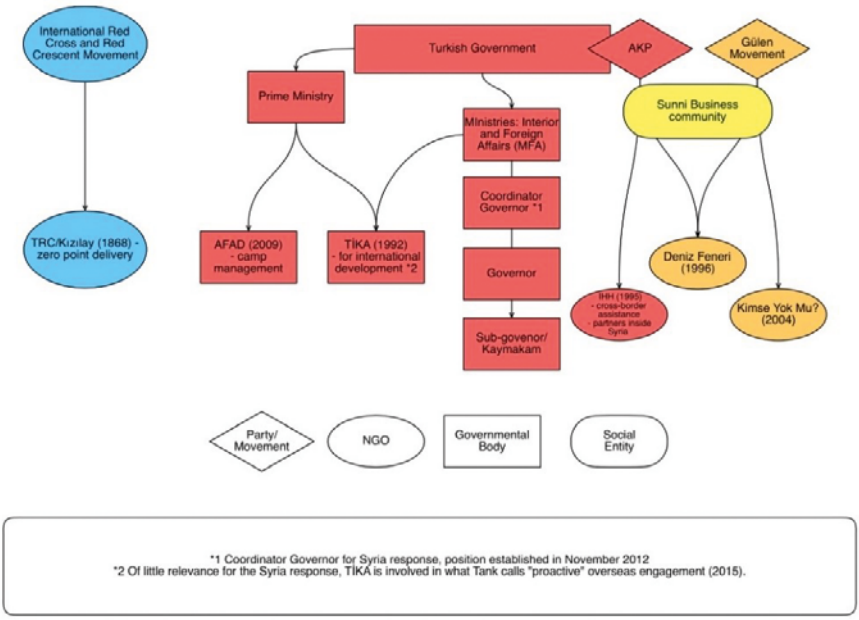

FIGURE 1 Pictorial representation of Turkish humanitarian architecture

between actors of conservative Islam in Turkey, *Deniz Feneri* is acknowledged to have re-positioned itself more equidistantly between Gülen and the AKP (reflected in Figure 1).[24]

Finally, the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC)[25] has a uniquely prestigious status as the oldest and largest charitable association in Turkey preceding the founding of the Turkish Republic (Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan, 2003: 45–68). While officially non-governmental, and moreover enjoying formal recognition as a member of the international movement of Red Cross/Red Crescent societies, the organisation is state-mandated and furthermore, according to one study, is "perceived by practically everyone as an extension of the state" (Paker, 2007: 654). While the Turkish government established AFAD as the lead agency of the Syrian Crisis Humanitarian Assistance Operation in August 2012, TRC, owing to its experience in customs clearance, was officially mandated with the responsibility for "zero point delivery" and transfer of cross-border assistance into Syria (Binder, 2014; Kirişci, 2013).

24 This assertion is informed by the anecdotal observations shared by several key respondents during October 2014.

25 Also known as (Türk) *Kızılay*, the Turkish word for "Crescent."

The Turkish Humanitarian Context and the Kurds

In addition to the long-time competition between central and local actors, humanitarianism in Turkey is significantly complicated by the government's anxiety about political challenge posed by Kurds as both the country's largest ethnic minority and a group of distinctive national identity (Tank, 2015: 3). Since the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne endowed the Turkish nation with a formal state structure while depriving Kurds of the same, academics have mostly reproduced the distinction between Turkish authorities and challenger Kurds as a non-state group (Heper, 2007; White, 2000; Gunter, 1997). Turkish history tends to be ordered according to structuralist logic, examining the consequences of regime change (through both military coup and ballot box), while Kurdish developments are more frequently accounted for by drawing on social movement theory (Watts, 2010; Romano, 2006). Though this binary system of Turkish oppression and Kurdish resistance is clearly a simplification of the reality at the individual level, experiences of exclusion and manipulation by the central government have become central to Kurdish collective subjectivity.

Frequent references to the 1925 Sheikh Said rebellion and the repressive response by the Turkish government in discourses on Kurdish-ness (e.g. Olson, 1989) exemplify the construction of national identity around a broad "dialectic of denial and resistance" (Vali, 1998: 85). The history of multi-faceted social engineering, including co-option, assimilation, non-recognition, neglect, forced displacement, combat etc. undertaken by Turkey's successive governments against the country's native Kurds (Üngör, 2008), presents significant challenges to the possibility of needs-based and neutral humanitarian action. Moreover, Kurdish identity itself retains somewhat controversial associations in Turkey due to the highly political history of conflict between Kurdish rebels and the state.

While Kurdish society has been significantly influenced by (conservative) Islamic and tribal traditions, contemporary usage of the term "Kurdish Movement" typically refers to a specific leftist, secular mass mobilisation that emerged in the early 1970s (Romano, 2006: 99–182). Founded by a leader perceived to have "c[o]me out of nowhere" (Marcus, 2007: 30), the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*, PKK) increasingly became the dominant voice representing Kurdish ethno-political demands. The outbreak of armed hostilities between guerrilla insurgents on behalf of an emboldened Kurdish national movement and the Turkish state military around 1984 opened a chapter of further polarisation, framed by the latter within an anti-terrorism and "security regime" narrative (Dorronsoro, 2008).

In this context, population movements and humanitarian crises involving Kurds are particularly contentious, as demonstrated by the displacement of Iraqi Kurds to Turkey after both intensification of Saddam Hussain's Anfal campaign of ethnic cleansing in 1988, and the 1991 Gulf war (Ihlamur-Öner, 2013). Fearful of a potential security threat on its territory, Turkey sought in 1988 to contain the risk that there might be PKK sympathisers among the more than 60,000 refugees by keeping them in 12 tightly controlled camps. During the 1991 influx, Turkey blocked the entry of fleeing Kurds, thus forcing the creation of a safe haven in Iraq, which would facilitate the cross-border return of Iraqi Kurds who had come to Turkey (Özdamar and Taydaş, 2013). These experiences left traces of deep paranoia about Kurdish ethno-national identity within the institutions of Turkey's asylum system, the policies of which already historically favoured those of "Turkish descent and culture" (Kirişçi, 2014: 7; İçduygu, 2015).

The general dynamics changed somewhat after the arrest of the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999, with the movement entering an official peace process with the state, renouncing separatist armed struggle and shifting its ideology to embrace "radical democracy" for all in Turkey (Akkaya and Jongerden, 2012). Nonetheless, pro-Kurdish actors have in the main part, and sometimes wilfully so, retained their "challenger" status. Moreover, the legal Kurdish parties, starting with the People's Labour Party (*Halkın Emek Partisi*, HEP) in 1990, that seek representation through contesting elections are often perceived as PKK surrogates (Watts, 2010: 13). However, through accessing municipal resources, pro-Kurdish representatives have used their hybrid "activist-politician" identity to acquire new status as official authorities and transcend traditional characterisation of Kurds as largely reactive to hegemonic actions of the central state. This article argues that despite often still espousing a somewhat extra-systemic identity, the municipalities have demonstrated their capacity for pro-active mobilisation of their own responses to the (humanitarian) needs of Kurdish areas during the crisis in Syria.

While the Turkish government has elsewhere facilitated cross-border relief shipments (particularly at the Bab Al-Salame and Bab Al-Hawa crossing points into opposition-controlled Aleppo), access to Kurdish populated areas of Syria has been restricted, with only occasional transfers of humanitarian aid being permitted. Despite the UN Inter-Agency convoy of 79 aid trucks via the Nusaybin-Qamishli border to al-Hassaka Governorate in March 2014, three months later this crossing point was excluded from the 2165 Security Council Resolution, which authorised the use of four other border gates for United Nations cross-border deliveries into Syria. In addition to the Kurdish municipalities managing to arrange for some aid to be delivered, Turkish NGO İHH

has, as a result of its close connections to the AKP government and consequent ability to gain the necessary approvals, been the dominant actor sending aid to Kurdish regions of Syria.[26]

Preliminary research interviews with Kurds from Syria highlighted the criticisms and controversy manifest in popular perceptions of humanitarian assistance delivered cross-border from Turkey. Besides accusations that relief shipments present a screen for support to (Islamist) armed groups in Syria (Humeyr and Tattersall, 2015), it was generally considered that decisions governing humanitarian access were politically motivated. A case in point was the Turkish government's attempt to establish a border wall at Nusaybin, separating the Kurdish communities on the Syrian and Turkish side of the border in November 2013 (Letsch, 2013).

Humanitarian Action in Suruç

While, as mentioned above, INGOs quickly took an interest in the needs around Suruç, they were met with the task of situating themselves within the field of national and local actors already engaged in aid provision. Broadly speaking, most of these operational entities can be classified through actor mapping according to their proximity to, and identification with, the two main "forces at work" (OHCHR, idem: 25): specifically the Turkish state response and that of the Kurdish national movement. In many cases, similar activities are conducted by actors on both sides of this political divide (see the example of camp administration dealt with in detail later in this article). Table 1 presents in the most basic terms the key actors associated with each affiliation.

The state-supported response is administered by the sub-governor's (*kaymakam*) office as representative of the central government at local level. While the sub-governor is appointed and not a local of Suruç, his office employs a number of Kurdish civil servants from within the community. The *kaymakam* has hosted coordination meetings, and serves as the "officially" correct interlocutor for UN and INGO agencies, through endorsement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Executing state-directed action on the ground are foremost AFAD, and the governmental directorates (e.g. Department of Health), with the support of TRC/*Kızılay*.

26 Indeed, İHH had sent assistance into Kobani only a few days before IS began advancing on the area: Retrieved from www.ihh.org.tr/tr/main/region/suriye/8/ihhdan-rojava-ve-kobaniye-27-yardim-tiri/2489 (last accessed on 12 April 2015).

TABLE 1 Basic terms and key actors affiliated

Turkish actors	Kurdish actors	International actors
Sub-governor of Suruç (*kaymakam*); Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD)	Suruç Municipality (*belediye*) and other Kurdish-run municipalities (Diyarbekir/Van etc.)	United Nations (UN) Agencies: principally UNHCR
Turkish Red Crescent (TRC/*Türk Kızılay*)	Kurdish Red Crescent (*Heyva Sor a Kurdistanê*)	International Red Cross/ Red Crescent Movement
Turkish NGOs (e.g. İHH)	Kurdish (& diaspora) NGOs (e.g. Kurdish Doctors Union)	International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs)

Besides this highly centralised, state-led response, which represents the established system for refugee administration in Turkey, is another network of actors grouped around the local Kurdish authorities represented at the municipal office (*belediye*) level. Pro-Kurdish organisations operating in coordination with, and under the wide umbrella of the municipalities, include *Heyva Sor* (Kurdish Red Crescent) and diaspora-based branches of the Kurdish Doctors Union. Despite the municipalities being legally elected bodies, officially integrated into the system of state governance, their Kurdish representatives often maintain their popular legitimacy by stressing extra-systemic identities and counter-hegemonic discourse. While receiving the standard funding allocation from the Bank of Provinces, Suruç Mayor Orhan Şansal confirms not having received any state support specifically to respond towards the Kobani displacement crisis.[27] Nonetheless, and with little professional humanitarian experience (by international standards), they were, building on local community knowledge, able to mobilise an early response. Public buildings were opened up to house the displaced, and the team of volunteer loaders and sorters operating from the municipal *garaj* (depot) was quickly expanded. According to their own capacity assessment, they "meet to a great extent the needs of the people, despite limited facilities" (ANF, 2014).

In spite of the physical proximity of the governor's office (*kaymakam*) and that of the municipality (*belediye*), both around Suruç's central square, coordination and transparent information sharing appear limited, with the relationship instead characterised by competition between parallel service provision mechanisms. Two largely distinct bodies have evolved with the

27 Author's interview via social media on 9 January 2015.

purpose of coordinating humanitarian action in Suruç. First, the Crisis Desk was established by the sub-governor with its counterparts AFAD and Kızılay. This Desk holds authority to determine which external actors are permitted to engage and provide assistance in the area. Effectively excluded from coordination opportunities associated with the above structure, the municipality established the Kobani Crisis Coordination, which is essentially a second crisis desk, through a central coordination committee with participation from various entities belonging to the Kurdish movement (GABB, 2014: 3). Likewise, the Rojava Assistance and Solidarity Association (*Rojava Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneği*) was founded in an attempt to professionalise the organisation of in-kind assistance collected and sent by organisations, other municipalities (Van, Diyarbakir etc.) and the public, as well as to accommodate monetary donations.

Van Earthquake Comparison

With many similar actors and conceptual issues at play, the two earthquakes that struck the Van region of Turkey in 2011 present a precedent and useful parallel for understanding the dynamics of the 2014 Suruç response. Like the Kobani crisis, the Van earthquakes demonstrated the potential controversy surrounding relief responses in majority-Kurdish areas in Turkey, with these tensions easily amplified by media reactions (AFP, 2011).

Both emergencies generated much introspection as well as accusations of mismanagement on the part of the national authorities. However, a clear difference is that while in Van the government's actions were described as "turning a natural disaster into a political one" (Sharifi, 2011; also Schäfers, 2016), the people of Kobani suffered a purely human-induced tragedy; one that was both political and military from the outset. For the former, a number of studies and publications responded to the call for evaluation by addressing the possible infrastructural weaknesses and inadequate technical preparations for a region prone to seismic activity.[28] Such a scientific reading was not tenable for the Kobani crisis. With Turkish foreign policy decisively favouring certain parties to the war in Syria (Vela, 2013), not to mention its fierce opposition to the emergence of a *de facto* Kurdish administration across the border, the

28 The majority of Anglophone academic publications on the Van earthquakes are written by engineers and scientists (especially those with architectural and seismological specialisations), and deal exclusively with technical deficiencies. Specific criticisms focus on negligent engineering practices, including buildings built too high, illegal construction, use of poor quality concrete (Mimarlar Odası, 2012; Taskin and Sezen, 2012), and lack of "disaster sensitive planning" (Turan, 2012).

forced displacement of civilians from Kobani is at origin an issue marked by pronounced political sensitivity.

Nonetheless, in both cases, there are attempts to provide an explicitly apolitical (and moreover actively de-politicised) presentation of the field situation. In several works addressing questions of post-disaster coordination in Van, a narrative consciously cleansed of Kurdish agency is propagated, with no mention of the affected population's Kurdish ethnic identity. For example, Celik and Corbacioglu's relatively in-depth network analysis of earthquake responders fails to reference efforts of the Kurdish-run municipalities and NGOs (2013). In Suruç, it was observed that a similar discourse was being reproduced at the *Ad Hoc Inter-Agency* meetings facilitated by UNHCR. There, the municipality-run camps of Suruç, with their symbolically powerful Kurdish names (discussed later in this article), were referred to only by assigned numbers. Kobani camp, for instance, had effectively been renamed as "Camp 1." As such, in both cases, the ostensible commitment to humanitarian and/or scientific objectivity embedded within the "officially" correct discourse of relief action disguises a powerful hegemonic state logic.

Despite its cross-border dimension, and the Kobani crisis primarily affecting a non-citizen population (i.e. foreigners to the Turkish Republic), relief action in both Suruç and Van is framed through a narrative of state-managed disasters (De Maupeou, 2013). A statement by the then Prime Minister Erdoğan after the Van earthquake that "[t]he state is there with all its institutions" could equally apply to the Kobani response (Avci, 2011), with the Health Department, AFAD, TRC/*Kızılay* all stationed on the border together with the police and national security forces. The central role of the state is significantly reinforced by traditional humanitarian actors in what Ozkapici refers to as the official coordination system (2012). For example, a report by IFRC states that the:

> [Van] response operation has been led by the government, notably by the Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) assisted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other agencies [...] The Turkish Red Crescent participates as a permanent member in the boards, which are established by AFAD. These boards are responsible for determining rules and principles of relief operations to be conducted during disasters. At provincial level, the responsible body is the concerned Provincial Directorate of Disaster and Emergency that is working in close cooperation with the Turkish Red Crescent (2012).

A few rare reports on the earthquake crisis hint towards a more complex actor reality. While providing little analysis of inter-actor relations, Zaré and

Nazmazar present a more objective timeline of events and description of other (including Kurdish) responders involved in the relief process (2013). More thorough examination of civil society-public sector cooperation in the crisis (TUSEV, 2013) highlights the significant, yet somewhat ambiguous, role of the local municipalities as "activists in office" (Watts, 2010). Their association with the pro-Kurdish movement results in a spill-over of politicised identity into the humanitarian field. Referring to long-standing unresolved grievances and disputes labelled by the Turkish state as the "Kurdish problem", it is noted that "provision of relief aid after the 2011 Van earthquake [...] clearly brought some of these social problems to the surface" (Özerdem and Özerdem, 2013: 5). Interviews from the field in Suruç suggest that this phenomenon remains highly prevalent in 2014.

Mistrust between local Kurdish and central Turkish authorities in Van resulted in coordination and organisational obstacles to effective aid management. Lack of communication and consultation on the part of the government and its provincial sub-offices with the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi*, BDP)-run municipalities led to significant tension and accusations that the insufficient state response was politically motivated (Akgönül, 2011). This was clearly manifest in the municipalities' exclusion from the AFAD-led coordination committees despite the former's evident pre-crisis local knowledge (TUSEV, 2013: 5). Culpability for limited cooperation is contested since "the [BDP] mayor complained that he was not invited to coordination meetings, while the governor [appointed by Ankara], claiming that an invitation is not needed, said that it was the mayor who was not present in the meetings" (Onur, 2011).

Political tensions increased with Kurdish voices criticising the government for initially refusing offers of international assistance, while the government provocatively accused "those [Kurdish actors] who are able to organise people to throw stones at police and soldiers, vandalizing the streets, throwing Molotov cocktails [... of] fail[ing] to reach out to an area that is right next to them" (Avci, 2011). The historic mistrust that the Kurdish movement has for the government of Turkey was reiterated in Suruç with pro-Kurdish commentators there implicating Turkey's foreign policy towards Syria and well-known displeasure for the Kurdish administration project in Kobani as factors facilitating IS's successful displacement strategy.[29] Post-crisis criticism was equally strong, with a report by Kurdish municipalities stating that the "central government hasn't shown the required sensitivity on this issue, and established

29 According to an interview conducted by a coalition of Human Rights Organisations (2014) "the opinion that Turkey knew about the attacks on Kobani beforehand was prevalent."

only 3 camps for 8,960 people from Shingal and Kobani. And, the government hasn't developed any policies for the remaining war victims" (GABB, 2014: 3).

While the immediate needs for temporary shelter and basic relief items were common to both Van and Suruç, the Kobani crisis took place against the backdrop of an emerging Kurdish self-administration in Syria and a more empowered Kurdish municipal representation in Turkey. Nonetheless, it is considered that the Van case provides a valuable parallel for understanding the Suruç response. It presents a precedent landscape, in which "it would not be an exaggeration to claim that political interests and calculations accompany every initiative from the collection of aid to its distribution" (Akgönül, 2011). Nowhere, perhaps, is this phenomenon more clearly manifest than with assistance provision in the camps of Suruç.

A Comparison between AFAD and Municipality-run Camps

Shortly after the initial cross-border movement of civilians fleeing Kobani, two overlapping yet identifiably differentiated caseloads began to emerge in Suruç. As those unable to accommodate themselves with friends or relatives upon arrival turned to communal settings for shelter options, families often found themselves, sometimes unconsciously, selecting spaces associated with either pro-Kurdish or state-supported entities. As an immediate response to the sudden influx, the Suruç municipality allowed people to settle in public buildings including the wedding hall, cultural centre and several mosques. Meanwhile, state-run transit camps in rural Suruç were used to take in newly arrived families. It was reported that some 9,000 individuals moved to pre-existing Yibo and Onbir Nisan AFAD centres near Suruç.[30] While in December 2014 AFAD had begun preparations to open a much larger and better designed state-funded facility further out at the Ali Gör junction to house some of the more than 40,000 Kobani population self-accommodated or hosted in Suruç region, the municipality had – for its part – established three "tent camps" on the northern exit road from Suruç towards Urfa with a total capacity for more than 10,000 individuals.[31]

30 Statistics provided by UNHCR in December 2014.

31 Idem; The number of municipality-administered camps in Suruç had increased in early 2015, but by June of the same year they had, besides hosting a few remaining families, essentially ceased to operate as camps.

While the AFAD-administered camps are mostly known after the area in which they are located, for the municipality naming camps serves as a powerful symbolic practice. Not only do the camp "signifiers" resonate strongly with Kurdish nationalist terminology, but they also enact the associated territorial claims discursively. Given that "Rojava" refers to Western (i.e. Syrian) Kurdistan, for example, its appropriation as a name for a camp on the northern side of the international border is deeply troubling for Turkey and its conception of state sovereignty based on inviolable territorial integrity. Challenging the organisational terrain of the state, the name also invokes a determination to return to the homeland, as such confirming the camp as a symbolic space of dual resistance: both against the Islamic State aggressors and Turkish state policy, which has historically been reluctant to acknowledge Kurdish existence in the country.

Such a satellite settlement of Rojava within the borders of the Turkish Republic emphasises the broader geographical nature of Kurdish identity, and substantiates subversive trans-border solidarity. Moreover, the administrative structure of elected community representation within the camp strongly resembles the "commune" governance system evolving in Kurdish-controlled territory of Rojava/Syria. Establishing the respective identities of the Kobani and Shehid [Martyr] Arin Mirkan camps (the latter named after a female fighter who carried out a suicide action against IS while defending the city) can be understood as willed acts of commemoration, symbolically compensating for losses incurred across the border, and continuing the trans-border

FIGURE 2 Signage to "Rojava" camp administered by the Suruç municipality

dialectic of repression and resistance.[32] Indeed, these "out-of-place" names can present a point of embarrassment for Turkish officials when brought up in coordination meetings and, as mentioned earlier, were eventually replaced with numerical identification.

Not only symbolic, camps are of course also "lived" spaces for their communities. In the municipality-established camps, people were heard speaking openly about support for Kurdish People's Protection Units (*Yekîneyên Parastina Gel*, YPG) forces, with children seeming spontaneously to sing pro-Democratic Union Party (*Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat*, PYD) songs whenever international visitors were present.[33] In contrast, such behaviour is remarkably absent in the camps of AFAD. Based on interviews with those living in both municipality and AFAD-run camps, the identity of the camp administration seems to condition the kind of political expressions people are comfortable to make, rather than necessarily forming opinion; nor does it appear that political ideology strongly determines who settles in which camp. After establishing relations with people residing in the municipality camps, a number explained that they are simultaneously registered with AFAD and regularly attend AFAD distributions outside the camp. "My political views and my family's needs are separate issues", says one such resident. "I have always supported the Kurdish movement, and continue to do so, but we all know AFAD's resources are greater."

Confirming Liisa Malkki's analysis of the camp as a "technology of care and control" (1992: 34), a space of humanitarian aid and containment, many in Suruç were left with somewhat ambivalent sentiments. While his description of the municipality-run camps as "places of liberation and resistance" underlines the opportunity for emancipatory demarcation of collective identity, one research participant hosted by relatives in the town nevertheless stressed: "I will do everything in my power to avoid the camps, for to live in a camp here is to enter the big battle between the state and the [Kurdish] party." It is clear that the camps of each actor serve to support its respective political narrative: the state emphasises its role as primary service provider, while the Kurdish movement asserts itself as the legitimate custodian for its ethnic kin.

32 See parallel practices by the Palestinian diaspora observed by Peteet, 2005; Schulz and Hammer, 2003.

33 Observation based on a number of visits by the author to the camps during the research period.

Impact on the Humanitarian Space

While in many conflict-induced crises, humanitarian space and access are limited by the presence of armed groups, in Suruç negotiation of the relations between aid actors of various identities is as much of an obstacle as are legal and bureaucratic restrictions. Competition between parallel assistance systems, and significantly two sets of governance structures, results in a polarisation of the humanitarian response. Though difficult to ascertain the extent of overlap in services and particular "beneficiaries" served,[34] there is a clear duplication of assumed institutional missions between the Turkish state authorities (AFAD, ministries etc.) and local Kurdish municipal representation, as well as, for example, the respective Turkish and Kurdish Red Crescent organisations.[35] The distinction between Turkish (state) actors and those related to the Kurdish movement is, therefore, less structural or typological (i.e. not public sector verses civil society) than it is based on political identity and ideology.

While AKP's ruling strategy has included empowerment of the municipalities as decision-makers in local matters, and indeed the party's first victories in Turkey were experienced at the municipal level (Buğra and Savaşkan, 2014: 68), Turkey's humanitarian response system continues to devalue the role of local-level actors, including non-government-affiliated NGOs. The engagement of the Kurdish-run municipalities in the organisation of emergency humanitarian assistance and their partnership with a number of mainstream international NGOs in Suruç exceeds their officially prescribed institutional mandate, and destabilises the highly centralised system of crisis management in Turkey. Moreover, entering this field as an alternative set of authorities allows pro-Kurdish entities to transcend the reductive characterisation of Kurds as reactive non-state challengers, and instead to transform their challenge by pro-actively performing parallel state-like duties on a localised level. Recognised as interlocutors well acquainted with the affected population by representatives of the international humanitarian community provided a level of legitimacy to the Kurdish-run municipalities, even if this did not always lead to direct funding or support for pro-Kurdish actors.

34 The possibility of duplication, particularly in non-camp settings, was highlighted as a cause for concern by several INGOs during coordination meetings.

35 According to the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, "there can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent society in any one country." Acting as a parallel body to TRC, the Kurdish Red Crescent's very existence consequently troubles the neat organisational logic that one national society can serve all peoples in Turkey while observing the movement's other essential principles, notably: Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality and Independence.

At the same time, this polarisation of actors presents a direct threat to the maintenance of humanitarian neutrality and can present obstacles to access for humanitarian engagement. This has led to some of those sympathetically learning about the Kobani people's suffering from afar encountering difficulties in finding an "appropriate" way to send support.[36] Donors (large and small) as well as INGOs have hesitated before making a commitment within this political minefield, and many implementers have found themselves labelled with unwanted partisan identities. The polarisation and perceived obligation to choose one side over the other became a reality for a number of actors. Responding to the municipality's attempts to enter the coordination field, and recognising that they are operationally relevant, UNHCR engaged them in bilateral meetings, and visited the camps they administer (UNHCR, 2014b), but was only authorised to implement directly through the state. Others took risks by trying to conduct distributions independently of both the Turkish and Kurdish authorities. Indeed, one INGO arranged for a group of civil society activists from Kobani to implement the delivery of their commodities to the urban-based population in Suruç without the knowledge of either the state or the municipality. While successfully bypassing the coordination deadlock in this way presented a solution for a rapid response, the most effective sustainable INGO interventions were conducted by those maintaining relations with both Turkish and Kurdish authorities simultaneously.

One interesting case is the engagement of the Turkish Red Crescent. While, based on lessons learned from the Van earthquake, it might be assumed that TRC would be situated squarely within the state-directed response and therefore distance itself from pro-Kurdish actors, observations from the ground in Suruç (particularly from the municipal depot) highlight a good degree of field coordination with municipal authorities. Through its role in border-crossing facilitation of previous aid deliveries to Kobani, TRC members had already developed a "friendly" working relationship with the municipality at the local level. Such pragmatic field relations led pro-Kurdish actors to consider TRC as a useful facilitator with the institutions of the state, while AFAD was more typically viewed as the unapproachable implementer of state policy. Though TRC is a national ambassador acting on behalf of the state, AFAD's sovereign identity is coupled with perception of being an uncompromising agent of the

36 Based on the author's e-mail correspondence with potential funders, a number of would-be individual donors sought a neutral organisation with a good track record and access to the affected population, expressing their anxiety about possible legal repercussions should they send funds internationally to a group perceived to be associated with the PKK.

ruling AKP. Thus, the collaborative relationship between TRC and the Kurdish municipalities in Suruç demonstrates the sometimes blurred and negotiable boundary between state and society actors in Turkey's complex humanitarian infrastructure.

Conclusion

Through presenting the key actors engaged in the Kobani response, this article has documented the clear presence of competing systems of "governmentality" affecting humanitarian action in Suruç. The two broad networks, associated with the Turkish state and pro-Kurdish movement respectively, constitute largely parallel structures, conducting similar yet uncoordinated activities. This dichotomy operates less on the level of typological actor variation (i.e. public sector verses civil society) than through the distinct political identities accompanying actions in the field. While all actors may be motivated by a humanitarian imperative to respond to the crisis, their engagements are framed through contrasting ideological commitments. Kurdish relief actors generally express a sense of solidarity and duty to assist their ethnic kin from across the border, while Turkish assistance providers underscore the high capacity of the state to comprehensively meet humanitarian needs within the national territory.

While the local authorities would ordinarily be one of the essential pillars of a coordinated humanitarian response, the municipalities run by the Kurdish party had, prior to the Kobani crisis, generally been treated by the state and international bodies as non-conventional relief actors. The strategic position of the pro-Kurdish municipalities to respond to the situation in Suruç, however, presents a unique opportunity for the Kurdish movement and associated relief bodies to gain exposure to the international humanitarian community. Highlighting the municipality's capacity to facilitate access to the field as an alternative authority, this article applies to the context of humanitarian action the "Yes, but …" re-assessment of the traditionally assumed state-versus-society/oppressor and victim distinction in Turkish-Kurdish relations, as considered by recent literature (Watts, 2009).

Finally, it is hoped that the Kobani case study serves to elucidate some of the complexities manifest more generally in relations between humanitarian response actors. This article concludes by calling on those engaging practically and academically in humanitarian action within situations of political contention to further reflect on the implications of (ethno-national) identity upon questions of disaster coordination and humanitarian access.

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In Search of Moral Imagination That Tells Us "Who the Kurds Are": toward a New Theoretical Approach to Modern Kurdish Literature

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Abstract

The main objective of this article is to propose a new theoretical perspective on modern Kurdish literature in order to enrich the existing field, which has mainly focused on identity and social issues. This article refers to Kwame Appiah's reflections on the ethics of identity and the concept of moral imagination by Martha Nussbaum, Patricia Werhane and Lawrence M. Hinman, and argues that the proposed moral imagination can have an important contribution to analysing Kurdish literature, deepening existing approaches and better evaluating Kurdish prose. It can also provide a greater insight into the difficult colonial and postcolonial interrelations.

Keywords

contemporary Kurdish literature – identity – moral imagination – village guards

Li pey xeyaleke exlaqî ku dibêje me "kurd kî ne": Ber bi nêrîneke teorîk a nû li ser edebiyata kurdî ya modêrn

Armanca serekî ya vê gotarê pêşkêşkirina nêrîneke nû ya mêtodolojîk e ji bo vekolîna edebiyata kurdî ya modêrn da ku xebatên heyî, ku bêtir bala xwe didin ser nasname û

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meseleyên civakî, dewlemendtir bike. Ev gotar xwe dispêre hizrên Kwame A. Appiah yên li ser etîka nasnameyê û têgeha texeyula exlaqî ya nivîskarên wek Martha Nussbaum, Patricia Werhane û Lawrence M. Hinman. Îdiaya gotarê ew e ku ev têgeha "texeyula exlaqî" dikare beşdariyeke girîng bike di tehlîlkirina edebiyata kurdî de, lewre ew dikare nêrînên heyî kûrtir bike û rêyê li tehlîlên çêtir ên li ser pexşana kurdî veke. Herwiha ev têgeh dibe têgihiştinên berfirehtir dabîn bike li ser têkiliyên aloz ên kolonyal û paş-kolonyal.

لە میانەی گەڕان بە دوای خەیاڵێکی ئەخلاقیدا کە پێمان دەڵێ کوردەکان کێن؟ بەرەو تیۆراندنێکی نوێ بۆ ئەدەبیاتی مۆدێرنی کوردیی

ئامانجی سەرەکی ئەم باسە پێشنیارکردنی تێڕوانینێکی میتۆدۆلۆجییە بۆ ئەدەبی مۆدێرنی کوردی بۆ ڕۆشنکردنەوەی ئەو ڕەوشی هەنووکەییەی بوارەکە، کە بریتییە لە تیشکخستنە سەر بابەتی ناسنامە و بویرە کۆمەڵایەتییەکان. باسەکە ئاماژە بە هەڵسەنگاندنەکانی کوامی. ئەی. ئاپیاح لەمەڕ ئەخلاقییبوننی ناسنامە و هەرەوەها مژاریی خەیاڵکردنی ئاکارییانە لە لای هەریەکە لە مارتا نەسیاو و پاتریشا وەرهاتە و لۆرێنز. ئێم. هینمان دەکات. باسەکە گفتوگۆی ئەوەدەکات کە پێشنیاریی خەیاڵکردنی ئاکارییانە دەتوانێ بەشدارییەکی گرنگی هەبێت لە شرۆڤەکردنی ئەدەبییاتی کوردیدا. دەتوانێت تێگەیشتنە هەنووکەییەکان قوواڵتربکاتەوە و ببێتە مایەی هەڵسەنگاندنێکی بابتییانەتر. لەوەش زیاتر، دەتوانێ دنیابینییەکی مەزنتر بداتە شرۆڤەکار لە میانەی تێگەیشتن لە پەیوەندییە ئاڵۆزەکانی سەردەمی کۆلۆنیاڵیی و پاش کۆلۆنیاڵیی سەبارەت بە ئەدەبی کوردیی.

•••

> Literary form is not separable from philosophical content, but is itself a part of content – an integral part, then, of the search for and the statement of truth.
>
> MARTHA C. NUSSBAUM

•••

> It is to give up certainty but not the search for truth.
>
> ELISABETH GERLE

⁘

Introduction[1]

The title of this article refers to a well-known text by the Kurdish literary scholar Hashem Ahmedzadeh entitled "In search of a Kurdish novel that tells us who the Kurds are". There are a few reasons for borrowing his title. Firstly, the subject of this article relates to the identity issues undertaken by Ahmedzadeh in many of his works, including the above mentioned paper. Secondly, this article wishes to promote continuity in Kurdish literary studies, which to my mind should be focused on enriching and supporting what has already been achieved. That is why I decided to modify his title and not invent a completely new one. Moreover, the title best suits the aim of this article, which aims to show that, considering the moral and philosophical reflection offered by contemporary Kurdish literature, we can better understand *who the Kurds are*,[2] that is to refine the discussion on Kurdish identity. In addition, the ethical reflection fits with the postcolonial perspective and aids us in following the difficult relationship between the Turks and the Kurds. A further aim of this article is to expose the value of questions and doubts in both our everyday judgments and literary interpretations. This article consists of two sections; the first, entitled "Moral imagination and postcolonial reckoning" introduces the term of moral imagination, linking it with postcolonial studies. The second, "When a dog becomes a cat", applies the discussed perspective to analyse a short story by Hesenê Metê[3] entitled "Şepal".

The ethical dimension of Kurdish literature is an inseparable part of Kurdish identity disputes, which dominate Kurdish literary studies, because as shown by Kwame Anthony Appiah, old ethical problems still play an important part

1 This article is part of the research project: *How to Make a Voice Audible? Continuity and Change of Kurdish Culture and of Social Reality in Postcolonial Perspectives* (www.kurdishstudies.pl) approved for financing by The National Science Centre of Poland (decision number DEC-2012/05/E/HS2/03779). I wish to express my thanks to Hesenê Metê for our numerous interesting talks on literature.

2 In this article the question of "who we are" does not reflect an essentialist viewpoint, but rather points to the question of identity that Ahmedzadeh brings up. Any answer to this question individualises the subject, in the same way as other abstract values such as love or hate need to be individualised. By using this phrase I also refer to Appiah who links the question of "who we are" to moral questions such as what we owe to others.

3 Hesenê Metê, born in 1957 in Erxanî in the northern part of Kurdistan, is a contemporary writer based in Sweden. He writes in the Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish. Hesenê Metê is the author of short stories published in collections entitled *Smirnoff* (1991), *Epîlog* (1998), and *Îşev* (Today's Evening, 2009), and novels *Labîrenta Cinan* (The Labirynth of Djinns, 1994), *Tofan* (Storm, 2000), *Gotinên gunehkar* (Sinful stories, 2007) and *Li derê* (In the church, 2011). Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

in our understanding of *who we are*, simply because they cannot be separated from the question of *what we owe to others* (2010: xiii/xiv). According to Appiah (2005: xiv), identity is a modern term applied to conceptualise issues which are not entirely new, but have been taken into account in a philosophical way in the past. He (2005: 24) regards identity as the source of many important ethical values because recognising something as important is often related to our identity. Identity helps us to make choices and find our way through life, evokes solidarity with people of the shared identity and involves collective intentions in our projects and commitments (p. 24). This suggests that when reflecting on identity our attention must be directed to both the social and cultural contexts we live in and to the deeds and inner life where our moral choices are made. Literature and the moral imagination evoked by reading are some of the best instruments to exemplify and understand the processes by which moral choices are made. As stressed by Lawrence M. Hinman (2007: 17), "an imagination, whether through direct contact or through literature and the arts, provides us with access to the inner life of the other, and it is precisely this access which is the foundation of the moral life".

The approaches to modern Kurdish literature that dominate the field of Kurdish literary criticism have been developed by scholars such as Hashem Ahmedzadeh, Özlem Belçim-Galip and Clemence Scalbert-Yücel, who have made important contributions to Kurdish identity and literary studies. However, due to the scarcity of translations of Kurdish literary texts into foreign languages, their works very much represent Kurdish literature outside of the Kurdish speaking world. The main aim of the abovementioned authors has been to present the wider social context in which Kurdish literature emerged and depict the social context contained within the literary texts. That is why I will refer to this perspective as "social". Ahmedzadeh, Belçim-Galip and Scalbert-Yücel explore many topics and motifs, and such an overview is essential for understanding the historical, political and cultural context of literature, but as put forward in this article, without good insight into the characters' inner lives, thoughts, emotions and moral choices, we will not be able to see all the elements of "the Kurdish puzzle". Ahmedzadeh (2003, 2005, 2013), for example, is primarily focused on identity and various aesthetical issues. In his works he presents a close connection between the process of nation-building and the emergence of the novel in the Persian and Kurdish contexts (2003). Furthermore, he (2011, 2014) provides us with an overview of modern Kurdish literary aesthetics, such as realism, naturalism and magic realism, which is an important contribution to Kurdish literary and modernity studies. However, although we can find summaries of novels and short stories in his works, they never offer us a more thorough analysis of actions, thoughts and feelings of

the characters. For example, when Ahmedzadeh (2003) describes the plot of *Gulî Şoran* (The Flower of Shoran), a novel by Eta Nehaye, in discussing the protagonist he states: "We read his thoughts when he enters the city late in the evening" (p. 257) or: "the inner thoughts of the characters are well depicted through their monologues" (p. 258). However, we have no opportunity to learn more about these thoughts and how exactly they are portrayed. The choice of the scholar to shorten the descriptions of novels and its characters is justified by the applied perspective that follows Benedict Anderson's theory and focuses on how Kurdish literature contributed to the process of forming and cementing the *imagined community* of the Kurdish nation (2003: 16). Thus, the priority has been to analyse many literary texts and a variety of motifs ranging from the characters to macro scale topics reflected in the novels, such as historical events (2003: 261) or religious customs (2003: 264). Belçim-Galip (2015, 2014) focuses on the image of Kurdistan in modern Kurdish literature and on the collective memory and diaspora, whilst Clemence Scalbert-Yücel (2012, 2014) reflects on minority literatures and resistance, but none of them expose any inner world, moral dilemmas or difficult choices faced by literary characters. Referring to the novel *Mişextî* (Exile) by Adil Zozan, Belçim-Galip (2015) discusses "the Turkish commander who regrets the cruel operations undertaken against guerrillas during his service in the Turkish army" (p. 139). Moreover, we learn that the commander's life changed after he had been affected by a story told by one of the Kurdish guerrillas while he was in captivity. To quote Belçim-Galip, "as soon as he is released, he gives up his job and, distressed and remorseful, begins to work as a lawyer" (p. 139). This is a very interesting ethical issue showing that moral choices can be inspired by narratives and by getting an insight to the inner life of others. However, this remains unexplored in the text and only briefly summarised. What Belçim-Galip highlights is that the Turkish ex-commander confirms "the existence of Kurdistan as a separate entity" (p. 139) which is "recognition of territory by another nation" (p. 140). In other words, in all of these works we only grasp a general view of the many characters and their ethical dilemmas. The characters are introduced, their dilemmas are sometimes mentioned but they are not explored in detail. That is because from the viewpoint of the social approach characters are important as a part of the larger *imagined community* of the Kurdish nation. Thus, the imagination and characters' inner lives, if at all, are viewed through their connections to Kurdistan, expressed as either a great love or yearning for the homeland (Belçim-Galip, 2015: 174–190).

Not undermining the role of the aforementioned social perspective, which provides us with a clear panoramic view of Kurdish literature, here I would like to focus on a more detailed approach to the inner lives of literary characters,

their thoughts, feelings and moral choices which I consider to be the pillars of the moral imagination project. In order to provide a deeper insight into the ethical dimension of Kurdish literature, in the second part of this article I will analyse the short story, "Şepal" written by Hesenê Metê, which presents difficult moral dilemmas in an aesthetically valuable way. The writer successfully manages to describe a complicated moral plight in a very short text. He does so by applying sophisticated narrative techniques, metaphors and terse well-considered sentences, which is why this story is worthy of further attention. Moreover, "Şepal" tells the story of a Kurdish village guard, Demodin, and raises difficult moral issues of faithfulness and betrayal in an aesthetical way. Thus, it has also potential to contribute to postcolonial studies with regards to Kurdish literature and to the difficult process of reconciliation between Turks and Kurds. By following Demodin, we not only observe Kurdish literature at a distance from the existing social approach, but also immerse ourselves in the psychological and philosophical dimensions of the characters' lives, dilemmas and choices. This analysis suits well the aim of this paper, which is to show moral choices as inseparable from identity. Additionally, the length of this concise short story allows us to analyse it thoroughly in this article.

Moral Imagination and the Postcolonial Reckoning

Along with the domination of postmodern thought, the ethical approach to literature is frequently associated with boring or even dangerous didactics. Postmodern philosophers claim that the traditional morality that was based on essentialism, obligation and instruction is useless in our modern times (Shusterman, 1988: 338–343) and cannot be built into any convincing narration. The crisis of the ethical dimension of literary narratives gave birth to many interesting publications. The acclaimed *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Literature and Philosophy* by Martha Nussbaum (1990) is one such example. The term moral imagination has also been adopted by other American philosophers in order to point to a kind of moral consideration, which for Patricia Werhane (2009: 3) "includes an awareness of the various dimensions embedded in the particular situation." Lawrence M. Hinman (2007: 17) highlights that moral imagination answers a difficult challenge, which is not "whether to tell the truth, but how to do so. How to state difficult, potentially hurtful truths in the best possible way."

The history of the term of moral imagination dates back to the works of Scottish philosopher Adam Smith (1723–1790) as well as the Austrian thinker Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), whose *Philosophy of Freedom* defines the concept.

According to Steiner (2000: 61), imagination fills the gap between abstract ideas we have in our minds and observations we make by means of our senses: imagination becomes an individualised concept, which enriches our knowledge and experiences. According to Steiner's vision of a free man, each of his deeds should be motivated by the imagination-based consideration. It brings together abstract values we wish to follow and enables us to understand the reality we live in. In this way, we can choose the best possible option to act upon and assume responsibility for our deeds. To Steiner, ethics cannot be based exclusively on the norms and codes inherited from the past. Such a morality, which to him dominates people's minds, becomes a rigid rule that does not answer the necessity of deep ethical thinking. That is why it should be transformed by means of moral imagination (p. 61). As we will see in the following section, Hesenê Metê's protagonist, Demodin, intuitively tries to bring together the values he wishes to follow and his own experiences in order to make decisions in life. He adjusts the moral teaching inherited from the old Kurd he respected to a difficult reality in which such lessons seem futile. He does not comply with rigid rules but follows his moral imagination, which is revealed to us through his monologues and conversations with other characters. Although Demodin's choices raise much controversy, the story indicates that his decisions are more complex than a simple desire to deceive or betray others. Furthermore, Hesenê Metê shows what it means to be a Kurd under the harsh regime of the Turkish state, and reveals the tragic perplexity hidden under the label "traitor", which was often applied to the so-called village guards by the Kurds. This helps us both to individualise and reconsider the negative label of traitor and to link ethics to identity in the framework offered by Appiah (2005, 2010), evaluating identity as a possible source of ethical values and moral choices. Reading the story, we can also imagine how difficult it was to make decisions in such tragic circumstances.

In search of arguments in favour of literary moral imagination, Nussbaum came back to ancient Greek philosophy. For her (1990), literature can be useful in moral thinking thanks to its specifics which "gives a certain type of priority to the perception of particular people and situations, rather than to abstract rules" (p. ix). Primarily, she focuses on a noncomensurability of valuable things, which is so well exposed by the qualitative basis of literary texts, rather than the quantitative perspective which dominates in many other sciences. In other words, by means of literature, we can understand the difficulty of making choices, which very often have to be made between two different incomparable values (pp. 106–124). We cannot just measure them in one general and hierarchical scale. This is well exemplified in Hesenê Metê's short story where characters are forced to live in a reality dominated by ideologies and violence

from both Turkish and Kurdish sides. This leads to tragic paradoxes, when choices must be made between completely incomparable values. Although nationalist ideology often claims that the life of a single human should be sacrificed for the sake of a nation, this may and should be questioned by showing the paradoxes it implies. As we can learn from the many ongoing conflicts, people often sacrifice their lives for the sake of their nations because of the difficult conditions they are forced to live in. It happens especially when they feel endangered as members of a group or a nation. From the short story "Şepal" we learn that the family of one of the Kurdish characters, Sadûn, was killed by the guerrillas. Living in a very insecure environment Sadûn is forced to choose his protectors, but he has only two options: the Turkish soldiers or the Kurdish guerrillas, which either way would be a tragic choice. Sadûn cannot simply decide that the lives' of his relatives are less or more important than the idea of Kurdishness in the name of which his family was killed. These values do not belong to one hierarchical scale and cannot be measured thus. Sadûn decides to abandon the "Kurdish camp" represented by the guerrillas and reluctantly makes favour with the Turks being persuaded by his companion, Demodin.

Additionally, Martha Nussbaum (1990: 66) refers to the priority of perception of perceiving the particular. The skill, so important for valuable reasoning, can be deepened and developed by literature, which presents many inner and external contexts embedded in particular situations. In other words, the literary narration provides us with a zoom by which we can see the unfolding reality depicted in the short story or novel. Such a presentation is planned by a writer who guides us to his view of a particular world. By following him we can acquire skills to perceive the particular and train our attention on the reality presented, which does not of course mean that we have to surrender to the writer's vision. It still depends on the reader which elements of the literary world he will appreciate. Consequently, the second part of this article will offer a thorough reading of the story, which will give priority to many details that would not usually be given due consideration by the social approach. Thus, the analysis will focus on the many inner and external contexts embedded in the reality of a Kurdish village and its inhabitants.

What is crucial is the more attention that is paid to the various contexts embedded in a particular situation, the more the literary practice of moral imagination allies with the postcolonial process of recalling and reconsidering the ambiguous relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. The validity of such a process for postcolonial studies and reconciliation was stressed by several thinkers (Gandhi, 2008: 18). Memmi (1968: 45), highlighted that colonialism will only disappear if the coloniser and the colonised are willing to see the reciprocal nature of their difficult relationship and responsibility.

This is well exposed in Hesenê Metê's story through his depiction of the relationship between Demodin and the Turkish sergeant as well as his outspoken question on Kurdish responsibility within the conflict.

Another advantage of literature, which is emphasised by Nussbaum, is its emotional aspect. Although, since antiquity, art has often been excluded from serious thought precisely because of this aspect, Nussbaum regards it as an asset and not a liability. She (1990: 41) claims that "emotions are closely linked to beliefs in such a way that the modification of beliefs brings about the modification of emotions." Moreover, to be overcome by emotions does not necessarily mean losing contact with reality, but may also mean discovering reality by another tool set (p. 261). In other words, the sympathy we get (or lose) for the character we read about is always based on our beliefs, which can be modified or at least reconsidered by the process of reading. Needless to say, it can change our attitude in many aspects to the surrounding world. Thus, emotions engaged in reading become an important cognitive tool and must be treated with due respect. The above is gracefully demonstrated in the story. After reading it, we cannot simply call Demodin a traitor and condemn him for his alliance with the Turkish soldiers. Thanks to empathy evoked by the characters' emotions exposed in the story, we try to understand the traitor, and this is where the power of moral imagination is hidden. Recalling the quotation from Elisabeth Gerle (2003), at the beginning of this article: "we give up certainty" of our judgements "but not the search for truth" (p. 35). On the other hand, Nussbaum (1990: 262) highlights the role of literary texts which provide us with both an emotional zoom and intellectual distance to the described reality and Hesenê Metê achieves this by using two different kinds of narration, which I will analyse in the following section.

Finally, Nussbaum (1990) stresses that literature and moral considerations are linked by one important question derived from Plato, which is *how one should live*. Because "What we really want is an account of an ethical inquiry that will capture what we actually do when we ask ourselves the most pressing ethical questions" (p. 24). In this way, literature is not a recipe for achieving the answers we need in each ethical consideration, but rather a set of questions that can or should be asked in regard to the reality we live in. This allows us to select texts which provide us with answers or questions. The first one is a typical didactic or ideology-based literature, which rarely meets our ethical needs. The second one is created from doubts and considerations, and coincidentally pays much more attention to the aesthetical dimension. It is thanks to the aesthetic means that ethical questions of literature become more sublime and apt. If we look at the history of modern Kurdish literature, we can describe it as a constant departure from the ideological and political device of

portraying reality to a more sensitive perception and description of it. While the first modern Kurdish writers (such as Rehim Qazi or Ibrahim Ahmed) were active in the political field (Ahmedzadeh, 2003: 173–175), many contemporary writers (Hesenê Metê, Sherzad Hessen among others) are keen to declare their independence from ideology or politics. This does not mean that political or national reality is absent in their works: on the contrary, contemporary prose can be a valuable commentary to it. However, the works constantly become more and more multidimensional, embedding new contexts to the presented situations and this is one of the most important achievements of the Kurdish literary field of the last decades. Following Nussbaum, the analysis which proceeds gives priority to questions too, which aims to stress the value and importance of uncertainty, contrary to fixed and permanent views and firm convictions we constantly produce in order to deal with and make sense of, order and judge the reality around us.

When a Dog Becomes a Cat

"Şepal"[4] tells the story of Demodin, who is a *korucu*, i.e. a Kurdish village guard working for the Turkish state against other Kurds. Şepal is Demodin's dog, which becomes a meaningful pretext to tell the story of conquest, subordination, betrayal, faithfulness and human dignity. The analysis of its content will help us see that identity issues are inseparable from moral questions.

Korucu (or *qoriçi* in Kurdish) is the Turkish word that comes from the verb *korumak*, which means to guard/protect. The system of *korucu*s was established by the Republic of Turkey in Kurdistan in the 1980s (Yildiz, 2005: 17). This was a well-known tactic used to infiltrate the region and govern people through a "divide and rule" policy without mass engagement of state resources. To some extent, it can be compared to the so-called dark blue police or *Polnishe Polizei* created by Nazi Germany in occupied Poland. But in the case of *korucu*, not only individuals but also families and clans were engaged in supporting the state against the rebels. *Korucu*s were and continue to be seen as traitors by many members of the Kurdish community, who did not accept such an alliance with the Turkish state. Nevertheless, the reasons for joining the *korucu*s were very diverse and Hesenê Metê indicates them in his short story. He does it

4 The story was published in the collection entitled *Îşev* (2009), by Apec Förlag, Stockholm, pp. 37–45. All the quotations in this article come from that edition. I also translated this story into Polish and it was published as Szepal in the second online issue of *Fritillaria Kurdica. Bulletin of Kurdish Studies* (Metê, 2012).

in an allusive form which reminds us of his inspiration from Anton Chekhov's style, where the meaning is rather hidden between the lines than directly exposed. By a few well considered short sentences he manages to tell volumes about the contradictions of human nature.

The short story uses a complicated mixed form of narration, which makes us see the world through Demodin's eyes and from a distance of a third-person narrative mode. The third-person narrative is in the present tense, which can be compared to a play. The events seem both exhibited and talked about. Thanks to the first-person narrative mode, we are submerged in reality and follow Demodin's emotions and point of view and, by means of the play-shaped style narration, we find ourselves far away, somewhere outside "the stage", where the events are taking place. In other words, we simultaneously come closer to and keep a distance from reality.

As mentioned above, the eponymous *Şepal* is the name of Demodin's dog. It is used as a meaningful metaphor since the dog itself is not playing any important role in events. Nevertheless, it becomes a crucial factor for the essence of this literary text. Şepal can be included in the family of famous literary dogs and be compared with Sharik from "The Heart of a Dog" by the Russian writer Mikhail Bulgakov (1925). Bulgakov used the motif of a dog to recount the gruesome reality of the Soviet regime as does Hesenê Metê, when exploring the reality of the Turkish regime in the 1980s. Şepal finally escapes but is caught and killed. The dog's connection to Demodin is visible from the very beginning and he becomes representative of his owner's hidden desires and inner thoughts.

Şepal's name (which means a brave dog), carries a metaphorical meaning. On the one hand, it is a very popular name for dogs in Kurdistan, so perhaps not remarkable. However, another meaning of Şepal is panther or lion, which are from the Feline rather than the Canine family. Although, seemingly of minor importance, it becomes crucial when viewed through the context of two contradictory and even competing identities, not only of dog and cat but also of Kurds and Turks. In other words, we can ask what the reason for a dog becoming a cat is? What is the underlying meaning of a dog being called by a cat's name in the story? Through this meaningful metaphor we are invited to approach and consider the ambiguous relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, its psychological and moral complexity. As we will see below, this motif is further strengthened and developed in the story.

The story starts late in the evening when Şepal's barking disturbs Demodin's wife. The plot is initially exposed by the play narrative mode, which quickly switches to the first person narrative. During the evening conversation between Demodin and his wife, Mehnaz, we are told about the events that took place

in the near and more distant past. Then the play narration refers briefly to the events that followed, which brings the end to the story.

Demodin explains to his wife that Şepal is displaying his brave spirit, which comes from lions and tigers. He emphasises the value of his words by saying that they are not only his, but also "Durmîş efendi's words" (p. 37). We learn that Durmîş efendi is a sergeant at the nearby Turkish military base that Demodin works for.[5] His respectful use of the title *Durmîş efendi*[6] is even adopted when he speaks with his wife at home (pp. 37–38). Thus, it expresses admiration rather than fear or subordination. The Turkish sergeant, who came from a far and unknown world outside of the village, becomes a father figure for Demodin. In one of the final sentences of the story Demodin even calls him Qaşo (p. 44), which is the Kurdish diminutive of the Turkish name Durmuş.[7] It highlights that, in fact, Demodin strongly desires to fraternise with the sergeant and manages to do so to some extent. Demodin tells his wife how he offered his brave dog to work with the sergeant. He asks Durmîş efendi to set a salary for Şepal, because of his unique skills to hunt guerrillas.[8] The sergeant smiles and tells Demodin that the state (i.e. Turkish state) does not allow any salaries to be paid to dogs, stressing that such things could not even happen during the Ottoman times. Instead, he suggests buying the dog but Demodin refuses saying that, despite being clever, Turkish officials do not know anything about taking care of a dog. The dog cannot be sold to the Turks because "by eating the bread from the military base it will become a bastard."[9] Thus, setting a salary for the dog while it remains resident in Demodin's home is a better solution (pp. 39–40). This brief conversation holds many important hidden meanings.

5 It is not clear what kind of base it is, the army or gendarme. Still, there are three kinds of security forces in Turkey: police, gendarme and the army.

6 In Turkey the word "effendi" is used as a respectful form that can be translated into English as "Mr."

7 Throughout the text I use the Kurdish spelling of the Turkish word "Durmuş" which is "Durmîş".

8 Because of the leftist ideology and comparisons to the South American leftist revolutionary movements, the Kurdish rebels from Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*, PKK) often call themselves *guerrillas* (*gerîla*) and are referred to as such by their supporters. It is interesting that Demodin uses this eponym narrating his talk to the sergeant because such a word could hardly have been used by the Turkish sergeant. *Gerîla* is an eponym of respect and Turkish officials would never use it referring to PKK fighters. But narrating the story to his wife, Demodin puts it into Durmîş efendi's mouth. This is also one of the writer's methods to make Demodin's character more ambiguous and rich.

9 I provide the original quotation: "(…) bi nanê qereqolan kûçik çênabin. Nanê qereqolan kûçikan dike bênamûs û hew" (p. 39).

Obviously, we see Demodin's witty wish to get a salary for the dog, but on the other hand, what he is saying is in fact an insult to the Turkish officials, who, in spite of their power and knowledge, can only raise bastards. Thus, these words inescapably suggest that the Turkish officials are morally corrupted and stupid. The sergeant is unable to grasp the meaning of Demodin's words because of the light hearted atmosphere of their conversation. But are Demodin's words conscious or subconscious? Is he talking about the dog or about himself? Does he realise the ironic absurdity of the situation? Though his outward approach to Durmîş efendi suggests that Demodin wishes to fraternise with the Turks, these words imply that there is still a kind of hidden distance and aversion between Demodin and the Turkish state that the sergeant represents. This renders the literary characteristic of the main personage as more rich and sophisticated and helps us to imagine the ambiguous attitude Demodin has toward the sergeant which consists of both friendly feelings and aversion.

Sadûn, who has been silent up till now, comes to Demodin. Sadûn is his Kurdish companion who also works for the Turks as a village guard. He tells Demodin not to debase himself, by which we can suppose he means Demodin's conversation with the sergeant and his plan to obtain a salary for his dog. This episode is also narrated by Demodin. Sadûn says that Demodin's words are the real debasement and if "someone is not a villain he will never bow his head before villains."[10] This indirect accusation sounds serious to Demodin, who wishes to discuss it with his wife Mehnaz. She points out that Sadûn has no right to say so because he also joined the Turks as a village guard. Unexpectedly, Demodin opposes her by confessing that it was not Sadûn's idea to join them but that he had convinced him to do that because "no good will come of Sadûn's wandering with a gun in hand" (p. 41). We can extract more information from this small excerpt. Firstly, through Demodin's feeling of responsibility for persuading Sadûn to join the Turks, we understand that a relationship with the Turks is not highly valued by Demodin, although he himself identifies with them. He likes the sergeant and wants Sadûn to get to know Durmîş efendi, but at the same time, he also seems distanced toward them. Secondly, we see that Demodin only has good intentions. He knows well that in reality the patronage that sustains them is very important, and a man alone with a gun can soon bring problems upon his own head. Furthermore, we acknowledge that Sadûn might have had his own important reason for joining the Turks. Demodin tells Mehnaz about Sadûn's family tragedy. Sadûn's

10 "Belê, rasterast ev rezîlî ye û ne tiştekî din, Demodîn! … Û ku meriv ne rezîl be, meriv dest û devê xwe li ber van rezîlan xwar nake!" (p. 40).

mountain *zoma* (pastures inhabited by the Kurdish shepherds during the summer) have been frequently visited by Kurdish guerrillas, who the villagers fed and sheltered. One day, Sadûn's father (Sofî Sêvdîn), who was widely respected for his wisdom (as stressed by Demodin), was accused by the guerrillas of inviting a Turkish officer and some soldiers into his tent. Sofî Sêvdîn confessed that he did so because it was their Kurdish duty to offer food even to an enemy (p. 42). According to Sofî Sêvdîn, being a Kurd requires behaving in this way.[11] However, the guerrillas respond by saying that times have changed and what he did was a treachery. Hearing the word traitor, Sadûn spits at the guerrillas and they retaliate by throwing a grenade into the tent and killing his family.[12] Sadûn, loses an eye in the explosion. Afterwards, he equips himself with a gun in order to defend himself against the guerrillas (pp. 42–43). The story is narrated by many agents (Demodin says that Sadûn has said that Sofî Sêvdîn had said …), which is typical for folklore and religious tradition exhibited mainly in the stories devoted to the Prophet Muhammad. We cannot be sure if the presented events happened exactly in this way. Hesenê Metê adapts this traditional narrative mode to describe his personages and justify their moral choices. In such a style he traces the way in which they learn about the reality. In both Sofi Sevdin's and the guerillas' statements we see the strong relevance of Appiah's connection between ethics and identity. Although understood differently, Kurdishness is linked to the notion of rightful choices. In the first case, it is *the feeding of enemies*, which is of course linked to the traditional duty of hospitality, in the second, *fighting with them*. Hence, to understand the perplexity of the situation, we need to see other elements of the puzzle. Sadûn should, according to the traditional code of rules, take revenge for the killing of his family. However, can he revolt against the guerrillas, that is, those who declare that they will protect the villagers from the enemy and liberate their

11 "Min ji bo we, ji bo xwe … gotiye, min ji bona me hemûyan nan û av daye ber wan, ma em ne Kurd in? Berbora bav û kalan e ku em li ser kulavê xwe mêvanan bi nan û av bikin. … ku dijmin be jî" (p. 42).

12 Because of this scene, the story was criticised by many Kurdish readers I know, complaining that it is not showing the Kurdish struggle in an adequate light. I will argue, however, that Hesenê Metê's critique is not of a political kind. It is not against or in favour of Kurdish village guards, the PKK or even the Turkish state. The story exposes the extreme emotions people are prone to precisely because of the Turkish army presence. The writer courageously asks for Kurdish responsibility, but does not justify Turks or their military presence. Hesenê Metê's lack of information about them can be compared to Ehmedê Khani's meaningful silence on the fate of Mîr Zeydin in the final part of the Kurdish classic poem *Mem and Zin*. Although its form is allusive, this silence speaks louder than words.

country? What approach should he apply on his enemies? The one inherited from his father or the one suggested by the guerrillas? Even Sadûn confesses that the only thing he wants is not to avenge but to defend himself. Demodin wishes to help him by securing the patronage of the competing faction, the Turks. But, is it all so simple? Can they ally with the Turks without doubts or consideration? Observing Demodin's plan to get a salary for his dog, Sadûn opposes him by suggesting that what he wishes to do is typical for a villain who cowers down to another villain. Sadûn, similarly to guerrillas, takes the position of the one who places judgement. Yet, his anger emphasises that it is not easy to judge his fellow man, being in alliance with the Turks at the same time. From a distance, the reasons for becoming a Turkish servant lose their poignancy and become a simple fact to be established and judged by others. Narrating the story to his wife, Demodin feels compelled to share it with someone. It may mean that he does not feel comfortable about what happened. The events he narrates and his attention towards the surrounding reality, which is well proven by his approach to Sadûn, suggest that he is, in fact, a thoughtful and caring person, but ultimately, he is unsure of what he should do.

A very interesting motif is Sadûn's father's definition of being a Kurd, which is linked to ethical choices and, as stressed above, illustrates the validity of Appiah's idea. We see a mountainous village that consists of tents and people attached to tradition. Can the loss of one's family be compared to the lack of a country's independence? They cannot be measured by one scale of values. The noncomensurability of these two values in such a context makes people's choices a tragedy. Furthermore, this small episode emphasises another issue. Sofî Sêvdîn purports the role of tradition in understanding Kurdish identity, whilst the guerrillas claim that *the times have changed*, so what had previously been perceived as good cannot be seen as such anymore. Sofî seeks a solution in the old customs, highlighting the continuity of tradition and identity. The guerrillas wish to cut links with the past and only believe in their own wisdom and new, we can assume, radical solutions. But, is the old tradition sufficient in understanding more sophisticated threats of the modern Turkish state? And can the guerrillas win by disassociating from tradition and proclaiming a new war ethics? As stressed above, it is also a conflict of two competitive visions of Kurdishness and of how one should live in such a difficult reality. Both are hard-line approaches, thus it is useful to ask if there is any appropriate narration which can link the moral imagination of an old shepherd and a young guerrilla. Hesenê Metê's story invents such a narration. Demodin presents different contexts embedded in the situation and becomes the attentive listener to both traditional and contemporary ideas of how to deal with the Turkish military presence.

According to Steve Brie and William T. Rossiter (2010), literature may be a kind of up-dating practice leading to the understanding of different ethical codes, people, generations and conditions they live in. A literary up-dating method is based not only on narration but also on intertextuality, which forces old motifs and characters to speak in a new, more understandable way. Such a practice is also visible in other works by Hesenê Metê, where he applies Yezidi or classical Kurdish literary motifs or personages.[13]

The section which follows Demodin's conversation with his wife adapts a play narration again. We learn that Şepal escapes from the village and afterwards his body is found hanging in Demodin's garden along with the note that next time it will be his owner. Simultaneously, someone sets fire to the school near the Turkish military barracks. It is not known who the culprit is, the reader may just assume that it was Sadûn. We do not know if Sadûn joined the guerrillas or if he is acting alone. As a result, Demodin is arrested by the soldiers and is suspected of arson (pp. 43–45). Despite the close relationship between him and sergeant Durmîş, Demodin cannot be trusted by the Turks nor be a part of them. Praised so much at the beginning, Şepal now becomes (in Demodin's description) the main responsible figure for all the bad things that have happened. Being until now a symbol of faithfulness, Şepal comes to symbolise betrayal. So does his owner in the eyes of the Turks. Şepal could not become the tiger. Theatrical narration, in addition to different descriptions of the dog, are significant elements linking the end with the beginning of the story. Demodin is not the hero type, but just an average guy, who wishes to be financially secure, calm and happy with his wife. But in his conversation with the sergeant, Demodin seems to be frank and courageous enough to be a hero. Contrary to Sadûn or the guerrillas, Demodin tries not to judge anyone. At the same time, he is naive in his belief that he merits the trust and friendship of the Turkish soldiers. Is Demodin just unwise, then? Or, maybe what he really wants is to cheat them? It just might be so that the metaphor of dog and cat refers not to the other identity of these creatures but to their other symbolic features. Isn't the behaviour of a smart cat a better tactic in a situation

13 In his novel *Tofan* Hesenê Metê revived Beko (or Bekir), the notorious character from the legend of *Meme Alan* and Ehmedê Khani's *Mem and Zîn*. In both stories Beko served as a symbol of the worst kind of villain. However, the writer showed that ordinary people may be worse than Beko, whose name they constantly apply to stigmatise or exclude others. Following Ehmedê Khani, Bekir may be considered more than just a bad character. It can be perceived as Satan or the Yezidi *Tawusê Melek* personified. He is depicted as the source of good and of knowledge that is misunderstood by people. In other words, the tradition Hesenê Metê follows here indicates that "evil" must be explored and understood rather than simply condemned (Bocheńska, 2014: 146).

demanding contact rather than fighting with the enemy? In a changed reality, being as faithful as a dog may just mean losing dignity. So, who is Demodin? Is he a traitor or rather a follower of Sofî Sêvdîn's definition of a Kurd, who simply wants to be a good man and does not even want to kill his enemies? But perhaps following the guerrillas' insistence that *times have changed*, he also wishes to resist the Turks by applying smartness rather than violence, however, we cannot be sure of that. Hesenê Metê's character adequately shows that courage and fear, as well as faithfulness and betrayal, smartness and foolishness may be inseparable from each other in one human being, who seemingly cannot be simply classified as a hero or traitor. The dog, which is now blamed for being unfaithful and susceptible to passion, escapes from the village in a very meaningful way. He "disappears from people's memory as a clumsy and unnecessary writer" (p. 43). The odd comparison suggests Şepal's links not only to his owner but also to the author. The escape from the humiliating reality seems to be the only way to save dignity, but the solution is unavailable for the other characters. Thus, the story also becomes a symbolic reckoning with the writer's past advocating for more attention and understanding in judging human deeds.

Conclusion

The analysis of this story shows us the difficult reality by emphasising the ethical problems of people who live in such circumstances. Of course, the usefulness of this story is not its literary meaning, but being written by a Kurd from Turkey, "Şepal" reflects the human plight in a very convincing, apt and aesthetically valuable form. Through detailed reading, our moral imagination becomes more sensitive to the problems which ordinarily are alien to us. Being familiar with such an intimate and particular situation, we become keener on exploring other related topics in a more attentive way. Moreover, the applied perspective provides us with a better insight in to the inner life of the characters, their dilemmas, feelings and choices, which are crucial for a fuller understanding of *who the Kurds are*. The Kurdish identity is closely related to the characters' ethical choices because their understanding of identity very much preconditions such choices and a hierarchy of values. On the other hand, their choices can influence their identity because they often result in belonging to different competing groups such as the village guards and the guerrillas, the Turks and the Kurds. The old shepherd represents the attachment to tradition, guerrillas focus on the changing reality and Demodin wishes to mesh these two different systems of values. What links them together is the humiliating experience of

the violent Turkish domination and the wish to overcome it with dignity. In spite of being labelled a traitor, in this short story the Kurdish village guard has the chance to speak and to be seen as a thoughtful and even a caring person. This does not of course mean that every Kurdish village guard was the same (we cannot even be sure about Demodin), but it urges us to be more critical and attentive in our judgments.

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Making Sense: Research as Active Engagement

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Abstract

When research gives voice to groups or people who are considered "deviant" this can lead to the charge that research is biased. In this paper, I will discuss the issue of bias in relation to my own work on the PKK. I will argue that the accusation of bias is related to a hierarchy of voices, in which some voices are considered more credible than others. I will furthermore argue that when we want to understand how particular actors make sense of themselves, their being in the world, and their interaction with others, then clearly, there is no other option but to observe their perspective.

Keywords

methodology – the PKK – making sense – research

Introduction

As a spin-off to my research on modernity and ordering in the southeast of Turkey (Jongerden, 2007), I have studied the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkêren Kurdistan*, PKK) (Akkaya and Jongerden, 2011; Jongerden and Akkaya, 2011; Akkaya and Jongerden, 2012; Casier and Jongerden, 2012; Casier and Jongerden, 2012; Jongerden and Akkaya, 2012; Jongerden and Akkaya, 2013; Jongerden and Akkaya, 2013; Jongerden, 2015).[1] In this work, I have sought to

1 I use the acronym "PKK" here as an umbrella term, referring to all those who are enacting the organisation, the movement, and the idea of the PKK.

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understand the PKK's outlook and actions, how these make sense for those involved, and I have treated the militants as political actors endowed with interests and the will to elaborate and articulate those interests[2] (Gould, 1995: 195). In my work on the PKK, I started from this very simple idea that what the PKK, its activists and militants, its leaders and rank and file do and think actually make sense, and if things look incomprehensible to us it simply is 'because we are too far away from the situation to know the actual contingencies under which the action was chosen' (Becker, 1998: 42). Over the years, however, I have received various comments, from colleagues and peers suggesting that my focus on how the PKK explain themselves in their own words appears to come very close to legitimising and justifying the official party line. As if when a scholar tries to explain the PKK in its own words, engaging and understanding the party's own perspective, the result is not academic but political. The suggestion is that the way I give credibility to their voices undermines "the descriptive adequacy or truth status of our accounts" (Sayer, 2011: 45). It is this issue of bias and the idea that one should take an objectivist position that I wish to discuss in this article. I will discuss this in the context of what I think sociology should do: make sense of practices and things.

Credibility: Why Them?

To some, a non-biased position involves a vision from nowhere; objectivity as the vision from the outside, from all around, equally. To others, a non-biased position implies a position from everywhere, which is being nowhere in particular. The trick of seeing everything from nowhere or everywhere is referred to as the "God position" or the "God trick" (Harraway, 1988: 584); it is that position which enables scientists to make claims without being influenced by subjective factors, either because of an outer position of pure or direct objectivity or a position in which objectivity is attained as the many subjective factors combine and balance one another in a kind of cancelling out. However, I feel it is more likely that the disembodied gaze from nowhere, or everywhere, the so-called God, is not possible and not desirable (Becker, 1967; 1998; 2013; Harraway, 1988). Instead, I adhere to an approach of reasoning from cases and

2 Elsewhere and some years ago, Marlies Casier and I argued that "Most of the academic literature on the PKK does not attempt to understand the movement, but tries to show the PKK as an expression of something else. Unsurprisingly, a significant part of the academic literature on the PKK is written from the perspective of criminology (…) and of terrorism and counter-insurgency (…) or a convergence of the two" (Casier and Jongerden, 2012).

identifying variables (Becker, 1998; 2013), of engaging with partial knowledge, which is a perspective of partial sight and limited voices, and always someone's sight and someone's voice. Thus, knowledge is "always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and *therefore* able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another" (Harraway, 1988: 586). Research always involves partiality, since we are always working from and with particular social constructions of the world and have to consider the specific circumstances under which something is deemed "true". And if one tries, as I do, to investigate the what, where, when, how, and why of certain actors, if one wants to understand how these actors make sense of themselves, their being in the world, then clearly, one is required to examine their perspective.

Taking a perspective is not bias. In *Whose Side Are We On*, the sociologist Howard Becker (1967) argues that we always take perspectives, but only particular perspectives run the risk of being qualified as biased. He argues that "the accusation (of bias) arises in one important class of cases". This is "when the research gives credence, in any serious way, to the perspective of the subordinate group in some hierarchical relationship" (Becker, 1967: 240). The accusation of bias is thus related to the recognition of particular voices; of subordinate voices, of "others", as credible. Becker distinguishes between two forms in which the accusation occurs. The first is the suspicion of bias when a story is told from the perspective of the subordinate, or, if one likes, "the other"; the second is the suspicion of bias when the research takes place in an open conflict, where established hierarchies are called into question (ibid: 241, 244).

Beginning with the first, the telling of a story from the perspective of the subordinate (other) is questioned on the basis of a hierarchy of credibility. In our case, the right to tell the story of the PKK is questioned from the perspective of the superordinate (say, Turkey) or, more generally, from the perspective from those who have defined the PKK as the unintelligible outside (such as the state, particular Kurdish organisations or Turkish (leftist) parties, for various reasons). The moment we accept the credibility of the PKK as an actor with a story to tell, we become prone to accusations of bias. This becomes aggravated when "We compound our sin and further provoke charges of bias by not giving immediate attention and 'equal time' to the apologies and explanations of official authority" (Becker, 1967: 242). In other words, if we tell the story from the perspective of the subordinate, or the other, we become duty-bound to tell it also from the perspective of the dominant – and, by implication, all other perspectives, returning us to the objectivist position of telling a story from everywhere, the impossible God trick. In the second form of the accusation of bias – in the context of an open conflict in which established hierarchies are

called into question – the accusation is prompted by the apparently conflicting definitions of reality. This becomes problematic insofar as it calls into question the very legitimacy of a political system: "When the situation is political, the researcher may accuse himself or be accused of bias by someone else, when he gives credence to the perspective of either party to the political conflict" (Becker, 1967: 241).

The point is, however, that the issue is not one of whether to take a perspective or not, but rather that when scholars engage with perspectives related to groups of people in subordinate positions, or, for one reason or another, designated as "other", and in the context of an open conflict about the definition of reality, that scholars and their work run the risk of being adjudged as unworthy (Becker, 1967: 247). The accusation of bias, therefore, can be looked upon as disciplinary action, as an action that tends (and sometimes intends) to result in scholars organising their research around certain norms of credibility.

Obviously, scholars taking a perspective should be concerned with the limits of what they study, the boundaries beyond which findings cannot be applied. And this is not the disclaimer in which we clarify that our study is only about the PKK so cannot be extended to other militant groups in other regions, since such "findings may very well hold if the conditions are the same elsewhere" (Becker, 1967: 247). Rather, it is that we have specifically made our study through the eyes of one particular movement or party; our study only speaks and only *can* speak from that one vantage point. Such an approach can clarify how certain things matter, how their relation to the world matters – or, even better, it can look at how a political actor, the PKK, views its being in the world. As such, then, my research is not so much concerned with reporting "their views as social facts about them but takes them seriously as evaluations of their experience" (Sayer, 2011: 9).

Making Sense

To make sense of the PKK is to locate the organisation in time and place; making sense of the PKK is about a grounding of the PKK, is about the question of how they understand themselves. It is a making sense of the PKK by listening to what those active within the organisation have to say about themselves, by engaging with how they see the world and how they explain themselves and their actions. It does not seek to judge that.

Following the work of the sociologist Howard Becker, I start from the assumption that the PKK and their activities make perfect sense for those who are involved, and that we need to figure out the social context in which

things seem to make sense. Thus, when we assert that the PKK, the ideology, the actions of its members, seem bizarre or unintelligible, this only states than that it seems so from a particular (outsider's) perspective (Becker, 1998: 28). In my research, therefore, I look for the sense that actions make, that concepts or ideas make, at least for those involved (Jongerden and Akkaya, 2012: 6). Making sense of the PKK means trying to understand how the PKK makes sense of itself and the circumstances under which things are understood.

Examining how the PKK makes sense of itself may seem to be an obvious thing to do, but it is not. To date, only a few studies have treated the PKK and its militants as credible voices. In *Blood and Belief*, a key work on the history of the party, the author, Aliza Marcus, decided to only interview former PKK members and dissidents. Displaying the courage to make things explicit, Marcus (2007: vii) explained herself thus:

> There are some who will complain that this book places too much stock in information provided by former PKK members. They will argue this information is suspect, because people who have taken part in an illegal, violent movement cannot be trusted. (…) I believe that in order to really understand the PKK, or any such movement, for that matter, it is necessary to talk to those people who actually were part of it.

Only former members were interviewed, Marcus goes on to explain: "For a variety of reasons, but mainly because current PKK members rarely speak freely" (ibid.). There is, of course, always an issue around the sense and extent to which a person is speaking "freely" (people are constantly in conversation with themselves about what to tell and what not) and the impact of this on the version they give to the world (their version, at that time, and, moreover, with that investigator). Disregarding this and associated issues, however, there is here a clear implication in this reconstruction of the party's history that the current party members are somehow not considered credible "voices", that they are, presumably, taken to be bound by the party line whereas former party members are not.[3]

In other works, however, the narratives of those associated with the PKK are routinely qualified, if not dismissed, as ideological. Thus, one could say that

3 I am not arguing against interviewing dissidents, on the opposite, but argue against dismissing those who are active within the movement as credible voices.

my[4] primary interest is in the stories disregarded by others. And when I have engaged with the question of how the PKK makes sense of itself (how they make sense of things themselves), this has meant for me that I should, as Gould (1995: 195) puts it, treat militants as political actors endowed with interests and the will to elaborate and articulate those interests. This also assumes what we might refer to as the reflexive monitoring of *actions*, implying the possibility of a practical as well as discursive consciousness, of a tacit knowledge that is skilfully applied in the enactment of courses of action in addition to the capacity of agents to "give reasons" and "rationalise" their conduct (Giddens, 1979).

Take, for example, the article *The Kurdistan Workers' Party and a New Left in Turkey* (Jongerden and Akkaya, 2012). This article is based in large part on an analysis of the publication *In Remembrance of the Proletarian and Internationalist Revolutionary Haki Karer*, a 33-page text published in May, 1978. This text was published one year after the killing of Haki Karer in Antep, a large city in Turkey on the north-western fringe of the Kurdistan region. The text is credited to the Kurdistan Devrimcileri (Kurdistan Revolutionaries), the name by which a small group of committed radicals was known before adopting the name "PKK", and to which Haki Karer belonged until he was killed by a member of a rival group, named Stêrka-Sor. In this text, the Kurdistan Revolutionaries formulate a scathing criticism of the left in Turkey. Through the text and conversations with militants about issues discussed in the text, we can learn about the contentious relationship between the PKK and the left and understand how the nature of political struggle was perceived by its activists.

Another example is our study of democratic confederalism and democratic autonomy (Akkaya and Jongerden 2013; Jongerden and Akkaya 2013), two concepts that play a central role in the PKK's idea of social reconstruction and through which we may question dominant political imaginaries. The concepts of democratic confederalism and democratic autonomy sound incomprehensible from the perspective of established political vocabularies. In such vocabularies, autonomy is defined as a form of sub-sovereignty granted to institutions within a sovereign state, the transfer of (limited) state functions and responsibilities to institutions that form a sub-state (Reyes and Kaufman, 2011). In the PKK discourse, however, it refers to a new grounding of the political status of people, on the basis of self-government; in terms of competences (Illich, 1977), social practices (Negri, 1991; Hardt and Negri, 2004), new political

4 There are others too, of course, who provide their own analysis of the PKK; see, for example Akkaya (2015); Casier (2010a); Casier (2010b); Gurbuz (2016); Gunes (2012); Gunes and Zeydanlioglu (2013); Smets and Akkaya (2015); and Yarkin (2015), to name just a few.

practices based on active citizenship and public action (Arendt, 1990 [1963]), or of cohabitation (Butler, 2015). When Akkaya and I discussed and presented the PKK's concept of democratic confederalism at academic conferences of MESA (Middle East Studies Association) in 2009 and WOCMES (World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies) in 2010 and subsequently started to write articles on the issue, several colleagues musing on the subject referred to the concepts of democratic confederalism and democratic autonomy as incomprehensible PKK-talk. This brings me back again to the issue of making sense raised by Becker: when something seems incomprehensible to us, it means we are too far away from that very something to know the actual contingencies under which an action or position was chosen. In other words, the problem is our lack of understanding, combined with judgement, in which case the challenge is to try to understand the way thoughts and practices are being developed and to learn from them (Gibson-Graham, 2008: 618).

Therefore, we took a closer look at democratic confederalism and democratic autonomy and explored these as a way of doing politics, as formulated by those active within the PKK, in addition to investigating the inspiration for this reformulation of politics. This engagement made it possible to raise questions about three important pillars of contemporary politics (the state, class and party) and of sociological concepts (power, people and politics) and put the PKK's thinking and actions into a historical and contemporary perspective (Akkaya and Jongerden, 2012; 2013; Jongerden and Akkaya, 2013; Jongerden, 2015).

Am I That Label?

Although the PKK is routinely characterised as a guerrilla/armed organisation, an insurgent movement or a terrorist organisation, many in the PKK would strongly object to a definition of the movement in military (or similar) terms. If we agree that the rationality is in the eye of the beholder, then a starting point is to be found in how the activists see themselves. The self-definition is that of a political movement, and when one talks with people in the movement, it is also defined as a youth movement and as a women's movement. When the PKK was established as a political party in 1978, it had a classical communist party type organisational structure, with a General Secretary as the leading party official and an Executive Committee responsible for direct operations. The highest executive institution was the Central Committee, and the Party Congress was the party's highest decision-making body. Over the years, however, the

PKK transformed and grew more diverse, into a party-complex, a formation of parties and organisations in all four parts of Kurdistan, *Bakur* (Northern Kurdistan) in Southeast Turkey, *Başur* (Southern Kurdistan) in Northern Iraq, *Rojava* (Southwest Kurdistan) in Northern Syria, and *Rojhilat* (East Kurdistan) in Northwest Iran. The most important of these organisations today is the Association of Communities in Kurdistan (*Koma Civakên Kurdistan*, KCK).[5] The KCK enacts itself as a network of village, city, and regional councils, whose assembly is called the Kurdistan People's Congress (Kongra-Gel). In short, what we used to know as the political party called the PKK institutionalised itself in various areas as an expression of a radical democratic discourse on active citizenship (Akkaya and Jongerden, 2012; Jongerden and Akkaya, 2013).

We could take this question of what the PKK is a step further. When we consider the PKK from the perspective of the KCK, the questions arise as to what extent we can separate or assume a pre-existing separation between organisation and population. Essentially, the KCK is engaging with an idea of social reconstruction that tries to develop the concept of democracy beyond nation and state, developing a bottom-up system for self-government referred to as democratic confederalism. The cornerstone of this democratic confederalism is the development of an alternative form of politics through self-organisation, a politics as self-government. In making this move, the PKK distinguishes statecraft from government, and like the Paris Commune (1871), almost 150 years ago, thinks not in terms of a centralist state but of "a free union of autonomous collectives" and a "confederation of free peoples" (Ross, 2015: 38). This association of people in a confederal union of communes lies at the basis of government in the three "cantons" of Rojava and is practiced as an assembly democracy, from street to city and regional level. It is not clear that there is any particular point or line where the KCK as a party-institution ends and the population starts. This makes the question of where the party ends and the constituency starts problematic, which is not a problem of finding a dividing line, however, so much as a problem of theory, because it makes an ontological claim about the nature of politics as presupposing a duality, comprised by an actor (the party) and a population (the people). So ex-ante distinction between

5 Originally the Association of Associations in Kurdistan (*Koma Komalên Kurdistan*, KKK), the KCK is both a concept embodying the idea of democratic confederalism as developed by Abdullah Öcalan and a societal organisation presented as an alternative to the nation-state that Öcalan sees as a model for the resolution of the problems of the Middle East; in the PKK party complex, the KCK, can be considered the executive body, with all parties and organisations coordinated through it.

party and constituency is based on a particular form of politics, namely on the idea that politics is an act in which people are represented, whether this be in the form of what Weber calls "an appropriated representation", a "free representation" and an "instructed representation" (Weber, cited in Hardt and Negri, 2004: 245–47). Yet this is not politics per se, but a version of politics, the version that has become dominant, and one different from politics envisaged in the KCK. This idea of politics is what Kropotkin (and after him Bookchin and now the PKK) refers to as the Roman or centralist imaginary of politics, as that which informed the American and French constitutionalists of the 18th century. This is contrasted with a Hellenic participatory and communal form of politics, which is not based on a herd of subjects and a politics of representation, and is rather based on an active citizenship, where action is not the prerogative of professional politicians but people, citizens themselves (Jongerden and Akkaya 2013; Jongerden 2015).

When we allow for the possibility of the idea of this other form of politics, this non-duality of active political actor and population, we consider instead the possibility of a politics based on citizen access to the public realm (with participation in decision-making as its constitutive basis), characteristically marked by fluidity and a hybridity of roles. In this politics, it is difficult to determine where the active actor ends and passive or supportive actor begins, since people are mostly both. Structurally they fill both roles, and practically they move from one to the other or play both at the same time. This fluidity and hybridity is expressed by the Invisible Committee (Committee, 2014: 22):

> We don't fight in the midst of the people "like fish in water"; we're the water itself, in which our enemies flounder – soluble fish.

One may draw an analogy with the nature of light, in which we choose either wave or particle, that which we look for determines what we see. But the party-people or actor-constituency binary (duality) is not just a misleading distinction, it is one that is performative too. The party-constituency speech-act bring into being what it names, making the division between the party and the people by talking about it. Insofar as it is a performative, the production of the actor-constituency duality and its conceptual and productive imposition, then a question is raised about the relation between theory and counter-insurgency. To what extent, we may ask, is our language, our research on militancy itself, a part of the "exclusionary" practices that create the "insurgent", so that what remains is on the one hand a governable population and on the other a paramilitary, which can be annihilated by virtue of its separation? To what extent is the actor-constituency duality a linguistic counter-insurgency, creating the

category of the insurgent (literally, one who rises up within, one who in-surges), to be combatted and neutralised (put down), and that of the population, to be pacified and governed?[6] I think these are questions we should not avoid.

Final Remarks

I began my paper with critical remarks I received on my work on the PKK, qualifying this work as biased, and developed this into a discussion on methodology. To conclude, and also in reference to the title, I would like to state, firstly, that research always takes perspectives and ought to show its perspectives and, second, that sociology is about making sense. Making sense of the PKK can only be done by listening and treating militants as political actors endowed with interests and the will to elaborate and articulate those interests. Does this mean that we, as social scientists, are merely a serving hatch, that there is no critical engagement? No, we are not serving hatches, and yes there is critical engagement, but here I would make a distinction between criticism and critique. Criticism looks for fault, for what is lacking or incomplete or incorrect, for flaws and imperfections, for what seems not to make sense. Criticism can be partial and selective; critique, however, cannot. Critique refers to a thorough evaluation, yet not from everywhere or nowhere, but from within. As a result, or better, as a method:

> [C]ritique maintains an intimate relationship with the object it works over: it inhabits the object's terms, takes them as far as they can go, and in so doing recovers the potentials immanent to a field of thought even as it highlights the boundedness of that field. Critique becomes so intimate to its object that the critic risks being identified with it. Just think of Marx: he so affirmatively embraces political economy in his *Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* that it is often assumed that *Kapital* is a political economy, that Marx is a political economist (Taylor 2013).

This implies an active engagement with the subject of study, the development of an understanding from within. It thus informs a type of research based not only on interviews, but also on a reading of primary texts and just being (spending time) with people to understand their narratives. I do not make the suggestion that the making sense approach makes the subaltern speak, it is I,

6 A population ceases to exist when it ceases to be governable (Committee, 2014: 22).

the scholar, who speaks, but this is done in the form of a dialogue with those whose narratives I engage with. That is why spending time and a process of dialogue is necessary, to discuss results with those on whose narratives we base ourselves. I am also not suggesting, referring to Borland, that our research should be validated by our research collaborators; rather, I aim to extend the conversation in order to gain understanding:

> For when we do interpretations, we bring our own knowledge, experience, and concerns to our material, and the result, we hope, is a richer, more textured understanding of its meaning. I am suggesting that we might open up the exchange of ideas so that we do not simply gather data on others to fit into our own paradigms once we are safely ensconced in our university libraries ready to do interpretation. By extending the conversation we initiate while collecting oral narratives to the later stage of interpretation, we might more sensitively negotiate issues of interpretive authority in our research (Borland, 1991).

Research is an active engagement.

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Book Reviews

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David L. Phillips, *The Kurdish Spring: A New Map of the Middle East*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2015. 268 pp., (ISBN-13: 978-1412856805).

The Kurdish Spring: A New Map of the Middle East is an insightful account of the Kurds' ongoing journey into statehood. The book traces how Kurds were divided into four countries, Turkey, Iran, Syria and Iraq, after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the late 19th century. It then explains their various struggles for human rights, cultural rights, semi-autonomy, independence, and statehood. The author David L. Phillips takes a sympathetic position; he explicates subjugation of and state-led violence towards Kurds, and also argues for their right for an independent state. Thanks to the author's years of experience in the region and sound scholarship, the book provides ample information to build a fair and critical perspective regarding the quite complex dynamics for a possible Kurdish state in the context of four countries. However, this focus on statehood does not leave adequate space for the crucial questions of de-militarisation and how to foster a culture of human rights within Kurdish society, which could perhaps be the topic of a follow up project.

The Kurdish Spring is divided into four self-explanatory sections. In the first part, "Betrayal", Phillips summarises the period from Sykes-Picot to Lausanne Treaties when Kurdistan was divided into four territories. In a brief historical account, he argues that the drawing of the borders in the Middle East and formation of new nation states were contingent upon the colonial interests of Britain and France. Even though Kurds lacked "good leadership and national vision", the author maintains that they had equal rights to establish their own state.

The second section, "Abuse", follows Kurdish history as it unfolded in four states, Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran. In Iraq, Mustafa Barzani's struggles and the Anfal campaign; in Turkey, Sheikh Said and the Dersim massacres, emergence of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and the state terror during 1990s; in Syria struggles of the Xoybun movement, the Kurdish Democratic Party of

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Syria (KDPS) and the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and the establishment of Emergency Law, and the recent uprooting of masses; in Iran the short-lived Mahabad Republic, Komala's and the Free Life Party's (PJAK) struggles constitute the highlights of Phillip's account of the Kurdish history in the 20th century. This account of the intensity, continuity, and cost of the violence Kurds have been subjected to is striking and informative. Yet, Kurds do not come out of this narrative as "absolute victims" mainly thanks to the author's meticulous analysis of ups and downs of various Kurdish movements. Thereby we also see the limits of Kurds' agency in the context of complex international politics.

The third section, "Progress", chronicles more recent episodes of Kurdish struggles for statehood. The progress in Iraq is explained as the constitution of unity and stronger will for self-rule starting with the first elections for Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) and Kurdish National Assembly (KNA) in 1992. In Turkey, Phillips emphasises the Imrali peace process as progress, which became possible due to Turkey's European Union accession processes, Justice and Development Party's (AKP) strategies to build its hegemony, and mainly the major transformation in the Kurdish movement. Here he cites the articulation of "democratic autonomy", change of PKK's position from "offense" to "defense", and the struggles to participate in the national legal political systems, i.e. parliament and local governances. In Syria, Kurds' lives changed radically after the Day of Rage in 2011 and especially with the "Rojava Revolution" that established an autonomous region within a dissolving Syria. The author does a good job to craft a fair and clear analysis of the Kurds' relationship with the Assad regime and oppositional Syrian National Council (SNC). Finally, in Iran, the author refers to Rouhani's presidential term as a "Second Revolution" but accepts that Kurds' lives have not significantly altered in that period. Instead he argues that Kurds suffered from "factionalism" (p. 178), and their failure to unite has impeded to take up the opportunities in the new period.

Before moving to the last sections, it needs to be stated that the part on "Progress" could benefit from two additional dimensions. First, it could integrate the sources of aspirations other than state building, i.e. gender equality, democratisation of the respective countries, and ecological concerns. According to Phillips the main drive in the Kurdish movement is building independence, however that neglects serious critical discussions about the ideology of statehood that take place especially among Kurds in Turkey. One of my human rights activist friends said in Diyarbakır: "Well, if the Kurdish security forces will beat me up when we have a state, I would prefer the Turkish security forces rather than seeing Kurds beating up each other". Second, and as a complementary point, Phillips is right to point out several times throughout the book that the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) in Iraq renewed

hopes for statehood among all Kurds in the region and this leads him to praise KRG as a leading power in that respect. However, this is questionable given the mutually pragmatic relations between the Turkish state and the KRG and the tension between the latter and the PKK. Instead, the Rojava Revolution seems to have stirred stronger excitement and sense of unity among Kurds; almost all of the political activists I talked to in Diyarbakır during my research had been to Suruç (Turkey) border in summer of 2014 to protect and oversee the border with their bodies in order to provide their support to the Kobani (Syria) resistance. While the KRG has the power to develop a real state apparatus that would nominally become an internationally recognised state, Rojava is emotionally and ideologically a better example of what some of the Kurds expect from a "state".

The Kurdish Spring concludes with "Peril and Opportunity", a section that is composed of three parts on the very recent developments in the region. In "the End of Iraq", he explains the fall of Iraq after the US invasion and how in that context Iraqi Kurds talk more openly about "self-determination". The author, supporting this position, situates IS and Iraqi Kurds as opposing forces in terms of civilisation, democracy and human rights. The next section "International Response" delineates several countries' (USA, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iran, Lebanon, and Israel) positions vis-à-vis a possible Kurdish state. In the final section, "Path to Independence", Phillips criticises US policies of initial non-involvement in the IS issue and therefore allowing the strengthening of the terrorist organisation in the region. While he depicts KRG's willingness to remain in a united Iraq, he also sees them justified in their search for independence given the IS threats and Iraqi state's inability to foster a more inclusive governance. At that point, he finds US's insistence on Iraqi unity as irrelevant and another form of betrayal of the Kurds.

The last sections definitely address the nation-states in which Kurds reside as well as the US audiences. In order to eliminate the fears of dissolution and chaos, he states, "Like letting steam out of the kettle, practical cooperation in the Kurdish neighborhood would diminish threats to territorial integrity rather than exacerbate differences between states where Kurds reside. Democratic development of Iraqi Kurdistan would serve as an inspiration to Kurds in the region, as well as a model for states" (p. 234). Additionally, for those who question the relevance of another nation-state, he argues, "Independence is not just a political state. It is a state of being. Independence would right a historical injustice, manifesting the pride of Kurds and fulfilling their destiny as a people. Kurds believe that independence is the only credible guarantor of security. Only Kurds can protect Kurds" (p. 227).

To wrap up, I would like to iterate that *The Kurdish Spring* is a rich and detailed guide for those who want to introduce themselves to the Kurdish struggles and who want an update on the very fast developments in the region. Furthermore, the book also presents a thorough analytical perspective grounded in adequate historical knowledge to help comprehend the current stakes and actors. The author references historical documents, newspaper articles, a few academic accounts and his own observations; thus his text stands somewhere between an academic work and an investigative journalistic account. The book focuses on the issue of independence and statehood at the expense of giving further insights on the bottom up, critical, and democratic movements, yet as indicated above, this could be the focus of a follow up project. Clearly written from a human rights perspective, *The Kurdish Spring* stands as a most-needed and refreshing guide for anybody politically and academically interested in this precarious moment for Kurds, peoples of the Middle East, and elsewhere.

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Bedross Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2014, 264 pp., (ISBN: 9780804791472).

This book is about an important issue of modern Ottoman history. Bedross Der Matossian has analysed the short time period between the Young Turk Revolution in 1908 and the counterrevolution in April 1909. His focus lays on the "nondominant" actors in the Ottoman sphere: the Jews, the Arabs and the Armenians. The essence of his research is that these three peoples were able to discuss and, to some extent, create their own role within the Ottoman framework between the two revolutions. The "dreams" of better political representation in the capital, harmony among the religions, and justice with the reinstallation of a constitution were "shattered" in spring 1909, when the Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*, CUP) showed its nationalistic vision of Ottomanism.

The book begins with the Young Turk Revolution and its impact on Ottoman society. An important observation is the role of print media and the creation of a public sphere in this important political movement. Matossian stresses the necessity of a public sphere, because it allowed discussions between and inside ethnic groups of the Ottoman Empire in a way only the intellectuals in exile were able to engage in before 1908. The revolution triggered a major and complex debate over constitutional issues. Intra- and interethnic relationships had to be newly defined. Der Matossian offers new insights into changes and disputes inside Armenian, Jewish, and Arab communities. But not only did the multiethnic aspect of the Ottoman Empire define the discussions, but so did its multilingual and geographical components. For example, the traditional power of the notables in Damascus was in danger due to demands of change by the CUP, and therefore, local actors reacted differently to the news in July 1908 than did those in the capital and furthermore the ones based in Jerusalem (p. 28).

The diverse ethnic groups in the multilingual empire faced a transformation of internal structures and new positioning towards a reborn central government. Der Matossian focuses on Arabs, Armenians and Jews. With Kurds and Kurdish organisations he deals only marginally, mostly in relation to the Armenians. The Young Turk Revolution reactivated constitutional discussions and reanimated various demands concerning a new reality that emerged from the end of the reign of Abdulhamid. He writes: "The euphoria that followed the Revolution of 1908 raised the ethnic groups' expectations of

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proportional representation, increased fairness, democracy, and equality in the electorial process" (p. 98).

Jews, for example, saw the opportunity to enforce Zionist projects and to strengthen the political voice of Jerusalem. The author explores print media sources and political speeches in Salonica and Jerusalem in his analysis of the Jews' roles in and responses to the revolution. The international framework concerning the postrevolutionary discussion is important, since central ideas and concepts came from the active "excilic public spheres." The strength of *Shattered Dreams of Revolution* is the connection between micro- and macro-history.

The question of political representation in the parliament and the situation in Eastern Anatolia dominated the Ottoman Armenian discourse. Concerning electoral confrontation among the empire's ethnic groups, proportional representation was the key concept. The elections in the different sancaks in the winter after the revolution cover a great deal of the book. As for the Greek and Armenian communities, expectations concerning the election results were too high. The Arab press on the other side expressed satisfaction. Der Matossian shows that the elections offered a platform for the various discussions and visions of the political future among and between the empire's ethnic groups. On the other hand, the CUP as the central actor of the postrevolutionary order put itself more and more against the major claims of non-Turkish ethnic groups' political platforms. The CUP followed a different version of Ottomanism and proclaimed its ideals of centralisation. The author characterises the elections as a "negotiation process" (p. 119) with reference to administrative decentralisation, ethno-religious privileges, national education, and proportional representation. The 1908 Ottoman elections "represented one of the first organized, mass political performances in the Middle East" (p. 119).

After the election, parliamentary politics became an important dimension in the public sphere. According to the author, the politics of the street and the politics of the Parliament went hand in hand. In his fifth and next-to-last chapter "From the Ballots to the Parliament", he explains the "degeneration" from the dream of a constitutional assembly towards the "reality of a one-party dictatorship" of the CUP (p. 124). The Macedonian Question demonstrates the complexity of the issues treated in the new parliament. Der Matossian emphasises that frictions in parliamentary discussions were marked by intrareligious and interethnic issues. For these, a hitherto under-researched "perspective of ecclesiastical politics" played a major role. "In fact, ecclesiastical politics was one of the key factors in defining inter- and intraethnic relationships in the empire" (p. 128).

Der Matossian follows the chronology of the events that took place after the 1908 revolution while focusing on internal changes of the empire. After different examples of local political problems in diverse areas of the empire, he briefly refers to the Baghdad railway as an example of European entanglement in the Ottoman Empire. Apart from remarks on the influence of exilic ideas and the role model of France in the constitutional discussion, he does not mention further the role of foreign powers in the shape of the events during the Ottoman cataclysm. One could argue that the author should mention ideas of Ottoman modernity and the role of the military, which were strongly influenced by Europe at that time. Furthermore, a description of the reaction of the non-Ottoman-world towards the shift of power and ideals in 1908 could be fruitful for providing a fuller picture. The Russian role concerning the Ottoman Armenians and with regard to Eastern Anatolia is not part of this study.

In his final chapter, "The Counterrevolution and the 'Second Revolution'", Der Matossian introduces the term, "Second Revolution", which becomes central to his analysis designating a counter-revolution and a counter-movement from forces within the Ottoman state that were the results of the first revolution in 1908. While the first revolution allowed "dreams" about constitutionalist harmony of all Ottoman subjects, the second revolution "shattered" those ambitions and hopes. In the author's words: "In short, the Counterrevolution led to the demise of the Ottoman dream that the Revolution had promised to fulfill" (p. 149). The events in April 1909 unleashed fears inside the three non-dominant groups of falling "back into the abyss of absolutism and the ancien régime" (p. 149).

The culmination of despair and mistrust were the Adana massacres in April 1909. The author outlines in detail the escalation and how the Armenians turned, once again, into victims. The ambivalent role of the CUP and the tensions afterwards between the Armenian revolutionary parties and the central government followed the opposite path, when compared to the ideas of fall 1908. As a reaction, they finally "resorted to mobilizing international powers to exert pressure on the Ottoman government" (p. 178).

The development was not the same for the Jews who were able to mobilise own troops to fight along with the Action Army against the Counterrevolutionaries in Istanbul. The reaction of different ethnic groups to the Second Revolution depended on geography and composition of the population. Against general belief, Der Matossian argues that the Counterrevolution was less about religious fanaticism than a multi-actor event against the power shifts and new values of the first revolution (pp. 151–152). Contradiction and ambiguity pervaded that revolutionary era. He concludes that Ottomanism fell

victim to the rise of nationalisms. The two revolutions were turning points for the Jews, Armenians, and Arabs. The latter's perception that the "dark history of the empire" (p. 176) would be over, was seriously shattered, even before the Ottoman cataclysm of the 1910s was unleashed.

Shattered Dreams of Revolution explores ecclesiastical politics that previously had found little interest among historians. It is a well focused, well written and innovative comparative contribution to the field of the Second Constitutional Period in late-Ottoman Turkey. All those interested in the question why the first attempt to achieve democratic constitutionalism failed in the Middle East a hundred years ago will greatly profit from this fine study.

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Yaniv Voller, *The Kurdish Liberation Movement in Iraq: From Insurgency to Statehood*, Oxon: Routledge, 2014, 190 pp., (ISBN: 978-0-415-70724-4).

This book is a welcome overview of the transformation of the Kurdish question in Iraq between 1990 and 2013. The author calls this transformation a change from "national insurgency and guerrilla struggle" to tactics of "state building". This transformation, according to the author, is a new stage in the Kurdish struggle of liberation. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq is the major factor in this transformation.

In the Introduction and the first chapter of *The Kurdish Liberation Movement in Iraq*, Yaniv Voller outlines the theoretical approach of the book. The main theoretical assumption is that the KRG is a de facto state and it works, thinks and approaches the outside world as a de facto state. This new reality has changed the nature of the Kurdish struggle dramatically and brought a new kind of interaction between the Kurdish liberation movement and the international community. Accordingly, this interaction changes the behaviour and policies of the KRG as a de facto state. The author argues that: "the status, or reality, of de facto statehood is essential for understanding the development, conduct and policies of KRG, at both the foreign and the domestic levels" (p. 3). As for the facto state, the book defines it as "a political entity whose leadership has wide autonomy in both its domestic and foreign policies, has established government institutions, and which perceives itself as deserving full legal and institutional independence" (p. 4). According to the author, the KRG has all the features: a defined territory; symbols of sovereignty, such as a flag, anthem, security forces and a functional government. This de facto state lacks international recognition, but this lack does not impede the KRG's efforts to act as a state.

The international context in which the KRG acts stimulates this kind of behaviour. The author sees this context as a composition of "Post-Cold War developments", "the environment that emerged from the attacks of September 11" and "the War on Terror" in which "normative shifts" have taken place. Prior to these new developments Kurdish secessionist aspirations were seen as "potential causes of instability" and perceived by the "international community with antipathy and even hostility" (p. 20). But the new context has changed the international norms and practices of recognition. Something like a "Kosovo and Montenegro effect" has emerged, which encouraged de facto states, including the KRG, to claim legitimacy.

The second chapter tells a short history of the Kurdish liberation movement in Iraq and its development towards statehood. The liberation struggle starts

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with the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of the Kurds as minority within the newly established states of Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. The rise of nationalist aspirations and the struggle for self-determination has since then been the red line that goes through this history. The years 1990 and 1991 are important in this history, since in 1990 Saddam Hussein occupied Kuwait and his defeat in the war that followed opened new opportunities for the Iraqi Kurds. During the uprisings of 1991 Iraqi Kurds brought considerable Kurdish areas under their control. The counter attacks of the Saddam Hussein regime and the defeat of the uprising led to the formation of the "no fly zone" in Kurdish regions to protect Kurdish refugees from Saddam's army. Subsequently, the Iraqi state withdrew its institutions from the Kurdish provinces, opening up the path of the gradual integration of Iraqi Kurds as a de facto state in the international system.

The third, fourth and fifth chapters are the most important chapters of this book. In these chapters the author studies different aspects of the development of the KRG's statehood. Chapter three deals with the KRG's practices of statehood from 1991 to 2001. According to the author, in this period the first steps towards liberalisation and democratisation took place and the Kurdish leadership saw these democratisation steps as "the key to express, and thus guarantee and expand, its earned sovereignty in the region" (p. 68). The Kurdish political parties, especially the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) led by Massoud Barzani and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) led by Jalal Talabani took on greater leadership roles. The Kurdish diaspora soon joined the parties in the formation of this new political experience. According to the author, the formation of the KRG has huge consequences on different levels, especially as it has changed the nature of the conflict with Baghdad as the KRG started to act as a sovereign state and developed its independent institutions. It has also changed Kurdish interaction with international and transnational actors (p. 68). The development towards statehood was seriously interrupted in 1994 when the civil war started between the two leading parties, the KDP and PUK. The regional states started to intervene actively in the Kurdish region by siding with either of the parties. Iran and Syria supported the PUK and Iraq and Turkey backed the KDP. The internal war lasted for four years and stopped officially in 1998. As a result of the civil war the KRG was divided into two separate entities each under the control of one of the two dominant parties. According to the author, the civil war and the division of the KRG between the two parties did not stop the process of state-building; towards the end of the nineties and the beginning of 2000s, when the process of reunification started, the process of state-building "was back on track" (p. 89).

Chapters four and five of the book are reserved for the details of the KRG's "successful" story of consolidating a real de facto state in the context of September 11 and the War on Terror. In this context Iraq became one of the main targets of America's global War on Terror and the consequences were immense: the overthrow of the regime of Saddam Hussein, the creation of a new Iraqi constitution in which the regional autonomy of the KRG was legalised, the reunification of the KRG administration in 2005 and the intensification of the KRG's regional and internal contacts. For example, chapter four sheds light on the KRG's foreign policy in which the KRG developed new strategies for its claim of sovereignty. Besides emphasising democratisation and liberalisation, the KRG underlined also economic viability, law and order, and the ability to contribute to regional stability and security (p. 94). The KRG's public diplomacy changed from focusing on the "democratic experiment" of the 1990s to talking about "the other Iraq" (p. 105), which was represented as prosper, stable and safe.

The fifth and the last chapter analyses the effects of the successful foreign policy of KRG on its domestic policies and evolution. The author analyses the manner with which the KRG deals with its natural resources, especially oil, as an important instrument to enhance its sovereignty, especially vis-à-vis Baghdad, and also to build a better relationship with the regional powers, especially Turkey. This chapter also deals with some domestic issues, among them organising elections, campaigns for democratic reforms, the granting of freedom of the media, protecting women and combating gender related violence against them, the KRG's engagement with its critics and being approachable to international organisations such as Amnesty International and human rights and UN organisations. In short, this chapter shows the transition of the KRG "from being a government dominated by warlords with no democratic transitions, into a more democratic government, willing to engage in a dialogue about its socio-political policies and amend at least some of its domestic policies" (p. 130).

Two major weaknesses in the book should be mentioned. The first one concerns the simple assumption regarding the reunification of the KRG's administration. The author takes the official discourse of the KRG on reunification too seriously and does not pay enough attention to the serious internal antagonism and fragmentation of the KRG and Kurdish politics in Iraq and the region. It is remarkable also how the author downplays the serious effects of the internal division of the region through citing some Kurdish experts who claim that the civil war and the internal division of the KRG even had "important positive effects". For example, the author cites Stansfield, who says that

this catastrophic division of the KRG "had some advantages for the process of state-building. In spite of its demoralizing effect, the division provided the Kurdish leadership with an opportunity for reorganizing their governance and re-stabilizing the parts under their control" (p. 84). This argument dismisses the serious structural damages the internal divisions have created in Kurdish politics and society. It is not the "demoralising effect" of the division which is most fundamental, but the institutionalisation of the division to the extent that it impedes the development of a basic national framework in the military, police apparatus, and security forces, not to mention the economy, bureaucracy and media.

It is of course true that by the end of 2005 most ministries were officially unified, but the region is in fact still deeply divided between the two dominant parties. Behind the mask of an artificial unity lay still huge and deep structural fragmentations. In Iraqi Kurdistan Massoud Barzani, as the president of the region, does not have any power in the PUK area and nor do PUK officials in the KDP zones. The power-sharing arrangement in the KRG still follows the logic of feudal fiefdoms instead of a unified state. The major institutions of army, security and media are still in the hands of the parties or in the hands of rival wings within the party and the ruling families, and each party has its own foreign relations policies. The fragmentations are so widely present that even small political disputes can lead to a hot media war between different parties in the same language and style of the earlier civil war in Kurdistan. In the last few years these divisions have become even more dangerous as the KDP has aligned with Turkey and the PUK with Iran. Further, the division created a hugely corrupt and dysfunctional bureaucratic system that was based on loyalty to one of the two parties or even to the different members of the politburo of the parties or to the specific individuals within the ruling family. This massive machine of almost one million "bureaucrats" out of a population of only about 4 million not only costs the lion's share of the KRG's budget, but also hinders the KRG from functioning as a unified state.

The second and more serious weakness of the book is the author's dismissal of the authoritarian structures of the KRG. Not only is political, security and military power under the control of small numbers of individuals and families, but the same families and their cronies also dominate the KRG's economy. As in other authoritarian experiments in the region or elsewhere, in the KRG it is very difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between the political elite who rules the country and the economic elite who runs the economy. Both forms of power are concentrated in the hands of the same individuals. Further, the rentier character of the KRG economy strengthens this dangerous link between politics and the economy. Moreover, both parties run most of the media and

control the judiciary. Important sectors of Kurdish civil-society organisations are dominated by the parties and a small number of the members of the ruling elite. There are of course some undeniable democratic elements in the Kurdistan region, there are elections, small segments of independent media and a multi-party political system, but those elements function within wider and more powerful authoritarian structures. The theoretical literature on authoritarianism in the Arab World, especially the "authoritarian upgrading" theses, can offer extra tools to see the deeper authoritarian structures of the KRG, beyond what the KRG officials claim.

Despite these two points of criticism this book is worth reading; it gives detailed and valuable information about different aspects of the development of the KRG from the beginning of the 1990s, especially how the KRG presents its image to the outside world. This book can serve students of social science and humanities in general, but it is especially useful to the students of the Middle Eastern and Kurdish studies. The book services also a general public who is interested in the further developments of the Kurdish question in the Middle East.

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Özlem Galip, *Imagining Kurdistan: Identity, Culture and Society*, London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2015, 311 pp., (ISBN: 978 1 78453 016 7).

Özlem Galip's book is of high relevance to all those interested in Kurdish literature and culture. Given the scarcity and the difficulties of Kurdish literary scholarship in Western languages (see Ghaderi, 2015), Galip's accomplishment represents a valuable contribution, especially for the breadth of the corpus examined (for other comprehensive works on the subject see Ahmadzadeh, 2003; Bocheńska, 2011; Scalbert-Yücel, 2014).

In *Imagining Kurdistan* Galip discusses one-hundred novels, written in, according to the geographical terminology used by the author, Turkish Kurdistan and in diaspora between 1984 and 2010. Her study has three main delimitations: it tackles only one literary genre: the novel; it is limited to the production of authors based in or hailing from Turkish Kurdistan and writing in Kurmanji, thus excluding Kurdish writers writing in Turkish; it has a temporal limitation that goes from the rise of the PKK insurgency to 2010. Notwithstanding such limitations, the corpus taken into account by Galip is remarkable. Although this work does not offer an in-depth discussion of each and every novel, it focuses on the overarching novelistic discourse concerning Kurdistan as it surfaces from such a vast number of works. The number of passages from novels originally translated by the author from Kurmanji into English contributes to making this book an important source for the international audience who seeks a more accessible path to Kurdish literature.

The study is informed by a recent and fecund stream of literary criticism focusing on notions of space and place (for an overview see Tally, 2013). Central concepts of space, place, homeland, territory, and identity in fact prove to be extremely useful in addressing the literature of a people whose geography is fragmented, continuously questioned, and even denied. As the title clearly confesses, Benedict Anderson's notions of "imagined community" and of literacy as a key tool of the imaginative nationalising process are crucial to Galip's understanding of her corpus.

The book starts with a preliminary discussion of the concept of "homeland" in the Kurdish context. It overviews the foundational myths and historical developments of the Kurdish sense of ethno-national community in relation to the geographical territory. In a rapid-yet-exhaustive overview, it goes from the Medes to the rise of a "modern" nationalist movement in opposition to the assimilative policies of the Turkish state. In Chapter Two, the author conducts an "Overview of Kurdish Politics" informed by a vast scholarship. It focuses on Kurdish revolts in the late Ottoman Empire, early Turkish Republic, and

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in the last section on "the emergence of a Kurdish Socialist Movement in the 1960s, and the Hegemony of the PKK" (p. 58). This chapter condenses dates and events well known to scholars working in Kurdish studies, but that function as necessary buttresses for readers coming from other research fields.

With Chapter Three we get to the heart of the matter, as Galip discusses the development of "Kurdish literary production" (p. 67), retracing the significant evolutions of literary creation and consumption in Turkish Kurdistan: "from oral literature to digital media". While giving some basic information on the history of Kurdish "traditional" literary practices, the chapter focuses more strictly on the "emergence of the Kurdish novel" (p. 71), especially after the easing of restrictions on the use of Kurdish language in Turkey in the early 1990s. A section is dedicated to the role of media such as magazines, newspapers, and TV-channels (from *Hawar* to *Med Nûçe TV*) in constructing the Kurdish imagined community and in opening up a distinct Kurdish literary field in Turkey and in the Kurdish diaspora. Perhaps a deeper discussion of the genre limitation given to the book would have been appropriate here. In fact, little is said on the reasons why the novel represents a better analytical instrument to study Kurdish geographical imagination, as compared for example to poetry or short stories.

The following two chapters serve as the proper analytical chapters on literature. In Chapter Four, Galip addresses the Kurdish novelistic discourse produced in diaspora and how it articulates concepts of "homeland" and "identity". As Galip notes, novelists of the Kurdish diaspora (Firat Cewerî, Bûbê Eser, Hesenê Metê, Mehmed Uzun, Mezher Bozan and Lokman Polat, among many others) are often pushed towards literary expression by the personal traumatic memory of their experiences under the oppressive rule of the Turkish state. For Galip, sharing individual experiences through the medium of the novel allows for the creation of a collective memory in which the visualisation of the homeland and the perception of a shared identity are mainly structured in response to social traumas.

However, for Galip, the response to traumatic legacy differentiates along the lines of political convictions and affiliations. She employs the pro-PKK or anti-PKK stance of the writers as a fundamental line of demarcation. The use of geographical markers, such as the names of the Kurdish regions in accordance to the recognised national borders or according to the imagined geography of Greater Kurdistan, stems from and accounts for the writer's political inclination. In general, Galip notes that "most – diasporic – authors do not challenge Turkish national borders or the sovereignty of the nation states of the countries located in other Kurdish regions" (p. 107). Furthermore, "as the

majority of the diaspora novels follow the line of the anti-PKK fraction, they do not accept the notion of 'Greater Kurdistan'" (p. 111). Diasporic authors condemn through their works the lack of national awareness among Kurds and see submissiveness to language assimilation as forgoing a fundamental national duty. According to the author, writers from diaspora tend to have a critical approach towards their homeland, which is generally not "romanticized or idealized" (p. 121). Yet, the diasporic distance brings about a sort of crystallisation of the image of the homeland; as Galip puts it: "it is also true that the illusory plays a prominent part in the diasporic construction of homeland because, as time passes, the place of origin remains stagnant in the memory of the migrant while in reality it has evolved" (p. 134).

Chapter Five conducts the same analytical operation for the novelistic discourse produced in Turkish Kurdistan up to 2010. Analysing thirty-six novels, Galip detects temporal and geographical structures that sustain the imaginary construction of the Kurdish "homeland". On the temporal line, we have an "idealized-idyllic" past constructed through a "patriotic attitude", a present in which the homeland is "torn to pieces by the impact of Turkey's provocative interventions" and a future that is the realm of "optimistic imaginary conceptions" (p. 136).

On the geographical level, Galip studies how the novelistic discourse helps in mapping and delimiting, in a word imagining, Kurdistan's territoriality in the effort "to create the organic link between Kurds as nation and Kurdistan as their homeland" (p. 138). At the intersection of the temporal and the territorial narratives, Kurdistan emerges as "emotional space". At times depicted as a beloved-woman, at times a "place for longing and yearning" (p. 173), the Kurdish homeland as reflected by Kurdish novels that Galip considers (by Şener Özmen, Îbrahîm Seydo Aydoğan, Ramezan Alan, Yaqob Tilermenî, among many others), seems to find its primary location in the realm of the imagination. In this respect, the dispossession of the lived environment, caused by Turkey's social, spatial and military policies, equates the diasporic and the local writer inasmuch as they perceive the homeland as something to be dreamed of, or, in other words, something that needs to be constructed through imagination. Nonetheless, the attitude of the writers from Turkish Kurdistan as analysed by Galip is generally less critical when compared to diasporic writers and far more optimistic on the future possibilities of achieving the imagined correspondence between space and identity.

A critical study of a vast literary corpus does not allow for nuanced accounts of each work or each writer. The author necessitates a certain degree of generalisation in order to highlight recurring narrative patterns that contribute to a broader, yet debated, idea of Kurdistan. The clear-cut distinction between

pro-PKK or anti-PKK political leaning used by Galip, although highly relevant and worth being explored, does not consider more nuanced positions or account for potential developments internal to the literary career of a particular writer. Repetitions of arguments and at times a lack of clarity in the exposition weaken the book to a certain extent. Nonetheless, *Imagining Kurdistan: Identity, Culture and Society*, (the words "literature" and "novel" could have featured in the title), is a relevant book for scholars and general readers alike who want to deepen their knowledge of the Kurdish contemporary literary field in Kurmanji. The positive recent developments, one might call it a little "renaissance" or a spring (Erbay, 2012), of the Kurdish letters clearly deserve such kind of contextualised analytical explorations. Galip's accomplishment helps the reader manage a burgeoning production, inspect its fundamental themes, and establish correlations with the social and political environments in which this literature was produced. *Imagining Kurdistan* is a must-read for scholars working on Kurdish literature and a positive contribution from a literary perspective for scholars working on various disciplines of Kurdish studies.

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Mahir A. Aziz, *The Kurds of Iraq: Nationalism and Identity in Iraqi Kurdistan*, London and New York: I. B. Taurus, 2015, 163 pp., (ISBN: 978-1-78453-273-4).

Aziz's sociological study assesses the development of ethno-national identities amongst a new generation of Kurds in the post-1990 era of Iraq. *The Kurds of Iraq* aptly traces how memory and identity in the Kurdish north have evolved away from the centralising force of Iraqi state hegemony. Aziz comprehensively traces the ways in which Kurdish youth balance competing, but ultimately complimentary, national, regional and ethnic forms of belonging. The introduction clearly outlines the main research questions, which address identity as a sociological model of inquiry, how and why Kurdish and Iraqi identities might differ, and to what extent Kurdish identity is dependent upon territorially specific mappings of individual and communal histories.

Aziz approaches the development of identity as organic, allowing for fluidity within the process of remembering and reconstructing new identities. Kurdistanism is not static in this sense, lending credence to the success of the Kurds in keeping alive their autonomy in the wake of repressive nationalising Ba'thist schemes. Tribal affiliations play an important role in advancing kinship systems of marriage and family alliance, helping the Kurds to maintain closely-knit communities that resist the hegemonic weight of the state to conform. The author discusses the rise of a new generational shift in nationalism, *Kurdistanyeti*, born of the lived experiences of the "youth" through the brutality of the Ba'th autocracy followed by a decade of de-Bathification. Aziz also complicates the relationship between the developing sense of *Kurdistaniyeti* nationalism following the devastating impacts of the Gulf War defeat and the increasingly urgent attempts by the Ba'th to reign in autonomy in the Kurdish north. The "failure of these regimes to instill a normative sense of Iraqiness in the Kurdish people" (p. 161) is the success of ethnic, territorial, and traditional forms of belonging that bind together an imagined nation within the broader boundaries of the Iraqi nation-state.

The book transitions somewhat awkwardly from a theoretical first section to the reminder of the monograph that discusses empirical data from student questionnaires disseminated across three campuses in Kurdistan. The first part of the book is especially frustrating because these short and choppy chapters frequently become repetitious, and remain disconnected from the research findings. Understandably, a discussion of nationalism(s) requires a discussion of theoretical lineages; however, it might make for a more interesting overview if these lineages were put into conversation with each other. Perhaps a more historically oriented approach might be useful in addressing how discussions

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of nationalism and ethno-nationalism germinate over time. An entire chapter on Anthony Smith's theoretical model and its applicability in this monograph felt excessive, since an additional chapter on history and the developments of the Kurdish region within the broader history of the Iraqi state may have been more helpful to students of the region.

In the second part of the book, Aziz provides a rich statistical analysis of how identity can at once be segmented but overlapping, highlighting the way in which *Kurdistaniyeti* identity incorporates local, regional, and national systems of belonging. At times, the text felt cluttered by demographic information that might be best included as an appendix to the book. The statistical data suggests that the segmentation of "Iraqi" and "Kurd" is problematic as this new generation embraces a more nuanced ethno-political identity. One element that Aziz does not address in great detail is how we define "Iraqi" identity in the post-1990 period. Eric Davis's *Memories of State* interrogates the subjugation of ethnic and religious history memory to the force of the Ba'th "Project for the Rewriting of History". Forcing all Iraqis to align behind a myth of collective past has distorted the communal narratives of all Iraqis, but especially those born into the post-1990s period. In this sense, putting this study in conversation with a bourgeoning body of literature on Iraqis in diaspora helps us to understand one of the many responses to the repressive measures of the state on ethno-national groups in Iraq.

Despite the enduring force of Kurdishness amongst the peoples of northern Iraq, Aziz concludes his evocative work with a prognosis that due to the lack of a fully developed civil society, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is not yet ready to emerge as a political state. As this new generation moves closer to a civic-oriented society, Aziz believes it is possible that statehood could be achieved in the future. Throughout the book, Aziz promotes the successes of Kurdish students and scholars, whom he believes will go on to pave a way towards peace and cooperation in Iraq. Perhaps the message to garner from his research is that Iraq cannot afford to lose the Kurds and jeopardise the chance of collaboration in its precarious future.

Aziz attempts to break with the familiar research pattern of accessing political elites and tracing their development as a representative microcosm of change and continuity. He instead draws upon groups of university-aged students who have been shaped by a distinctly Kurdish historical, cultural and political narrative. This group is portrayed in the book as the future of Kurdish identity and nationalism: the future of the region within the state, and the future of co-existence within the broader region. The strength of the book lies in Aziz's native knowledge of the region, but also his ability to communicate ideas and

ask questions in both Kurdish and Arabic. Many historians and political scientists interested in the region try to capture its identity politics, and complex and often fractured nationalisms without the benefit of advanced local, cultural and linguistic capability. The cultural sensitivity and ethnographic tools Aziz brings to this study make the book a compelling interpretation of how the next generation of Kurds in Iraq will lead the charge in rethinking the role of the modern nation-state for Iraqis.

The reverse of his fortunate position as a researcher with an accessible pool of participants is the inherent danger in not addressing the power dynamics present in this relationship. These highly educated and politically conscious graduate-student participants are also aware of how and why their answers are important to the ongoing struggle for an independent Kurdish state. Had a similar survey been conducted with young adults from different educational backgrounds, it would have been interesting to see if the premise of research terms in the questionnaire would have resonated in the same way. Moreover, the questionnaire as it was administered in Kurdish (or Arabic) would have been a welcome addition to the appendices of the book.

This empirically rich study engages a new generation as they emerge into a new political and social reality for Iraq. In the midst of the current instability, Kurds are a critical element to the rebuilding of the nation and have a crucial part to play in the future of Iraq. As research participants, they also offer an essential window into the dynamics of national and ethno-national negotiation in an unofficial state-building process. The book is accessible on a number of levels – it is detailed enough to be of value to undergraduate and graduate students, and all manner of specialists interested in Iraq, the Kurds, nationalism, identity, and regionalism. It is both well written and executed, since the detailed mapping provided in the introduction is carried forth throughout the book, making it accessible despite the level of statistical detail.

Though current geopolitical realities stand in the way of Kurdish independence, Aziz believes this could eventually be a reality if a democratic federal Iraq can cooperate with the northern region. Kurdistan straddles important oil and water resources that make it essential that stability be returned to the region – not only on a national level, but also to the benefit of the U.S., Turkey, and states in the neighbouring region. Kurdish nationalism will thus shape the future relationships between this region, its resources, and its allies. The work is a wonderful contribution to the growing body of literature that has expanded upon studies of nationalism to explore aspects of transnationalism and identity in the context of a global diaspora. Though this pivotal contribution is set within national borders, it provides an important basis from which to engage with Kurdish state-building activism within the diaspora. The intersections of

nationalism, identity and regionalism coalesce in this monograph to support future developments of ethno-nationalisms and layered identities. An understanding of identity and nationalism in a new generation of Kurds is an essential tool not only for those in the academy, but much further afield in areas of diplomacy, foreign policy, and international development.

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