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Between Gift and Taboo: Death and the Negotiation of National Identity and Sovereignty in the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey

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Between Gift and Taboo: Death and the Negotiation of National Identity and Sovereignty in the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey

by

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Dedication

To my brother Şirhat

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This dissertation explores politico-symbolic deployments of death in figurations of national identity and sovereignty in the Kurdish conflict in Turkey. Many Kurds have died in their successive rebellions over the last century. However biological death has not necessarily excluded them from Kurdish culture and politics. Rather, through a symbolic economy of "gift" the Kurds resurrect their dead as martyrs – affective forces that powerfully shape public, political and daily life and promote Kurdish national identity as a sacred communion of the dead and the living. For its own part, the Turkish state has been endeavoring to eradicate this persistent power of the Kurdish dead by obstructing their appropriation and assimilation into the regenerative realms of Kurdish national-symbolic. While these struggles are still in effect, with the shift in Kurdish politics away from the original goal of national independence in 1999, the Kurdish dead emerged as a site of contention also among the Kurds. At least until 2005 the place of the dead in Kurdish politics also shifted with a new politics of memory that the leadership of Kurdish movement initiated to buttress the "peace process". Based on two-year fieldwork in

Diyarbakır, the informal capital of Kurds in Turkey, this study explores the Kurdish political imaginaries and subjectivities that are generated in and through these multiple struggles and contentions over the Kurdish dead, situating death as a central symbolic and semantic field constitutive to national identity and sovereignty. This study contributes to the ethnography of the Kurds, Turkey and the Middle East as well as theories of death, the body, nationalism, sovereignty and political subjectivity.

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Introduction

The Kurds in Turkey are commonly associated with several rebellions in the last century, which have all been repressed except for the still ongoing guerilla warfare that Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiyê Karkerên Kurdistan - PKK) initiated in 1984. The human cost of these rebellions has been grave. Only in the last three decades, almost forty thousand people were killed on both sides, while the majority of these were Kurdish guerillas and civilians. Biological death, however, has not necessarily meant total destruction or exclusion of these dead from Kurdish culture and politics. Rather, the Kurds resurrect their dead through a moral and symbolic economy of martyrdom as highly affective forces that powerfully shape public, political and daily life, promoting Kurdish national identity and struggle as a sacred communion of the dead and the living.

Cultural forms such as stories, myths, songs and ballads dedicated to the heroism, struggle and self-sacrifice of the dead and practices such as naming the newborn after the martyrs constituted significant venues for the generation and maintenance of this sacred communion. At the height of the guerilla warfare in the early 1990s, funeral ceremonies of Kurdish militants and civilians became a particularly central site of for the performative production of this resurrectory politics in Kurdish political culture.

For its own part, the Turkish state has also developed a politics over the Kurdish dead in order to prevent their symbolic construction as martyrs and assimilation into the regenerative realms of Kurdish national-symbolic.[1] This has included practices ranging

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[1] I borrow the concept "national-symbolic" from Lauren Berlant (1991). Berlant argues that complex regimes of power, knowledge, affect and desire transform bodies into the intimate space of the nation as

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from refusal to deliver dead bodies for burial, secret interments, burials in unmarked mass-graves, banning funerals, punishing funeral participants, banning practices of naming after the martyrs to dismemberment of dead guerilla bodies and executions in the form of disappearances.

While these struggles between the Kurds and the state to control the power of death are still in effect, the Kurdish dead also emerged as a site of contention among the Kurds with the discursive shift in Kurdish politics in 1999 away from the goal of national independence and towards dialogue and peace building. At least until 2005 this political change also shifted the place of the dead in Kurdish politics and somehow decentered the mythology of national martyrdom within the context of a new politics of memory that the Kurdish leadership initiated to buttress "the peace process". This has not gone uncontested, yet. Kurdish political groups who are critical of the PKK, some martyr families and the cadres and militants who separated from the movement after 1999 raised heated criticisms. However, the rise of armed conflicts and polarization between the PKK and the Turkish army since 2005 has somehow re-unified the Kurds and decentered intra-Kurdish contests over their dead, while simultaneously putting the dead back at the center stage of the conflict between Kurds and the state. Based on two-year fieldwork in

national subjects who share not just a history or institutional political allegiance but a set of forms and the affect that makes these forms meaningful. Occupying the political space of nation, citizens are subjected not merely to juridical, territorial, genetic, linguistic, or experiential workings of nationalism, but some tangled cluster of these. Berlant calls this 'tangled cluster' the National Symbolic—the order of discursive practices whose reign within a national space transforms individuals into subjects of collectively held history. The traditional icons, metaphors, heroes, rituals and narratives of nationalism provide an alphabet for collective subjectivity which operates not simply at the level of public and conscious life but also extends its reach to private life, the life of the body itself. According to Berlant, the nation as a political form thus operates at the very intimate level of affect, desire, unconscious, a process wherein the subject's corporeality and sensuality become central to the production and regulation of national subjectivity.

Diyarbakır, the informal capital of Kurds in Turkey, this study explores these multiple struggles over Kurdish dead bodies and the political imaginaries and subjectivities they generate, situating death as a contentious symbolic and semantic field constitutive to national identity and sovereignty.

WHY THE DEAD?

My interest in the relationship between death and politics first emerged, while I was conducting my master's research in Diyarbakır over the summers of 2003 and 2004. Then I explored the political transformation of Kurdish movement in the post-1999 period, focusing on how this process was reshaping the relationships between the Kurdish movement and the Turkish state on the one hand, and how differently situated Kurds were negotiating this transformation at classed and gendered registers and in the realms memory and identity, on the other. As I detail below, the loss of "meaning of death" emerged as a significant narrative among the Kurds to assess this process. My interest in this issue increased, when I started my dissertation fieldwork in Diyarbakır in the summer of 2005 in the wake of rising armed conflicts in the region. But it was during the analysis of my findings that I came to recognize the centrality of death as a most generative field in and through which Kurdish national identity and struggle are imagined and practiced. A brief background is necessary in order to clarify the political, historical and ethnographic contexts that have shaped the framework and main problematic of this research.

Founded in 1978 as a Marxist-Leninist national-liberationist organization, the PKK started armed struggle in 1984 with the aim of creating an independent Kurdistan.

Within the context of post-Cold War ideological and political changes, however, the movement had gradually abandoned most of its original goals starting with the first half of the 1990s. This shift gained momentum in 1999, when Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the movement, was abducted in Kenya with the help of the American Central Intelligence Agency and transferred to Turkey. In his defense before the court, Öcalan recognized Turkish state's sovereign rule in Kurdistan, claiming that Turkish-Kurdish relations should not be approached from the perspective of colonialism. Renouncing the politics of both independence and federalism as "primitive nationalism" in favor of a politics of "free and equal unity of Kurds and Turks in a Democratic Republic", he called on the movement to restructure for a struggle from within, and outlined a project of peace articulated with demands for constitutional recognition and cultural and political rights.[2] Öcalan declared that the new century was one of "human rights and democracy" which had no room for rebellion and violence, and called on the Turkish state to prepare conditions for disarmament and negotiations towards peace.

Upon Öcalan's call the PKK guerillas withdrew from the Turkish borders. The movement started more centrally organizing in the legal field towards articulating a new type of Kurdish politics along the terms laid down by its leader. In this process, local governments in the Kurdish region - which were electorally won by the pro-Kurdish

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[2] This restructuration involved a series of changes in the movement's ideological, political and organizational orientation. The party-front-army structure was transformed. The guerrilla forces were reorganized as Popular Defense Forces. The ERNK (the Popular Front) was dissolved. Some of its members started involving in legal politics in Turkey, while other members joined the newly established Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK). The Presidency Council of PKK said that the restructuration of the movement was not a voluntary choice, but a necessity to survive changing regional and global political circumstances, inviting Kurds to understand the criticalness of the situation. The Council emphasized that any failure in the restructuration of the movement would be its total collapse.

People's Democracy Party (HADEP)[3] in April 1999 - took a leading role for the institutionalization of legal forms of Kurdish politics and activism. Despite all these compromises towards legalization, the Turkish state has so far refused to recognize Öcalan or any Kurdish institutions as legitimate political interlocutors for dialogue and to declare a peace and reconciliation process as an official policy.

Nevertheless, the state did partially respond to the revised Kurdish demands via the mediation of another process that was initiated at the end of 1999. In December, the European Union (EU) granted Turkey the status of candidacy, and demanded her to make democratic reforms towards cultural and political liberalization as prerequisites for full membership. Accordingly, the government passed a series of constitutional and legal reforms between 2001 and 2004. The reform process included improvements in some spheres which had particular relevance to Kurdish demands; such as the elimination of state of emergency rule in Kurdish provinces[4], limited recognition of cultural and

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[3] HADEP was the heir of previously banned Kurdish parties, the first one being People's Labor Party (Halkın Emek Partisi -HEP) which was established in 1990. HEP was banned by the Constitutional Court in July1993. Before this decision, the party had already dissolved itself in April 1993. Before the ban of HEP, in November 1992, Freedom and Democracy Party (ÖZDEP) was established as a substitute of HEP. The Constitutional Court also closed ÖZDEP in November 1993. Then, Democracy Party (DEP) was established. However, DEP was also banned in July 1994. Before the ban of DEP, People's Democracy Party (Halkın Demokrasi Partisi -HADEP) was established in May 1994. HADEP was banned in March 2003, and 45 of its members were banned from political activity for five years. HADEP was followed by Democratic People's Party (DEHAP), founded in 1997, and Free Society Party (OTP), founded in 2002. DEHAP was banned in 2005. Then Democratic Society Party (DTP) was established in 2006. But DTP was also banned in December 2009 on charges of its links with the PKK. Kurdish politicians transferred to the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), which was established in 2007, when the closure case on the DTP was openned. Currently BDP is the legal party representing the Kurdish resistance movement. These banned parties are all viewed by the Turkish state and Turkish public as "legal extensions" of the PKK.

[4] Emergency State Rule was in effect between 1986 and 2002. Starting with 2007 the Turkish army declared many Kurdish provinces to be "temporary security zones", which meant de facto emergency state rule. The press and observers are allowed to enter these zones only with the official permission of the army. Şırnak, Hakkâri, Siirt, Siverek, Tunceli, Diyarbakır are among these security zones.

linguistic rights of minorities in Turkey[5] and the restriction of death penalty to war time crimes. Armed conflicts significantly decreased in the Kurdish region between 2000 and 2004. Despite the state's highly hesitant and limited responses, the Kurds were hopeful that although it might take time, the protracted conflict would eventually leave its place to a process of peace and democratic resolution.

However, conformity and hope were far from being the only Kurdish responses to the changes that the post-1999 period brought about in Kurdish struggle and politics. Öcalan's defense was a shock to many Kurds, as it almost totally dismantled the movement's original political imaginary that was centered on anti-colonial armed struggle for an independent state and territorial sovereignty. Many Kurds regarded giving up the ideal of Kurdistan as the end of the last Kurdish rebellion. Between 1999 and 2004, about four thousand cadres and militants left the PKK, justifying their decisions by accusing Öcalan of "selling out" the Kurdish cause and "betraying" those who had sacrificed their lives for it. For example, an ex-guerilla who had joined the movement in 1991 told me shortly after he left the movement in 2004:

> Thirty thousand people were martyred for something. Now I feel they had died for nothing. If we had a chance to wake up the spirit of the martyrs and ask "What did you die for', I have no doubt that they would answer from their hearts that they died for ideal of a liberated Kurdistan.

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[5] The Constitutional amendment that allowed Kurdish broadcasting in official TV and radio stations was made in October 2001. The government passed the related reform package in 2004, specifying the form and content of these rights: Forty-five-minute broadcasting per day, but no cartoons. For cartoons were viewed as a national security, as, it was reasoned, they could help Kurdish children improve their mother tongue. Later these rights were expanded, and a full-time multi-language TV channel (TRT 6) was opened within the body of the official Turkish Radio and Television Directorate in January 2009.

During the course of my master's research, I observed on many occasions how frequently such a rethinking of the dead and imaginary exchanges with them marked critical talks about the recent changes in Kurdish politics. Yet, this reconsideration of the dead was not confined to the field of politics; it also extended its reach to the field of personal mourning. In another interview in the summer of 2004, a Kurdish man related his brother's death in 1991 to changing Kurdish politics as follows:

> Then I did not cry much, perhaps because I was young and did not know what death really was. He was a martyr of Kurds and Kurdistan, I thought. It was painful, but still I did not feel much the emptiness that one normally is supposed to feel when a loved one dies. It was strange. I felt proud and powerful. When I saw Öcalan's arrest in TV, his hands in cuffs and eyes blindfolded, and his speech at the trial, then I felt my brother was really dead. After ten years I started crying for him, asking myself, "Did he die for this?"…My father did not like Öcalan; he kind of kept him responsible for the death of my brother. But when he saw Öcalan before the court, he cried, too. I am not sure whether he cried for Öcalan or he was mourning for my brother again.

In reconsiderations such as this one, the start of the postponed mourning over the dead was usually mentioned in the proxy of the "loss of Kurdistan". This was because in the Kurdish popular imaginary, Kurdistan did not simply indicate a political project for an independent state. It was more a utopia, a fantasy screen onto which desires for a better life were projected. Perhaps most crucially, it was a set of narratives, structures of feeling and desire that mobilized many Kurds into national subjects, enabling them to develop relatively stable identities amid violent socio-political transformations. As the shift in Kurdish politics destabilized the utopia of Kurdistan, it ended up destroying also the matrix of signification through which people used to assess and experience their lives and struggles. More specifically, the dismantling of the imagnary of Kurdistan led to a questioning of the meaning of pain and suffering that people had endured to realize that

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imaginary. Death was the ultimate sacrifice that had been made for upholding Kurdistan. Hence, many started asking whether it was worth it, if Kurdistan was no longer.

Yet, what made the situation more complex was that it was not only those who received the shift in Kurdish politics with criticism and left or distanced themselves from the movement, but also those still committed to it frequently referred to the dead in repositioning themselves. An active member of the movement commented:

> The party [PKK] calls those who separated traitors. I don't think it is as simple as that. It has been a difficult time for all of us. I did not separate, because there is no place I can go after dedicating half of my life to this struggle. Many of my friends died, maybe hundreds. I always think what would have they done, had they seen our current politics. How death fast martyrs would have acted? What my martyred elder brother would have done? Would he go or stay? I feel that they would have wanted me to stay where I am. Mine is not a cause for the future. I fight for the past and for the martyrs.

In the post-1999 period, the dead thus acquired a different kind of moral power and were usually positioned as supreme arbiters of moral and political action. Loyalty to their legacy could justify both parting ways and moving ahead with the movement; and each attitude could be interpreted by its opponent similarly as betraying the dead. When I shared with an active senior member of the movement my observations on these frequent references to the dead in assessing the changes in Kurdish politics, he explained: "It is very normal, because we have created the whole struggle out of death. But, death, which was once sacred, does not mean much now."

Starting with 2004, certain development signaled a fracture in the peace and democratic reform process. In the spring of 2004, the Turkish army increased its military operations and transferred troops to the Iraqi-Turkish border for cross-border operations into the PKK camps located in Iraqi Kurdistan. This change in state policy was largely

shaped by considerations of possible spill-over effects of the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish Regional Government right beneath its borders with Iraq following the American occupation in 2003. The state's worry was that the case of Iraqi Kurds would inspire "its own Kurds" for more radical demands. This led to an aggressive Turkish policy to minimize political benefits of the Kurds in a reconstructed Iraq. Meanwhile, the PKK ended the unilateral ceasefire that it had declared in 1998, claiming that the state had repeatedly failed to respond its persistent calls for peace, and moved more guerilla groups to the mountains in the Kurdish region of Turkey. Armed conflicts and political tension increased. Nevertheless, many Kurds maintained their hopes for peace, believing at first that the conflicts were of a temporary tactical nature. Discourses of peace and democracy remained rather intact in Kurdish politics well into 2005.

Considering these, I formulated my dissertation research in early 2005 as an extension and deepening of my master's research into the effects of the transformation of Kurdish politics on the Turkish state-Kurdish and intra-Kurdish relations. Based upon the insights of my previous work, I included in my research agenda the relationship of the Kurdish dead to the changing parameters of Kurdish nationalist politics. Then, I was interested in this issue primarily in terms of how the dead were variously repositioned in the Kurds' re-workings of memory, history and identity vis-à-vis the "peace process".

However, little optimism for peace was left when I went to Diyarbakır in August 2005. Armed conflicts significantly increased, which not only appeased and de-centered the intra-Kurdish contests over their dead but also put the politics of death back at the center of the polarity between the Kurdish movement and the state. This confrontation

increased the more, as dead guerilla bodies re-started hitting the city centers more frequently, increasing Kurdish dissappointments with the "peace process". These contingencies of the field extended my initial interest in Kurdish negotiations over their dead into another field: dead bodies as a fierce site of struggle between Kurds and the state. Two events that took place at the initial stages of my fieldwork particularly shaped my interest in this field. Let me briefly refer to these events to explain how.

Soon after arriving at Diyarbakır, I started working at the Diyarbakır metropolitan municipality as foreign relations coordinator. As discussed below, Diyarbakır municipality has assumed a significant institutional role in the articulation and promotion of new Kurdish political demands in the post-1999 period. Two weeks after my entering the municipality, in late August, three PKK guerillas were killed in the adjacent rural Batman. Their bodies were taken to the Batman State Hospital from where they were to be transferred to their place of burial. For three days, the families could not find an ambulance to carry their dead for burial. Obviously no institution was willing to take the responsibility under the climate of fear and terror created by the military and civilian bureaucracy. On the third day, Diyarbakır municipality sent its ambulance to Batman to transfer the dead with the initiative of the mayor. The central government and national media turned the mayor's action into a political scandal. Legal and criminal investigations followed in which the mayor was variously charged with abuse of authority, misuse of public resources, and supporting "terrorism". This event was soon followed by similar other events, and each turning into another "ambulance scandal".

Tensions and conflicts over the Kurdish dead reached their peak in March 2006, when the funeral ceremonies of four PKK guerillas in Diyarbakır turned into a one-week violent protest. The protest was mostly located in the central Baĝlar district that was the primary site of my field research (Chapter 5). It was marked with an intense degree of violence which included the killing of ten protestors by the police, hundreds of detentions and arrests and destruction of property. This protest constituted a turning point in the radical destabilization, if not reversal, of the discourses of "peace" and "democratic reconciliation" in the period that has since followed.

My up-to-then personal and scholarly involvement with the Kurdish issue had made me quite familiar with the Turkish state's politics over the Kurdish dead as well as the significance of these dead in the articulation and contestation of Kurdish national identities, imaginaries and struggle. However, this time observing these events from an institutional location within the municipality offered some unique insights: The mayor of the city would send ambulances to carry dead bodies of PKK members or visit families of the dead or join their funeral ceremonies, and each act would turn into a "political scandal" to be followed by investigations and court procedures. As part of my work in the municipality, I traced the reactions of the Turkish government, the press and media coverage, court cases and criminal procedures, and "translating" what happened to the concerned international community. It was these observations that compelled me to focus more centrally on how dead bodies and the kinds of practices, discourses and struggles generated around them play into the very constitution of the field of the political and political subjectivity in the Kurdish conflict in Turkey.

THEORETICAL CONCERNS

        To address my research concerns, throughout this study I navigate among five mostly interdisciplinary fields of socio-cultural scholarship. Here I would like to briefly introduce these fields, which include symbolic anthropology of death, nationalism, the body, the corpse and sovereignty. I rely on classical anthropological debates on the rituals, symbolism and representations of death (Hertz 1990 [1907]; Turner 1967; Van Gennep 1960 [1909]) as well as the themes of gift, reciprocity, sacrifice and regeneration (Hubert & Mauss 1964; Mauss 1966; Bloch and Parry 1982) to explore the mutually constitutive relationship between death and politics. Until the 1970s, the theme of death had mostly been parochialized, folklorized and exoticized in conventional anthropology as a static and self-contained experience of the Others (Fabian 1973). Although more critical work on death emerged thereafter, it was the emergence of critical studies of nationalism that conditioned a unique interest in the issue of death. Benedict Anderson's (1983) argument that the relationship between death and nationalism is a unique one without any genuine precursors in the past was a path-breaking theoretical intervention in this regard. Inspired by this, this study draws on and contributes to the scholarship that repositions death and its politico-symbolic constructions as processual, dynamic and constitutive parts of nationalisms (Anderson 1983; Kaplan 2008; Khalili 2007; Zerubavel 2006). Besides, it relies on Michel Foucault's (1977) centering of the body as the site, instrument and effect of power, which in itself has paved the way for critical analyses of the body, power and violence (Aretxaga 1995; Feldman 1991; Peteet 1994). I am particularly informed by the growing scholarship that positions the corpse (or dead body) and its spectral power as a distinct analytical trajectory to explore violent political

formations and transformations (Domanska 2005; Klima 2002; Robben 2005; Siegel 1998; Verdery 1999). Finally, this study puts these diverse debates in conversation with the growing literature on the issue of sovereignty, understood as the management of life and death or the right to kill (Agamben 1998; Foucault 2003; Mbembe 2003). My central theoretical proposition is that the symbolic and political constructions of death and dead bodies are constitutive to the politics of national identity and sovereign power in the Kurdish conflict in Turkey.

RESEARCH SITES

A Brief Political History of Diyarbakır

Located in the northernmost corner of the Fertile Crescent in Upper Mesopotamia, Diyarbakır is an old city which was home to prolonged struggles between regional powers since the medieval times. Centuries of wars, state-making processes, forced or voluntary population movements, mass conversions, and the Silk Road trade had made Diyarbakır a highly ethno-religiously mixed regional urban center with a well-established bureaucratic tradition and economic and cultural life. This urban formation was severely disrupted over the course of the late 19th and early 20th century Ottoman-Turkish modernization processes. This processes included the genocidal destruction of the city's large native Armenian and Assyrian communities on the eve of the First World War, the mass-transfer of Kurds to Western Anatolia, and the resettlement of Muslim populations from the Balkans into the region; all as parts of a radical "ethnic engineering program" (Dündar 2008) undertaken to the end of "creating the Turk's homeland" (Öktem 2003).

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In the Turkish Republican era, Diyarbakır became a military-administrative headquarter to Turkify and integrate the Kurdish region.

This attempt at centralization and assimilation was met by several rebellions across the Kurdish region in the early Republican Era (1923-1938). The first of these was the Sheikh Said Rebellion of 1925 that was repressed outside of the City Walls of Diyarbakır. Rebellions in Aĝrı (1927-30), Dersim (1935-38) and other Kurdish provinces shared the same fate. The pacification of the region through successive martial laws, mass population transfers, and legal bans on the Kurdish cultural and political expression eradicated all public vestiges of Kurdishness by the end of 1930s.

It was only in mid-1960s that several illegal Kurdish organizations emerged under the influence of leftist and anti-colonial struggles of the era with nationalist demands ranging from autonomy to independence. These groups managed to organize a large popular base particularly among the city's lower-classes, and newly-urbanized and youth populations. Kurdish nationalism started to drive the rhythm of Diyarbakır in the 1970s. But this was also suppressed by the September 1980 coup d'état, an event which led to the destruction of all leftist opposition in Turkey in general. The PKK was one of the 1970s' Kurdish political organizations, and it became the only one to survive the coup. The PKK's resistance in the infamous Diyarbakır prison[6] through methods such as death fasts and ritualized self-immolations is counted as a significant factor in the immense growth of popular support for the organization in the coup's aftermath (Cemal 2004, Miroĝlu 2007).

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[6] Amnesty International ranks Diyarbakır prison among "the ten most notorious jails in the world" (*The Times*, April 28, 2008).

From the early-1980s onwards, Diyarbakır became the political and symbolic center of the PKK-led movement for national independence. Accordingly, the city became the center of an aggressive state of emergency rule instituted by the Turkish state (1979-2002). At the peak of the guerilla war and emergency rule violence in the 1990s, many people were murdered or disappeared in Diyarbakır by the counter-guerilla, while mass detentions, systematic torture, checkpoints and night-time curfews turned the parameters of urban everyday existence into a chronic state of insecurity. The war also brought the urban economy to a halt and largely destroyed the systems of social welfare and urban infrastructure. Furthermore, the city's population almost quadrupled from the 1980s to the late 1990s, rising from 284,000 to about one million as a result of massive in-migration of rural populations displaced from the Kurdish countryside as a strategy of counter insurgency. Yet, these destructive processes helped Kurdish nationalist militancy to gain more momentum throughout the 1990s, when Diyarbakır consolidated its status as the informal capital of Kurdistan both within the Kurdish national-symbolic and in the eyes of the outsiders.

The post-1999 period changed also the role and image of Diyarbakır within the Kurdish movement. At the intersection of the PKK's abandoning the goal of national liberation in favor for a constitutional reintegration with Turkey, the beginning of the pro-Kurdish HADEP's rule in local governments in the Kurdish region, and the start of Turkey's EU accession process, Diyarbakır became the center of a nascent legal Kurdish politics devised for attaining the renewed Kurdish political demands framed through political discourses of peace, multiculturalism and democratic reconciliation. Diyarbakır

municipality took on a particularly leading role in this process, in the absence of parliamentary venues for the representation of Kurdish politics –which continued until July 2007. During the first five-year-term of pro-Kurdish party's tenure in the municipal government between 1999 and 2004, when expectations for democratization and peace-making were ripe, all kinds of activities of the Diyarbakır municipality were announced to the public on a weekly basis through the pro-Kurdish daily press, city billboards, brochures and street banners with same motto: "We govern our city and ourselves on our own". Appropriated from the new international "local governance" vocabulary introduced by the EU process, the motto was literally referring to the principles of transparency and participatory governance. On a more metaphorical level, however, it referenced to the positioning and perception of the municipality as the site of Kurdish national self-rule. The result was the endowment of most aspects of urban policy in Diyarbakır -from the most technical and everyday level to the realm of cultural politics- with an immediate expediency at the level of Kurdish national politics.

This congruence between urban and nationalist politics produced paradoxical results: The instrumentalization of local government bodies for the representation of Kurdish political demands have resulted in the subjection of these institutions to acute forms of legal, administrative, bureaucratic pressures by the central government. Pressures proved to be particularly harsh on Diyarbakır municipality, including many legal and criminal lawsuits filed against the mayor and harsh bureaucratic surveillance. These pressures further increased the symbolic and political significance of the

municipality in the eyes of the Kurdish public and popular classes and reinforced its image as the office of the "Prime Ministry of Kurdistan".

However, the sense and performance of (Kurdish national) unity that the municipality sustained against the "Other", the Turkish state, did not have a symmetrical resonance within the emergent intra-Kurdish debates on the post-1999 process. The de-centering of the guerilla warfare as part of the projects of peace and democratic reintegration had inevitably implied a change in the location and demographic profile of Kurdish political activism from the rural to the urban areas. The positioning of local governments as leading agents in the articulation new forms of nationalist politics helped in this period of transition to increase the power of urban middle classes within the ranks of Kurdish politics in such a degree that would otherwise have been more conflict-ridden, gradual and partial. Nowhere was Kurdish politics more marked by urbanization and the rise of middle classes than in Diyarbakır. Within such a context, the municipality also became the site and object of intra-Kurdish contests over the changing parameters of Kurdish identity, politics and struggle (Chapter 5).

Back and Forth between Baĝlar and the Municipality

As I arrived at Diyarbakır, I rented an apartment in the Körhat neighborhood of the Baĝlar district. Today the largest district in central Diyarbakır with approximately three hundred and eighty thousand residents, the settlement area in Baĝlar grew as of the mid-1960s within the context of an urban sprawl caused by high-rates of rural-urban in-migration due to agricultural modernization in the region. Since the 1980s the district has been the most socio-economically disadvantaged part of central Diyarbakır and the noted

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home of Kurdish political militancy. This made Baĝlar a primary target of Turkish counter-guerilla activities throughout the 1990s. In this period, the district also received over one hundred and fifty thousand displaced rural populations, which deepened the level of urban informality, poverty and socio-cultural marginalization vis-à-vis the rest of urban space. This led to futher ghettoization of the district's oldest neighborhoods, of which Körhat was one.

Baĝlar is often romanticized as the symbol of struggle, heroism and sacrifice with regards to the national-liberationist phase of the Kurdish movement and the State of Emergency period of the 1990s. However, such alternately melancholic or nostalgic visions that the district sustains vis-à-vis the recent past get largely decentered within the current discourses of Kurdish politics and urban life. As notions such as democratic politics, multiculturalism and civil society have re-defined the discursive contours of Kurdish politics and subjectivity, the kind of militancy represented by Baĝlar gets usually resituated as symptom of radicalism, provincialism and political immaturity that have become outdated and need to be superseded. Meanwhile, the image of Baĝlar as a site of urban policy space is increasingly determined by dystopian visions of urban informality, poverty, disorder, conflict, maladaptation and violence.

I decided to live in Baĝlar during my fieldwork, because the kinds of classed, gendered and urban intra-Kurdish conflicts created by the post-1999 period were among my primary research concerns; more so in its preparatory stages. However, as I mentioned earlier, soon after I went to the city, I also started working with the Diyarbakır municipality. My decision to work here rested on my position in Diyarbakır as a

politically engaged Kurdish person, and now a researcher. Yet, given the municipality's significant role in the articulation of emergent forms of Kurdish political culture, I located myself at the institution's Foreign Relations Office. This was an autonomous unit outside of the organizational structure, and had little to no role to play in the municipality's routine policy-making and implementation process. More precisely, the office was responsible for developing networks and lobbying with the EU and other international governance institutions, hosting foreign missions, NGOs, journalists, independent researchers and peace activists, maintaining the municipality's foreign correspondences, translating reports, and the like. Hence, working here would, at least ideally, enable me to maintain solidarity with the larger Kurdish movement while allowing for some autonomy for my research. I furthermore expected that moving back and forth between the municipality and Baĝlar as two antithetical sites of both Kurdish politics and urban space would enable me to capture the complexities of the ongoing process of socio-political transformation.

However, I want to clarify, I neither intended nor did an organizational ethnography of the municipality. Furthermore, for reasons that I discuss later, I keep the organizational site of the municipality outside of my ethnographic scrutiny. Nevertheless, my observations from a position in the municipality have shaped the concerns of this study. This position also allowed me to establish a wide network of relationships with Kurdish politicians, activists, NGOs, regional and international actors such as the EU agencies and NGOs as well as local activists and intellectuals.

Baĝlar had its own unique insights and relationships to offer to this work. I not only lived but conducted significant amount of field research in Baĝlar, primarily in Körhat, and the adjacent neighborhoods of Fatih and Muradiye. Besides observing and participating into the daily life in these neighborhoods, I interviewed men and women of different social and political status, standings and generations, conducted focus group discussions, and had informal conversations across a variety of sites including homes, protests, funerals and condolence ceremonies, coffee-houses, streets, shops and the like.

Diyarbakır and Baĝlar were thus focal locations of my fieldwork. Most of the stories and observations that shaped the analyses and contents of this work came from my research and social interactions here. However, just as I adjusted my original research concerns due to the contingencies of the context, I also extended my ethnographic research beyond these sites. Accordingly, I followed the negotiations of death across the physical, discursive or imaginary space of political Kurdishness and Kurdistan in Turkey. In this sense, this work is not the ethnography of a bounded physical site, but an ethnographic venture into death and what it generates in Kurdish struggle and politics.

POSITIONALITY AND METHODOLOGY

My inevitable position as a "native ethnographer" and my personal and political involvement with the Kurdish struggles in Turkey significantly shaped my intellectual concerns about the issue. Here I feel responsible to state my positionality. By the very nature of its thematic and analytical concerns and the demographic and geographical context in which it is located, this dissertation deals with issues that have largely remained outside the concerns of existing anthropological scholarship on the Kurds in

Turkey and the larger Middle East. While I find it significant to explore marginalized or silenced stories and histories of the Kurds, both dead and alive, I do not assume that revealing these silences would lead to a more "truthful" understanding of the histories and the complexities of the Kurdish struggle in Turkey. My aim, in this sense, is neither "to fill a 'gap' in academic knowledge nor to write a 'history' from the point of view of the marginalized" (Swedenburg 1995: xxvi). I am rather interested in understanding what factors have played into the production of experiences, recollections, gaps, silences and the reworkings of memory with respect to the negotiations over Kurdish dead bodies and how these shape the content and limits of the sphere of the political and political subjectivity. Just as my aim is not simply to give the marginalized voice and visibility through a gesture of defacement, my work will intentionally be complicit in the production or maintenance of certain silences where communal interests and personal securities of the people I worked with are at stake. Therefore, for example, I leave my observations and experiences within the institutional domains of Kurdish politics, primarily the municipality, outside of this work's ethnographic scrutiny, save for those knowledges about these spaces that became part of public discourse; such as press releases or interviews of Kurdish politicians or the mayor in the media (Chapter 2 and 5). Besides, I observe the necessary precautions in order to ensure the anonymity of my research participants and interlocutors from non-institutional contexts. All individual names but a few key public figures referred to in this work are pseudonyms.

This study is concerned with limit bodies, subjectivities, histories, and knowledges which have been disqualified as "illegitimate" in hegemonic political

formations, be it Turkish or Kurdish. Methodologically I approach such limits as foundational thresholds through which the inside and outside of the sphere of the political and the forms of subjectivity located therein are normatively defined. However, deciphering the production of such limits, my aim is not to entertain a politics of knowledge towards "including" the heretofore excluded. Rather, I pursue a methodology to make a modest contribution to those efforts at disrupting and transgressing the very normativity of such limits.

OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

The first three chapters of this study are concerned with how and why the Kurdish dead turn into a highly contested symbolic and semantic field in the larger struggle between the Kurdish movement and the Turkish state. In these chapters, I mainly analyze how death shapes practices and processes of national identity and sovereignty. The last two chapters depart from this analytical focus and shift the discussion towards intra-Kurdish tensions and contentions regarding the relationships between death, struggle and politics in the post-1999 period that is shaped through the discourse and politics of peace.

Chapter 1 explores the semantic and symbolic significance of dead Kurdish bodies in the struggle between the Kurds and the Turkish state focusing on the last three decades (1984--). On the one hand, I trace funeral ceremonies of Kurdish fighters as a key site for the production of the mythology of Kurdish national martyrdom. I argue that this mythology is structured by a moral and symbolic economy of "gift" which creates moral, symbolic and political exchanges between the Kurds and their dead and promotes the sense of a Kurdish nation identity as a sacred communion of the dead and the living.

On the other hand, I detail how the Turkish state endeavors to prevent this processing of death into the Kurdish struggle by a series of repressive techniques such as refusing to deliver dead bodies for burial, secret interments, destroying graveyards, banning funeral or attacking funeral participants. I analyze these state practices as attempts at destroying the economy of gift the Kurds create around the dead. Accordingly, the already dead Kurds gain immense political significance, serving as a battleground for the Kurds to challenge the Turkish state's desire to regulate death, life and territory in Kurdistan.

Chapter 2 extends and details the focus of Chapter 1 in three ways. First I describe some traditional Kurdish conventions and practices related to death and the Kurdish movement's efforts to change these towards instituting a politics of martyrdom starting with the early 1990s. Then I explore how the Kurds reanimate their dead in public, political and daily life through a variety of cultural forms and practices ranging from national songs and naming after the dead to anniversary celebrations of martyrs. Through this "resurrectory" politics, I argue, the Kurds "recycle" their dead bodies – which the Turkish state seeks to reduce to sheer corpses - into life, value and meaning. Finally, focusing on the troubling relationship of the mayor of Diyarbakır with the burial of dead Kurdish guerillas, I end this chapter with a discussion on how dead bodies operate as a taboo threshold that shapes and limits the normative boundaries of Kurdish political subjectivity in legal-democratic politics centered in the municipalities.

To historicize my analyses in Chapters 1 and 2, Chapter 3 seeks to answer the following question: When, how and why had the treatment of dead bodies of Kurdish rebels historically become an object of state surveillance? Here I argue that the

contemporary surveillance of dead Kurdish bodies has to do with the nationalization of death, territory and identity during the transition of the Ottoman Empire into the Turkish nation-state. At the center of this transition was the emergence of the territorial notion of national vatan (homeland) and the "patriotic" feelings of love, loyalty and self-sacrifice to protect it. I trace this process through the first Ottoman theater play *Vatan yahut Silistre* (1873); Ottoman cartographic education in schools from mid- 1890s onwards; and the *Hiyanet-i Vataniye Kanunu* (1920 - Law on Treason against Vatan). These processes culminated into a particular state reason that I analyze through the case of the Sheikh Said Rebellion in 1925, when Sheikh Said and other leaders of the rebellion were hanged in Diyarbakır and buried in an unmarked mass-grave unknown to date.

Chapter 4 explores the construction of this rebellion and this unmarked grave in historical discourses and Kurdish popular stories. First I present how dominant Turkish, Western and Kurdish historical discourses turn this rebellion into a rationalized event in historical time through a perspective that I call "history-as-reason". Then I detail three successive versions of the rebellion in the official discourse of the Kurdish movement in the last three decades as responses to practical political realities. Finally I discuss some mythical popular stories about the rebellion, its leader and his unknown grave, which could not have found much room in these historical discourses. My central concern in this chapter is to explore how the rebellion of 1925, its leader and his unmarked grave enter into the politics of the present through historical and mythical perceptions of the past. In this, I refrain from reproducing the romantic distinction between myth and history and focus on both the tensions and interactions between them. Departing from the

central focus of my previous chapters – the polarized conflict between the Kurdish movement and the Turkish state, this chapter reflects on intra-Kurdish mnemonic contentions over the dead by using the rebellion of the 1925 as a historical case.

Chapter 5 traces the political and popular negotiations of a funeral ceremony and the violent protest which followed it in Diyarbakır in March 2006. The dominant view on the protest - promoted by local businessmen, the media, state authorities, NGOs and some Kurdish politicians- was structured by a discourse that equated politics with reason-able action and excluded the protestors as the un-reason of politics. In response, the protestors highlighted a discourse of struggle and justice, promoting a sense of self and community that transgressed the limits of reason-based politics. In this chapter I am concerned with how normative boundaries of politics and subjectivity are created and/or transgressed through negotiations over death and violence in this tense zone between dominant political reason and popular perceptions of struggle and justice. Besides, I will trace in popular narratives of the protest an emergent critique of the hierarchies and conflicts inbuilt to the professionalization and bureaucratization of Kurdish politics as it has been restructuring itself for a politics of peace since 1999. In this critique, I argue, the often classed discontents with the increasingly hierarchical Kurdish political space are displaced and sublimated into a moral discourse that distinguishes between Kurdish "politics" and "struggle"; and re-appropriates the legacy of the dead into the latter to develop a moral/political critique of the former. In this emergent rift between Kurdish politics and struggle appear two burning questions: Which Kurds own and have the power of the dead? And, what will be the place of the dead in "peace"?

Power is possible only if death is no longer free, only if the dead are put under surveillance, in anticipation of the future confinement of life in its entirety.

Jean Baudrillard (1993:130)

Give way to the dead. Don't keep stabbing at him who is destroyed. What prowess can there be in killing the dead yet again?

Teiresias (Sophocles 2003: 101)

Chapter One: Fighting over Corpses: Sovereignty in Contention between This World and the Hereafter

The walls of her small apartment smelled damp and poverty. In a cold late autumn evening in Baĝlar, with shaking hands holding a cup of tea and deep wrinkles on her soft face, the old Kurdish mother started unburdening about her inability to get the *cenaz*a (dead body) of her son Aydın and to arrange a proper burial ceremony for him. "I wish I had his body. I wish I could shroud and bury him with my own hands," she said in a hard-bitten voice. Aydın was the eldest of her four children. When he joined Kurdish guerillas in September 1990, he was a nineteen-year-old junior university student. He was killed in Şırnak in July 1992 in an ambush organized by Turkish soldiers and Kurdish village-guards, the paramilitary forces paid by the state. Aydın's mother maintained:

> Şırnak was under fire. That year they [Turkish police and soldiers] burnt the town, and killed about one hundred people in Newroz.[7] A few months later we heard that he was killed in the mountains and buried in some place between Şırnak and Cizre. We feared to go there. Even if we had gone, they would not have given him to us. We feared that if we had gone, they would have killed us, too. It has been fifteen years. He has no gravestone where I can go and cry what is inside me, a

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[7] Annual holiday celebrated on March 21st celebrated by Kurds, Persians and some Turkic groups. Kurdish Newroz in Turkey differs from its counterparts in that it gained an extremely politicized character since the early 1990s, which usually turns into street demonstrations especially when celebrations are banned by Turkish state authorities. (For details on Newroz, see footnote 21.)

knot here in my throat growing ever since he died. Sometimes I see from the window some street vendor passing by. I think maybe it is him, disguising himself in vendor's clothes. The vendor approaches and I see it is not him. Sometimes, the door rings. I think maybe it is him. I open the door, but he is not. I know he is not alive. For fifteen years, everyday he is alive, everyday he is dead. But, still…because we have not seen his body, still I have little hope in me. Maybe he is alive…Turks are luckier. At least they have their *cenaza,* when their kids [soldiers] are killed. All the army commanders, politicians and other big people go to their funerals. Their funeral ceremonies are all over the TVs. They bury their dead the way they wish. They have graves to visit…They kill our children. People say it is war. The state says they are terrorists. I think it is pre-destination. I understand that. We cannot change the will of Allah, we have to accept it. *But what do they want from our cenaza*? I don't understand that.

Throughout my several interviews with this mother, she desperately struggled to rescue herself from her beloved son, or the idea of him; to stop him from haunting her on a daily basis. One may consider her desire to shroud her son "with her own hands" as an attempt to bring a symbolic closure to the son's murder and re-order the destroyed boundaries between life and death. Biologically Aydın is dead and she is alive, yet socio-symbolically both are stuck in a place in between this world and the other. The absence of the dead body has obstructed the funeral ceremony, which has not allowed the son's passage to the afterlife and, relationally, a passage for the mother back into this world. Unable to achieve a genuine death for her son for the last sixteen years, she complains of her inability to weep over a body and work through her loss. Despite her "little hope" that her son may be alive, she is envious of Turkish women whom she finds luckier, because, she thinks, they at least recognize the death of their soldier children as a genuine loss, situate and signify it in the symbolic order or structures of meaning, fulfill their last obligations through a proper burial and make a less painful passage for themselves back into this world. The mother's little hope is one that reason condemns with no mercy, for it

does not emanate from any factual hint that the son is alive, but from the absence of his dead body. This hope and the doubt that lurks right behind it do not allow the son to "pass" within the mother; while the moment of death turns into a stretched out and never-ending present. The result is a failure to overcome the crisis of mourning; a traumatic process that turns hope into an excruciating melancholic force, an over-identification with the loss, which makes the mother remember involuntarily and suffer anew on a daily basis in between life and death.[8] To overcome this crisis of mourning, she is in desperate need of knowing the place her dead son occupies, a fixed and secure place both in this world and in the other, because "nothing could be worse, for the work of mourning, than confusion or doubt: one *has to know* who is buried where –and it *is necessary* (to know – to make certain) that, in what remains of him, *he remain there*. Let him stay there and move no more!" (Derrida 1994: 9; original emphasis)

THE POWER OF THE DEAD

The protracted warfare between the PKK and Turkish state has resulted in about forty thousand dead bodies in the last three decades. Most of these are Kurdish. Inspired by Aydın's mother's question "What does the state want from our *cenaza*?" this and the next chapters are concerned with the Turkish state's politics over the Kurdish dead after it kills them, and Kurdish responses to these. As in Aydın's case, refusal of delivering the dead body to the family and interring it clandestinely, "theft of *cenaza*" as it is expressed popularly, is one such form. Others include mass-graving, banning or attacking funeral

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[8] For theoretical and literary discussions on mourning, melancholia, involuntary memory and impossible mourning, see Derrida (1994), Freud (1917), Proust (2002), Luckhurst (1996).

ceremonies, delivering corpses to the families on the condition of secret interment or interment in places and times determined by state authorities, destroying graveyards and gravestones, legally or extra-legally punishing those who attend funerals ceremonies, etc.[9] However, the specific forms of the deployment of this politics of surveillance over the Kurdish dead depend on the place, authorities in charge, general climate of Kurdish politics at the time and the organizational strength of local Kurdish communities. That is, this is not a monolithic politics applied the same way regardless of time, space and socio-political dynamics. Despite this diversity of its forms and contingency of its applications, however, I argue that this politics constitutes a systematic technique of sovereign rule whose objective is to obstruct the politico-symbolic construction of death, to clearly dissociate the dead from the living, and to prevent the dead from being regenerated into the Kurdish national-symbolic. I analyze this politics over the dead as a sovereignty struggle that seeks to control and manage human bodies and territories at the borders of death; a fierce struggle fought not only in this world but also extends its metaphysical reach to the creation and monitoring of a fantastic liminal time-space between this world and the other in order to contain or eradicate the power of the Kurdish dead.

My analysis draws on an emergent body of literature on the power of the dead in the negotiation and contestation of politics and identity in situations of violent conflict and/or processes of socio-political formations and transformations. Be it the dead bodies

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[9] The state's politics are not confined to the above mentioned forms: mutilation and dismemberment of dead guerillas were rampant counter-guerilla activities in the 1990s. Besides, countless Kurds "disappeared", a euphemism to denote the murders by the state or paramilitary forces, similar to the case of the disappeared in Argentina. This chapter is confined to the analysis of the state's politics that seek to obstruct burial ceremonies and dissociate the Kurdish dead from the living.

of Israeli soldiers (Kaplan 2008), Palestinian martyrs (Khalili 2007; Swedenburg 1995), the Irish hunger striker (Feldman 1991), the disappeared in Argentina (Domanska 2005; Robben 2005; Taylor 1997), criminal murders in Jakarta (Siegel 1998) or the remains of a priest in post-socialist Yugoslavia (Verdery 1999), dead human bodies are repositioned in culturally specific ways as powerful affective and symbolic forces that shape power, identities and struggles. Kathrine Verdery (1999: 32) ascribes this efficacy of dead bodies in politics to their symbolic multivocality and polysemy that is open to multiple readings, which simultaneously subjects them to diverse forms of socio-political use and abuse. Besides, Verdery maintains, their power is compounded by the fact that dead bodies are linked to "the sacred and cosmic –to the feelings of awe aroused by contact with death". Following Freud (1989), I add that its liminal position between life and death turns the corpse into an uncanny entity; "dead" yet not really, not fully, not properly, unless it goes through the symbolic process of initiation into the Hereafter. Before the passage to afterlife, the corpse is neither living nor dead, but *undead*; a being and non-being at one and the same time. Blurring the boundaries between human and non-human, life and death and nature and culture, the corpse threatens the social and political orders constructed on these very fundamental binaries. It is this destabilizing position of the corpse that instigates feelings of dread and horror as well as curiosity, veneration and fascination. Perhaps this is why when faced with a corpse "we cover [our] eyes and then peek through [our] fingers" (Quigley 1996: 12).

According to Verdery, it is precisely this uncanny power of the dead body that is processed into "a site of political profit" (ibid. p. 33). In many cases moral economies

created around the dead exchange their symbolic and affective power into useful and meaningful "gifts" within the sphere of the political, often through the institution of martyrdom and ideals of self-sacrificial death (Klima 2002). 'The corpse is an effective instrument', says Louis-Vincent Thomas, 'if only one knows how to use it: it makes a great impression and perfectly fulfills all expectations'.[10] Marquis de Sade long ago recognized the symbolic and political power of dead human body. He wrote:

> One should seek to prevent the regeneration of the body that we bury. Murder only takes the *first life* of the individual who we strike down; we should also seek to take his *second life*, if we are to be even more useful to Nature. For Nature wants annihilation; it is beyond our capacity to achieve the scale of destruction it desires.[11] (Emphasis added).

Behind Sade's idea of killing a life twice is the distinction between "biological" and "symbolic" death. For him, while the murder of first life is biological death, symbolic death, that is, taking the second life, means absolute death, the whole destruction of the natural cycle of regeneration; the complete annihilation of the symbolic order itself. That is, the body should be killed twice so that its every trace in the symbolic order is obliterated; taken outside of the symbolic order, it is to remain as an abject corpse, a non-human. This is such a death "for which there is no redemptive cycle, for which no birth follows" (Butler 2000: 49). I contend and will substantiate that the Turkish state's politics over the Kurdish dead follows this Sadean logic of killing a life twice, first biologically then symbolically, to eradicate the persistent affective and politico-symbolic power of the Kurds it has already murdered. The sovereign act here, I suggest, is not only the exercise

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[10] Quoted in, Domanska (2005: 43)

[11] Qouted in, Siegel (1998: 90)

of the juridico-political right to kill (Agamben 1998; Foucault 2003), but to kill a body twice so as to assure that it is wasted away and relegated beyond the symbolic order where it is devoid of any meaning, value and utility (Bataille 1988; Sade 1988). I will show how state sovereignty materializes in a desire and ability to produce "corpses" within an economy of *waste* and the imposition of *taboos* on these "corpses" to keep them in a state of abjection. In response, I detail, the Kurds construct a symbolic/moral economy of *gift* with their dead to reclaim them from the abject state of waste into the sacred and regenerative realm of martyrdom through highly masculine forms of ritualized political protest. Hence, the fight for sovereignty between Kurds and the state gains its "ghostly" character as a struggle to control the corporeality, spirituality, affectivity and semantics of dead bodies between life and death.

As a final introductory note I want to also make a terminological clarification on the concept of *corpse* before detailing my discussion. Depending on the context, in Kurdish "cenaza" means biologically dead human body (corpse), dead body prepared for burial according to Islamic law, and the whole process of funeral ceremony. "Cesed" is another Kurdish word for corpse, simply meaning biologically dead human body - that is, the first meaning of cenaza. I use corpse as an analytical category whenever I mean the first meaning of cenaza, the biologically dead body who has not gone through the process of ritual initiation into the Hereafter and who has not thus achieved a proper social death and a fixed place within the symbolic order. My use of the word corpse is intentional, although some scholars prefer not to use this word because of its "semantic abjectivity" (Domanska 2005: 409; Footnote 14). In fact, as I will demonstrate, the state's policy is to

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actively produce this semantic abjectivity over the Kurdish dead by not allowing them to have a proper burial ceremony and a place in the symbolic order. It is precisely due to this intended semantic abjectivity that I insist on the concept corpse. This is, of course, not to justify and reiterate the effects of the state's policy. On the contrary, it is to expose this policy to a critique by showing how the Kurds eradicate this semantic abjectivity by reclaiming their dead into value and meaning.

DIRTY WAR AND BEYOND

Most Kurds explain the state's politics over their dead as a crucial element of the highly institutionalized psychological warfare to destroy people's motivation for struggle and/or as an indicator of the extent to which the state is "intolerant" of the Kurds. On August 20th 2008, the family of Nahide Akgün -a female guerilla killed by the Turkish army in the Kulp province of Diyarbakır in March 1995- organized a memorial ceremony for her. Nahide's mother Bezare said that they had applied to the Human Rights Association to find Nahide's grave, but without any results till then. Bezare said:

> My daughter was engaged. She joined the guerilla on the night of her wedding ceremony. She loved her *welat* [homeland, in Kurdish], and died for it. I wish condolences to all Kurds. We say it is enough. No more bloodshed. No more mothers' tears. Our daughter died, but we cannot find her grave. They don't even respect our dead.[12]

In a phone interview in March 2008, a PKK executive told me that the most painful moment in the US-backed Turkish cross-border operation into Iraqi Kurdistan in November 2007 was the bombing of martyr cemeteries in Xinêrê and Qendil regions, the military bases of PKK in Iraqi Kurdistan:

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[12] http://www.firatnews.eu/haber-1158&baslik=tek-istegimiz-kizimizin-mezarina-ulasmak.anf

Some friends were martyred during the operation. But they intentionally attacked the martyr cemeteries we have constructed. Guerilla friends were very much psychologically ruined. I would say the enemy's attack on martyr graves was more painful than the martyrdom of our friends during the air-bombing. When the war-planes left, guerillas started gathering the bones scattered all around and reburied them.

In another instance, Xêlil, a very articulate Kurdish militia since the late 1980s with whom I had several interviews, interpreted the state's stakes in controlling the Kurdish dead as follows:

Xêlil: They want to destroy our motivation for struggle. By stealing the corpses, they want to inflict pain on the families, to teach them a lesson. They want to show us that this will happen to us if we rebel. It is psychological warfare. But, I think, most importantly, they fear our dead.

Hişyar: How come?

Xêlil: Because we organize huge funeral ceremonies. Tens thousands of people gather to express their respect to the dead and their families. Other than the mothers, people usually don't cry. They do folk dance and celebrate the martyrs. Especially in the 1990s, most guerilla funerals were like weddings. Because when a guerilla dies, people say he/she married Kurdistan. That is why they fear our dead. The police go crazy when they see so many people gathering around the martyrs and expressing their love, their respect. I mean when people and the dead become united as one. Then they attack funeral ceremonies, kill people, destroy gravestones, and all that. So, we gather for the new dead. We reconstruct the gravestones. It goes on and on like that.

The PKK executive's narrative and Xêlil's first explanation point to the centrality of the politics over the dead in the ongoing psychological warfare that is used in most "dirty wars". The term dirty war and missing dead bodies usually reminds us the case of the disappeared in Argentina. Many explanations have been put forward as to why the military regime in Argentina used a politics of disappearance to repress the opposition (Domanska 2005; Robben 2004). One reason was that the junta generals feared that the murders would be reciprocated with immediate revenge against themselves or family

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members. Besides, the uncertainty created among the revolutionary organization via making its members disappear gave the army and the police operational advantages. Also, by erasing the traces of the murders, the witness and evidence of crime, the junta obstructed not only future criminal prosecution but also the mobilization of international public opinion against its atrocities. Most importantly, disappearances enabled the regime to develop a ghostly power over the socio-political landscape that carried state terror to the most intimate spaces of human life, particularly family and home, psychologically ruining families, friends and comrades.

It is true that in Kurdistan a significant number of murders have taken the form of disappearances, and the above stated reasons as to why the regime hid the dead might also be valid for the case under consideration. Yet, because the production of dead bodies in Kurdistan happens in a context of nationalist struggle that has pursued for a long time an agenda of creating a separate national homeland, the power of ritualized burials of the Kurdish dead to mark, nationalize and appropriate territory has been a much more serious concern for the Turkish state. Accordingly, I argue, the politics of the Turkish state over the Kurdish dead has the added objective to obstruct precisely the exchange between death and territory. The Kurdish dead are meticulously separated from the land which they claim to die for, shattering the aimed symbiosis of the human body with the national body, the homeland.

In fact, Xêlil's elaboration on the state's fear of the Kurdish dead as well as how Kurds organize massive funeral ceremonies highlight something more than psychological warfare: the whole process of politicizing and appropriating death into the Kurdish

national symbolic and its corresponding claims to national territory. Emphasizing her daughter's love for Kurdistan, Bezare wishes condolences to all Kurds, generalizing her personal pain and suffering into the imagining of a Kurdish national homeland, struggle and identity. In both Xêlil and Bezare's words, very similar to the case of Palestinian which Khalili (2007) describes in detail, wedding becomes the metaphor to signify death; an affective bond with national homeland, "love for Kurdistan" is defined with respect to self-sacrifice; physical murder is exchanged into a "superior death", that is martyrdom - a useful gift within the Kurdish national symbolic, and the martyr becomes the affective figure that enkindles "feelings of militancy" and viscerally embeds national pedagogy (Peteet 1991: 151).

Bezare's wishing condolences to "all Kurds" is a frequent public performative in martyr funerals, which collectivizes pain and reconfigures the relationship between the family of the martyr and the national community for which he/she claims to die for. For example, in the funeral ceremony of his brother Fariz Kaymaz (Andok Amed) who was killed in the Mutki district of Bitlis in late August 2008, Halis Kaymaz told the people who gathered at the cemetery, "Martyr Andok was born in 1975. He was my brother until 1990 [when he joined the guerillas]. Since 1990 he has been the son of his people. Andok Amed is your martyr".[13]

This shift from family to the national community as the "true owner" of the martyr was also bluntly expressed by the uncle of Şirzat Paşayi [Serkan Çiya] who was killed in Bingöl in late August 2008. Şirzat was a member of the PKK from Iranian

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[13] http://www.yeniozgurpolitika.org/?bolum=haber&hid=37417

Kurdistan. So, his family came to Turkey to take his body for a funeral ceremony in Iran. But on their way back with the body of Şirzat, the family was stopped by Turkish authorities at the Balaban checkpoint on the way to Van, a Kurdish province bordering Iran. They told the family that Iranian authorities did not want the cenaza. Desperate as they were, the family decided to bury Şirzat's body in Esendere district of Hakkâri, a neighboring Kurdish province. But that was not allowed, either. The family was stopped at the Güroymak district of Bitlis by Turkish soldiers. In the meantime, Kurdistan Democratic People Initiative, a militia group related to the PKK, called on Kurdish people to be in solidarity with Şirzat's family and claim the cenaza.[14]

> Kurdistan's brave guerillas have turned their bodies into earthwork for their people against enemy attacks, for the freedom of Kurdistan and the future of Kurdish people. Claiming their cenaza and greeting them should be in a way worthy of them. In this regard, we call on people to claim the cenaza of our heroic martyr Serkan Çiya and organize serhildan [Kurdish intifada] wherever they are, because those who are martyred in the freedom struggle for Kurdish people are our biggest spiritual value. To claim and protect this value is a sacred task for each and every Kurd.

Soon, people gathered in Diyarbakır, Hakkâri, Esendere and Yüksekova to protest the state. In Hakkâri, people closed down their shops, except for bakeries and pharmacies. In Esendere, Kurdish youth fought the police. In Diyarbakır, police used gas to disperse the crowd who gathered in front of the Democratic Society Party's (DTP)[15] headquarters. Considering that things may worsen, state authorities allowed the burial of Şirzat in Bingöl, where he was killed. By the time, around one hundred vehicles reached

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[14] http://www.firatnews.com/haber-2747&baslik=gerilla-cenazesine-saldiriya-karsi-serhildan-cagrisi.anf

[15] DTP was the pro-Kurdish party between 2006 and 2009. In December 2009, it was banned by the Turkish Constitutional Court and charges of having links with the PKK. See footnote 3 for previously banned Kurdish parties.

Güroymak, where the family was stopped. Among them were parliamentarians and executives of the DTP and people from surrounding provinces. After three days, the family and people who joined them for solidarity brought Şirzat's body to Bingöl. In the cemetery, Şirzat's uncle Said said:

> We have been on the roads for all these days. It is insulting that they did not allow us bury our dead in any place. They put a lot of pressure on us on the roads. Despite this, this people's claiming their martyr has decreased our pain and suffering. This martyr is not mine; it belongs to this dignified people who have claimed him.[16]

The martyr is connected to the family via actual kinship, while his/her appropriation into the national symbolic operates through an idiom of fictive kinship. This shift away from family towards the nation finds its expression in the families' acknowledgement of their children as "the sons [and daughters] of their people". Despite the family's de-claiming the martyr in such a way, all funeral attendees know that the martyr first and foremost "belongs" to the family, whose de-claiming the martyr is an expected gesture to share the honor, dignity and respect redeemed through martyrdom. There are definitely contextual and performative aspects to such narratives, as they are produced in heated public gatherings that hail the family into a position to collectivize their pain, signify death via martyrdom and relocate their dead into the national symbolic. Families also express that their children "left their families to fight for their ideals"; "they sacrificed themselves for their people, not for their families", and so they belong to the national community.

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[16] http://www.gundemonline.org/haber.asp?haberid=60276

Hence, the cenaza of the martyr and its ownership becomes the territory over which the boundaries between family and nation are re-negotiated, get blurred and pass into each other; while funeral attendees are hailed as members of the nation as one family. The nation is thus imagined and practiced in metaphorical terms of an extended family, a militant community comprised of martyrs and those who follow the ideals they have died for; a communion of the dead and the living. This rendering of Kurdish nation as an extended family is usually accompanied by the imagination of Kurdistan as a beautiful, wild and feminine landscape under the constant attacks of Turkish colonialist rule. Against the penetrations or "rapes" (tecavüz) of the state, Kurdish mountains are romanticized as sacred terrains of resistance from where the feminized love of Kurdish "sons and daughters" for their people and their land "is folded into the valorous masculinity of the revolutionary subject" (Tadiar 2009: 357). In this political imaginary, Kurdish women often appear as "more manly than man" icons of national resistance who receive respect and honor from the community and yet at the expense of their thoroughly de-sexualized bodies.

Heroic narratives of martyrdom are a standard form in public gatherings, which ascribe a divine aura to the national struggle by emphasizing the self-sacrificial nature of martyrdom. However, when families talk to "outsiders" or the international community, the martyr as a masculine self-sacrificial figure fighting for the national community leaves his/her place to a narrative of victimized and usually feminized innocence. In such narratives, the martyr is depicted not as a person who struggled for Kurdish people as a person with full consciousness and will, but as somebody who was forced to fight as state

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oppression left no other choice. Sufferings of the victim and the family embody the pain of national community, justifying the rightfulness of the national cause and qualifying for compassion and understanding from the audience. In more private settings, however, both national martyrdom and victimized innocence are superseded by personal narratives of pain and suffering. Family members' recollecting and narrating childhood years of the dead are usually marked with constantly shifting moments of pain, sorrow and joy, portraying the dead as never growing infants whose lives were innocent and whose death tragic and untimely.

However, acknowledging the performative production of narratives of martyrdom does not mean to question their authenticity or legitimacy. None of them is more authentic than the other. Families do produce different narratives for different audiences and contexts, relying on their proximity with and place within the Kurdish national symbolic. It is not that, for example, all ethnically Kurdish families appeal to nationalist construction of the death of their children. Some prefer not to talk about the fact at all. Politically engaged families, especially mothers, devise contextually different narrative strategies to talk about their pain and suffering; sometimes heroic, other times personal. Nevertheless, the women and the elderly are less inclined to use the language of masculine heroism to give meaning to death.

The stakes of the family and the national community in securing a passage for the cenaza to the Hereafter may converge or diverge. For example, in Aydın's story with which I started this chapter, the mother's priority is to have a proper passage for her son in order to keep him in peace and have a genuine mourning process to cope with her loss.

However, for the movement and national community at large, the whole process of cenaza is an utterly political fact, in which the martyr is repositioned in the struggle against the state as the heroic icon of national militancy and unity. Another point to note is that without the solidarity of national community, families usually cannot get their dead bodies or arrange a funeral ceremony at all, as in the case of Şirzat I described above, and the case of Iqbal I will describe below. Yet, it would be wrong to clearly separate the family and the nation, for such reification would prevent us from seeing the core of the problematic, the enmeshing of the two into each other in the cultural politics of national martyrdom. With converging and diverging stakes and meanings they associate with the dead and a proper passage, the family and the national community struggle to bury their dead, while the Turkish state is dedicated to close the gates of the Hereafter to those it kills as a sovereign act.

IQBAL: THE MAKING OF A MARTYR

The conflict between the state and the Kurds over dead bodies found one of its most graphic expressions during the protests that started after the murder of a Kurdish youth in March 2008. Iqbal Yaşar, a Kurdish youth, was shot to death on his chest by the Turkish police on March 23rd during the Newroz celebrations in Yüksekova, a Kurdish town in Hakkâri province located at the border of Iran, Iraq and Turkey. This state act in this peripheral yet politically active small border town was a familiar practice to most Kurds, as killings during Newroz celebrations have become routinized throughout the 1990s via the protracted state of emergency practices that epitomized the state's "dirty

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war". This killing was followed by another familiar state act; the clandestine interment of the corpse.

State authorities claimed that Iqbal was interred in secret "to decrease tension in the district" at 2.00 - 2:30am of March 24th by the head of religious affairs in the district, who followed the directive of the head civil official of Yüksekova who was also present at the interment, both being state officials appointed by the government in Ankara. This was not a convincing explanation, as even a little familiarity with the Kurdish politics of the last two decades would attest to the fact that "theft of corpses" often exacerbates the situation. Iqbal's murder had already culminated into street battles with the Turkish police and soldiers on March 23rd, yet tension peaked the day after with the news that his corpse was "stolen". Soon, the town turned into an actual battlefield. Covering up their faces with pushis, the symbol of Palestinian intifada appropriated by Kurds during the 1990s, thousands of Kurdish youth protested the government, the governor and the police vociferously. The police attacked the protestors fighting behind the barricades established in many districts of Yüksekova against panzers, real bullets, and pressurized hose water and pepper gas. These were reciprocated by Kurdish youth with stones, Molotov cocktails, and slogans: "Long Live PKK", "Long Live President Apo" and "Governor Resign!" Soon, slogans mixed with the voices of busy ambulances and noisy bullets. As the police attacked further, resistance spread to other parts of Yüksekova. When it became clear that the police were unable to handle the situation, Turkish military troops entered the district, marching and chanting as if they were conquering a foreign territory: "Every Turk is born a soldier!"

While people of Yüksekova were fighting the police and soldiers on the streets, a delegation of DTP was negotiating with state authorities to get Iqbal's body back. Soon, the locally elected Kurdish mayor of Esendere, a member of the DTP, announced that state authorities gave up, and agreed to deliver the body to the family. A few hours later, Iqbal's body was exhumed from his grave at the Akalın cemetery where he had been interred by a "midnight operation", and taken to the Büyük mosque to be prepared for proper burial in accordance with the requirements of the Islamic ecclesiastical law. Iqbal was washed, shrouded and put in a coffin. From the mosque he was taken to the Asri cemetery in the Mezarlık neighborhood of Yüksekova, with the participation of tens of thousands of agitated mourners, family members, human rights activists, local mayors of Şemdinli, Şırnak and Silopi districts and two Kurdish deputies. On the way to the cemetery, military helicopters kept flying low over the mourners back and forth, another familiar state act in most Kurdish protests to intimidate or harass people, an act typically responded by booing and more agitated slogans.

Talking to the crowd in the cemetery, Hamit Geylani, Kurdish deputy of Hakkâri province, said: "The cenaza was stolen from his family, and interred in secret at midnight. However, he was taken back with resistance and decisiveness demonstrated. He is now buried by tens of thousands of people in a way worthy of him." Deputy of Şırnak, Sevahir Bayındır, a young female member of the DTP, added: "I salute the resistance of the people of Yüksekova. Iqbal Yaşar is a martyr of Newroz". After these speech acts that ascribed the burial process its national character, Iqbal's coffin was decorated with a green-red-yellow pennant symbolizing the Kurdish flag and reburied

under the flags of the PKK and posters of its leader Abdullah Öcalan by the angry crowd chanting slogans: "Long live President Apo", "Martyrs Never Die", "Down with Turkish Republic", etc. Three-day mourning was declared in Yüksekova.

One year later, on March 21st, 2009, about forty to fifty thousand people gathered in Hakkâri to celebrate Newroz. This year Newroz celebrations were dedicated to the memory of Iqbal and of Fahrettin Sedal. Fahrettin was wounded during the protests to get back Iqbal's dead body. He died in hospital on April 10, 2008. The next day he had a funeral ceremony like that of Iqbal with the participation of about fifty thousand people. Before the celebrations for Newroz 2009 started, one minute silence was practiced for respect to the memory of Iqbal and Fahrettin. Hence, both Iqbal and Fahrettin not only managed to have a "proper" social death, but also found a place within both the local history and the Kurdish national symbolic as iconic martyrs. This is precisely how many killings by the Turkish state are met by the symbolic construction of a "superior death": the overcoming of biological murder through martyrdom, the relocation of the dead into the symbolic realms of regeneration and immortality.

And yet, a man is never simply "a figure, not even and exemplary figure in the logic of an emblem, a rhetoric of the flag or of martyrdom. A man's life, as unique as his death, will always be more than a paradigm and something other than a symbol" (Derrida 1994: xiv). Most probably the reason why Iqbal left his house that morning was not "to sacrifice his life for his people and Kurdistan". Although he might have liked his people and his country very much, again most probably he did not think of death at all, which caught him so untimely. More, perhaps he was very much afraid of death, as most human

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beings are. But these are not important with regards to the operation of martyrdom. And neither the poverty of his family, his marriage nor his two orphaned kids were talked about much, details covered only in the local newspaper of the town who interviewed family members. The rather important thing for the national community was "his heroic self-sacrificial struggle" and his murdered and stolen body. In the process of reburial, Iqbal's body was thoroughly nationalized and turned into a sacred symbol, and that was at the expense of putting aside the singularity of his life and death. This reduction of singularities of the life and death to an abstraction is a key organizing principle of martyrdom; a generative and regenerative violence active at the core of all of its operations and manifestations.

SERHILDAN: A CULTURAL POLITICS OF POLITICIZING DEATH
Death has always and already been a deeply political component of the Kurdish struggle, which has been marked with a cycle of rebellion and repression throughout the twentieth century. Yet, such a struggle to get the dead body, designing massive funeral ceremonies as a form of resistance and appropriating death into nationalist struggle through specific rituals of martyrdom was institutionalized during the serhildans (uprisings, Kurdish intifada) in the early 1990s, which first started in Kerboran (Dargeçit) and Nusaybin districts of Mardin and Cizre district of Şırnak after the funerals of PKK guerillas. Before serhildans, though, an event deciphered in late 1988 by Günay Aslan, a Kurdish author and then a correspondent of *2000'e Doğru* monthly, had increased popular sensitivity around cenazas. Rumors spread all over Kurdistan that dogs were walking in the streets of Siirt with human arms, legs and other limbs in their mouth. It

was discovered that there were many dead bodies thrown into Newala Qasaba (Butchers' Brook), a place where the waste of the city was collected. When interviewing people who remember the publicizing of the event, many emphasized that Newala Qasaba was the place where the city's butchers threw the remains and waste of the meat they sell, depicting a very grotesque scene in which limbs of dead human bodies mixed with bits and pieces of animal bones and flesh; a scene of bare life, literally.

In June 1989, Günay Aslan appealed to the Public Prosecutor of Siirt via the Public Prosecutor of Özalp to investigate into Newala Qasaba, with a list of seventy three people, who were almost exclusively PKK executives, guerillas or prisoners died under torture or in hunger strikes. The PKK's most famous guerilla commander Mahsum Korkmaz (Egid) was also claimed to be among the dead. Although, later in 1991, then the Turkish Prime Minister Abdulkadir Aksu admitted that there were eight bodies in the brook, and then added seventeen more, the army covered up the issue by classifying the area as a military zone, which prevented people from entering the area and deepening the investigation. The place was covered with cement. In 2008 the municipality of Siirt started constructing a public park on top of the bodies in Newala Qasaba.

Official investigation yielded no results, unsurprisingly. But this event has created and effectively publicized the urgency and need to handle the dead in a sensitive and dignified manner. Yet, up until the late 1980s, claiming a dead body was an extremely risky and difficult task (Marcus 2007). It was difficult to identify the bodies, as guerillas had code names that were not necessarily known by the families. Dismemberment and mutilation of the bodies sometimes made identification virtually impossible. But the more

significant reason was the fact that it was very risky to ask state authorities for the bodies, as having a family member in the PKK would put them at risk of state retaliation, usually in the form of torture and sometimes death. State authorities viewed especially public burial of dead Kurdish guerillas as a sign of sympathy and respect for the PKK.

In the winter of 1990, the PKK determined in its Second Conference that the cenaza of the martyrs had to be claimed and buried in a way worthy of them, that they should not be left at the battleground under any circumstances. Even before this official decision of the PKK, Kurdish people initiated the struggle to claim the cenaza of those killed by the state. One such event happened in Cizre in early January 1990, when hundreds of Kurds gathered to protest the murder of Binevş Agal (Berivan), a female Yezidi member of the PKK carrying out city-guerilla activities. The first spectacular funeral ceremony, however, was organized for Kamuran Dündar by thousands of local Kurds in Nusaybin district of Mardin on March 15th, 1990.

A member of the PKK, Kamuran was the twenty-year-old son of a family who had nationalist aspirations. His father was a member of the town's local council. He was killed with his six friends in an ambush into their cave hide-out near Savur district of Mardin on March 13th. Upon getting informed by the PKK about his son's death, Kamuran's father immediately demanded the body. Initially state authorities resisted, but ultimately they relented. The body was given on the condition that he would be buried early morning and only family members could join the funeral. However, the funeral procession started in the afternoon, partly because the mother was coming from İzmir, a Turkish province located at the Aegean coast. In the meantime, people were spreading

the word so that many could join. As the body was carried to the mosque at the far end of the town and from there to the cemetery, more and more people joined. According to Aliza Marcus (2007), there was another mosque closer to the house where Kamuran was resting for his last journey, but the family wanted to enable more people to join the procession. The police was carefully observing the funeral. The climate was tense, but no clash with the police happened until the burial finished. On the way back from the cemetery, things turned violent. Finally, the fight that PKK had in the mountains hit the city centers. It was the dead body coming from the mountains that created "an air of revolution" in Nusaybin.

Destroying Ethnic Identity: The Kurds of Turkey (An Update, July 1990) [17], a report jointly prepared by European and American human rights organizations described the events after Kamuran's funeral and the spread of the spirit of serhildan to other Kurdish province in March 1990 as follows:

> Following the burial, Nusaybin residents confronted security forces, threw stones at them, and shouted slogans like, "Long live Kurdistan," and "Down with the Turkish State." Security forces fired on the crowds, killing one person, Şemsettin Çiftçi. Three hundred people were detained. On March 19, Kurds demonstrated in Cizre to protest the security forces' actions in Nusaybin, closing their shops and staging a general strike. On March 20, security forces fired on crowds in Cizre who were trying to stage a demonstration; four people were killed and nine wounded. Sixty-eight people were detained. On March 21, a [female] university student [of medicine] in Diyarbakır, Zekiye Alkan, immolated herself in a protest against "the oppression of the Kurdish people." At the same time, thousands of Kurdish university students demonstrated to celebrate Newroz....On March 26, shops and businesses in Cizre, Silopi and İdil remained closed, as residents

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[17] *Destroying Ethnic Identity: The Kurds of Turkey (An Update, July 1990).* The report was jointly prepared by the US Helsinki Watch Committee, Human Rights Watch and International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights. It was based largely on information gathered by Lois Whitman, Counsel to Helsinki Watch, and Eric Siesby, Chairman of the Danish Helsinki Committee, during a fact-finding mission to Turkey in May 1990. It was written by Lois Whitman.

launched a silent protest against "state terrorism." The next day, high school students in Cizre began a protest demonstration. When security forces ordered them to disperse, they refused, set fire to tires in the streets and threw stones at security forces. Rioting then followed in other sections of town. Four people were killed and nine seriously wounded by security forces. Police then detained 138 people, of whom 74 were formally arrested on March 28 by the State Security Court in Diyarbakır. On May 21, prosecutors asked for 10-year sentences for 155 Kurds accused of taking part in the demonstration; the defendants were charged with separatist propaganda, holding illegal rallies and damaging government property…Following the incidents in Nusaybin and Cizre, shopkeepers in Diyarbakır, Silvan, Batman and Tunceli pulled down their shutters and closed their shops as a form of protest.[18]

The power of the dead proved to be fairly contagious. Until Vedat Aydın's funeral in Diyarbakır in July 1991, the symbolic peak of the Kurdish politics of politicizing death, there were countless funeral ceremonies, protests and boycotts in most Kurdish cities and towns. It was not surprising, however, that the most spectacular ones were organized in Diyarbakır. In an interview in January 2007, Xêlil remembered the day of Vedat Aydın's funeral as follows:

> It was in 1991, when Vedat Aydın was killed by the state. You should have heard of him. He was the chair of Diyarbakır branch of People's Labor Party [Halkın Emek Partisi -HEP]. It was July. One night he was taken from his house by the

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[18] The report maintained: "The government reinforced its troops in the region and set up roadblocks at the entrances to towns, allowing entry only to government officials and local residents. During the first week in April, President Turgut Özal met with the National Security Council and then announced that the events in the southeast "were part of a plan targeting the territorial integrity of the Turkish Republic." He called a "summit meeting" of the leaders of the three parties represented in Parliament to discuss additional measures to be targeted at the State of Emergency region. Many observers in Turkey told us in early May that the events in the southeast had worried the government; that President Özal had been forced to acknowledge that the unrest represented more than isolated terrorist incidents; and that recent events indicated a higher level of support for the PKK, or at least greater opposition to the government's policies in the region, than had been seen earlier. We were told by many people in southeast Turkey that support for the PKK was mounting. One lawyer said support for the group varies from region to region; in some areas everyone supports the PKK -- in others 65 percent or less. But he believes that every year there is more and more sympathy for the militants because of the killings, detentions, beatings and harassment by security forces, which are bitterly resented by the Kurds in villages and in towns alike. In April, Reuter's quoted Müslüm Yıldırım, the Mayor of Nusaybin, as saying that "about 95 percent" of the people in his town cooperated with the PKK "willingly." (On April 20, Yıldırım was suspended from his position because of this statement.)"

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police. A few days later his body was found on Diyarbakır-Elazığ highway. He was tortured and then shot in the head…Maybe one hundred thousand people, maybe more. All Diyarbakır was there that day. Not only Diyarbakır, though. People came from the districts and other provinces; from Bingöl, from Mardin, from everywhere. One end of the group was at the train station, the other was down Mardinkapı. I can never forget that day. All people were united. All political groups were there; the PKK, Peşeng, Rızgari; men and women; children and the elderly; poor and rich. There was no fear. After the burial, we were dispersing. But the police shot at us right outside Mardinkapı and killed more than ten people and injured hundreds. It all started that day. After that funeral, it became like a tradition in Diyarbakır. Whenever a person is killed by the state, people are on the streets to protest. It was like last year.

The funeral of Vedat Aydın and the protests that followed the burial of four members of the PKK in March 2006 have become two of the most important local events in the recent political history of both Diyarbakır and the Kurdish movement.[19] There was yet another funeral ceremony in Diyarbakır before Vedat Aydın's, which Xêlil did not mention. In fact, Vedat Aydın himself attended that funeral in early March 1991, and sang the Kurdish national anthem with his left fist raised in the air. That was the funeral ceremony of Aziz Turhallı, a member of the PKK killed together with his seven other comrades in the Poxaz valley between the Nazımiye district of Dersim and Yayladere district of Bingöl. Aziz was the only son of a poor family who had other five daughters. Despite the poverty of his family, he won the right to study medicine at a prestigious medical school in Ankara, the capital of Turkey. He joined the PKK in his third year at the university, and died in December 1990. His mother Asiye became a very well-known peace activist especially after all her other children except for the youngest had joined the

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[19] In both cases, tens thousands of people gathered to join the funeral ceremonies and protests. The police attacked the mourners and protestors after each burial ceremony and murdered ten in each. In Chapter 5, I will analyze the protest in March 2006, focusing on its public and political constructions.

guerilla in the 1990s. Asiye remembered the difficulties to find and get the dead bodies of

her two children and the funeral ceremony of Aziz as follows:

> Asiye: We passed that winter [January-February 1991] on the mountains trying to find Aziz. We could get it on March 5th, after two months. To find and take his cenaza to Diyarbakır, we went to Bingöl seven times. The soldiers knew where he was buried, but did not tell us. When we said we would go and find it, they did not let us. For two months, we did not know what sleep was. My husband and brother did not allow me go to the mountains. But they were all there. Each time they failed to find Aziz, they would come with their hands and fingers burnt in the cold and snow. Six times in two months like that. On the seventh, it was the wake of spring, the snow was melting…Ultimately we could make a grave for him. For the first few years, I regularly went to visit and talk to him. Once I thought maybe we should have a tent there in the cemetery. We could live next to him. He would not talk to us, but still he would be with us. But the police destroyed his grave and gravestone. Then we went in hiding for years because of pressures. We were constantly moving our house in Diyarbakır. In 1993, we changed our place four times. Then, we could not. We had to leave. We went to İstanbul, thinking that they would not find us there. You know, all that. Still, it is like that.

> Hişyar: Like what?

> Asiye: Still his gravestone is broken.

> Hişyar: The funeral ceremony?

> Asiye: We took Aziz to Ulu Cami to prepare him for burial. There were many people, but also many policemen…They did not allow men to carry the coffin on their shoulders to the cemetery. They said people should not walk. They said we had to carry it with a vehicle. So, we found a pick-up to carry the coffin. Thousands of people followed. Until we reached the cemetery, people were harassed several times. We buried it. Then the police wanted the crowd to disperse. They attacked some people. It was like that…I swear, I swear maybe one hundred thousand people came to our house for *taziya* [the ceremony to accept condolences]. Everywhere was full of people. There was no place in the house and in the garden; so many people had to stay on the street. It was like that for weeks. We have a large family. Aziz had a lot of friends. His uncle knew many people. That is why people were coming from everywhere. That day I said, "Amed hişyar bu" ["Amed woke up" -Amed is Diyarbakır's name in Kurdish]. I wish Aziz could have seen how he united all people. He united people with the cause...

> Hişyar: Ayfer [Asiye's daughter]?

> Asiye: Ayfer was young, very young. I felt very angry when she left. Aziz's was also very painful, but he had a decision. He was older and mature. But Ayfer was

a small girl. Why did they [PKK] allow her? Even if she wanted it, they should have sent her back home. She was very young.

Hişyar: How old was she then?

Asiye: She was a very intelligent child. She just finished her fourteen in March, and left in July. Two months later, only two months…We got the news. She was very smart. Even one year after her death, the *dersane* (private institutions that prepare students for national exams) were sending us letters to ask for Ayfer to join them for free…We could not get her cenaza. We found it, but they did not give her to us. They put her in a mass grave, thirteen people in the same grave (in Newala Qasaba).

A friend of Aziz, who attended the ceremony, told me that Aziz's elder sister, a high school teacher who later joined the PKK, decorated Aziz's coffin with a red-yellow-green pennant, symbolizing the Kurdish national flag. The colorful pennant put on Aziz's coffin, which, according to Aziz's friend, was a first in Diyarbakır, would find its way into the Turkish parliament eight months later, decorating the hair of Leyla Zana, a young Diyarbakırite who entered the parliament as the first Kurdish woman member of the parliament in October 1991. Aziz was bid farewell with ululations and slogans, "Şehid namirin!" (Martyrs do not die!).

WEDDING THE DEAD

Since the early 1990s, ululations and decoration of the coffin with red-yellow-green pennants as well as dancing folk dance with patriotic songs have become the main elements of ritualizing martyr funerals. In some cases, the hands of the martyr were hennaed, another appropriation of the symbolism of Kurdish weddings. Ululations, henna and folk dance were meant to turn especially the death of unmarried youth into a wedding, a moment of happiness, motivated by the often stated objective: "not to make the enemy happy, not to show our pain and tears to them". This has been a kind of

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counter psychological warfare, but, more importantly, a militant form of community-making via the productive and reproductive symbolism of weddings positioned against the destructiveness of death; which turns mourning into celebration; an end into a beginning; destruction into hope, loss into self-sacrifice, defeat into success, and hence death into resurrection. This regenerative power of death was succinctly put in the PKK's 1991 Album for the martyred as follows: "Martyrs have created life out of their death".

Perhaps the most well-known story in Diyarbakır in which the logics of wedding and funeral get thoroughly enmeshed is that of Welat Şeyhmus Kaya (code: Hebun) and his bride Emel, which I listened to from his elder sister, my neighbor in Baĝlar, and many others who lived their youth in Diyarbakır in the early 1990s. Welat, Seyhmus' first name, means homeland in Kurdish. Because Kurdish was strictly banned, he had not been registered in the population office until he was seven, the age of primary school. Then his name was written as Şeyhmus in his Turkish identification card. Seyhmus was the youngest and most liked son of a well-to-do family in Alipar. He was raised as his father's heroic son, a would-be-rebel like Usife Seydaqni, the militia leader who kept fighting around the Pasur region of Diyarbakır after the repression of the Sheikh Said rebellion in 1925. Like other youth in Diyarbakır of the time, Seyhmus grew fast, became politicized in high school, was taken under custody several times, tortured and finally imprisoned for two years when he was twenty. After he was released he wanted to marry. The family was very happy with this news. The father bought a new apartment immediately and furnished it beautifully. But there was something worrying for his father about the date Sehymus wanted to have the wedding ceremony, August 15. This was the

anniversary of the PKK's initiation of armed struggle in 1984. Despite his father's

hesitation, the wedding took place in front of their house on that day in 1991. More than

four thousand people joined the wedding. They danced folk dance and sang patriotic

songs for hours. But they could not finish the wedding ceremony due to a violent police

raid that night. Seyhmus the groom went into hiding. Together with Emel, they stayed in

a district of Diyarbakır for three days, and then "went to the mountains," taking with

them the money and gold received as wedding gifts as a contribution to the guerilla.

> He was martyred on August 6, 1992. Eight days less than a year he stayed in the
> guerilla. It was Thursday. My father, elder-brother, Hebun's brother-in-law and
> another friend went to bring his cenaza. Our whole world was destroyed. I can't
> express how painful it was. We buried him in Alipar. His last request from us was
> to henna his hands when he got martyred. He wanted us to tie green-red-yellow
> colors. When they took his cenaza to the house, my mother asked my aunt to
> bring the henna that had remained from his wedding ceremony. My aunt had hid
> the henna. Before that it was in the dowerchest that had remained from my
> grandmother. Because my elder sister and mother were crying each and every
> time they opened the dowerchest and saw the henna, my elder brother's wife had
> asked my aunt to hide it. When they brought the cenaza, my mother asked my
> aunt to bring the henna. She wanted to put it on his hands. People were singing
> and dancing folk dance. All the youth of Alipar and patriotic people of Bağlar
> were there that evening. People sang songs, while his body was washed. Then we
> hennaed his hands. We dressed his watch and tied his hennaed hand with a green-
> red-yellow pennant. Then we took him to the cemetery. We four siblings said we
> would bury our brother. But the police blocked the road. They did not allow many
> people to join the funeral, including my elder sister and two younger sisters. I
> escaped from their hands. It was late evening. It was dark. Despite the police and
> the dark, still there were more than one thousand people in the cemetery. It was so
> painful…But we are faithful to his struggle to the very end. He always said this.
> He always said, "Each and every sibling of mine will maintain my struggle". In
> every single note he had sent us, when he was a guerilla. That is why we are so
> faithful to the struggle.

The cultural form of funeral-as-wedding is not unique to Kurdish political rituals

and symbolism, however. Such practices have been recorded from diverse parts of the

world as attempts to culturally construct and cope with the "untimely death" of young

men and women who have not yet fulfilled their lives, particularly sexual lives, such as in Romania, Greece, or African tribes (Kligman 1988; Danforth 1982; Herzfeld 1981; Levy-Bruhl 1966). Besides, Leila Khalili (2007) highlights the existence of such practices in Palestine, Iran and beyond the Middle East. "In the past", a seventy-four-year old Kurdish woman told me, "some people hennaed the hands of their children who died unmarried. But that was in the past. I myself have not seen this, but my aunt told me about it when I was a child. People don't do it nowadays." Unfortunately, I was not able to situate this change in funeral symbolism historically. Yet, I should underline that at least in the vicinity of Diyarbakır re-inscribing funerals through wedding symbolism has not been a common practice in the last seventy to eighty years. In other parts of Kurdistan that are outside the sphere of influence of Sunni Islam, there may be such practices, yet further research is required to attend this issue. In the Kurdish funeral ceremonies of the Sunni Muslim heritage, any expression or symbolism of happiness and joy is strictly renounced, no matter who the deceased person is, whether old or young, married or unmarried, male or female. Besides, a temporal distance between funerals and weddings is always encouraged. For example, wedding ceremonies are mostly postponed when the cenaza of a kin or friend is "still on the ground", which usually means at least forty days have to pass after the death in order to have the wedding. Or, when it is too late to change the wedding date, the families of the bride and the groom ask for the consent of the family of the deceased. In such cases, families do their best to observe modesty and not to involve in the extremes of joy and happiness, showing their respect to the dead and the mourning families.

The metaphor of wedding to signify death in elite Kurdish national imagination dates back at least to the mid 1930s (Strohmeier 2003). For example, in his novel *The Eagle of Kurdistan*, published in 1937 in German and then in French, Kamuran Bedirxan, a key figure in the emergence of Kurdish nationalist imagination, talks about the fertilizing of the Kurdish homeland by the sacred blood of Kurdish heroes, an organicist visioning of the union of the fallen with the earth as the "wedding" of the Kurdish nation. Besides, in *Mem û Zin,* the most famous Kurdish literary work which was written by Ehmede Xanî in the late seventeenth century that is often referred to as the Kurdish equivalent of *Romeo and Juliet* or *Leila u Mecnun*, Zin asks her brother to welcome and celebrate her death with a feast as grand as a wedding to signify her union with her beloved Mem in death.[20] Despite these literary references, the mimesis between ritual

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[20] Mem u Zin was written in Kurdish by Xanî as an allegory of the disunited and split situation of the Kurds in the late seventeenth century. Xanî complains of the lack of a strong ruler who would unite the Kurds under one authority and end their oppression by their neighbors; Persians and Turks. As Xanî himself writes, he uses the love story of Mem and Zin as a pretext to describe the situation of his people. The story is organized around the love of Mem and Zin. Mem is a secretary at the court. Zin is the sister of the emir (ruler) of Botan region of Kurdistan. When the emir learns about this relationship through manipulations of Bekr (or Beko), he imprisons Mem and places him in chains. Zin gets bedridden. Their suffering turns their love into a spiritual one. Their desire to unite turns into an eagerness to die and thus achieve a union with each other and with God. Afraid of an uprising by Mem's friends to save him, the emir persuades them that Mem will be released, but the reality is that Beko has already convinced the emir to kill Mem. But when he sees her sister is bedridden, the emir feels intense remorse due to what he had done to Mem and Zin. Zin expresses her desire to die in order for her soul to unite with Mem's. Mem is told to go to the emir who is willing to release him, but he refuses, saying proudly that he would not be slave, a servant or prisoner to anyone other than God. Mem and Zin die. Their story ends by a unity in death. Mem's best friend and Zin's sister's husband Tajdin kills Beko who destroyed their lives.

With its emphasis on the unity of Kurds, many Kurdish nationalists take Mem û Zin to be the foundational document of Kurdish nationalism. They interpret that Mem represents Kurdistan under oppression, while the unity of Mem and Zin in death is Xanî's desire to achieve the unity of Kurdish peoples. Some even argue that Ahmede Xanî was a genuine nationalist one century before the Europeans had invented the idea of a modern nation. Beyond these speculations, however, it should be admitted that the story of Mem and Zin, at least in its form published by Kurdish nationalists in the early 20th century, has significant potential to be appropriated into nationalist patterns of identity and belonging.This is so not simply because the story promotes an integrative and larger image of Kurdish identity, but it also involves elements typically found in many nationalisms; such as the romance of love, the difficulty to achieve unity, resistance to oppression,

forms of wedding and funeral, of joyful celebration and mourning, has not found practical popular expression in Turkish Kurdistan until the early 1990s, when nationalist imagination became inscribed in the socio-political body of the Kurds through the armed struggle of the PKK that has deeply nationalized death, as I detail in the next chapter. Let me also clarify that this mimetic relationship between funeral and wedding is observable only in self-sacrificial death. In cases of normal death, the Kurds are still very meticulous in not transgressing the cultural boundaries that delineate the domains of wedding-celebration and funeral-mourning.

CONCLUSION

In an interview with Aliza Marcus (2007), Selahattin Çelik, a former executive of the PKK who later separated from the movement, states that they learned demonstrations and funeral ceremonies for martyrs from the Palestinians, primarily the Palestinian Liberation Organization, who helped the PKK between 1980 and 1982 by providing military camps and training for its new recruits in Syria and Lebanon dominated territories. Even as early as the 1936-39 Palestinian rebellion, one elderly Palestinian recalled the mimetic relation between funeral and wedding, revealing striking similarities with the funeral ceremony of Seyhmus that I described above (Khalili 2007: 125):

> Both a funeral and a wedding were simultaneously taking place in our house. The women's thrilling cries of joy were mixed with the relatives' bitter crying, national songs, and young men's threats were heard…They were singing wedding songs for my brother, the martyred groom. My mother and the village women were putting henna on the hands of my brother who was twenty years old. A groom in the real sense of the word, he was being treated like one, as they dressed

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pride and heroism, suffering and readiness to die for a supreme goal, and "treason" as personalized in the figure of Beko, who obstructs the much desired unity.

him in his best clothes and sang for him: "Groom, oh Groom, we are happy for you.

The power of sacrificial death and martyrdom in the production and maintenance of national solidarity has been extensively studied (Anderson 1983; Kaplan 2008; Khalili 2007; Mosse 1990; Smith 1998). With its contextual particularities, Kurdish national struggle is also heavily marked with discourses and practices of self-sacrificial death and martyrdom. I have shown that many murdered guerilla or civilian Kurds cannot have a proper passage to the Hereafter, and when they can, funeral ceremonies are transformed into massive protests, wherein the dead are immortalized through the institution of martyrdom, and the spectral power of the martyr is exchanged or processed into the core of national struggle and identity. Sufferings and pain of the people as well as the rightfulness of the national cause are rearticulated, re-performed and re-inscribed in the national imaginary through each and every cenaza.

Saturating and consecrating "the soil" with the martyr's body and blood as a *homeland-making* practice, Kurdish funeral ceremonies not only immortalize the martyr and the nation; unite the body with the soil, both literally and symbolically, and the living and the dead; but also evoke strong intensities that unify the community and produce a particular structure of feeling that blends personal sorrow, pain and suffering into politicized collective rage and vengeance mobilized into an unremitting struggle against the state. This power/affect matrix guides the dead body, the territory it marks and claims, and the mourners to find their ways into the Kurdish national-symbolic. In this process, the corporeality of the martyr and the mourners and the collective sensuality produced throughout the funeral ceremony become central to the production of a unified

militant national subjectivity. It is the dead body and the affectivity it generates on its way to martyrdom that mediate the mourners' journey into the national symbolic, a collective performative reiterated in every single funeral ceremony, a visceral moment that produces and harnesses affect and national pedagogy into political subjectivity.

The process of *cenaza* is a genuine "total social fact" (Mauss 1966). The act of initiation into the Hereafter structures moral, psychological, symbolic and political ties between the living and the dead within a moral economy of gift and reciprocity created around and through the dead body, uniting the separate realms of life and death in one and the same symbolic act of exchange. Within the symbolic order of nationalism, self-sacrifice, gifting one's life for the collective good, is the ultimate form of generosity; the most significant gift possible (Zerubavel 2006). By gifting his/her life the martyr obtains moral superiority over the community, leaving them indebted, a particular kind of moral debt to be paid in the form of a commitment to the ideal for which he/she had died; the Nation. In other words, within this ethos of patriotic self-sacrifice, the dead retain a powerful affective, spiritual and even magical hold over the living, leading to a moral obligation to reciprocate in ways conducive for promoting the struggle. Thus the funeral process does not operate simply as a social arrangement to conjure death away or overcome it, but to articulate it socio-politically (Baudrillard 1993). Concurrently, mourning becomes an organized form of affective political labor through which disposed and dehumanized Kurdish dead bodies turn into valuable and meaningful human lives. Besides, the dead body is transformed into a most powerful national institution, and sorrow into a radical political faculty, while death turns out to be more of a political fact

than an individual experience (Domanska 2005). It is these politico-symbolic exchanges with the dead embedded in the moral economy of gift that help to produce and reproduce a militant Kurdish political community.

The martyr is a most powerful figure in the Kurdish political drama, whose authority comes from its otherworldly or sacred qualities, its contact with death and proximity to the Hereafter, which consecrates this world and informs politico-cultural imaginaries and practices. In this power/affect matrix, corpses that turn into martyrs via massive rituals have witnessed and stood for all the sufferings and self-sacrificial resistance of the Kurdish national self. As martyrs have multiplied, they have become the symbolic glue that has produced, reproduced and held together national subjectivity. This, however, is not simply a symbolic process. Considering that about thirty thousand of the dead bodies produced in the last three decades are Kurds, and also that Kurdish society is still largely organized around large or extended families, it becomes clear that these dead bodies are organically tied to millions of Kurds through kin networks as their sons, daughters, cousins of various distance, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters. In an almost mimetic relationship, as the dead have multiplied and the exchanges between them and the living increased, the Kurdish nation has transformed into a *collective cenaza*, symbolically imagined and practically experienced as such.

If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide unto the body of life. For life and death are one; even as the river and the sea are one.

Khalil Gibran

Between life and death, nationalism has its own proper space the experience of haunting. There is no nationalism without some ghost.

Jacques Derrida (1992: 15)

Chapter Two: Symbolic Interruptions of the Real: Creating Life out of Death

There has never been a monolithic conception of death in Kurdistan, and neither has there been a uniform pattern in which the Kurds culturally organize their relationships with their dead. Located in Mesopotamia, a crossroads for diverse cultures, religions and languages, Kurdistan is home to a multiplicity of often contradictory social and cultural forms related to death and the dead. Before the age of nationalism, many Muslim and non-Muslim groups inhabited this geography, and each had developed their own symbolism and ritual practices concerning death. The Turkish nation building process has led to the almost total extinction of non-Muslim groups, yet this could not deplete the multiplicity of cultural constructions of death, either. Kurdistan is now predominantly inhabited by the Kurds, who are themselves internally differentiated through cultural, linguistic and religious lines. Alevid Kurds are different from Sunni Kurds, who are different from Christian Kurds, the Yezidis and the Syriac. Class relations and urban/rural divide also play their roles in perceptions and rituals of death across the vast Kurdish geography. The details of these differences are important and to be acknowledged, yet they are beyond the scope of the present work. Here I confine myself to a summary of some conventional practices related to death and dead bodies among the

people with whom I have conducted research, who were almost exclusively of the Sunni Muslim heritage, the majority of contemporary Kurds. In doing so, I will further detail the development of a politics of national martyrdom in the last three decades to show how death works within these cultural conventions and how it is also radically transformed through time.

NATIONALIZATION OF DEATH: THE QUEST FOR IMMORTALITY

The dead, as elsewhere, are respected in Kurdistan. Torture, insult or dismemberment of the dead body is counted as one of the worst sins. Besides, bodily integrity of the dead is always protected. The dead bodies are approached with utmost care; they are washed, shrouded and given a proper burial according to conventional Islamic rules as the final obligation of the community towards the dead. People are expected to forgive the dead either before or after death. Usually the community's forgiving the misdeeds of the dead takes place during the burial ceremony upon the formal request of the person who is in charge of the burial. That is, the communal break with the dead requires the settlement of all debts with the dead so that they can go into the Hereafter peacefully where they are to be judged for their worldly deeds and to start their eternal life. After the burial, family members accept condolences for at least three days, and usually in each case of death many people pay visits.

Especially among the rural Kurds, "to leave the dead on the ground", as it is phrased locally, is a big shame. Being unable to arrange a proper burial stains family honor, and also points at the family's weakness. "To leave the dead on the ground" is also used in a metaphorical sense in cases of blood-feud when the kin of the murdered are not

able to take revenge. Whether used in its literal or metaphorical sense, the men of the family lose face, unless the last obligation towards the dead is fulfilled. It is important to note that taking revenge and arranging a proper burial come to coincide with each other in this metaphorical semantic field. But, in cases of blood-feud, even if the dead body is properly buried, it will symbolically remain on the ground unless revenge is taken.

Cemeteries, the home of the dead, are sacred places. People are asked to refrain from talking aloud, singing, whistling or having fun in any way in the cemeteries. Anything that may disturb the resting dead is regarded as shameful. People regularly visit cemeteries, especially in religious holidays, and read verses from Koran and pray for the salvation of the souls of their dead. Besides, especially in rural Kurdistan, graveyards of religious figures have been turned into sacred tombs, places of prayer and making requests for varied wishes. The most well-known tomb in the vicinity of Diyarbakır is Sultan Seyhmus, visited especially by women who make oblations in return for a son. The tombs of Veysel Karani and Sheikh Ali in Siirt and Palu provinces respectively are also well-known, the latter being the grandfather of Sheikh Said, the leader of Kurdish rebellion in 1925. Although establishing socialities around the tombs is officially banned; discouraged by scriptural as well as secularized Islam and condemned as superstition by many Kurdish nationalists, local people maintain these practices as their very Islamic obligations throughout the Kurdish geography. When uncertainties hit human life, or in case of unavailability of a proper match for marriage, an incurable disease, or inability to give birth, people visit the holy tombs - practices that ascribe the dead the power to

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intercede with god in order to generously bestow on the people better health, fertility, wealth and happiness.

Having said these, let me underline the fact that although social and symbolic exchanges of various kinds between the dead and the living may continue, as I briefly described above, in cases of normal death the community is freed from its *obligations* towards the dead upon the burial. Once the destroyed boundaries between life and death are restored through the funeral, people go back to their normal lives. The politics of national martyrdom has recently changed precisely this sense of communal obligation towards the dead. In national martyrdom, the burial ceremony is not the end, but start of a new set of obligations defined through a secular dualism of body and spirit: while the obligations towards the dead body end by the funeral, obligations towards the spirit begin. Yet, in this dualism spirit does not mean the immortal life force that separates from the body upon physical death, but a metaphorical substitute for the political ideals for which he/she had died for, a secular metaphysics that tends to equate human spirit with political reason and consciousness.

The position of Mothers of Plaza de Mayo on the reburial of the disappeared in Argentina helps to further clarify this distinction between body and spirit. When in 1984 president of Argentina Raul Alfonsin initiated the policy of disinterring and reburying the disappeared properly as part of a "reconciliation process", he was responded with strong opposition especially by a sector of the Mothers who had initiated the struggle to learn the whereabouts of their children in the first place. The mothers led by Hebe de Bonafini were rightly suspicious that the government was seeking a policy to make peace with and

leave behind the criminal past by reburials, a process that would not simply rebury the bodily remains of their beloved but also, and more importantly, their spirit – their political ideals. When president Alfonsin highlighted the need to recover 'the nation's wounds', the Mothers replied violently (Robben 2004: 143-144): 'Many want the wound to dry so that we will forget. We want it to continue bleeding, because this is the only way to have the strength to fight'. Two years later, they added: 'They have interred their bodies it does not matter where, but their spirit, their solidarity, and their love for the people can never be buried and forgotten'. The dilemma of the Mothers was of extreme difficulty. They had to renounce the bodily remains of their dead and a possible genuine mourning process in order to keep "the spirit" of their children alive; 'in order not to forget, not to forgive, not to succumb and to fight for victory'.

The substitution of the spirit of the dead with their political ideals is clearly operative in the Kurdish movement's declaring itself to be the link between the martyrs' ideals and the living community so as to redeem their spirit in life as a source of struggle, as articulated by its leader Abdullah Öcalan. In a chapter titled "In Search of Immortality" (2000: 268-269), he criticizes traditional Kurdish mourning practices. When he was a child, he says, he thought of mourning as a sign of the deplorable situation of the living:

> The tears of the living for the dead are tears for themselves. They see themselves in the dead. They see the fact that they are living dead…They are so weak and so much like the dead that they create a mess when one is dead. It did not seem to be as a meaningful thing to face a natural life cycle in this way. In fact, now there is not much weeping for the martyrs. What we have done was to turn the martyrs into a force of life and courage…And one should not underestimate the power of transforming the fear of death into courage…It is a great achievement that we have turned the great fear of death in the people of Kurdistan, this situation of

pain and tears, into a fight with courage... A right approach to death, rightly evaluating the link between life and death, defeated fear…We have created a situation in which physical death would not mean death. This has met a great need for Kurdistan. The fear of death is eliminated and the need to create the feeling of immortality in life has been met.

What Öcalan suggests is a change in the mode of exchange with the dead from the framework of communal mourning towards its political articulation into a life force repositioned in the promotion of struggle. Öcalan states that the PKK has both turned the martyr into a theory for struggle and put the martyr in practice in order "to bring the martyrs and the living closer to each other". Positioning the martyr as the most condensed form of labor power and the true owner of the struggle, this theory of struggle invites the Kurds "to obey the order of the martyr" and "move forward under its command" by practicing in their personality the power, ambition, suffering and resistance of the fallen. According to Öcalan, the movement's working as "a bridge" between the martyrs and the living led to several achievements in Kurdistan; including the eradication of the fear of death, changing the meaning of physical death, the creation of life in the death for sacred ideals, creation of a sense of "more bearable death" and establishing the links between such a death and life. Within such a framework, Öcalan concludes, the best way to fulfill the obligations towards the martyrs is not to weep for or commemorate them but to be faithful to their political ideals, maintain their struggle and reorganize personal and communal life accordingly.

Clearly this theory and practice of martyrdom has allowed the movement to gain significant control over the sphere of death in Kurdistan, while the power culled from the dead helped to create and promote national forms of life. In this process, it should be

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noted, while the movement has bridged between the martyrs and the living, it was the sacred power of the martyrs that mediated the journey of the living into the national symbolic. In this symbolic, the Kurds are invited to reciprocate the martyrs' gift which has usually taken two forms: either to die like the martyrs or to fight until victory. And it is this mythology of martyrdom and the accompanying structures of feeling that lay much of the grounding of a highly fatalistic and militant form of Kurdish political agency.

The Kurdish politics of national martyrdom is mostly grounded in metaphysics of secular sacredness and not in religion per se, although various religious symbolic and ritual elements are utilized in providing the martyr with a sacred aura. At play in the difference between religious and national martyrs are a series of metaphorical substitutes that parallel with the fundamental dualism between body and spirit. For example, in Islam martyrdom is self-sacrificial death in the name of religion and Allah against those against Islam and Allah (Küfr and Batıl), while in Kurdish nationalism it is in the name of protecting homeland and national community against an oppressive regime. Besides, in Islam, upon the burial of the body the spirit goes to Heaven without any judgment as all sins are forgiven in the act of martyrdom. In Kurdish national martyrdom, there has not been much mention of Heaven. The pious Kurdish community and most martyr families do believe that the martyred go to Heaven, understood in Islamic terms, but in the secular nationalist discourse the martyr is already buried in the sacred soil of Heaven; the Homeland. Although both forms of martyrdom are sacred and both have immense effects on the living, shaping their imaginaries and life practices, the spirit of the martyr

of religion starts an eternal life in the Hereafter, while the spirit of the martyr of the nation never takes the passage and decisively stays here in this world.

One should also notice that in the process of nationalizing death in Kurdistan the formal structure and the sequence of funeral proceedings have largely remained unchanged. The meticulous care for the body as well as the procedures of burial such as washing the body at the mosque, shrouding it with white garment, carrying the coffin over the shoulders, Islamic prayers at the burial site, the organization of the whole burial under the initiative of *the imam* or *mela* (the local religious authority), the position of the dead body in the grave (the head should lie towards Mecca) and many other formal details still follow Islamic rules. Yet, the content and signification of the funeral have changed radically in the form of marriage-funeral mimesis, national songs, slogans and folk-dance, increasing participation of women, increasing numbers of the participants in general, political speeches, decorations of the body and the coffin with henna and national flags, ululations, carrying the photos of the dead during the funeral, and the like.

WHISTLE IN THE DARK: REANIMATING THE DEAD

Despite state oppression, there are several forms in which the community of the dead is woven into the national symbolic and reanimated in public, political and daily life as a life force. One such dominant form is composition of heroic national songs and lyrics for them. For example, Kurdish musicians working with the movement composed heroic songs for Berivan and Kamuran immediately after their death. Again, after Vedat Aydın's funeral ceremony, which has found its place in Kurdish political discourse as Serhildana Amed, Koma Berxwedan (Group Resistance) composed *Amedê Serhildane*, the election

campaign song when Kurds entered the elections in 1991 with a specifically Kurdish agenda. This song was brought to every Kurdish province through the loudspeakers of the bus used in the election campaign, a successful campaign that helped a pro-Kurdish party to win seats for the first time in the history of the Republic.

Amedê serhildan e	Amed is *serhildan*
Lê Amedê Amedê	O! Amed, Amed
Dîlan a me Kurdan e	The wedding of us, the Kurds
Warê şêran Amedê	The land of lions
Tabuta Wedat Aydın	The coffin of Wedat Aydın
Lê Amedê Amedê	O! Amed Amed
Ala rengin pêçane	Is wrapped with the colorful flag
Tu buka Kurdistanê	You are the bride of Kurdistan
Meskenê egidan e	The home of the brave
Amed xwe dixemlîne	Amed adorns herself
Lê Amedê Amedê	O! Amed Amed
Tev govendan dikşîne	All are dancing in line
Warê şêran Amedê	The land of lions, O! Amed
Darbesta Wedat Aydın	The grave of Wedat Aydın
Paytexta Kurdistanê	The capital of Kurdistan
Lê Amedê Amedê	O! Amed Amed
Navê te pir şirîn e	How pleasant is your name
Tu kela berxwedanê	You, the castle of resistance
Paytexta Kurdistanê	The capital of Kurdistan
Lê Amedê Amedê	O! Amed Amed
Navê te pir şirîn e	How pleasant is your name
Tu buka Kurdistanê	You are the bride of Kurdistan

In the initial phase of the guerilla warfare between 1984 and 1989, almost all martyrs were honored by a song or a reference by name in a song composed for those who died together. However, martyrs multiplied by the early 1990s. Between 1990 and 1992 death toll reached thousands, which made it practically impossible to compose songs for each and every martyr. In such a context Xêlil Xemgin, a famous Kurdish singer composed his *Ey Şehid* (Oh, Martyr), which did not mention any specific name but handled "Şehid" as a generic category for all those who have died for Kurdistan. The

overwhelming number of martyrs apparently left him with no other choice. Here are excerpts from the songs on Kamuran and Xêlil Xemgin's *Ey Şehîd* that were composed in the early 1990s and are still very popular in Kurdistan.

Heval Kamuran	Comrade Kamuran
Sêzde heval bûn	They were thirteen comrades
Destê hev gırtın	Hand in hand
Serê wan bilind	Their heads-up
Çıqa diburtin	How [long] they resisted
Şêrên Kurdistan	The lions of Kurdistan
Wan tîmên xwînmij	Blood-sucking teams
Dora wan girtin	Encircled them
Serê nedanîn	They did not bend their heads down
Heval berxwedan	Comrades resisted
Heval Kâmuran	Comrade Kamuran
Şehidê Kurdan	The martyr of the Kurds
Şehid namirin	Martyrs never die
Dikevin dilan	They fall into hearts
Ey şehîd şehîd	O! Martyr Martyr
Jîna bê mirin	The life that is immortal
Mêrxas û agît	Brave and heroic
Rûmeta mezin	The biggest honor
Ey şehîd şehîd	O! Martyr Martyr
Dengê dilê me	The voice of our hearts
Bû hêrsa mezin	Turned into a big rage
Tev lat û zinar	All the mountains and rock
Ji ber dilerzîn	Tremble at your feet
Gel rakir pîya	You made all stand-up
Bûn tirsa dujmin	You became the enemy's fear

Despite their pedagogical dryness, poor poetic qualities and thematic repetitions, the reiterated affect of these songs was very powerful especially when combined with rich Kurdish musical forms. However, these songs are not produced for the purpose of mourning, but more for the education of sorrow that stems from death into particular structures of feeling such as collective rage and vengeance conducive for promoting revolutionary struggle. Yet, in many songs the affective and the pedagogical elements

tend to remain in tension. The affect produced jointly by the loss and the song itself cannot be easily contained into the structures of feeling promoted by the explicit ideological content of the songs. While the lyrical melodies invoke further sorrow so that the audience would feel the pain for the loss and get further agitated, the accompanying pedagogical words call for restraint and organization of that sorrow and agitation into a commitment to revolutionary struggle. As such, these songs provide both "ideological guidance and encouragement, and [serve] as emotion-cuing accompaniment to memories of the fallen" (Tadiar 2009: 356). Many people I interviewed underlined the affective power of songs in turning Kurdish youth into self-sacrificial militants. Aydın's mother repeatedly said: "It was all because of those songs. I told the kids several times not to listen. I hid the cassettes. I burnt them. But it did not work. Each time they found others." Hivda, a female member of the movement's student organization whom I knew from mid-1990s, remembered: "It was all Xêlil Xemgin. I know so many friends went to the mountains just because they listened to his Ey Şehid."

Interviewing Hivda after so many years as a research informant did not prevent me from joining in her pain and sorrow which was intertwined with the joy in her words and on her face. I told her Ramazan's love for Xêlil Xemgin and his songs. Ramazan was a primary school classmate of mine who joined guerillas in spring 1993, and was killed in Derê Nazik village of Bingöl three years later in an ambush. His body was brutally destroyed, his ears cut off. The soldiers did not allow his burial next to other dead guerillas of our village. He was buried down in the brook at the end of the cemetery so as to obstruct the spatial concentration of martyr graves.

I saw Ramazan in Newroz 1992, when we visited the village with Vedat to celebrate the day. We could not find him in the village, but we needed him to burn a big fire for Newroz[21], thinking that he could bring some used tires of his tractor which he was keeping in their barn. Soon, we heard somebody was loudly whistling one of Xêlil Xemgin's rhythmic songs far in the dark. Vedat immediately recognized the whistle's owner. It was him. Two days later, I saw him in Bingöl city center. With a huge smile in his face, he told us in a coffee-house over hot and sweet tea: "The tire I brought from our barn was not a used one. It was new. I could not see that in the dark. After you had left the next day, my father discovered it. He was almost killing me. It was the tractor's big tire. Very expensive! That is why the fire was burning so nicely." Then his smile turned into a huge and loud laughter. We all laughed for minutes. That was the last time I saw

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[21] Newroz, meaning new (new) day (roz), is often referred to as a Persian holiday to welcome the coming of spring. The Kurds also celebrated Newroz historically as a cultural form. In the early 1990s Newroz was politically revived as a symbol of resurrection and freedom, typically celebrated by doing folk dance around big fires lit by used tires. The centrality of fire in Kurdish national mythology has several origins. One argument is that the ancient Kurdish religion was Zoroastrianism which regards fire as sacred. The myth that became popular in the 1990s was first invented by a Kurdish poet named Abdullah Tevfik in the 1930s. Tevfik modified the legend on the resistance of a blacksmith named Kawa against the tyranny of the Assyrian king Dehaq (Zahhak or Zahak) about two and a half millennia ago, which was probably an ancient Persian legend. According to the Kurdish version, Dehaq had two serpents growing over his shoulders and everyday he sacrificed two young men whose brains were given to the serpents so as to alleviate the pain he felt. However, the man who was charged with the sacrifices would instead kill one man and mix his brains with that of a sheep, thus saving one man a day. The discontent that grows against Dehaq's tyranny gets organized into a revolt led by Kawa, who had already lost several sons. Kawa trains the saved young men into an army and marches to Dehaq's castle where he kills him with a hammer and burns the castle into ashes or sets fires on the hillsides to celebrate the victory. In contemporary Kurdish versions of Newroz, the fire that Kawa lit on Dehaq's castle turns into a symbol of resistance against tyranny, the beginning of a life free of oppression. The PKK has further modified this legend by incorporating the story of Mazlum Doĝan, who hung himself in the infamous Diyarbakır prison on the day of Newroz in 1982 to protest inhumane prison conditions. Mazlum, a central committee member of the PKK who also wrote its Menifosto, was declared by the PKK to be the Modern Kawa, connecting past and present Kurdish "freedom struggle" in the mythical time of national liberation. Although Mazlum hung himself, the first news from the prison was that he celebrated Newroz by burning his body and turning his death into a most powerful weapon against the Turkish military regime. Later it became clear that he did not burn himself, but celebrated Newroz in his cell by lighting three matches and then hung himself.

him. A month later, Vedat also joined guerillas. In May 2007, I met an old friend in Germany in Vedat's exiled brother's house and learned from her that Vedat died in 1994 in Serhad and that he could not manage to have a gravestone, either.

Usually the guerillas would bring music cassettes to the village militia for duplication in simple music sets. The circulation of songs was through illegal networks. Although being caught with such a cassette would have brought years of prison sentence, songs always managed to find their intended audience. These songs, especially the rhythmic ones like Berivanê, gained immense popularity in wedding ceremonies. Hence it was not simply that funeral ceremonies were elaborated on with wedding symbolism in recent Kurdish national socio-genesis. Weddings also mimicked funerals through the singing of martyr songs and agitated slogans. Both funerals and weddings gained new meanings in the course of the serhildans, which deeply politicized sorrow, pain and happiness that intermingled into each other.

Photos of the martyrs are another important and very much visible force that shapes political and daily life. Here I do not mean the photos carried during funeral ceremonies, but the ones that are usually hanged on the walls of the living rooms of martyr families where guests are hosted. In almost every single martyr family, one can see at least one photo of the martyr on the most visible wall of the living room. The photo is meticulously framed and adorned with red-yellow-green ribbons and flowers. Usually the most beautiful photos are hanged, in which all facial features are clear and lively and the eyes are foregrounded. It is impossible to escape the living presence of the martyrs in the room. No matter what the purpose of the visit is, at one point the martyrs in the wall

walk down and enter the conversation; their life and death are told. Entering the living room, one feels the sacred aura of the tomb of a saint. In the houses with more than one martyr, the photos multiply, and the living room mimics the cemetery.

Naming the newborn after personally known or canonized martyrs has been another very common practice that reanimates the martyred in the national symbolic. Starting with the 1990s, in almost every village, every politically engaged family, girls and boys were named after Berivan, Zilan, Şiyar, Welat, Rojhat, Zozan, Newroz, etc., which were all code names used by their brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins or neighbors who joined the guerilla and died. It is important to notice that these code names are all Kurdish, while the martyrs' real names are almost exclusively Arabic names spelled in Turkish; Mehmet, Ahmet, Hasan, Abdullah, etc. This appeal to code names is not only to claim or aspire to the respect and militancy of the martyr, especially for the boys, and reanimate them, but points to the nationalization of Kurdish symbolic order away from the historical Arabic and Turkish influence mediated through Islam. The martyr's legacy and ideals are thus transferred to and live through the newborn. However, as until 2003 Kurdish names were strictly banned, most newborn had two names; the Kurdish one being used in the family and community, while the Turkish was used in schools and other official proceedings. This was so because state legislation dictated that names of citizens should "not violate national culture, moral laws, customs and traditions and insult the public". Even after the government had passed the Sixth Reform Package in 2003 which formally uplifted the ban on Kurdish names as a part of Turkey's accession to the European Union, Turkish Language Institution found twenty seven

names in contravention with Turkish national culture, and left them outside the law. Berivan was one of them. Zilan, PKK's first suicide bomber, was another. All other banned names were code names of well-known martyrs.[22]

It is not only the newborn but also places, guerilla training periods, guerilla units, frontal committee groups are named after the martyrs; such as Martyr Harun Point, Martyr Rojhat Hill, Martyr Delil Brook, Martyr Zilan Training Group, Martyr Ape Musa Revenge Brigades. Although such naming practices to mark and appropriate territories are almost totally exclusive to guerillas, in certain instances Kurdish municipalities also followed such (re)naming practices to counteract past efforts to efface Kurdishness from urban political geography, reintroducing "a Kurdish politico-cultural sensitivity into the public setting of everyday life." (Jongerden 2009: 12). For example, a public park that Diyarbakır municipality constructed in 2007 was named as Ayşenur Zarakolu Free Women Park after a Turkish leftist woman publisher and intellectual who had been in solidarity with the Kurdish movement until she died of cancer. Although she was not killed by the state, she was honored as a martyr for her long-term solidarity with the Kurdish struggle. But, the centrally appointed governor of Diyarbakır revoked the municipal decision without any valid excuse. In another instance, Musa Anter's name was given to the largest boulevards of newly constructed Diclekent suburb of Diyarbakır. Anter, popularly known as Ape Musa (Uncle Musa in Kurdish), was the most famous

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[22] Although the Turkish Language Institute specified twenty seven names, in practice the banned names are more. In 2002 the Regional Gendarmerie Office of Dicle district of Diyarbakır prepared a list of 600 names and appealed to the Public Prosecutor of Diyarbakır to open cases against the families whose children had those names. Many court cases followed. In Western parts of Turkey where registration officers are Turkish, problems with naming abound. In Kurdish provinces with Kurdish officers, however, such banning practices are lower. See, Human Rights Foundation of Turkey's Annual Human Rights Reports 2002-2004 for details. For further details, also see a recent article by Senem Aslan (2009).

Kurdish lawyer and intellectual, when he was killed in Seyrantepe neighborhood of Diyarbakır by a PKK repentant.[23] The dominant Kurdish view is that Ape Musa was murdered under the directives of the Gendarmerie Intelligence Center (JİTEM), an illegal organization that Kurds hold responsible for extra-judicial killings and disappearances.

In another interesting case in March 2009, the municipal assembly of Batman made the decision to change the name of the Ahmet Necdet Sezer Boulevard into Zilan Boulevard. Ahmet Necdet Sezer was the 10th President of Turkey, while Zilan had several implications for the Kurds. First, it was the name of the PKK's first suicide-bomber; a female guerilla who killed eight Turkish soldiers in Dersim province in June 1996. More importantly Zilan was the name of a brook associated with the Kurdish rebellion in 1930 around the Mount Ararat. Although there are no actual figures on the numbers of Kurds who died in the rebellion, Kurds claim that between ten to fifteen thousand people were massacred en masse. İsmet İnönü, then the Prime Minister and the best friend of the Republic's founder Mustafa Kemal, is quoted as saying after the rebellion, "In this country only the Turkish nation has the right to demand ethnic and racial rights. No one else has that right". The governor of Batman revoked the decision of the municipality twice on procedural grounds, without objecting to the implications of the name itself. Zilan is still used in Turkish maps to denote a geographical area, and yet its Kurdish appropriations and meanings are not allowed.

Martyrdom is also inscribed in the "national calendar" which is full of days and weeks to commemorate popular martyrs through legal and illegal activities. The national

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[23] Repentant (itirafçı) is a term used for ex-PKK members who surrendered and became informers, some of whom joined several extra-legal activities such as the killing of Kurdish civilians throughout the 1990s.

heroism week is March 21st - 28th, from the day of Newroz to the martyrdom of PKK's most famous commander Egid, the Kurdish equivalent of Che. March 16th and May 18th are two other important days in the national calendar, the anniversary of Saddam's gassing five thousand Kurds in Halabja in 1988 and the protest of PKK's four executives and members in the form immolating themselves in Diyarbakır prison in 1982, respectively. Repeated commemorations in such days help to create a national temporality replete with heroic self-sacrificial moments, suffering and resistance.

Along with these politicized days celebrated through often illegal activities, legal Kurdish institutions are also involved in politics of martyrdom in several ways. For example, Diyarbakır municipality organizes a dinner every year to honor families of martyrs, where thousands of people gather to commemorate the dead. The dinner starts with ceremonies of respect to the dead, and usually takes the form of a meeting with lengthy talks on the value of martyrs and an expressed commitment to their ideals, and ends with a music concert. Besides, in religious holidays Kurdish activists and politicians regularly pay visits to the families of martyrs, *deĝer aileleri* (*families of value* in Turkish) as they are called popularly.[24]

Having a martyr in the family is usually taken as a sign of loyalty to the national cause and personal trust, while the *bedel* (price/cost) that family pays in the form of "giving their children" to the struggle is exchanged into status, value and prestige, as

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[24] On one such occasion, in Ramadan and Qurban holidays of 2006 and 2007, I joined a group DTP members and local people to pay short visits to the martyr families in Körhat neighborhood, which has twenty seven *deĝer ailesi*. Some of the people I met in these visits supported my research in considerable ways not only by sharing their stories but also by introducing me into the larger community. Being introduced into community by them immediately turned into respect and trust I generously received, which was a small share from the respect and trust the community had towards martyr families, an uncanny way the martyrs have helped my research.

evidenced in the very name *değer aileleri.* Although such a prestigious position may provide them with ease and advantages in accessing material resources and power as well, most families shy away from asking for "personal things", as that might harm their reputation. In other words, as long as the families follow the narrative of altruistic self-sacrifice and perform selflessness, they enjoy prestige. Otherwise, they may turn into targets for gossip and despise as immoral people "using their dead" for personal reasons. Despite this puritanical symbolic economy around the martyrs, many of Kurdish parliamentarians, mayors, members of local councils, or chairs and executives of Kurdish institutions are members of martyr or guerilla (potential martyr) families.

One other exemplary form in which the dead are reanimated and processed into struggle is the case of the Kurdish initiative of Peace Mothers. Established in Istanbul in 1999, Peace Mothers is an organization created by Kurdish women whose children, husbands or close kin were murdered in the war. In the last decade the Mothers have been able to mobilize the power culled from their dead children into a struggle for justice and peace. Similar with Mothers in Argentina, Chile, ex-Yugoslavia, or elsewhere, the deployment of motherhood as well as sorrow and pain as political faculties coupled with the power of their dead have enabled them to gain significant visibility in Turkey and abroad in their struggle for "Turkish-Kurdish and intra-Kurdish peace". Mostly rural and illiterate women whose villages were destroyed as part of the counter-insurgency warfare during the 1990s, the Mothers have created networks with several international groups and institutions, and have had many visits to capitals of European politics such as

Strasbourg and Brussels to bring the case of the Kurds into the agenda of European Union, to which Turkey is in the process of accession.

In most cultural and political activities in Diyarbakır, from illegal demonstrations, municipal receptions, party congresses to Newroz celebrations or election campaigns, the Mothers always appear in the front. In current peace politics, their words and experiences are positioned as the ultimate truth of the brutalities of war, and their testimony of war and call for peace are regarded as sincere and genuine, a process that effectively translates or re-genders the sufferings of Kurdish community into maternal suffering.

The authority of the Mothers relies on the same moral economy created around the dead that processes their pain and suffering into respect and prestige. There are not significant class hierarchies among the Mothers, who are mostly urban poor or displaced rural Kurds, yet they have their own hierarchies in-built into the very economy of death that grants them respect and prestige. The mothers of well-known martyrs have more authority than others, while the number of children lost, that is, the amount of pain and suffering, is the ultimate scale and arbiter that measures and allocates their share of respect and prestige.

THE SYMBOLIC INTERRUPTION OF THE REAL
Through these practices and others, the community of the dead is reanimated and woven into public, political and daily life of the living. For the state it has not been an easy task to regulate the dead once it unleashes their spirits from their bodies by killing them. As Paul Valery suggests, the spirit has a "certain *power of transformation…*the spirit…*works*" (Quoted in Derrida 1994: 9, original emphasis). The martyr's spirit takes

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countless public and political forms and joins the collective national spirit, which define and feed each other and are transcended into the sacred domain of immortality. The state's dilemma is a difficult one: The more it kills, the more Kurds multiply; not simply in the quantitative sense that many more Kurds join the movement, but also in that martyrs are the main force in enlarging and elaborating the national symbolic. The state's inability to obstruct this generativity of the spirit of the dead is perhaps best summarized in the words of a Turkish poet, Ataol Behramoĝlu, which became most famous among Kurds, when it was read by Ape Musa before he was martyred:

Ve cellat uyandı yataĝında bir gece,	One night the executioner woke up in his bed,
Tanrım dedi, bu ne zor bilmece!	Oh my God, he said, what a difficult puzzle!
Öldükçe çoĝalıyor adamlar,	They multiply, as they die,
Ben tükenmekteyim öldürdükçe	I am withering away, as I kill.

The executioner probably perceives that when located into the realm of the symbolic, where challenge and reversal are the law (Baudrillard 1993), death is reversed into life, in fact, into an immortal life, much as sorrow into happiness, destruction into hope, end into beginning, or funeral into wedding, as I have discussed. At the center of the Kurdish symbolic of martyrdom is a notion of temporality that the dead and the living can inhabit, a divine temporality that puts an end to the linearity of the fact of death, or reversing the direction of time from death towards eternal life. This symbolic reversibility of death, of the Real, leads to a disruption in the state's semiotic order, in which the puzzled executioner himself is located. Once the state's semiotic universe is disoriented, the opposition in the binary of life and death disappears; the moment of execution, of biological death, comes to coincide with the initiation of dead body into a symbolic exchange towards immortality. Hence the Sadean logic of killing a life twice inevitably

fails, for in the Kurdish symbolic each and every death is immediately exchanged into value and immortal life force. The Kurdish bodies that the state "wastes away" are "recycled" as raw materials, for the lack of a better word, and accumulated into moral/political surplus deposited into the immortal power of the Nation. Due to this economy of "resurrectionary power, the power to continue life after death – indeed, to create life out of death" (Tadiar 2009: 312), the executioner's killing more and more bodies is of no political utility. The martyr is a gift that creates insurmountable relations of obligation and reciprocity with the living, and yet the challenge it poses to state power is deeper: the martyr is "a gift to which [the system] cannot respond save by its own collapse and death" (Baudrillard 1993: 37).

> Perhaps death and death alone, the reversibility of death, belongs to a higher order than the code. Only symbolic disorder can bring about an interruption in the code (ibid. 4).

THE MAYOR'S ORDEALWITH THE DEAD

So far I have detailed the emergence and consolidation of a symbolic and moral economy of martyrdom around Kurdish dead bodies as part of the effort to produce and promote the sense of an oppositional Kurdish identity-in-struggle. The shift in Kurdish politics towards peace, which I outlined in the introduction, led to new contentions over the place and meaning of dead Kurdish bodies, however. One effect of peace politics was the dismantling of the Kurdish political imaginary of national independence within which the symbolic economy of martyrdom was previously located. This led to a burning question: How to resituate the "martyrs of Kurdistan" within the emergent discursive space of "peace" with the Turkish state? How would the politics of peace materialize in

the struggles over dead Kurdish bodies, an issue that the Turkish state has been most "sensitive" about? Focusing on two events in July 2004 and March 2006 when the attitude of the mayor of Diyarbakır towards dead guerilla bodies turned into nationwide scandals, in the next two sub-sections I will present some observations and thoughts on the "troubling" place of the dead within changing Kurdish politics. In this I will pay particular attention to the formation of political subjectivity in between two contending positions: the Turkish state's efforts to taboo the dead bodies of Kurdish guerillas on the one hand, and the ways in which the mayor challenged this state policy by insisting on the reclamation of the dead, on the other.

Forget the Dead?

In a guerilla attack on a checkpoint near the Hewsel gardens in Diyarbakır, a guard named Abbas Yoldaş was killed and two Turkish policemen were injured on July 28, 2004. The guerillas who organized the attack were also killed after a one-week siege of the gardens. After the first attack, Osman Baydemir, the mayor of Diyarbakır, visited the injured police officers at the hospital. After his visit he talked to the press, highlighting that the people of Diyarbakır needed peace and harmony and not bloodshed. Baydemir also visited the family of Abbas Yoldaş to express his condolences. However, when he, together with the mayors of Yenişehir, Bağlar, Sur and Kayapınar districts of Diyarbakır, visited the family of the dead guerilla to express condolences, the Turkish media started a lynching campaign against him and his friends, accusing them of encouraging and supporting "the terrorists". In response, Baydemir justified his visit as "a humanitarian task", adding that one should not privilege sufferings of some people over

others. But the Ministry of Interior immediately appointed two officials to investigate the case. The Minister of Justice found the mayors' act as "immoral" and "inhumane". For the Turkish Chief of the General Staff, Yaşar Büyükanıt, the event was even "beyond discussion" and "very ugly". The most interesting reaction, however, came from the imprisoned leader of the PKK. Criticizing the mayor, he said:

> This last event in Diyarbakır shows that you have not been able to understand the situation. It is improper. Both your war and peace are strange. Your logic is one of gamble that does not help to win. Actually, it is somewhat meaningful that the Chief of the General Staff evaluated the event as ugly. You have to understand him. Why do you allow them to say this? You have to see their sensibilities.[25]

Öcalan's comment was a surprise for many Kurds, as most of the PKK's politics of martyrdom until then was to be in solidarity with the martyrs and their families under any conditions. Öcalan's reaction becomes "reasonable", however, when situated within his peace project that he detailed in 1999. Aware of the fragility of the process, between 1999 and 2004 Öcalan repeatedly called upon the Kurdish movement to be responsive to the "sensibilities" of the state and not transgress sovereign limits of state toleration in order to receive recognition as legitimate interlocutors for dialogue. Coupled with the moral language of the minister of Justice and the Chief of the General Staff, his critique hinted at the emergent forms of political morality and rationality to specify forms of inclusion and exclusion through which to define the limits of a "proper" Kurdish political subjectivity and its relationship with the dead in a way conducive for peace. In this moral and rational landscape, pragmatic political considerations came to contribute to the relegation of the dead guerilla and his family to the status of untouchables that the

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[25] *Özgür Politika*, August 14, 2004.

mayors should have renounced to keep their political legitimacy. In other words, the morality and political rationality behind the mayors' action, which was created and consolidated through fierce struggles during the 1990s, was to be suspended if they were to seek state recognition and move the peace process forward. Accordingly, at least in this particular case, the martyrs turned out to be that which to be "sacrificed" or de-centered in order for a dialogue and peace to emerge.

I should also note that although Öcalan has consistently insisted on his peace project to date, he has never had any other criticisms against Kurdish politicians who joined martyr funerals or visited martyr families. Besides, the political developments after this event revealed that Öcalan's criticism was more of a conjunctural nature. However, although his politically instrumental approach to the dead in this case has not revised the larger Kurdish politics of martyrdom and found no popular support, it still hints at the possible place of the Kurdish dead in case of peace with the Turkish state. In fact, for example, amidst renewed hopes for peace stemming from the Turkish government's promise to have a democratic "Kurdish opening", Ahmet Türk, the chair of DTP, announced in late May 2009 that the Kurds were ready "to forget the seventeen thousand killings by unidentified perpetrators (faili meçhuller) if there is peace", meaning those Kurds who were extra-judicially killed, disappeared or mass-graved during the dirty war. Many Kurds harshly criticized this statement, questioning his right to have such a bold statement and the sheer instrumentality towards the memory of the dead. It remains to be seen whether the Kurds would forget for the sake of peace, but these developments

point to the possibility of a radical revision over the symbolic economy of martyrdom, if and when negotiations for peace start.

Grieving for the "Terrorist"

The end of unilateral cease-fire in 2004 and increasing armed conflicts since then have been producing more and more casualties, leading to the postponement of hopes for peace and agitating Kurdish sensibilities over their dead. The mayor continued to attend funerals and helped the burial of Kurdish guerillas, consistently meeting popular expectations of him. His ordeal with dead guerilla bodies gained a much heavier tone in late March 2006, during and after the funeral ceremony of four PKK members in Diyarbakır. The funeral ceremony turned into a one-week protest, which resulted in the murder of ten civilians in Diyarbakır. In Chapter 5, I provide details of this protest. Here I will confine myself to a discussion on the mayor's position vis-à-vis the dead and the protest and the implications of this with respect to the constitution of the political and Kurdish political subjectivity within the field of legal politics which was then mostly concentrated in and around the municipalities.

On the first day of the protest, several people were heavily injured by the police, which further increased the tension and rage in the city. Consequently the city turned into a battleground and many streets were occupied and barricaded by agitated youth groups, particularly in Bağlar. That afternoon DTP executives met in the Diyarbakır municipality and decided to have a press release on the protests. When the mayor read the press release the next day, two youth had already been murdered. In his short speech, the mayor expressed his sorrow, claimed that the unfortunate events stemmed from the

state's inability to develop a peaceful approach to the Kurdish issue, and ended his talk with the following paragraph:

> Our pain was for fourteen, now it is for sixteen. It should not be for seventeen, eighteen… As a city our pain is big and we face risks that may increase our pain every passing minute. We understand the worries of our people and share their pain and suffering. In order to prevent further pain and damage, once again we invite everybody to discretion and steadiness and to contribute to the normalization of life in our city.

Despite the mayor's careful and calming language that invited to stop the protests, his first sentence in this paragraph once again scandalized Turkish media and politicians, including the Turkish prime minister. The mayor's speech was found beyond the limits, arrogant, unreasonable, ugly and ethically unsustainable. His sentence "our pain was for fourteen" was taken as his feeling and grieving "from within a presumption of criminality" (Butler 2001: 79). The structure of feeling of the Turkish public and politicians was simple and rigid: "How dare you?" How dare the mayor could publicly feel and grieve for "the terrorists", those the state rightfully kills? As Judith Butler eloquently puts it regarding Antigone's story which I detail below, it was not simply that the mayor's grief for the Kurdish guerillas was a relation that "cannot be honored, cannot be openly acknowledged, and cannot therefore be publicly grieved, but that these relations involve persons who are also restricted in the very act of grieving, who are denied the power to confer legitimacy on loss" (ibid). The mayor's words were interpreted by the Turkish public as a treacherous attempt to confer legitimacy on the loss of fourteen "terrorists". Soon, a new court case was launched against the mayor based an investigation report prepared by two inspectors immediately sent from Ankara to Diyarbakır by the Ministry of Interior.

The mayor, in his own words, used to be "a collector of the dead" as a human rights activist, especially in the mid-1990s when "human rights" and "terrorism" meant one and the same thing in the state's eyes. He joined martyr families in countless cases, helping them as a lawyer and human rights activist to claim their dead in dangerous security zones. Due to these activities, many martyr families in and outside Diyarbakır knew and respected him. But he was also harassed by the police and prosecuted by legal authorities for these same activities. Involving in such activities as a human rights activist and as a mayor was not the same thing for state authorities, however. The municipality was an institutional organ of the state's sovereign body, and an opposition from within its own institutional body was unbearable for the state. The scandal was not that a Kurdish human activist or politician was claiming the dead body of a "terrorist", as that happens regularly and those who involve in such activities are viewed by the state as "terrorists" and prosecuted or "dealt with" accordingly. Rather, the scandal was that the most well-known Kurdish mayor "whose salary was paid by the state" dared to publicly grieve for "the terrorists who fight against the state to divide the country". It was this institutional location that cast the mayor as something to be cleansed off from the body of the state.

Notwithstanding the scandalizing nature of these events, the mayor has not received any prison sentence so far due to his involvement with the Kurdish dead. There are both external and internal pressures and negotiations that have discouraged the state to sentence him. European Union officials were clearly against the dismissal of the mayor, as that would mean the closing off the local democratic venues for the Kurds to articulate and express their dissent. They considered local institutions to be crucial for

democratic representation, because Kurds had been excluded from the national parliament since when Kurdish parliamentarians were expelled and imprisoned in 1994. In this context, Baydemir, who was also the president of the Union of Southeast Anatolia Region Municipalities, turned out to be the "unofficial prime minister" of the Kurdish region. Increasing state pressures were met by reactions on the part of the Kurds and this helped to increase and consolidate popular support behind the mayor. Consequently, Baydemir became a metonym for Diyarbakır, which was a metonym for Kurdistan. This political and symbolic centrality of Diyarbakır and its mayor in Kurdish politics was a strong source of hesitation both for the court and the Ministry of Interior to expel him. In such heated political circumstances, the mayor was acquitted of all charges in September 2006 for a case on the use of the municipality's ambulance to carry dead bodies of Kurdish guerillas. Despite this decision, similar cases were opened against him each time the ambulance carried dead Kurdish guerillas. Other mayors, however, were not as protected as Baydemir. For example, the vice-mayor of Yakapınar district of Adana, Burhan Aras, was sentenced to two and a half years in jail in May 2008, because of the use of the municipality's ambulance to carry the cenaza of a member of the PKK from Mersin to Van. According to the Court, the mayor's act was a case of misuse of duty.

Here I will not go into the detail of legal proceedings. Suffice it to point to the political use of law as a sovereign technology to buttress the process of tabooing the Kurdish dead, thus deterring the mayors from reclaiming them. The arbitrariness in the application of law as evidenced in different forms of punishment for the same action depending on the person, time and space not simply reveals the ability of the sovereign to

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manipulate and act simultaneously in and outside the law, but also shows that law is a highly contingent and deeply political space of negotiation and struggle. In fact, the mayor himself disputed the legal nature of the case in a hearing before the court on September 27, 2006, arguing that the opening of such a case was about "the identity of the dead" and that was "a political decision that has nothing to do with the law".

> The law gives the municipalities the duty and authority to bury the dead. It would have been against human dignity to refuse the application of the citizens to carry and bury their dead children. In fact, such a refusal itself would be a crime. Nobody has the right to question the identity of somebody after he/she is dead.

On April 2006, in a national TV program titled *Siyaset Meydanı* (The Square of Politics), Baydemir provided a clearer explanation to the national public about his relationship with dead Kurdish guerillas. His speech was a response to a question from another program participant; Suheyl Batum - a Turkish professor of constitutional law. The question was aggressive; posed with a structure of feeling that I described in the above as "How dare you?" I noted down the mayor's explanation as the following:

> First of all, it is my legal duty to bury the dead within the borders of my city, especially when their families officially apply. But to bury the dead is not just my legal duty; it is a question of conscience. I do not distinguish between the suffering of the mothers Turkish soldiers and Kurdish militants. My primary responsibility is not to meet the demands of the state, but to meet the demands of the local people who I represent. The dead militants have their mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters in my city. And I am responsible towards these people. If you do not want me to send the ambulance, there is only one way. No more cenazas should be coming to my city. It is not my job to investigate the identity of the dead. Ultimately, once a person dies, he/she no longer has an identity.

Do the dead have identities? This and the previous chapter have argued and substantiated the idea that the dead not only have political identities but also help to generate many other political imaginaries, identities and practices --the reason why they

are under constant state surveillance. Here it is not important to question whether the mayor really believes the dead have an identity or not, which the Turkish public keeps doing. What is more crucial is the way he articulates his relationship with the Kurdish dead in public speech the rules of which are set and monitored by sovereign arrangements that dictate what is speakable within a politico-cultural formation. As Judith Butler (2000: xvii) argues, "The public sphere is constituted in part by what cannot be said and what cannot be shown. The limits of the sayable, the limits of what can appear, circumscribe the domain in which political speech operates and certain kinds of subjects appear as viable actors", and consequently, I add, certain kinds of other subjects disappear or are excluded from the sphere of viable action.

The mayor was not satisfied with the justification to bury the dead only as his legal duty. In his speech he highlighted the word conscience (vicdan), having full stop at the beginning and end of his sentence for emphasis and putting his right hand on his heart as a culturally familiar bodily gesture that invited the audience to feel the situation from their hearts (conscience). According to the mayor, whoever the dead person was, to bury the dead properly was an ethical humanitarian task. His reference to the families of the dead as fellow citizens and the duty to meet their demands subtly put in dialogue the crucial issue of kinship with legal citizenship. This hybrid category of kin-citizen, kin of the dead and citizen of the state, pointed to an unsettling human community who exchange with and are morally obligated to the dead and yet beyond or against their formal contractual relationship with the state as legal citizens. The reference to this community of kin-citizens undermined the terrorizing of the dead by emphasizing the

simple fact that dead guerillas were also human beings who have mothers, fathers and other kin. Here what the mayor emphasized was not the metaphorical or fictive kinship that was at the heart of Kurdish national pedagogy and affect, as summarized in the phrase "sons and daughters of their nation", which I have described in Chapter 1. His reference to actual kinship ascribed the ownership of the dead to back to the family as well as the ensuing pain and suffering , which in turn helped to draw the dead back into the field of citizenship and human sociality, at least partly. Finally, the mayor made a strong political statement; "stop sending the dead to my city", implying that the state should find peaceful ways to handle the Kurdish issue rather than simply "killing the terrorist" through militarist national security politics that have hitherto marked Turkey's Kurdish policy. Hence the mayor justified his relationship with the dead as performing his legal and moral duty towards the dead, including the dead into the domain of citizenship even if still criminal; a legal and ethical duty towards the family members as citizen-fellows; and a question of conscience - a moral/ethical task towards humanity. What remained outside of the mayor's public speech was the political content and identity of the dead.

"ANTIGONE'S CLAIM": DEATH, TABOO AND POLITICAL SUBJECTIVITY
Although it has its own particularities, the mayor's case it still exemplary of the larger plight of legal Kurdish politicians in their relationships with dead bodies of Kurdish guerillas. So far many mayors were prosecuted for their helping the burial of "terrorist bodies" and some received prison sentence. And as long as dead bodies keep coming into the cities, it is likely that the mayors' relationship with the state would

remain troubling. By way of concluding, I would like to juxtapose the case of the mayor with the story of Antigone to further detail this troubling relationship and explore the production and regulation of the political identity of the dead to shed light on the interactions among the processes of tabooing the dead, sovereignty and subjectivity.

In Sophocles' classic (2003), Antigone's brothers Eteokles and Polyneikes die fighting each other in the Thebes' civil war as the leaders of rival sides. King Kreon, their maternal uncle, orders two opposing procedures for the treatment of their dead bodies. Eteokles, the loyal, is honored with "all pure and proper rites", while Polyneikes, the traitor, is condemned to "lie unburied, a corpse eaten by birds and dogs and torn to pieces, shameful for anyone to see" (62-63). Kreon prohibits the people of Thebes to treat Polyneikes as a fellow-citizen and "to wail for him with grief" - an act that not only taboos the dead body of Polyneikes and excludes him from the domain of citizenship and human sociality but also equates grief for him with criminality. Afraid of Kreon, nobody dares to touch Polyneikes' dead body. Antigone secretly buries Polyneikes, but gets caught. When taken before the King, she justifies her act in two ways. First, she says, she obeyed the unwritten laws of Gods that required doing Justice to the dead, implying the fact that every citizen of the city has the right to proper burial, and no man, including the king, can violate these laws. Second, she adds, it would have been very painful, had she left the son of her own mother "lie dead and unburied" (73). Kreon seals Antigone up, still living, in a tomb dug into a rock from where she cannot "pollute" the city, a place where Antigone describes as being "among corpses, having no home with either the living or the dead" (92). Kreon's son Haimon, Antigone's lover, tries to convince his

father to spare her, but with no avail. The old blind seer Teiresias warns Kreon that the Gods were angry with what he done to the dead (101): "Give way to the dead. Don't keep stabbing at him who is destroyed. What prowess can there be in killing the dead yet again?"Afraid of divine retribution, Kreon yields in. But, it is too late, for Antigone and Haimon have already taken their lives. Upon the news, Kreon's wife commits suicide, cursing her husband as the killer of his son.

There may not be a valid base for a cultural comparison between the mayor and Antigone, and not simply because of the two and a half millennia time lag between them or the fact that one story is fiction while the other real. The ancient Greek city no doubt is a different formation with regards to sovereignty, law, citizenship, kinship, male/female and public/private distinctions. However, despite these differences, there are several structural analogies between these two cases. In both situations, there is a sovereign edict that prohibits proper burial for the dead body of a "traitor" (rebel or terrorist), which taboos the dead as a dangerous or polluting entity and excludes it from legal citizenship and human sociality. Second, sovereign taboo is violated through an act of burial. Third is the punishment of the taboo violators to restore obedience and authority. Fourth, the taboo violators justify their actions through kinship and God. In the mayor's case, justification is through the law itself (his legal duty), kinship (responsibility towards the family) and a humanist morality that replaces God (conscience). Finally, neither Antigone nor the mayor claims what the dead had died for; disclaiming or, better, not openly claiming the political intent and content in their violation of the taboo.

Here taboo appears to be the very organizing principle of sovereign power to arrange the relations between the dead and the living in both cases. But, why taboo? What is the relationship between sovereignty and taboo? For Freud (1989), the objects and persons that are uncanny or that provoke dread for any reason become subject to taboo. The 'demonic' or dangerous powers that are believed to lie hidden in the taboo entity are unleashed and transferred through physical or metaphorical contact, because the power of taboo entity is fairly contagious, "almost like an infection" (28). Hence, those who violate the taboo themselves acquire the characteristic of being tabooed and are to be punished. Freud proposes the following rationale (42):

> Anyone who has violated a taboo becomes taboo himself because he possesses the dangerous quality of tempting others to follow his example: why should he be allowed to do what is forbidden to others? Thus he is truly contagious in that every example encourages imitation, and for that reason he himself must be shunned.

As I have argued, sovereignty is not simply the right to kill, but to kill human bodies within an economy of waste so as to prevent them from entering the symbolic order as meaningful and valuable entities. Tabooing the dead helps to separate them from human sociality, putting them in abjection both in corporal and spiritual senses and keeping the living away from their "polluting" power or "spirit" to maintain social order and sovereign authority. I suggest that Antigone and the mayor's violation of taboo by burying the dead put precisely this sovereign economy of waste in jeopardy by drawing the abject bodies back into the sphere of the symbolic, where legitimacy can be conferred onto death and humane relationships between the dead and the living are re-established. In other words, these acts effectively re-humanize the dead body and prevent its second

murder by reconstructing the symbolic order in which to ascribe meaning and value to death. In this sense, the violation of taboo is a genuine scandal. Antigone and the mayor thus appear "at the far side of the symbolic limit beyond which human may not cross" (Butler 2000: 47); standing for a threshold "that haunts the conscious, public sphere as its scandalous future" (ibid, 40), while at the same time hinting at new and legitimate, if not legal, grounds of communicability and life with the dead.

There still remains, however, the fact that neither Antigone nor the mayor claimed what the dead had died for; that is, their political ideals or their "spirit". On the surface, justifying their act of burying the dead not through their political motivations or identities but through kinship, God, conscience or the law itself may be considered as a de-politicizing endeavor that strips the dead bodies and the act of burial of their political content and power. But it should be noted that these seemingly depoliticizing arguments put heavy constraints on sovereign power, particularly undermining its crucial political technology of dehumanizing the dead in both cases. At least in terms of their effects, these are deeply political acts without coming into open confrontation with the sovereign.

Sophocles does not give any hint on the political motivations of Antigone in the Thebes civil war, on which brother she sides with. Consequently, not claiming the dead body's political content does not play any role in this drama. However, in the mayor's case it did. The professor of constitutional law who asked the mayor the question in the TV program felt very relieved upon the mayor's answer that the dead did not have an identity, meaning a political identity. The professor felt to admit that he did not know about the mayor's rationale and it was then understandable to him. This relief of the

professor was apparently because of the fact that the mayor's answer that "the dead do not have an identity" did not come into contact with the "spirit" (political ideals) of the Kurdish dead, their "polluting" power – and that was in exchange of their already destroyed bodies.

As far as the "spirit" of the dead body is not claimed, and the rationale behind the act of burial does not assume an explicit political character, the chances of Kurdish dead in having a resting place are higher even within the extremely authoritarian sovereign arrangements of the Turkish state and public sphere. The professor's relief reveals that the Kurds can grieve for their dead as their kin, God's creatures, or as an ethical/moral duty, and yet never as entities to have political exchanges with. The political identity of the dead appears here as that which is unspeakable within the Turkish public and political sphere, a symbolic threshold over which no living can cross. I contend that it is this symbolic threshold that operates as the ultimate sovereign limit that delineates the normative boundaries of the political as well as Kurdish forms of agency and subjectivity located therein. Disconnecting himself from the political identity of the dead appears as the only way to enter into the domain of public speech as a viable actor and the only space wherein the mayor probably felt compelled to situate himself. Here the very identity of the dead appears as the taboo that allows the state to maintain its political control over the collective dead body of the Kurdish community.

In this and previous chapters I have argued that gift is the structuring principle of exchanging with the Kurdish dead as a central technology to produce and maintain the collective sense of a militant Kurdish national identity. I have also analyzed the ability to

waste away and taboo as an essential technology for state sovereignty to contain or eradicate the persistent power of the Kurdish dead, and Kurdish violations of these taboos as a scandalous form of counter-sovereign politics. I conclude this chapter by arguing that it is in between these rival politics of gift and taboo - two forms of associating with and dissociating from the dead respectively- that the Kurds and the Turkish state often encounter each other in death to settle their scores over the issues of national identity and sovereignty. And it is these encounters that have formed a significant part of Kurdish politics, delineating its normative boundaries and producing certain forms political subjectivity while limiting or negating others.

Without death there would be no history. History feeds on death. History begins in the grave.

<div align="right">Eva Domanska (2005:398)</div>

Humanitas in Latin comes first and properly from humando, burying.[26]

<div align="right">Vico</div>

Chapter Three: The Sacred Soil of Vatan: People without History, Death without Grave

On April 10, 1998, the Turkish army killed seven PKK guerillas around Demirciler village in the Serik district of Antalya. The same day, three others were killed in the rural area of Manavgat, another district in Antalya. These were rather strange events, for Antalya was a Turkish city located at the Mediterranean coast, a place far away from Kurdish provinces where most guerilla activities were concentrated. Apparently, the guerillas had recently come to this region as part of the PKK's strategy to spread guerilla warfare to other parts of Turkey. Their bodies were buried in Manavgat and Antalya town cemeteries, but their stories did not end there.

On April 15, having heard the news that three "terrorists" were buried in the Manavgat town cemetery, a group of about one thousand Turkish nationalists protested with Turkish flags in their hands, blocking the Manavgat-Antalya highway for three and a half hours.[27] Chanting angry slogans such as "Happy is he who says I am a Turk", "Down with the PKK", the group argued that the martyrs and "terrorists" could not lie buried side by side, and demanded immediate disinterment and return of the bodies so that they

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[26] Quoted in, Harrison (2003: xi)

[27] "Cesetleri verin yakalım!" *Milliyet*, April 16, 1998.

could burn them. State authorities convinced the protesters to disperse only after the promise that the corpses would be exhumed and reburied "somewhere else". A few hours later, the bodies were disinterred with a mechanical digger, which the Kurds and human rights activists perceived as "inhumane". The governor of the town did not specify the new place of burial. Rumor had it that they were reburied in Antalya. On April 19, mobilized by Turkish nationalist groups, family members of Turkish martyrs (Turkish soldiers killed by the PKK) organized another protest, this time in the Antalya town cemetery. The crowd claimed that they had found the place of the buried "terrorists" and demanded their immediate relocation. The bodies were disinterred and buried unmarked somewhere else the same day. That evening news reports on the national TV aired scenes from the protest. In one quite disturbing scene, a Turkish mother, probably whose son had been killed by the PKK, was angrily shouting at the cameras, while passionately digging up the graves using her own trembling hands.

The Human Rights Association soon filed a complaint against the protestors and the state authorities who used a mechanical digger to dig up the bodies and accused them of "insulting the body and bones of a dead person" (Turkish Penal Code (TPC) Article 130/2; or Article 178 of the old TPC). However, no investigation or court case was opened, probably because for Turkish legal authorities dead "terrorist" bodies were already located somewhere outside the law.

Putting aside legal aspects of the event, I want to focus on why these dead bodies created so much uproar. At least among the Kurds, these protestors were mostly understood as a group motivated by extreme feelings of hate and racism, a psychological

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state of utter madness, or a revelation of the un-reason of Turkish national sentiment. To put it simply, the Kurdish feeling was that the protestors could not be normal and rational people. Yet, a different question can be posed: Was the protest perhaps a rather *intelligible* form of a highly provoked Turkish national sentiment?

The explicit motivation behind this protest was that Turkish martyrs and Kurdish "terrorists" could not be buried in the same soil; a sentiment/idea grounded in the perception of national homeland (vatan) as the sacred land that can be home to only those who are loyal to it. Like Kurdish nationalism, central to this organicist Turkish perception is the symbiosis of dead human body and national territory; imagining vatan as the territory constructed and consecrated by "the blood of martyrs". This imagination is perhaps best described in the words of a nationalist Turkish poet, Mithat Cemal Kuntay, "Soil is vatan, only if there are people who die for it".

The protestors claimed that "the terrorists who betrayed the Turkish vatan" do not have the right to be buried under its sacred soil and united with it. They also clarified that "terrorist corpses" damaged the purity of national soil, perceiving them as infectious entities to be burned so that Turkish martyrs could rest in peace under the soil of their beloved vatan. Considering the nationalist idea that vatan belongs to only those who are loyal to it, this "coming together" of Turkish and the Kurdish dead in a Turkish cemetery, a company-in-death of two stern enemies -patriots and traitors- provoked uproar not only by blurring the lines between "our dead" and "their dead" but also putting in question the purity and ownership of vatan, here imagined and extended into the cemetery. In order to resolve these uncertainties, physical traces of "Kurdish terrorists" that marked Turkish

soil were to be obliterated; they were to be burnt or buried *somewhere else* as demonic entities who were worthy of neither respect nor rights. Hence, the boundary between patriots and traitors, Turkish martyrs and "Kurdish terrorists", was redrawn, and the purity and ownership of vatan reassured.

Seeking to answer the question "what the state wants from Kurdish cenaza", the previous chapters detailed the ways in which death and dead bodies have been deployed in figurations of Kurdish national identity and Turkish state sovereignty in recent history. Thinking the dug-up dead bodies of Kurdish guerillas, this chapter seeks to put the nationalist structure of feeling behind the above described protest into a brief historical context: When, how and why did the treatment of dead bodies of Kurdish rebels become a serious concern for Turkish nationalism and state surveillance?

Answering this, I will explore the differences between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic in their treatment of Kurdish rebels and their dead bodies. In this, I have two related objectives: On the one hand, I seek to historicize the symbiotic relationship between national identity and death. On the other, I will trace the changing semantics of Kurdish rebellions with the national territorialization of sovereignty as the Empire has transformed into a Republic. Informed by Nicos Poulantzas' (1980: 114) suggestion that the construction of a unified national identity requires "the historicity of a territory and the territorialization of history", I will analyze the emergence of Ottoman and Turkish territorial imaginations of vatan between 1850s and 1920s by focusing on the Ottoman intellectual Namık Kemal's theater play *Vatan yahut Silistre* which was written and first performed in 1873; the Ottoman cartographic education in schools from mid-

1890s onwards; and the Hiyanet-i Vataniye Kanunu (Law on Treason against Vatan) that was dated 1920. I argue that the national sentiment behind the protest described above has to do with the territorialization of vatan, national identity and state sovereignty in this period - and the ideological and affective forms of love and loyalty towards these, which set an unprecedentedly rigid punitive frame to deal with Kurdish rebels and treat their dead bodies in the years to come.

FROM EXILE TO DEATH

Various Kurdish groups have organized successive rebellions against the Ottoman and Turkish rule throughout the last two centuries, which total around thirty. Scholars of Kurdish history usually interpret the rebellions of the nineteenth century as sporadic local responses to the modernizing Ottoman policy of state centralization initiated by Sultan Mahmud II in the first quarter of the nineteenth century and the consequent eradication of the autonomy of Kurdish emirates, who had previously enjoyed significant power and authority since the Sunni Kurdish notables had allied with the Ottomans against the Safavids in 1515.[28] Kurdish rebellions in the twentieth century, especially those after the declaration of Turkish Republic in 1923, are often viewed as products of nationalist politics, in one way or another. While the last Kurdish rebellion is still ongoing, the clearest common denominator of Kurdish rebellions is that they were all heavily repressed. For my current discussion, one way to differentiate among these rebellions is the relative leniency of the Ottomans in handling them, when compared with the Turkish Republic, which has been referred to both in scholarly and political debates (Bozarslan

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[28] Although these rebellions were organized by Kurdish notables who self-identified as Kurds, in this period the cultural and political identification with Kurdishness had not been nationalized, yet.

2003; 2004). Yet, there is another way to differentiate among these rebellions, which has gone totally unnoticed: the different ways in which the Ottomans and the Republic treated dead bodies of Kurdish rebels.

Although the systematic policy of executing Kurdish rebels by hanging them in public started after the military coup of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) in 1908, the first refusal to deliver dead bodies of Kurdish rebels to their families for proper burial took place in 1925, two years after the declaration of the Turkish Republic in 1923. After the repression of the Kurdish rebellion led by Sheikh Said that had lasted about three months starting in mid-February 1925, the Sheikh and his forty five friends were hanged in public by the Court of Independence on June 28th and then interred in an unmarked mass-grave around Dağkapı square in Diyarbakır.[29] Twelve years later, Seyyid Rıza and his five friends, who were Alevid Kurdish leaders, were hanged in public in Elazığ after the second largest rebellion in the formative years of the Republic that took place in the Dersim province in 1937-1938. Ihsan Sabri Çağlayangil (1990: 45-55), who was the state official in charge of the executions on November 15th, 1937, described the last moments of Seyyid Rıza's life in his memoir which he wrote after his retirement. According to Cağlayangil, no indictment was given to the rebels who could not speak Turkish, and neither were they provided with an attorney. Besides, the regional army

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[29] Despite all my efforts during the fieldwork, I could not find the exact location of the mass-grave, yet it is almost certain that it is somewhere in the Dağkapı area. I could learn from the granddaughter of Sheikh Semseddin of Silvan that only her grandfather's body was exhumed later and re-buried in Silvan by his sister. Although she did not explain why the state authorities allowed this reburial, it may be because of his unstable position during the rebellion. Initially, Sheikh Semseddin allied with the government and issued a fatwa against Sheikh Said, yet when rebel forces got stronger and reached the Silvan area, he joined them "for the fear of execution", according to his defense before the Court.

commander Abdullah Pasha had already signed the death sentence before the Court's decision. Because Seyyid Rıza was very old, probably in his seventies, while his son only seventeen, Seyyid Rıza's age was decreased to fifty seven and his son's increased to twenty one so that they could be hanged "legally". Çaĝlayangil maintains:

> We took Seyit Rıza to the square. Nobody was around. But Seyit Rıza shouted at the silence and void as if the square was full of people: 'We are the children of Karbala. We did not commit any mistake. This is shame. This is persecution [zulûm]. This is murder [cinayet]'. My hair stood on end. This old men walked rap-rap [with strong decisive steps]. He pushed the gypsy [the executioner], put the rope over his neck, kicked the chair and hanged himself.

Some believe that the bodies were burnt to obstruct his burial place to turn into a tomb. Others claim that they were not burnt but buried in an unknown place. Similar to the case of Sheikh Said, what specifically happened to the dead bodies of Seyyid Rıza and his friends has been kept as an official secret to date. In 2006 and 2007, the grandchildren of Sheikh Said and Seyyid Rıza separately appealed to state authorities to learn about the whereabouts of the graves of their grandfathers, yet without any positive response so far. In a conference at the European Parliament held in November 2009, the granddaughter of Seyyid Rıza said the following to Oral Calışlar, a Turkish journalist:

> My mother Leyla was seven, when the whole family was massacred. My mother was wounded too. They thought she was dead and left her there, but she survived. They killed my maternal aunts and uncles. They hanged one of my maternal uncles with my grandfather. Thirty-five people were killed from our family…They did this massacre near the brook. Either the soldiers or other people coming from the surrounding area put the dead bodies of men and women in separate pits and covered them with soil. In reality, the place of nobody's grave is clear. In fact, some others were thrown down from the cliffs… I want to know where my uncle and grandfather were buried. This is my right as a human being, as a citizen. But so far nobody has replied our petitions. I want to send a message to state authorities through you. They should tell us where they lie buried; they

should show us their place. Can there be a state like this? What kind of humanity is this?[30]

The rebel Kurdish notables of the nineteenth century, however, were "luckier" than their successors who rebelled against the Turkish Republic. Unlike what happened to Sheikh Said in 1925 and Seyyid Rıza in 1937, they were not executed by the Ottoman Sultan despite all the political turmoil they had created for years. Rather, the Ottomans treated them "leniently" with graduated measures of punishment, which usually took the form of long-term exile. Kurdish leaders who led large rebellions in the nineteenth century were Mir Muhammed of Ruwanduz (1821-1834), Bedirxan Beg of Botan (1838-1847)[31], Yezdanşer of Botan (1854-1856), and Sheikh Ubeydullah Nehri (1878-1881), respectively. Kurdish historiography interprets the first three of these as responses to state centralization, while ascribing a proto-nationalist or nationalist character to Sheikh Ubeydullah Nehri, who had a clear agenda of creating a separate state over the Kurdish territories that were then under the rule of Persian and Ottoman empires and who also declared himself to be the king of Kurdistan (Jwaideh 2006; Van Bruinesses 1991). No matter what their objectives were, the treatment of these rebel leaders by the Ottomans is suggestive for my current discussion. Some details are in order.

Rashid Muhammed Pasha, who was appointed by the Sultan to repress Mir Muhammed Ruwanduz, made use of diplomacy rather than war to persuade his opponent. He assured that if Mir Muhammed were to surrender, he would be honorably treated and

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[30] www.radikal.com.tr/Default.aspx?aType=RadikalYazarYazisi&Date=21.11.2009&ArticleID=965459

[31] Bedirxan Beg's sons and nephews became most important political and intellectual figures in the emergence of Kurdish nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, who also published the first Kurdish newspaper named *Kurdistan* in 1898.

restored to his principality. In fact, Mir Muhammed was received "graciously" upon his arrival in Istanbul, where the Sultan "bestowed upon him the highest honors" (Jwaideh 2006: 60). The Kurdish pasha 'was acknowledged to be a man endowed with the greatest qualities, and one of the pillars that sustained the throne of the Sultan. The Porte decided to reorganize the whole [Kurdistan], and named Muhammed Pasha Governor-General of that province, giving him the most unlimited power' (ibid). But we know that Mir Muhammed never reached home. According to Jwaideh, on his way back to Kurdistan, he was killed either in an Ottoman ship at the sea or in the Sivas province, and probably by a plot arranged by the Ottoman governor of Baghdad, who believed that it was not possible to achieve peace and order in the territories he ruled as long as Mir Muhammed was alive. Bedirxan Beg also surrendered on the condition of honorable treatment, when it became clear to him that defeat was unavoidable, especially after his nephew Yezdanşer changed sides and allied with the Ottoman forces. Bedirxan's condition was accepted by the Ottomans. He was removed to Istanbul and then exiled to Crete. The Sultan allowed him to have his family and two hundred personal followers with him. In 1856, the Sultan even assigned him the task to repress the rebellion of the Cretan Greeks. Upon the successful fulfillment of this task, he was allowed to go back to Istanbul, where he lived for seven years. Later, he was sent to Damascus where he lived until he died in 1868. In the meantime, Bedirxan Beg continued to receive his allowance from the Ottoman payroll until his death. Besides, his two sons were given important military posts in the Ottoman-Russian war in 1877-1878. Yezdanşer, who had previously betrayed his uncle Bedirxan Beg, rebelled in 1854-1856. But he was also defeated and removed to

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Istanbul. Unlike his uncle, he was imprisoned. We do not know much about what happened to him after that, partly because both Kurdish nationalists and historians did not care about "the traitor who betrayed his uncle". But we know that the Ottomans did not execute him in public. Finally, Sheikh Ubeydullah was also removed to Istanbul after his defeat, and as a pre-condition for his surrender, he was treated with honor and respect. Later he escaped from Istanbul and started another rebellion. He was defeated, captured and removed to first Mosul and then Hijaz, where he died in Mecca in 1882 or 1883.

This relatively lenient approach of the Ottomans towards Kurdish rebels had its own exceptions. For example, after the repression of Bedirxan Beg's rebellion, while Nurullah Beg of Hakkâri and Şerif Beg of Bitlis were also exiled, Mahmud Khan of Van, another ally of Bedirxan Beg, was put to death after undergoing many tortures and indignities (Jwaideh 2006). A more striking example is the case of Molla Selim rebellion in Bitlis in 1914. Molla Selim and his friend took shelter in the Russian Consulate after their military defeat. But Turkish forces attacked the consulate, captured and immediately hanged Molla Selim and his friends in public. Early in the same year, Sheikh Abdulsalam of Barzan and his three men were hanged in public by the Ottoman governor of Mosul, Süleyman Nazif, and probably without an authorization from Istanbul. However, it should be noted that although the public executions of Molla Selim and Sheikh Abdulsalam occurred under the official rule of the Ottoman Empire, which officially collapsed in 1922, it was the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) that was ruling the empire in reality as a military dictatorship. Having come to power through a military coup against the Sultan in 1908, the CUP was the main force of progress and nationalism,

the organizer of Armenian genocide of 1915-1916, which also provided much of the national ideology and political cadres of the Turkish Republic a decade later.

As one reason to why Kurdish rebel leaders of the nineteenth century were not executed after they were defeated, Hamid Bozarslan (2003) argues that these rebellions did not aim at challenging the ultimate sovereignty of the Sultan but served as venues of renegotiating the terms of their contract with the imperial center. Under conditions of imperial sovereignty, he maintains, rebellions by Kurdish notables were more diplomatic means for negotiation, a substitution of the right to resistance in the context of the flexible "tacit contract" to rearrange the relationships with the center. While Bozarslan foregrounds the *nature* of Kurdish rebellions, Selim Deringil (1998: 10), a Turkish scholar of late Ottoman history, puts forth another answer in terms of the very nature and logic of Ottoman modes of managing rebellious subjects under the imperial rule. Deringil suggests that the Ottomans practiced a policy of "fine tuning", which allowed "a tacit process of bargaining" between the state and its people.

> Fine tuning involved meticulous inculcation, indoctrination, enticing, frightening, flattering, forbidding, permitting, punishing or rewarding −all in precise doses- which had been the stuff of empire since Caesar crossed the *limes*. In empires such as the late Ottoman, when the state exists in an almost constant state of crisis or emergency, fine tuning requires additional importance but also becomes more difficult. I would even venture to say that fine tuning is more the characteristic of a state which is constantly on the defensive. Not necessarily humane or anodyne, it can involve brute force and bloodshed, but only at the last resort. The most important aspect of fine tuning is that it is a process through which the legitimation ideology of the state is promoted and state policy is imposed on the society.

It is important to note that the Ottoman Empire, often situated as an example of Oriental despotism in most Western scholarship, worked to attain the consent of its

subjects by means of different forms of bargaining to legitimize its rule. The issue of legitimation became a much grave issue especially in the nineteenth century, when the Ottomans developed a highly defensive political orientation towards increasing European and Russian pressures as well as its non-Muslim subject populations such as the Greek and the Serbs, who had already enjoyed the spirit of the age and launched successful nationalist rebellions towards independence. As a passing reference, the role of religious differences in the emergence of nationalism among non-Muslim populations should also be underlined. It is important to notice that Muslim populations of the Empire, including the Kurds, started involving in nationalist politics much later due mostly to the institutionalized notion of universal Muslim brotherhood (Umma), the existence of the Ottoman Caliphate as a unifying force among Muslim populations, and the Ottoman policies of fine tuning.

My point here is not that "leniency" was an all-encompassing Ottoman policy to rule its subject populations. In fact, harsh measures against not only diverse rebel populations but also against imperial bureaucracy were rampant. History is full of records on the execution of grand viziers, viziers, army commanders, significant bureaucrats as well as unorthodox subjects of the Empire such as the Alevid people, Yezidi Kurds, Christian populations in the Balkans as well as in Anatolia and Mesopotamia. Besides, the deployment of "'lenient and moderate means' (*vesait-i leyyine ve mutedile*) was preferred because it was cheaper and far less destabilizing than the military option. If this did not achieve the desired result, only then would the Ottoman centre resort to sending a 'punitive expedition' (heyet-i tedibiye)" (ibid. 69). This happened, for example, in the

case of converting Yezidi Kurds into Islam in 1891-1892. The Ottomans first used persuasive means such as sending an 'advisory commission' to the Yezidis, "including local notables and respected religious leaders"; "a system of persuasion helped by decorations, bribes, sometimes invitations to leaders co come to Istanbul where, if they were lucky, they would be kept under comfortable house arrest" (ibid.). When these did not work, then intimidation techniques ranging from the raiding of villages to severing heads were brutally used to produce the submission of unruly Yezidis.

Hence, not necessarily humane, the leniency of the Ottomans towards the Kurdish rebels and the rationality behind it should be properly situated in the specific historical context of Ottoman-Kurdish relations. As mentioned earlier, Kurdish notables of the Sunni Muslim heritage had enjoyed significant authority and power as a part of their alliance with the Ottomans against the Safavids in the early sixteenth century, whose architect was a Kurd named İdris-i Bitlis. The geopolitical location of Kurdistan between the Ottoman and Safavid empires helped much in securing this autonomy, which integrated and consolidated autonomous Kurdish principalities into an imperial political structure while providing the Ottomans with a buffer zone against the Safavid threat and a new source of tax revenue (Özoĝlu 2004). The Alevid Kurds, who mostly allied with the Safavids, would greatly suffer from this alliance in the years to come.

Despite sporadic situations in which Kurdish notables switched loyalties,[32] this system of autonomous rule in Kurdistan survived about three centuries (Bruinessen 1992;

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[32] One such case happened in 1534, when the ruler of Bitlis Şerefxan IV, who originally allied himself with the Ottomans, switched his loyalty to the Safavids. The Ottoman forces under the command of Ulema Pasha took Bitlis, captured Serefxan and killed him. However, the Ottomans did not appoint a governor from the center, but gave the rule of Bitlis to Şerefxan's son Şemseddin III (Özoĝlu 2004: 50).

Jwaideh 2006). An imperial decree by Sultan Suleyman I, the son of Sultan Selim who first established the alliance with Kurdish notables, gives specific details of Ottoman rule in Kurdistan that was mostly based on hereditary transfer of land and political power.[33] Even when this system of rule came under total collapse through centralization policies in the nineteenth century, most Kurdish notables still identified and allied with the Empire both in political and religious terms. The emergence of an autonomous Kurdish nationalism did not become possible until the 1920s. This is not to argue that the Kurds were not inspired by cultural ideals of nationalism before. On the contrary, they were. But, they maintained their political loyalty to the Empire until its *de facto* collapse at end of the World War I in 1918. Until then Kurdish nationalism did not seek territorial sovereignty in the form of an independent state, while concentrating its activities on securing autonomous spheres within the territorial unity of Empire in order to educate and empower the Kurds in the teleological path of progress and civilization.[34]

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[33] "[Kanuni Sultan Süleyman] gives to the Kurdish beys who, in his father Yavuz Sultan Selim's times, opposed the Kızılbaş and who are currently serving the State (Devlet) with faith, and who joined specifically in the Serasker Sultan İbrahim Pasha's Iran expedition with courage – both as a reward for their loyalty and courage, and their application and requests being into consideration – the provinces and fortresses that have been controlled by each of them as their *yurtluk* or *ocaklık* since past times along with the places that were given to them with separate imperial licenses (berat) and their provinces, fortresses, cities, villages and arable fields (mezra) with all their harvest, under the condition of inheritance from father to son, are also given to them as their estate (temlik). There should never be any external aggression or conflict among them. This glorious order (emr-i celile) shall be obeyed; under no conditions shall it be changed. In case of a bey's death, his province shall be given, as a whole, to his son, if there is only one. If there is more than one son, they (the sons) shall divide the province contingent upon mutual agreement among themselves. If they cannot reach any compromise, then whoever the Kurdistan beys decide to the best choice shall succeed, and through private ownership (mülkiyet) he shall be the holder (mutasarrıf) of the land forever. If the bey has no heir of relative, then his province shall not be given to anybody from outside. As a result of consultation with the Kurdistan beys, the region shall be given to even beys or *beyzades* (someone else from the bey's family) suggested by the Kurdistan beys…" Quoted in Özoĝlu (2004: 53-54).

[34] Sheikh Ubeydullah is often regarded as a Kurdish nationalist, but it should be noted that although he aimed to create a separate state, what he had in his mind was more a kingship than a state based on a modern/national notion of territoriality.

For example, when the first Kurdish newspaper *Kurdistan* was published 1898, Kurdish nationalist elites still had a double meaning of the term *welat*, the equivalent of vatan in Turkish. The term welat was used broadly to denote both the geography that the Kurds inhabited and the sovereign territories of the Ottoman Empire. Kurdistan was clearly an object of love and affection for these Kurdish elites, but their political identification and loyalty resided in the territorial unity of the Ottoman state, which was perceived as the state of all Muslims including the Kurds. For example, in the 16th issue of *Kurdistan*, Abdurrahman Bedirxan wrote (Bozarslan 1991: 23):

> Each and every Muslim person wants the continuation of the life of Ottoman state. When we see that the body of the state gets sick because of maladministration, we have to treat this body and eradicate the causes of sickness. The health of the state is our health, and its death will also be our death.

Two passages in from the 28th issue of *Kurdistan* further clarify the Kurdish national elites' perception of Kurdistan, political identity and loyalty (ibid. 23-24).

> Kurdistan is a very wide and important region for our state (Ottoman) that has borders with Russia and Iran. It is very important to protect Kurdistan in order for our government to maintain its life.

> Kurdistan is a wide and deep region located at one of the militarily most fragile parts of *our vatan* and in the relations of the Sublime State [Ottoman] in its eastern borders with Iran and Russia. In order for the territorial unity of our government and sustainability of its political life, the protection of Kurdistan region is as important and necessary as the protection of Rumeli [Ottoman territories in Europe]. (Emphasis added.)

Although in the pages of *Kurdistan*, one can see many references of love for Kurdistan and the need to empower and civilize Kurdish people through education, in this imagination there was no overlap among identity, state power and vatan. Apparently, these national elites perceived themselves as Kurds, but they also claimed powerfully the

political identity of being Ottoman, and Kurdistan as a part of *their* Ottoman vatan and state. In other words, Kurdish national identity did not imply a desire for a separate state and a country. Even during the Balkan wars (1912-1913), the World War I (1914-1918) as well as the War of Independence (1919-1923), when political and military conditions for an independent state were ripe, unlike many Arab populations and the Muslim Albanians, most Kurdish national elites maintained their political loyalty and allied with Ottoman and Turkish forces. Although the Kurdish Şerif Pasha involved in diplomatic efforts in Europe for an independent Kurdish state in 1919[35] and the Koçgiri rebellion in 1921 had certain nationalist aims and elements, Kurdish political elites have mostly stayed away from a national independence oriented political struggle. The ideal of a separate Kurdish state became perceived as a necessity for Kurdish cultural and political survival only after the Kurdish urban elites and rural notables recognized that they would not have autonomous power within the emerging Republic. This political tendency was further consolidated after the repression of the rebellion of 1925 and aggressive policies of assimilation thereafter. Consequently, exiled Kurdish nationalists in Beirut and Damascus as well as those in the capitals of Europe increasingly appealed to the ideal of a territorial sovereignty in the form of a separate Kurdish state, though such territorial imaginations did not find much popular base among the ordinary Kurds. With the

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[35] Part of the reason why Şerif Pasha failed in his diplomatic activities was that a significant number of Kurdish notables, who mostly sought autonomy, sent protest petitions to Paris Peace Conference, declaring that Şerif Pasha could not represent Kurdish people.

repression of Dersim rebellion in 1938, Kurdish nationalism in Turkey was almost totally

rendered invisible for two decades.[36]

Having said this let me go back to the crux of my current inquiry. What did

specifically change in the passage from Empire to national Republic that made the latter

so harsh in the measures of punishment away from exile towards death? And, why did the

Republic start refusing to deliver the corpses of the Kurds it killed? Chronologically, the

systematic executions of Kurdish rebel leaders and the obstruction of their funeral

ceremonies are coeval with the emergence of Turkish and Kurdish nationalisms. Benedict

Anderson (1983) argues that nationalism has a peculiar relationship to death and territory

without any genuine antecedents in the past. In a similar vein, I argue and will

substantiate that systematic executions of Kurdish rebels as well as the obstruction of

proper burial for them are unique phenomena in Kurdish-Turkish relations that have to do

with the nationalization of sovereignty, territory, death and identity. More precisely, it

was the nationalization of territory and identity that brought about rigid punishment of

Kurdish rebels, also putting their dead bodies under surveillance of a new sovereign state.

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[36] Kurdish nationalism could regain some visibility only after a series of developments in the early 1960s; namely, relative liberalization of the Turkish political system by the Constitution of 1961, the re-emergence of Kurdish armed struggle in Iraq and the political space opened through the Turkish Left. Until the early 1970s Kurdish activists and organizations framed their demands in terms of economic development of the Kurdish region and basic cultural rights such as education in Kurdish. From mid-1970s onwards Kurdish groups started clearly differentiating themselves from what they called the "social chauvinist" Turkish Left, who did not have a clear agenda on the Kurdish issue and often dismissed Kurdish demands as divisive for a socialist struggle. Having emerged from within these socio-political conditions of the 1960s and 1970s, the PKK was a product of the articulation of two political forces of the previous decade; Kurdish nationalism and Turkish Left. The PKK developed a Marxist-Leninist national liberation ideology and forcefully announced the need for an "anti-colonial" armed struggle against the Turkish state as well as its "feudal Kurdish collaborators" towards a unified, socialist and independent Kurdistan. And it was only in the 1990s that the Kurds of Turkey developed a strong popular idea and sentiment for an independent Kurdistan through the guerilla warfare of the PKK.

Sheikh Said and Seyyid Rıza were executed on charges of rebelling against the Republic. While the Sheikh was accused of attempting at the creation of a separate Kurdish state, the specific reason behind Seyyid Rıza's execution remains as a mystery, because the indictment of his case never became public. Most probably, he, too, was charged with treason. According to the *Hiyanet-i Vataniye Kanunu* (Law on Reason against Vatan) dated April 29, 1920, their punishment was death with hanging immediately, and there was no right to appeal for the sentence. *Hiyanet-i Vataniye* is translated into English as *Treason against the State*. This collapse of national territory (vatan) into state power in translation, however, is no coincidence, as within the cultural logic of nationalism state and vatan intimately define each other, while the deployment of violence by the state in situations of rebellion is justified in the name of protecting vatan as a feminized and abstract space possessed and protected by the male members of the nation who are ready to kill and die for it (Najmabadi 1997). After all, "every state calls itself 'country' or 'nation' when it is about to commit murder" (Durrenmatt 1964: 97). But, how can one betray vatan, while vatan is ultimately a piece of soil? How did vatan become a very personalized and beloved entity and an object of loyalty or disloyalty? More importantly, what does vatan mean in the first place?

LOVING VATAN

According to the Orientalist historian of Ottoman Empire Bernard Lewis (1991: 525-527), the notion of vatan as national homeland in the French sense of *patrie* entered into Ottoman official usage in 1830s. Until then, while it had been referenced in some translated European texts, the word vatan, coming from Arabic watan, was used to mean

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the place of residence, e.g. village, town or province, which was a focus "of sentiment, of affection, of nostalgia, but not of loyalty, and only to a limited extent of identity", and had neither any political referents nor paternal or ancestral connotations of *patrie*. Tracing the use of vatan concept as patrie in official documents, Lewis quotes the Sultan as saying "it is the inescapable duty of all the people to provide soldiers for the defense of vatan" in the famous reform decree of 1839, the Edict of the Rosebower [Gülhane]. A year earlier, the Board of Public Works observed in a report that 'without science, the people cannot know the meaning of love for the state and vatan'. Lewis maintains:

> By the mid-century, the association of country (vatan), with state (devlet) and nation (millet), as something not only to be loved but also to be served and if necessary fought for, has become commonplace. A striking example of this association of ideas occurs in a letter which the Turkish poet and journalist Şinasi wrote to his mother from Paris in 1851: 'I want to devote (or sacrifice) myself to the cause of my religion, state, country (vatan) and nation (millet).

In early February 1873, Namık Kemal, an intellectual inspired by the nationalist and liberal ideals of the French and a disciple of Şinasi, finished writing his theater play *Vatan yahut Silistre* (Vatan or Silistre). The play was a romantic historical drama on love and heroic sacrifices for the Ottoman vatan, which became one of the founding documents of Ottoman and Turkish nationalisms. It dramatized the love between an Ottoman military officer and a young woman and the sublime love for Ottoman vatan into a single love story, using the "heroic defense" of Silistre castle on the Danube against the Russians as the historical stage. Kemal seems to be inspired by two traumatic events in the Ottoman history; the Crimean war with the Russians in 1828 and 1955-56, which had catastrophic impacts on the political psyche of the Ottoman rulers and intellectuals and helped to develop a "patriotic" sense of duty and loyalty towards vatan,

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which were still encapsulated in the figure of the Sultan. The main protagonists in the play are İslam Bey, an Albanian man, and Zekiye, a young girl following him into Silistre, who, together with others, are ready to die for their vatan against the Russians.

As a passing reference, it is important to note that Kemal chose an Albanian man as the main protagonist of his play. Although Kemal is counted as a pioneer of Turkish nationalism, such a choice shows that he might still have imagined nationalism from within Ottomanism. At least at the discursive level, Ottomanism did not define membership in ethnic terms, but claimed to comprise all subjects of the Empire regardless of their ethnicity and religion as one nation. The Ottomanists also struggled against the monarchy of the Sultan, demanding constitutional rule and equality before the law. In a few decades, however, the protagonists in novels, stories and plays would mostly be ethnic Turks. The nationalization in literature started with increasing power of Turkish nationalism after the military coup in 1908 (The Young Turk Revolution) and the further consolidation of its exclusionary tendencies after the Balkan Wars in 1912 and 1913. Unlike the Ottomanists, Young Turks started ethnicizing the terms of political identification with the nation, positioning themselves against not only "external enemies", and their internal "collaborators" –primarily Armenians and Greeks, but also the relatively "cosmopolitan" logic of Ottomanism and the Islamism of Sultan Abdulhamid. This increasing Turkification of nationalism set the cultural and political environment in which first the Armenians and the Kurds became "problems" to be worked out towards national unity and sovereignty over the national vatan, which also provided the ideological core of the Turkish Republic a decade later.

Despite its didactic repetitions and very poor theatrical qualities, *Vatan yahut Silistre* is of utmost importance, as this play is the origin from where Turkish nationalists usually trace the genuine love for vatan. Although, Bernard Lewis claims that the use of vatan as *patrie* was commonplace in the 1850s, one should correct that it might be commonplace among the Ottoman elites and intellectuals. Otherwise, the article titled "Vatan" that Kemal wrote in the daily *İbret* ten days before the first performance of the play in 1873 would not make much sense. Kemal wrote this article because he worried that "people" would not understand the meaning of vatan, and, consequently, the love for it. He was probably right, as then there was (Akyüz 1988: 2-3)

> …remarkable ambiguity among people with regards to the true meaning of love for vatan. People understood vatan simply as the place they were born into (city, town or village), and it was still far away from having an 'unity'…this play has brought about the contemporary idea of 'unity of vatan' for the first time; the love imagined on the basis of this idea had no limits…Vatan was more valuable than anything; one's own life, one's beloved, it was sacred.

Kemal's article was intended to inform the people about "true meaning of and love for vatan", including many sentences that would be performed in the play, hence preparing them to receive its didactic message. Kemal wrote (ibid. p. 3):

> A human being loves his vatan with feelings similar to the love of babies for their cradles, that of children for their playground, that of youth for their work place, that of the elderly for the corner of seclusion where they feel most comfortable, that of the children for their mothers, that of the fathers for their families.

This quite gendered language of analogy hints at a very crucial aspect of the nationalist imagination. It abstracts the human being (the national subject) by separating it from lived identifications such as being a baby, a child, youth, elderly or a father. The same abstracting logic is valid in the imagination of vatan, which is separated from the

cradle, the playground, the workplace, the mother or the family. In Kemal's nationalist imagination both the human being and his vatan appear as abstract entities separate from the sociality and historicity of lived identifications. Both seemed to have fetish qualities.

Kemal further explains why a human being should love his vatan (ibid. pp. 3-4):

> …life starts with breathing its atmosphere; because when his eyes open for the first time, his looks are directed at vatan's territories; because the substance of his body is a part and parcel of vatan; because when he looks around, he sees at every corner of vatan a memory of his past in its ossified form; …because he does have a particle of sovereignty that exists on his vatan;…because vatan is a sacred idea sprung from the union of many lofty sentiments like nation, freedom, interest, fraternity, property, sovereignty, respect to the dead, love for family, etc…We have given lives for every corner of the places we inhabit. Every piece of soil in our vatan is a keepsake of a hero who sacrificed himself to protect it…Vatan is the bread of our swords. It always belongs to us, and only and only belongs to us. We always love it more than ourselves, we sacrifice ourselves for it.

Needles to say, the protection of vatan as a very much sublimated and feminized abstract space was a task assigned to the male members of the Ottoman nation, while women would help their men in this heroic and dignified task, which Zekiye would do in the play by following her beloved İslam Bey into the front. There she discovers the love for vatan and the necessity of heroic sacrifices to protect it. When İslam Bey gets wounded in a heroic battle during the last part of the play, Zekiye and Abdullah Çavuş take a very dangerous task and destroy the Russian artillery that helps to attain a total victory. İslam Bey and Zekiye marry; their love for each other and for vatan is perfectly combined, and through a Hegelian resolution par excellence, family and love appear as the foundation of emerging Ottoman nation.

MAPPING VATAN

When *Vatan yahut Silistre* was first performed in 1873, the Ottoman Empire still did not have a map displaying the Ottoman vatan in its territorial integrity. That is, although Kemal was successful in personalizing and feminizing vatan as the beloved to be protected; neither the love for vatan nor loyalty towards it was territorialized, yet. That became possible gradually only after the imperial bureaucracy had directed the military in 1890s to produce maps that would display all Ottoman territories in one frame, which were used as educational items in schools (Fortna 2002). These maps ended the monopoly of continent-oriented maps that truncated the Ottoman domains, displaying them as peripheries of the continents of Asia, Africa and Europe, which consequently obstructed a fully unified territorial image of the Empire to emerge.

According to Fortna, with cartographic unity of its territory, the Ottoman bureaucracy aimed to instill a renewed sense of loyalty to the Empire and the Sultan. Ottoman bureaucrats recognized the importance of maps in educating people, their ability to effect a more direct affective identification between the subjects and the territories of empire which they belonged to. Maps were found to be particularly powerful in shaping the students' geographical imagination of power and their affective identification with the political entity embodied and displayed in the maps.

As Fortna also noted, *Suyu Arayan Adam* (1987), the autobiography of Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, specifically mentions the affective power of maps on the students' imagination of the territoriality of empire and political identification with vatan. Born in Edirne in 1897 to a family form the Danube region, Şevket Süreyya became an important Turkish nationalist, who is best known with his biography of the founder of Turkish

Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. In his autobiography, Şevket Süreyya describes how the map in his military school classroom affected the development of his nationalist sentiment and consciousness. He remembers learning to think of "the Ottoman state [as] our state" (p. 40).

> Between classes, we children were gathering in front of the maps and looking at the borders of our state. We were repeating "Our lands" when looking at the lands encircled by these borders. We frequently and readily repeated: Our lands! Our state! Saying these, I felt something exulting in me, some emotional upsurge; such sentiments were making me mature and proud.

The thought process that Şevket Süreyya underwent -as he describes in his memoir- led him to identify himself entirely with the state and its cause, even to the point of readiness to sacrifice his own life. He writes that the state meant everything to him. Consequently, it became natural for him to feel at a personal level the perceived threats against the Empire. Şevket Süreyya expresses his frustration when he perceives the difference between Ottoman territories of his time with those under Ottoman sovereignty before many other populations had separated from the empire to create their own independent nation-states (p. 41):

> This state, this empire was now everything to me. These lands even seemed few. Among the children who gathered before the maps between classes, I would trace with my fingers the border of the countries that had been broken off from our land, and naturally unjustly broken off: the Caucasus, the Crimea, Bessarabia, Romania, the Danubian provinces, even Algeria and the countries of Atlas [i.e. Morocco] smoldered in all of our imagination. There were stirring up our imagination…Then I understood that vatan was where the borders of the state could reach. Our vatan was where our borders could reach. And these borders were places where our army could reach. The borders of the vatan were the places under the rule of the empire's army.

Then he goes on to describe how such territorial imaginings stirred up his desire to restore the former territories to the empire and to suppress the uprisings that were

breaking against it all over. This love for and loyalty to a territorial vatan and the need for

self-sacrifice to protect it would soon get remarkably ethnicized after the military coup of

the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) in 1908 -when Turkish nationalism

gradually replaced Ottoman nationalism as well as Islamism. But, the symbiosis of death

and vatan in territorial imagination remains a powerful idea and sentiment in both

Ottoman and Turkish nationalisms. Mehmet Akif Ersoy, who was more an Ottoman

nationalist and a pious Muslim, gives a description of the place of self-sacrificial love and

martyrdom in the making of a national identity and vatan in the second, sixth and seventh

stanzas of the national anthem of the Turkish Republic that he wrote in 1921.

> Frown not, I beseech you, oh thou coy crescent,
> But smile upon my heroic race! Why the anger, why the rage?
> This blood of ours which we shed for you shall not be blessed otherwise;
> For Freedom is the absolute right of my God-worshiping nation.
>
> View not the soil you tread on as mere earth, recognize it!
> And think about the shroudless thousands who lie so nobly beneath you.
> You're the noble son of a martyr, take shame, hurt not your ancestor!
> Unhand not, even when you're promised worlds, this paradise of a vatan.
>
> What man would not die for this heavenly piece of land?
> Martyrs would gush out were one to just squeeze the soil! Martyrs!
> May God take all my loved ones and possessions from me if He will,
> But may He not deprive me of my one true vatan for the world.

This spirit of self-sacrificial love for vatan and the symbiotic relationship between

martyrdom and vatan-making as emphasized in the anthem have been inculcated in the

minds and hearts of Turkish citizenry by the ritual public singing of its first two stanzas

in all national holidays, military barracks, sporting events, school ceremonies, etc. The

most powerful institution in instilling this national pedagogy has been the school.

Throughout the history of the Republic and with increasing ambition after the military

coup in 1980, in school ceremonies on every Monday morning and Friday evening the anthem is sung loud by the participation of all public and private primary, secondary and high school children and teachers in Turkey. Besides, inside the classroom, a framed copy of the national anthem is always hung on the most visible wall of the classroom of every public and private school in Turkey. The anthem is typically accompanied with a photo of the Republic's founding father Atatürk, a copy of his famous speech to Turkish youth, the national flag, and a map of Turkey.

It should also be noticed that there is much transitivity between the spirit of the anthem and the symbols of Turkish national flag; a white crescent and a star at the center of red ground. Although the symbols in the flag were inherited from the mid-nineteenth century Ottoman Empire, the most popular Turkish belief is that during a battle in the War of Independence Atatürk saw at night the reflection of a crescent and a star onto a large pool of blood of the martyrs, signifying the heroic sacrifices for vatan. Besides, every school textbook's first pages include the anthem, a photo of Atatürk, the flag and a map of Turkey. While students of primary school are repeatedly assigned the homework of drawing maps of vatan and writing the anthem and memorizing/singing its first two stanzas, high school students are given the task of memorizing all the ten stanzas of the anthem. A simple arithmetic calculation reveals that until their graduation from high school, each and every student in Turkey has to write and sing the anthem about one thousand and five hundred times. Homework on maps stop when students gain the ability to draw the map without looking at an actual copy of it, that is, when national territories are literally inscribed in their imagination. These and other reiterated performative acts

around the anthem, the flag, the maps, etc. help to produce and reproduce a self-sacrificial national structure of feeling and the love for vatan.

Let me here return to the Turkish protest with which I started this chapter. I do not suggest a causal relationship between that protest and Turkish national pedagogy that has been produced and promoted through national theaters, maps, the anthem, the flag and the media such as newspapers, novels, television programs, and the like. However, considering these various ways in which national pedagogy on the love for vatan and the symbiosis of martyrdom and sacred national soil have been inculcated into citizenry both at the level of consciousness and affect, it is safe to argue that the organizing sentiment behind the protest against the company of the Kurdish and Turkish dead in a Turkish cemetery is not an abnormality, but an intelligible performative example of reasserting of feelings of love and loyalty to their sacred vatan, even if in a highly provoked and grotesque form. In fact, although surprised by some of the scenes from the protest, all TV news reports and the national newspapers depicted the protest with a sympathetic tone as a heightened and condensed "sensitivity of Turkish people for their vatan" and without any sympathy for the dead "terrorists".

BETRAYING VATAN

When *Misak-ı Milli* (National Oath), the manifesto of War of Independence, was declared on January 20, 1920, the claimed territories included Anatolia, parts of contemporary Greece and Bulgaria and small parts in Georgia, Syria and Iraq, including oil rich Mosul and Kirkuk. It was these lands to be defended and protected. The Grand Turkish National Assembly was established on April 23, 1920 as the ultimate sovereign

body of the nation. Six days later, the Assembly passed *Hiyanet-i Vataniye Kanunu* as the first law of the national regime. It was inspired by the CUP's law on deserted soldiers dated 1914 (Hiyanet-i Askeriye), and designed to deal with those who would challenge the authority and legitimacy of the National Assembly chaired by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The law clarified that those who would rebel, by deeds or words, would be treated as *vatan haini* (traitors), and those practically participate in rebellion would be executed by hanging. This was *the first time* the word vatan was coined with treason in the law. The law also clarified that punishment would be swift and *non-negotiable*; the cases would be concluded within twenty four days at latest, and with no right to appeal. The law was first used against the Kurdish Koçgiri rebellion in spring 1921. After the repression of the rebellion, many captive Kurds were sentenced to capital punishment. Yet, dynamics of the ongoing War of Independence and demands of parliamentarians from Kurdish provinces led Mustafa Kemal not to execute the sentences. An amnesty was declared. Yet, in the Kurdish rebellions to come, there would be no negotiation, no mercy and no amnesty.

With the rise of Republican Turkish nationalism, the political semantics of both rebellion and state sovereignty radically changed. State authorities started perceiving rebellions by other ethnic or national groups as principal means of challenging the sovereignty of state power, not simply the state as a centralized structure of power, but as an entity whose boundaries started neatly overlapping with the imagined boundaries of nation and vatan, a new equation in which political, cultural and spatial techniques of power and identity came to define each other; the isomorphism of state, identity and

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territory. The coherence and integrity of both state power and national identity were believed to require territorial unity of vatan, which brought about increasing rigidification of national borders and identities simultaneously. As discussed above, this rigidification was compounded by a highly feminized and sexualized image of vatan that represented national territories as the very honor of the nation, equating the violation of the borders of vatan with the violation and rape of national honor.

The gradual territorialization of land, love, loyalty, identity and sovereignty thus went hand in hand. At the center of this process was the discourse of vatan and the national duty to protect it, now embodied in the legal concept Hiyanet-i Vataniye. What has not been noticed in this process is the radical change in the semantics of rebellion, especially those rebellions that were organized by ethnically different subjects of the emerging Turkish regime, whether Muslim or not. As stated earlier, as opposed to the deathful dictates of the Republican laws, the Ottomans treated Kurdish rebels leniently; while the most severe punishment was usually a long-term exile. Part of the reason was the fact that Kurds were parts of the Islamic community (Umma); and neither Kurdish demands nor the Empire's conception of sovereignty had been territorialized in a national sense, yet. When compared with national sovereignty, imperial sovereignty was relatively more flexible and had more room to settle rebellions with graduated measures of punishment and negotiation. Hence, for the Kurds, the shift from imperial sovereignty towards national sovereignty was not a good sign, because this transition has led to the development of an extremely rigid conception of rebellion that equated it with treason, the most unforgivable sin in a national formation. And it is this perception of rebellion-

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as-treason that has framed the Republic's approach to Kurdish rebels and their dead bodies since its inception.

DEATH WITHOUT GRAVE

Khaled Abou el Fadl (2001: 32) summarizes the Islamic doctrinal law on combat as follows:

> According to Muslim jurists, other than fighting the unbelievers, there are three types of combat (qital): (1) fighting apostates (murtaddun); (2) fighting brigands (muharibun); and (3) fighting rebels (bughah). Apostates may be killed unless they repent, and brigands and highway robbers maybe killed, crucified, have a hand and foot amputated, or banished; however, rebels may not be killed, tortured, or imprisoned. Apostasy and brigandage are very serious crimes and are punished harshly. Insurrection or rebellion is not a crime and is treated leniently. A baghi (rebel) may not be executed, crucified or tortured…The word for rebellion is baghy and…it means *to demand* or to *exceed the limits* or to commit injustice. (Emphasis added.)

There is no historical work on the specificities of how the Ottomans constructed the rebellions by Kurdish notables in legal discourse. Was the Islamic law of rebellion effective in their "leniency" towards the Kurdish rebels? The answer to this question is important but requires historical research, which is beyond my current analysis. But we can say something on the case of Sheikh Said rebellion. As one of the highest ranking figures of the Naqshbendi sect of Islam at the time, and who had much knowledge both on the Islamic law and the fates of Kurdish rebel leaders in the nineteenth century Ottoman Empire, the Sheikh probably could not guess his sentence would be execution by hanging in case of the failure of rebellion. In fact, the records of his defense before the Court reveal that he expected, actually demanded, his punishment to be exile until the very last day. Perhaps, in demanding exile he thought of the ways previous Kurdish rebel leaders were punished or he had the Islamic law of rebellion in mind. We do not know

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that. But we know that when asked what he would have done, had he succeeded to conquer Diyarbakır, the Sheikh told his prosecutor that he would have *communicated with* the government in Ankara and expressed his *demands*. The rigid Republican perception of rebellion reveals itself in the next passage (Örgeevren 2007: 194-195).

> Prosecutor: Have not you considered that the Turkish Republic would repress this *qıyam* (religious rebellion) with its soldiers and eliminate you? What did give you the courage for such an act?
>
> Sheikh Said: We did not have evidence. We could not guess that so many soldiers would be transferred so fast.
>
> Prosecutor: Did you understand it later?
>
> Sheikh Said: Yes, I understand it now.
>
> Prosecutor: You have seen this (the issue of qıyam) in the past, but you compared today with the past and came to the conclusion that today is not like the past. Is that correct?
>
> Sheikh Said: If they had asked, "Why did you rebel?" we would have told them [our demands), and they would have partly accepted. Then we would have been grateful. It would have been better, had we thought of it before [that today is different from the past].

That the Sheikh was expecting to communicate with the government and express certain demands for negotiation is suggestive. At least according to his defense, for him rebellion meant neither treason nor destruction of all bridges with the new regime, but a call and means for negotiation. But his prosecutor was not of the same opinion and spoke from within a new political "episteme" (Foucault 1970; 1980: 197) which would structure the mode of governing rebel populations to secure the sovereign powers of the emerging Republic.[37] He clarified that unlike the past the Republic was not willing to negotiate in

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[37] Foucault uses the notion of "episteme" to define the *a priori* that both makes possible and structures and limits the knowledge and discourses in the field of scientificity of a particular epoch. I extend the scope of this notion so as to include the field of the political in a new epoch that was shaped by new knowledges and discourses regarding the regulation of rebellions.

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any sense with those who dared to rebel against its sovereign powers. The Sheikh was a *vatan haini* (traitor) and was to be punished as such.

Considering the Islamic law of rebellion, the Sheikh would not have thought of himself as an apostate, a brigand, a highway robber, or one who committed crime or injustice; he was too pious, too old and too rich to do these. But he *demanded*, and in doing so he knew he had *exceeded* limits (two meanings of rebellion in Islamic law). What he could not foresee but understood only before the Court was that with the establishment of a Republican nation-state upon a territorial notion of vatan and identity, the semantics of rebellion had also undergone a radical transition away from meaning *to demand* towards *to commit treason* short a while ago, and a shift in punishment away from exile towards death. Probably when he saw the gallows prepared for him and his forty five friends in the morning of June 28, 1925, he was convinced for sure that what he rebelled against was a genuinely new regime that was rigidly unwilling to negotiate. But still he could not guess his dead body would not have a proper passage to the Hereafter. The executions continued for hours. The hangmen were exhausted. The Sheikh and his friends were put into an unmarked mass-grave unknown to date.

BACK TO THE PRESENT
This rigid Republican perception of rebellion was re-invoked on November 10, 2009, when the Turkish parliament had a session on democratization in order to discuss the "Kurdish problem", which was a first in the Republic's history. This session was a part of the ruling Justice and Development Party's (AKP) "democratic opening" in order to find a democratic solution and "eliminate terrorism". As a major populist rhetoric to

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legitimize its project among the nationalist Turkish public, the AKP repeatedly claimed

that they would stop "mothers' tears" and "prevent the youth of the country from being

martyred". Many weeks before the parliamentary session, the Republican People's Party

(CHP) had started criticizing the AKP vociferously, accusing it of secretly or indirectly

negotiating with the PKK. In its criticisms the CHP repeatedly claimed the political

heritage of the founding father of the Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who was also the

founder and first chair of the CHP, which governed the Republic from 1923 to 1950 in a

single party-rule, and carried out the military campaigns against Kurdish rebellions. In

the parliamentary session, Onur Öymen, the vice-chair of CHP, argued:

> They say they don't want mothers cry, but unfortunately the mother of this
> country have cried much. We gave many martyrs throughout our history. In
> Dardanelles War, we had two hundred thousand martyrs. The mothers of all of
> them cried. Nobody said "let's finish this war". Did not mothers cry in the War of
> Independence, in the Sheikh Said rebellion, the Dersim rebellion, in Cyprus? Did
> anybody say "Don't let the mothers cry, let us stop fighting"? You are the first
> who say this, because you don't have courage to fight against terror…Did Atatürk
> struggle against terror like this? Did he negotiate with the terrorists? Did Atatürk
> negotiate with Sheikh Said? Did he struggle against or negotiate with those who
> organized the Dersim rebellion?[38]

However, Öymen's evaluating the wars of Dardanelles and Independence with

repressing Kurdish rebellions on the same plane did not go unnoticed. Severe criticisms

were raised not only by the people of Dersim and the Kurds but also by many liberal-

minded Turkish intellectuals. They argued that in the wars of Dardanelles and

Independence, Kurds and Turks fought together, while the repression of Dersim rebellion

involved the massacre of many civilians, including women and children, who were

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[38]http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/Tutanak_B_SD.birlesim_baslangic?P4=20485&P5=H&PAGE1=1
&PAGE2=89

"gassed in the caves like mice", as later described by the executives of the repression campaign. To answer the criticism that he was offering total massacre as a model to handle the Kurdish issue, Öymen reasoned by positioning himself safely behind Atatürk, the untouchable cult of Turkish politics. According to him, AKP was doing exactly the opposite of what Atatürk did in the past and Atatürk never favored negotiating with "armed terrorists".

> Atatürk struggled against those who pulled out weapons against the state. Unlike the AKP he did not negotiate with armed people in the mountains, those who pulled out weapons against the state. I said how Atatürk struggled against those who pulled out weapons against the state. I told what Atatürk did. If one has courage, let him criticize Atatürk. Let him say Atatürk committed mistake…How many rebellions happened in Turkey? Did Atatürk do wrong, when he repressed these rebellions?[39]

According to Öymen, the only way to deal with rebels is to repress and eliminate them; compromise or negotiation would mean the recognition of rebels as legitimate entities. Negotiation is unimaginable to this hyper-masculine frame of mind, which perceives compromise not only as a weakness and lack of courage to fight but in contravention with the established Kemalist political heritage. Consequently, the only two ways to finish the ongoing war is either total elimination of the terrorists or their surrender to the Republic's sovereign power and sense of justice, and that without any pre-condition. In fact, in an aggressively paternalist tone Öymen's party has repeatedly called on the PKK to surrender and trust in the state's benevolence; adding that the Father state may show mercy and may wish to think forgiving them but only after their total surrender/submission and confession/repentance for their misdeeds.

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[39] http://www.haber5.com/news_details?id=35078

Öymen was criticized because of his "anti-democratic" political orientation. However, the crux of problem here is less Öymen's antidemocratic personality and more his conceptions of state power and sovereignty. Although his position is politically and ethically unsustainable, the fact remains that he is right in pointing at the fact that negotiating with those who "pulled out weapons" would mean to compromise over state sovereignty, understood as the monopoly over violence or the right to kill. Seen from this particular perspective of sovereignty, the logical conclusion of Öymen's argument is that not simply rebellion but also negotiation with the rebels is treason. It is this nexus of two forms of treason, of rebellion and negotiation, which squeezes the debate over the issue of sovereignty in the Kurdish conflict into a deadlock, hampering the imagination of a different future where sovereignty can be reorganized in less deadlier forms.

Between a tyrant and a martyr there is of course an enormous difference, although they both have one thing in common: the power to compel. The tyrant, himself ambitious to dominate, compels people through his power, the martyr, himself unconditionally obedient to God, compels others through his suffering. The tyrant dies and his rule is over; the martyr dies and his rule begins.

<div align="right">Søren Kierkegaard (2003: 151)</div>

Chapter Four: Between Myth and History: Mnemonic Negotiations over Rebellion, Death and Sovereignty

Why were Sheikh Said and his friends buried unmarked? Considering the secular and nationalist character of the Republic, some of my research associates suggest that it was a policy to prevent the graves from turning into sacred tombs, religious places for pilgrimage. That is, marked graves would have provided material traces of the dead over which to form a non-secular Kurdish community. Besides, it was to teach a memorable lesson (ibret-i alem) to secure obedience through intimidation and terror. A neighbor in Baĝlar explained it beyond Kurdish-state relations: "Graves are what make a place one's home. They are one's past. They did not allow the Sheikh have a gravestone. Later they also destroyed Armenian and Jewish cemeteries and constructed hospitals and army buildings there. They bulldozed them to make sure that this city was and is Turkish, as if others never lived here." The systematic erasure of material traces of non-Muslim and non-Turkish communities and their past has been a key technique in space-making processes of nation building and state formation in Diyarbakır and beyond. In the previous chapter I argued that strict surveillance of Kurdish dead bodies had to do with nationalization and territorialization of sovereignty and identity. There may be other explanations. Unfortunately, we do not know what exactly motivated state authorities in

burying dead rebel bodies unmarked, as most official documents on the rebellion are still top-secret and inaccessible.

If there is one fact about this rebellion that goes uncontested, that is the Sheikh's story did not end in that unmarked grave. Quite the contrary, a new history has started from that very grave, shaping Kurdish-state relations in the years to come. This chapter is concerned with how this rebellion and this unmarked grave have turned into an unfinished story on rebellion, death, community and sovereignty. The denial of the Sheikh a marked grave has obstructed the possibility of putting a closure on his story, which has fostered narrative elaborations on the event that made the Sheikh all the more legendary and sacred. Preventing his bodily remains from marking social space could not erase or limit his memory and influence. Rather, it allowed the Sheikh to gain a spectral presence over the city. Even eighty years after he had been executed, Kurds keep talking about the Sheikh; his miracles and sufferings for justice for his people and for Allah. In these stories, Sheikh Said rebellion turns into an often messianic narrative of sacred struggle and divine justice against a politically oppressive state, which is mostly, but not always, situated as a building block of historical memory in the teleological time of the Kurdish nationalist movement.

This chapter will first describe the rebellion. Then, it will present the way the rebellion has been constructed as an event in the Turkish state's historical discourse and Western academic scholarship. Later, it will discuss three distinct constructions of the rebellion by the Kurdish movement in the last three decades, situating them within a process of political transformation. Finally, it will discuss some legendary and messianic

popular stories about the rebellion, the Sheikh and his unknown grave in Diyarbakır. In this, I do not juxtapose popular stories with hegemonic histories, be they Turkish, Kurdish or academic, which is a romanticizing tendency of the scholarship on memory. Rather, I will discuss the interactions and tensions between popular and hegemonic constructions of the Sheikh and the rebellion.

In this discussion I am informed by the anti-empiricist approaches to the study of remembering and representing the past, be it through the modality of history, story or memory, which privilege an analysis of the politics of the production, interpretation and representation of "facts" into historical truths (Taussig 1987). I am particularly inspired by three studies that focus on changing representations of insurrectionary events in nationalist histories as well as the internal heterogeneity of these histories under the pressures of time and space (Amin 1995; Swedenburg 1995; Trouillot 1995). Following these scholars, I define my aim as not to fill in a gap in historical representations of the Sheikh Said rebellion by providing more empirical data from silenced margins, but to understand how and why those gaps and silences are actively produced and negotiated as intrinsic parts of discursively mediated power struggles in the first place. In so doing, I seek to develop an understanding of what contending parties make of this rebellion, "in the constructed nature of their experiences and recollections, in the working-over of memories by dominant historiography and subsequent events, and in the ongoing struggle over this national signifier" (Swedenburg 1995: xxvi).

THE SHEIKH AND THE REBELLION

The Sheikh was an old man. Before the Court, he said, he was probably in his sixties. He was one of the highest ranking figures of the Naqshbandi[40] tariqa (sect, order) of Islam in Kurdistan. He did not have much to do with politics. At least until 1925, there is no recorded political activity of the Sheikh (Eriş and Özsoy 2007). Hasan Hişyar Serdî (1994), however, argues that the Sheikh had relations with Istanbul-based Kurdish organizations between 1908 and 1922. Probably his nationalist aspirations were also inspired by his brother-in-law Xalit Beg, who was the chair of Azadi (Freedom), a secret Kurdish nationalist organization established in Erzurum in 1921 (Olson 1989). The Sheikh lived in the Kolhisar village of Hınıs, where he also taught at his madrassah. Besides, he was a rich merchant who traded herds of sheep with merchants in Aleppo, where he visited many times. These trips allowed the Sheikh to develop a wide network of relationships over a large part of Kurdistan. There is also a possibility that he had relations with Kurdish nationalist circles in Aleppo.

The beginning of the Sheikh's end starts with his leaving from his village probably in late December 1924. We know that Captain Yusuf Ziya and Xalit Beg, two founding leaders of the Azadi, were arrested in September and December 1924 and jailed

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[40] According to Martin van Bruinessen (1992), the Naqshbandi tariqa originated from central Asia, deriving its name from Baha ad-Din Naqshbandi (1318-1889, of Bukhara), who, however, was neither the inventor of the tariqa not first organizer of the order. The tariqa traces its pedigree back to the Prophet Muhammad through the first Caliph Abu Bakr. The Naqshbandi order has had a historical role in the spread of Islam across the vast area from Turkey to India and Indonesia. The Kurdish version of the tariqa was developed by Ziyaeddin Khalid, a Kurd of the Jaf tribe usually called Mawlana Khalid, who went to Delhi in 1808, where he received his ijaza (authorization) from Sheikh Abdullah to transmit the Naqshbandi tariqa in Baghdad, Sulaymaniyah and later Damascus. Khalid converted many influential Kurdish families into the tariqa. According to Bruinessen, the religious influence these families acquired later assured them key roles in the development of Kurdish nationalism: "Sheikh Ubeydullah of Nehri, Sheikh Said of Palu and Mulla Mustafa Barzani, the leaders of important nationalist movements, were the descendants of Sheikhs who received the Naqshbandi tariqa through Mawlana Khalid" (p. 224).

in Bitlis for their alleged role in a local Nestorian rebellion in Beytüşşebap in September 1924. The Sheikh was invited to Bitlis as a witness. Afraid of imprisonment like Yusuf Ziya and Xalit Beg, he did not go and requested to testify in his hometown due to his old age and poor health. His request was accepted.

The Sheikh testified Hınıs on December 22, 1924, but his fear of imprisonment did not go away. He left his village some ten days later. Passing through Kaniya Reş, Çapakçur, Dara Hini and Lice, he headed towards Hani. On his way he had meetings with communal leaders and influential Kurds. Using his religious authority he settled conflicts to create harmony among his followers, which have been interpreted as preparatory steps to create unity among the Kurds towards the rebellion. When he was in Hani, his brother insisted that he had to visit Piran, his brother's village, which was not in the Sheikh's plan. He went to Piran with about one to two hundred men. Probably, from there he was planning to go to Palu to visit his grandfather's tomb. He could never do that.

Sometime between the 8th and 13th of February, his first day in Piran, about ten Turkish gendarmeries came to visit the Sheikh. They wanted him to hand over two, four or ten outlaws who had joined him on his way to Piran. Dates and numbers are different, but the event goes uncontested. The Sheikh refused. He told them that handing over those who take shelter in one's house was disgracing. Later, before the Court, he said that he had asked the outlaws to surrender but they had refused and he could not push further. Another version is that the Sheikh asked the gendarmeries to arrest the outlaws after he had left the village. But the gendarmeries insisted. A fight broke up. Two soldiers got

wounded, one killed. Or, many soldiers were killed and wounded. According to Hasan Hişyar, the Sheikh's brother was also among the wounded.

Local Kurds in close towns misinterpreted "the guns fired in Piran" as the start of the rebellion. The Sheikh later said that the fight turned into a rebellion without planning; he lost control and had to assume leadership. The Kurdish claim is that the fight in Piran was a Turkish plot that started the rebellion without enough preparation, earlier than it was planned by the Azadi; either on March 21st (the Newroz holiday) or in May 1925.

In the first week, rebel forces took the control of Dara Hini, Hani and Lice, turning the first one into a provisional capital. In a few weeks, the rebellion spread to all towns in the area. The Sheikh's forces won battle after battle, but this victorious period could last only three weeks. The rebellion was fought on several fronts: Varto-Muş, Harput-Elaziz, Diyarbakır, Silvan and Ergani. Estimates on the number of Kurdish forces range from ten to forty thousand. Robert Olson (1989) argues that Kurdish forces were about fifteen thousand, while there were twenty five thousand Turkish troops in the rebellion area until April, when the number reached fifty three thousand.

In late February 1925, the Sheikh headed towards Diyarbakır. Probably on March 2nd, the first attack on Diyarbakır was launched with five to ten thousand forces. Although on the night of March 7th, some fighters entered through the holes in the city walls, all attempts to take Diyarbakır failed, partly because the expected support from within the city never came. In the meantime, Turkish officials were trying to convince the French to use railways that passed through French-dominated Syrian territories for the transfer of troops. The French agreed. In early April, troops were transferred. Even before

this, Turkish forces started taking control in Elaziz, Çapakçur, Palu, Varto and other towns under the control of Kurdish forces. The Sheikh headed towards Varto from where to pass to Iran, but he was captured on the Abdurrahman Paşa Bridge close to Varto with the help of Captain Kasım, a cousin of the imprisoned Azadi leader Xalit Beg and a military advisor of the Sheikh who had been informing Turkish officials since before the rebellion. While some of the Sheikh's men were brought to Hınıs and executed there, the Sheikh and some others were transferred to Diyarbakır. They were tried in the Court of Independence and hanged on June 28, 1925. Only the body of Sheikh Şemseddin of Silvan was delivered for proper burial, probably because he had previously announced a fatwa against Sheikh Said at the beginning of the rebellion, but later changed sides.

THE REBELLION AS HISTORICAL EVENT

In historical discourse there is much controversy over "objective facts" of the rebellion. What were the reasons and goals? What was the chronological sequence of the events? How many people participated? How many died? What were the consequences? The controversy mainly stems from the fact that constructions of the rebellion rely on different sources, mainly Turkish archives and the British and Russian foreign office and intelligence reports. Like all historical sources, these were all produced with their in-built silences and 'omissions'. Interpretations of these sources are ideologically mediated, and so they have their own silences. Besides, most Turkish archives on the event are inaccessible to researchers. The Kurds do not have their own archives or systematic resources other than some memoirs and popular stories that have been excluded from historical discourse as factually unreliable. The Kurdish historical discourse itself relies

on the interpretation of Turkish or foreign resources. That is why reading through various accounts does not help to construct a "clear picture" of the event.

"What happened in 1925" has been written in historical discourse in a variety of ways. Kurdish nationalists, Turkish official history and foreign scholars all have their own interpretations with different points of emphasis and significance. However, despite the diversity of interpretations, it is through a rational assessment of causes, aims and effects through which the rebellion gets constructed as an event in historical time.

The state's historical discourse on the rebellion is not monolithic. The judge of the Court concluded that the goal of the rebels was "an independent Islamic Kurdish government". According to the prosecutor (Örgeevren 2007: 40-41), religion was a means of propaganda; the rebels had lies and claims that the Republic was destroying Islam. He maintained that the rebel leaders hid their true goal, which was a Kurdish state, even from their followers.

> The rebellion in the East, on the surface, was as if only a religious and sharia-seeking one…However, when its internal dynamics, spirit and the aims and objectives of its organizers are considered, its true essence was completely Kurdish nationalism, and its goal was nothing other than the establishment of a Kurdish state and government.

Turkish Army did not agree with this view, however. A book published by the Chief of the General Staff (1972: 78-79) argued that the rebellion was a counter-revolution:

> The Sheikh Said rebellion, which started just one year after the declaration of the Republic and the abolition of the Caliphate and last 6-7 months with its repercussions, was completely a case of counter-revolution, if its reasons, preparations, timing and context are considered…Propaganda of Kurdishness (Kürtlük) started with the declaration of Tanzimat-ı Hayriye [The Edict of Rosebower in 1839], but this propaganda had never found base among the people.

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This is because the primary change Tanzimat and Meşrutiyet (Constitutional Rule) brought about for Kurdish life was to break down the influence of aghas, begs, chiefs, Sheikhs and hodjas over these primitive herds. But it was impossible to inculcate Kurdishness among this mass, who even could not understand what humanity was. For this mass the meaning of human existence was not more than a handful of bulgur (a kind of wheat) and barley; and neither they did nor wanted to know what the Republic was, what existed behind the mountain they lived. In order to provoke this ignorant mass, it was necessary to make religious propaganda. That was what happened in actuality.

This has been the most dominant public historical narrative in Turkey. According to this narrative, the rebellion was organized by "reactionary" Kurdish notables who, in enmity with the civilizing secular Kemalist reforms, aimed to establish a fundamentalist Islamic order. Sheikh Said, in this narrative, is viewed as a notable whose power and privileges were destroyed as the Republic was bringing a "humane" life to the East, a place inhabited by "poor and ignorant masses" under bonds of hierarchy and oppression of the Sheikhs. The Army also warned the politicians and the press not to represent the event as a Kurdish nationalist uprising, as that would have put Turkey in difficulty in its relations with the Europeans, particularly the British, as a state oppressing its national minorities. According to the Army, it was a counter-revolution to bring back the rule of the Caliphate and Islam.

In retrospect, Kemalists also emphasized the role of the rebellion in the issue of oil politics, arguing that it was a British plot to gain the control of the oil rich Mosul and Kirkuk in 1926. The "British finger" argument follows as: The rebellion created the impression that Kurds in Turkey are oppressed and do not accept the rule of Turkish state. So, it would be wrong to allow Turkey have sovereign rule over mostly Kurdish-populated Mosul and Kirkuk. However, even Turkish scholars dispute "the British

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finger". According to Mete Tunçay (1999: 136), who himself views the event as "a nationalist revolt in religious garb," there was no evidence and logical explanation about the British involvement. He adds that state officials devised multiple versions for different audiences. The emphasis on the counter-revolutionary character of the rebellion helped the Kemalists to extend the repression campaign to the opposition against the regime's top-down secularizing reforms. These opponents, including many commanders of the War of Independence, were executed, imprisoned or exiled on charges of encouraging the rebels. Talking to the Europeans, again, the rebellion was represented as a reactionary event against modernization and civilizing reforms, denying the ethno-political dynamics of the event. Yet, in the Court and the Army's internal correspondences it was a Kurdish nationalist rebellion, the ultimate form of treason.

Western scholarship mostly constructs the rebellion as a nationalist response to the Turkish nation-state formation which started destroying non-Turkish and non-secular cultural and political formations after the proclamation of the Republic. Martin van Bruinessen, for example, argues that the explicit goal of the rebellion was to establish "an independent Kurdish state, where the Islamic principles, violated in modern Turkey, were to be respected" (1992: 265).

> The revolt has been prepared by a *political organization* [Azadi], exploiting the Sheikh's charisma in order to mobilize a mass following that it itself lacked. The Sheikh was, nevertheless, much more than a mere figure-head; he assumed supreme leadership of the military operations (original emphasis).

Following Bruinessen, Robert Olson (1989) privileges the modern organizational aspects of the rebellion by emphasizing the role of the Azadi in its mobilization. According to Olson, it was "the first large-scale nationalist rebellion by the Kurds"

(1989: 153). He adds that the Azadi deliberately promoted a Sheikhly leadership since its inception and this was "given force in the Azadi congresses of 1924. The fact that the rebellion had a religious character was the result of Azadi's assessment of the strategy and tactics necessary for carrying out a successful revolution. While the Sheikh Said rebellion was a nationalist rebellion, its mobilization, propaganda and symbols were those of a religious rebellion". While Olson argues that the Sheikh was simultaneously an ardent nationalist and a committed believer, for Bruinessen the main factor in Azadi's decision to elect him as the leader was the Sheikh's religious influence over the locals, especially the Zaza-speaking Kurds. Both Olson and Bruinessen also underline that religious and nationalist elements of the rebellion cannot be differentiated.

> The nationalist motivations of those who planned it are beyond doubt, but even among them many were also emotionally affected by the abolition of the Caliphate. Sheikh Said was certainly a very pious person, and honestly indignant at secularizing reforms…, but –as my informants insist- he was at least a sincere nationalist…The *primary* aim of both Sheikh Said and Azadi leaders was the establishment of an independent Kurdistan…The movement was called jihad ('holy war'); Sheikh Said assumed the title of amir almujahidin ('commander of the warriors of the fatih'). This by itself, however, does not mean that religion provided the impetus behind the revolt…For the mass of participants in Sheikh Said's revolt, religious and nationalist loyalties cannot be separated: they coincided and were virtually identical. (Bruinessen 1992: 298-299, original emphasis)

Whether nationalist or religious, progressive or reactionary, there is consensus that the effects of the rebellion were far more that the rebellion itself. In fact, it was a radical turning point for both the Kurds and the Republic (Bozarslan 2004; Olson 1989; Toker 1994; Tunçay 1999). This rebellion practically ended the Kurdish-Ottoman alliance created in the first quarter of the 16th century. Here a few details are in order.

Under the reign of Ottoman Empire, the Kurds lived as part of a broader Sunni (orthodox) Muslim core of the Empire where "minorities" were defined in religious terms, not in terms of ethnic or cultural markers. While the existence of Christian (Greeks and Armenians) and Jewish populations was given a legal minority status as "millets", the differences among Muslim populations were managed through the idiom of Islamic brotherhood (Umma).[41] Kurdish notables derived their autonomous power and authority from the twin institutions of the Sultanate and the Caliphate. The Lausanne Treaty, founding treaty of the Republic, formulated the status of minorities in Turkey in 1923. But the treaty did not refer to the Kurds as a minority, acknowledging the Ottoman model that gave minority status only to non-Muslims. That is, the Kurds were incorporated into the Turkish nation by virtue of their Muslim heritage.

However, Republican reforms[42], especially the abolition of the Caliphate, the ban on religious organizations and the introduction of a unified secular Turkish education system in March 1924, crushed all public vestiges of a separate Kurdish cultural ethno-political existence. The banning of madrassahs meant the elimination of the only educational institution where Kurdish language was used. The Constitution of 1924

[41] The Ottoman Empire did not recognize a minority status for Muslim groups and effectively managed its subjects thorough the Millet system from 15th century onwards. The Millets –Armenians and Greeks (Christians), Jews and Muslims, were 'ethno'-religious communities that enjoyed official recognition by Ottoman administration, which enabled them to have administrative and judicial autonomy in communal matters. However, this did not mean that non-Muslim millets were not discriminated against.

[42] The Grand National Assembly of Turkey was established in April 1920. Two years later the Sultanate was abolished. The abolition of the Caliphate, the Ottoman Ministry of Religious Affairs and Pious Foundations, religious courts and the enforcement of the Law on the Unification of Education further destroyed the status of the Kurds in March 1924. These reforms meant the ban of all Kurdish schools, organizations, and publications as well as religious fraternities and *madrassahs*, which were the last source of education for most Kurds. Through these secularizing reforms, the Kemalist regime tightened its grip over its "religious" peripheries. The introduction of a unified and secular Turkish education system was a decisive move toward the creation of a homogeneous national identity.

equated citizenship with "Turkishness". The words Kurds and Kurdistan were removed from books and maps. The abolition of the Caliphate replaced the idiom of Islamic brotherhood with the "unity of Turkish nation and state". This was the destruction of the "historical bridge" between Kurds and Turks. The Sheikh Said rebellion was practically a last hit at this already ruined "historical bridge", creating a point of departure for Kurdish claims for an independent state. This rebellion has also served as a foundational event in-reverse for Turkish nationalism and state formation, as it was against this rebellion that most Turkish legal and political institutions were established in strcitly secularist and nationalist terms. Even today Kemalists views Kurdish nationalism and Islam, two tendencies embodied in the personality the Sheikh, as the main national security issues. In this sense, the Sheikh keeps haunting the regime.

THREE FACES OF THE SHEIKH

National independence is not just a political project that seeks exclusive territorial sovereignty; it also involves a particular interpretation of history. Until the recent politics of compromise initiated by Öcalan's defense in 1999, the PKK-led Kurdish movement deployed an independence-oriented approach to interpret history, creating foundational national myths, symbols and narratives accordingly. Yet, although Sheikh Said became a national hero in the movement's public discourse starting with the early 1990s, the Manifesto of the PKK (1978) interestingly had no single reference to his rebellion. The heir of both the Turkish Left and preceding Kurdish movements, PKK referenced to this rebellion in another foundational document (1982: 185-190), *Kürdistan'da Zorun Rolü (The Role of Force in Kurdistan),* appropriating it hesitantly as "a primitive but rightful

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reaction" to Turkish policies that aimed at establishing political sovereignty in Kurdistan

through military occupation.

> The uprisings in Kurdistan in this period (1925-1940) were the most senseless rebellions in the world…Because there was no modern social development; there was no serious goal of political and national liberation and modern organization. On the contrary, they were imprisoned in the most reactionary medieval remnants of thought and organization, tribalism and religious sectarianism. In fact, these were not planned and organized rebellions but spontaneous reactions against very aggressive, savage, murderous national oppression practices… [However, these] primitive uprisings had a very rightful essence, as they were against national domination and oppression. But dominant Kurdish classes have prevented this rightful essence from gaining a progressive content…Although the resistances were rightful and sacred; the reactionary position of the leadership obstructed their transformation into a revolutionary national liberationist struggle…They prioritized economically their narrow family and tribal interests, ideologically the "Islamic brotherhood", the feudal ideology, and politically they aimed to bring back the Ottoman sultans. That is why we call these primitive rebellions…Rightful but primitive! While this was the case of rebellions, the policies of Kemalist dictatorship in Kurdistan were completely unjust and reactionary, examples of savagery and barbarism.

This "progressive" class analysis should be located into its historical and political

context. The Turkish Left traditionally opposed Kurdish political mobilization as a threat

to class solidarity and appealed to the Kemalist view that the rebellion was a primitive

and reactionary enterprise of British-supported Kurdish feudal landlords who had lost

their privileges due to progressive Kemalist reforms. PKK's view of the rebellion as

rightful was an ideological point of departure from the Turkish Left towards creating an

autonomous Kurdish leftist political tradition. However, like the Kemalists and the

Turkish Left, the PKK itself was rigidly secularist and promoted rigidly orthodox leftist

politics of anti-religion and anti-tribe. It was this "progressive" approach that condemned

the Sheikh as "primitive" and "reactionary". The PKK argued that the feudal nature of

tribalism and religious loyalties to the Ottomans (and Turks) obstructed the emergence of

a genuine modern Kurdish national consciousness. Accordingly, the movement defined its goal as to overcome this tribalism and religiosity towards national liberation as the political heir of the "rightful essence" of the Sheikh Said rebellion.

A decade later, this "primitive" and "reactionary" character of the rebellion was revised. In an article in Serxwebun (1995), the journal of the movement, the rebellion was reconstructed as follows:

> When Mustafa Kemal started invading/occupying Kurdistan anew, he hurt their interests (they also have a national character), he hurt also their national interests…Sheikh Said was from an important merchant family. But he had ties with Kurdish people [meaning he had nationalist aspirations]…Certainly, this reaction had a religious color, but in essence it was national…[Sheikh Said] was not prepared and organized. Consequently, he was very brutally repressed…Using this rebellion as an excuse, [Atatürk] destroyed any value regarding Kurdishness…Now, the most strange thing about this fascist regime is that it stigmatized even the most ordinary popular uprising as reactionary. In fact, this is something like (a most reactionary and bloody) fascist's calling anything other than himself a reactionary. Sheikh Said was progressive and humane one thousand times more than Atatürk.

While in the written discourse of the movement the Sheikh gained a "national" and "progressive" character, he was elevated to the status of a quintessential symbol of heroic anti-colonial resistance in public discourse. Particularly effective in this revision were two larger forces: First, the PKK was no longer a marginal Leftist group, but an armed movement supported by millions of Kurds. That most Kurds were pious has pressured the PKK for ideological change, even if instrumentally. Secondly, and more importantly, this revision was a response to Hizbullah; an underground organization formed by "religious Kurds" who murdered many Kurdish activists throughout the 1990s. The Kurdish movement believes that this organization was created, supported and protected by Turkish authorities. In such a context, the movement criticized the orthodox

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Left, declaring that crude materialist interpretations of religion were wrong (Öcalan 1991). Criticizing Kurdish Hizbullah as triggermen of a dirty regime who had nothing to do with Islam, the leader of the movement declared the PKK to be the real fighter for Islam understood as a religion of justice against all kinds of oppression (Öcalan 1995).

Consequently, Marxist PKK guerillas were told to be "as worthy and dignified as the first companions of Prophet Mohammed". Öcalan's photos with famous Kurdish religious personalities were circulated in Kurdish media. The PKK's frontal organization supported Kurdish *imams* (mullahs) and Alevids to organize under two different political unions in Europe, Turkey, and even Mecca. In the process, the PKK established mosques in Europe; those in Bremen and Paris were named after Sheikh Said. This appropriation of Islam as a religion of justice and fighting oppression helped the movement to incorporate Sheikh Said and other past leaders into the liberationist discourse as sacred anti-colonial figures whose revenge should be taken and whose mission completed in the progressive teleology of Kurdish nationalism. A guerilla fighter in Amed (Diyarbakır) between 1986 and 1995 explained these changes as follows:

> Before, we said there was no God, no Prophet and tried to teach people socialism, Leninism and all that. Our people were illiterate and deeply pious, and they did not get it. But when we started talking about Sheikh Said, they all welcomed us as their own children. They started sharing their food with us. The fact was that they did not know or care who Lenin was, but they not only knew but also lived Sheikh Said. I mean they grew up listening stories about his struggle, his death. They believed that we would have revenge for the past and present oppression.

In the early 1990s pious Kurds started massively involving in the movement's illegal activities, working as militias or propagandists in and outside Kurdistan. The images of Sheikh Said and Seyyid Rıza were repeatedly used in the opening and closing

scenes of the movement's Brussels based Med-TV satellite station. These images ended with Öcalan's photo, which was the largest, completing the historical chain of Kurdish leadership and turning Öcalan into "the last Kurdish leader", the political heir of all previous rebellions. Besides, the image of the guerilla as the companions of the Prophet symbolically elevated the status of Öcalan to the Prophet himself. Consequently, he was reconstructed by his sympathizers as a messianic figure, but without claiming him to be the Mahdi (the Islamic equivalent of Messiah). The leader's last name helped much in this regard. Öcalan literally means "avenger" in Turkish. Some entertained the idea that the leader's last name was not a coincidence, but a divine arrangement, depicting Öcalan as the divine avenger to take the historical revenge of the Kurds. In this context, Kurdish guerillas turned out to be the "real grandchildren" of Sheikh Said and Seyyid Rıza to complete their historical mission.

The arrest of Öcalan in 1999 interrupted this mythology, however. In his defense, he not only renounced claims for anti-colonial struggle, national independence and territorial sovereignty but also condemned these as past forms of "primitive nationalism" that harmed the Kurds most throughout the 20th century. Sheikh Said's name was among those "primitive nationalists". This radical change in political discourse was accompanied by a reinterpretation of Kurdish history, as previous liberationist historical narratives and mythologies became politically unsustainable. In fact, Öcalan argued for the need for a new history; a "realist reinterpretation" of the history of the Kurds and Turkish-Kurdish relations to ease the peace process (2001). The historiographical operation he initiated

was more critical of past Kurdish mistakes than state policies, countering past narratives that had valorized Kurdish heroisms and state atrocities.

Until 1999 the movement's standard discourse on Kurdish-Turkish relations was as follows: Kurds supported Turks in the fight against imperialists during the War of Independence (1919-1923). However, once independence was achieved, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, a fervent cadre of the Jacobin Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), betrayed the Kurds, and denied their autonomy and cultural rights which he had promised during the struggle. Several Kurdish rebellions were rightfully initiated in response to this betrayal, the first one being the Sheikh Said rebellion. The moral and political assumption of this narrative of betrayal was that Kurds did not have any choice other than rebellion in the face of a disloyal and increasingly despotic regime. This assumption has served to justify claims for independence through armed struggle. PKK had declared itself to be the heir of previous rebellions against the "dirty" and "criminal" Republic who started the fight in the first place.

The narrative that Öcalan put forward in 1999 was almost in total opposition with the above: Kurds and Turks fought together against the imperialists in the War of Independence. Then, Atatürk was sincere in his democratic approach towards Kurds and Kurdish autonomy, especially between 1921 and 1924. But, two things prevented him from achieving a democratic Republic and peaceful co-existence with Kurds. First, the CUP members isolated and manipulated him in order to create a despotic regime, and Atatürk could not see or overcome this. Secondly, Kurds made the mistake of rebelling against the state, leaving no choice to Atatürk other than repression to consolidate the

emergent regime. The "omission" in this narrative is that cultural and political pressures on the Kurds started before the rebellion of 1925. The Constitution that tightened the grips over the Kurds was dated March 1924. This revision mostly ascribed historical responsibility for the anti-democratic character of the Republic to the CUP and "primitive nationalist" Kurdish leaders. Accordingly, Öcalan emphasized the significance of reanimating "the spirit 1921-1924" and the need for "a second Atatürk" to democratize the Republic. According to him, the twenty first century would be one of "democracy and human rights", in which there is no place for violence and rebellion. Öcalan also said that he gained maturity and would not repeat the mistakes of former Kurdish leaders who "chose to rebel" over reason and dialogue.

With this narrative of coming to reason, Sheikh Said rebellion was resituated as a case of "primitive nationalism" which was "probably" supported by the imperial British. Behind this revision is the reasoning that in order to live with Turks under the roof of the same sovereign state, the broken bridges between Kurds and Turks should be repaired and those who destroyed the bridges should be decentered. Criticizing the primitive nationalism and religiosity of the Sheikh as well as pointing at "the British finger" in the rebellion, Öcalan distanced himself from "the three enemies" the Republic feels besieged by simultaneously; namely "Kurdish separatists", "Islamic fundamentalists" and "external enemies", with the expectation of securing state recognition as a legitimate interlocutor towards negotiations for peace.

This reconstruction of Sheikh Said rebellion is grounded in three other key revisions of the independence-oriented Kurdish historical discourse: The first is the first

encounter; when "Kurds" and "Turks" met in Anatolia in the eleventh century in the context of the expansion of the Seljukid rule. The PKK's past historical discourse situated the Malazgirt War in 1071 as the first Turkish colonial act; a narrative that uses the terms "Kurds" and "Turks" in their modern nationalist sense without attention to why Kurdish notables "allied" with the Seljukids ("Turks") against the Byzantines. The second is the "alliance" between Kurdish notables and the Ottomans in the first quarter of the 16th century. The architect of this alliance - a Kurd named İdris-i Bitlis - was condemned by the PKK as a "traitor" for his not pursuing national independence in the 16th century. The third moment is the Kurdish-Turkish "alliance" during the First World War, especially the War of Gallipoli, which was previously represented as the inability of the Kurdish leadership of the time to pursue a genuine nationalist agenda. The present historical discourse refers to the first two moments as "rational alliances" or past examples that can inform Turks and Kurds "to win together" in the present, while the War of Gallipoli is emphasized as a memorable moment when Kurds and Turks "sacrificed" their lives for their common vatan.

These mnemonic operations to re-appropriate previously condemned moments are essential in liquidating the logics of independence in the construction of both Kurdish history and politics. In order to repair the "bridges" between Turks and Kurds, past moments of "colonialism" and "treason" are resituated as "rational alliances" to be reanimated as models to inform the present. Concurrently, the historical moments of violence and rebellion in Kurdish relations with the state, which were appropriated as heroic anti-colonial moments, are now repositioned as unfortunate cases of un-reason that

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harmed both Kurds and Turks. It is within this matrix of coming to historical and political Reason that "Sheikh Said the hero" and "İdris the traitor" gain totally reversed meanings.

BETWEEN MYTH AND HISTORY

In his work on the rebellion, Martin van Bruinessen (1992: 266) complains of the factual validity of Kurdish sources: "The problem with these Kurdish sources, especially the oral ones, is that the rebellion has become a legendary event in Kurdish nationalist history. All of my informants had told their stories numerous times before, undoubtedly ever polishing and embellishing them, and bringing them more into line with what they thought *should* have happened". In order for factual verification, he says, he had to carefully check Kurdish accounts with whatever "independent information" he could find. For this purpose, he used Turkish newspapers (especially the daily Cumhuriyet) and intelligence reports of the British Foreign Office on Turkey and Iraq. Bruinessen's use of Cumhuriyet, then the official daily of the regime, as an independent source is a scandal in itself, yet the problem in his anthropological method is graver. Approaching the event through an empiricist-rationalist perspective, he easily sacrifices "the legendary" for the sake of authentic historical truth. Besides, he says, there is evidence that Kurdish rebels strongly condemned "the sinful anti-religious reforms in Turkey," giving the "impression that the revolt had the character of a messianic movement in the name of old-time religion," but after the repression of the rebellion, "nothing of the messianic appearance of the movement remained" (288-299).

Bruinessen dismisses the legendary and messianic stories to give a rationalized description of the event as a nationalist rebellion. He is right in saying that most Kurdish

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stories on the rebellion are legendary. But his argument that nothing of the messianic nature of the rebellion has remained is debatable. I gathered many legends and messianic stories during my research. Below I will discuss some of these as crucial forms of cultural and political knowledges that have been excluded from rationalist histories. I will analyze not only the content of these stories but also their form, and especially the ways they are "polished" and "embellished". In this my aim is not to reconstruct the rebellion through popular stories as more authentic sources to unveil so far unmentioned truths, but to understand the living presence of the rebellion and the Sheikh within popular cultural matrices of signification. After all, "the significance of particular events and persons cannot be disembodied from the cultural forms through which they are interpreted in different historical traditions, whether oral or written" (Wright and Hill 1986: 32).

AN UNFINISHED STORY

Most popular stories start with a personal connection with the time of rebellion. Either a grandfather or a grandmother is the conveyor of stories. For the previous generation, it was the fathers, mothers, or uncles. In these stories "then my mother was a young bride", "my grandfather was a teenager" or "my grandmother was pregnant of my mother" are typical introductory speech-acts that anchor the rebellion into familial genealogies and experiences, taking both the storyteller and the listener back to the lived social time of the rebellion. These stories do not follow any chronological sequence, or involve any sense of chronological time. There are no dates, no numbers. They are inhabited, performed, transformed and transmitted through life experiences. Besides, interestingly, there is no mention of anything that had happened before the rebellion in

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these stories, except for *the Famine* and *Fermana Fila* (Kurdish idiom used to refer to the Armenian genocide).[43] Also, there is no sense of a larger historical context and no detailed arguments on the reasons underlying the rebellion. The most repeated themes are those that could not find a room in history books; the miracles of the Sheikh, debates on the whereabouts of his grave and what happened to those who oppressed or betrayed him.

I will start with a legendary story of the rebellion by a Kurdish woman that is written by her son who couched it in nationalist terms:

> I was young. One day, my mother held my hand and took me to Daĝkapı. Then, Daĝkapı was Diyarbakır's center. It was [the name of] one of the four gates of the walls that surround the whole city [old city]. Daĝkapı was a large square where five different roads came to intersect. Atatürk's statue was erected on one side of the square. Atatürk's face was directed towards the place where Sheikh Said and his friends were hanged [buried], as if it was positioned to watch them for eternity. In between Yenişehir Cinema and the Army House there was an empty land lot which was not used by anybody. It was deserted, an area that nobody entered. We were standing across that empty area. "Look", my mother said, and started telling.
> 'Son, Sheikh Said Effendi, Sheikh Şerif Effendi, and other Kurdish elders were hanged here. They were murdered…Look at there (pointing to the empty area). They buried the corpses of our grandfathers there. Don't forget son, they are our ancestors, they died for us…They could not have hanged Sheikh Said Effendi. The rope to hang him broke three times. Effendi wanted to take some soil from the ground and throw it into the wind, but he did not. If he had thrown that soil into the wind, the whole Diyarbakır would have turned into ashes, all the living would have died that moment. But Sheikh Said Effendi put the soil in his hand back on the ground, because if he had thrown it into the wind, besides the oppressors his people would have died, too. Only after he had put the soil back on the ground, they could hang him. Don't forget son, they were your ancestors. They murdered them mercilessly. Pray for them. The day would come and things

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[43] In these narratives that connect the rebellion with the Armenian genocide in 1915, Kurds usually get their share from divine justice due to their roles in the genocide. That is, the suffering of the Kurds in 1925 is indexed with the suffering of the Armenians a decade earlier. Yet, the Sheikh if often saved from this divine retribution. Many Kurds, including the Sheikh's grandchildren, argue that the Sheikh was against the Armenian genocide. Besides, the Sheikh's uncle Sheikh Hesen, the mufti (highest religious authority) of Palu, issued a fatwa (religious decree) against the Armenian genocide, for which he had to live in hiding between 1915 and 1922.

would change. Allah is just, and he shall never allow the oppressors to stay with the injustices they have done to the oppressed.'

My mom finished her words, and was praying silently while her face was looking towards the area. While praying, tears were coming down from her cheeks. In a puzzled childish way, I was trying to understand. The only thing I understood was that the people who she told to be my ancestors had experienced oppression and been killed…Looking at that area with eyes full of fear, I was imagining that the dead buried there were watching us. I was scared. I understood nothing, but as my mom was crying, I cried, too. Later, she told me their stories; their rebellion, heroism and their bitter end. She was telling of their stories as if she had lived through them, taking us to the rebellion, making us a part of it.

We were proud of those who had resisted heroically; angry at those who had surrendered; and we hated those who had betrayed…

My mother was two years old at the time of rebellion. Her parents told her of the story of Kurdish heroes. She told us. I will tell my children.

This story does not end until the statues and mausoleums of Sheikh Said Effendi and other Kurdish heroes are constructed in Daĝkapı.[44]

To start with the closure of the story, the Sheikh would not have thought of a statue being erected for him. Most probably, as a pious man he would have found that as sinful, for most Muslims view statues as idolatry. Mausoleums, too, would not found a place in his imagination; as they are too secular forms to store memory. For the Sheikh, a tomb or marked grave would have sufficed. But many stories by learned nationalist Kurds end with such a closure that expresses the desire for "the day" when the Sheikh will reappear in some form in the very place he was hanged and buried. Only on the day he would put his mark on Daĝkapı square, his story would end. In such stories national and messianic imaginations often feed into each other. "The day would come" is a repeated emphasis, an expected messianic moment onto which the desire to live in a liberated environment is projected. But the Sheikh's expected return on that day would

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[44] Dagdelen, Murat.2006. The Grave of Sheikh Said and Tears of My Mother.
http://www.rizgari.com/modules.php?name=Rizgari_Niviskar&cmd=read&id=825

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not be in the religiously promised form of the Mahdi, but in some secular nationalist form; a statue, a mausoleum, or just as a name, as described in the next story.

Ape Ziya, a seventy-year-old Kurdish man, was a store of stories. We mostly had our conversations in his son's shop in the Centroom. He was from a well-known Kurdish nationalist family from Lice. An "enlightened" nationalist, he neither believed in religion nor mythical stories on the Sheikh. For him, the Sheikh was pious but his fight was for the Kurdish nation.

> The name of the Sheikh's right-hand man was Fehmi, a lawyer from Lice. The Sheikh liked and trusted him. Those who say the rebellion was just a religious event don't know that Fehmi was an atheist. If it was all for religion, then how come Fehmi was his chief assistant? After the repression, Fehmi went in hiding. In the 1950s he came back to Diyarbakır. He always told us: 'The Sheikh is a most valuable person for the Kurds. He lived and died for us. Whenever you pass through this area, you should button your jackets and show your respect. One day this Daĝkapı will be named as the Sheikh Said Square. When this happens, come and visit me in my grave to tell me that you did it. This is my last wish from you'.

Figure 1: Daĝkapı Square.

Figure 2: Dağkapı Square; (from left to right) the Army House, the German Hospital, the Centroom and the Dağkapı Bastion.

Dağkapı is one of the gates of the historic walls that surround the old city of Diyarbakır. There is a wide square right outside Dağkapı (Figure 1). On the right upper corner of the square is located the Army House (Orduevi - on the left in Figure 2), a white ten-storey building with an at least ten-meter mural of Atatürk that faces towards the area where the Sheikh is buried. The locals believe that the state put the mural as a sign that it would put an eye on the Sheikh's grave for eternity, a story in which the mural of Atatürk symbolically gains Panopticon qualities. Atatürk's saying on the mural summarizes the policy of national assimilation imposed on the Kurds and other non-Turkish peoples: "People from Diyarbekir, Van, Erzurum, Trabzon, Istanbul, Thrace and Macedonia are all sons of the same race [Turkish], the veins of the same gem".

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Figure 3: Daĝkapı Bastion; the picture of Atatürk and the Turkish flag.

About one hundred meters down from the Army House is the Daĝkapı bastion, with a picture of Atatürk and an always waving Turkish flag on top of it (Figure 3). Until 2001, I was told, there was a big statue of Atatürk in between the Army House and the bastion, but that was relocated. Two other Turkish flags are put in the middle of the square. In most stories the mural of Atatürk, the flags, the statue and the picture all appear as a part of a deliberately devised policy to inscribe state power over the most central square of the city and the Sheikh's unknown grave. The two buildings in between the Army house and the bastion were recently constructed (Figure 2). The mirror-windowed building is the German Hospital and the half-circle shaped one is the Centroom, a shopping center. It is believed that the Sheikh lies buried in the small area behind the German hospital or somewhere between the hospital and the Army House.

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Fehmi's last wish to name Daĝkapı after the Sheikh is to re-appropriate a colonized space, a desire projected onto a future messianic moment. During my research several people expressed this wish mostly as a response to the aforementioned symbols that inscribe state domination in Daĝkapı. The recuperation of Daĝkapı by re-inscribing it with some trace of the Sheikh, be it a name, a grave or a statue, is usually equated with the liberation of both Diyarbakır and Kurdistan. This is so because, as is often stated, "If Diyarbakır is the heart of Kurdistan, Daĝkapı is the heart of Diyarbakır." Hence, the argument implies, the unknown grave of the Sheikh is the heart of Kurdistan.

The state was most probably correct in having guessed that it would have turned into a pilgrimage site, had it allowed the Sheikh to have a known grave. Here is a story by a literature teacher about how he had come to know the sacred memory of the Sheikh for the first time and the formation of a pilgrimage site around burial site of one of the Sheikh's fighters who could manage to have a known grave:

> I was eleven or twelve. One day we were playing. A fight broke up, I don't remember why. One of my friends was hitting a boy. An old woman who saw it shouted at us, "What are you doing, he is the Sheikh's grandson". My friend stopped immediately. I did not really know who or what the Sheikh was. It should have been kind of an untouchable thing, because my friend stopped immediately. I mean the Sheikh was untouchable and so his grandson. It was kind of a sacred shield. That evening I asked my father who the Sheikh was. He told me that he was Sheikh Said, a Sheikh of the Kurds hanged by the state. He did not know much about him and put it in very simple words. He was our unjustly hanged Sheikh. A sacred man killed by an oppressive state (zulumkar devlet). Later I read in school books that he was a traitor and all that. But my first acquaintance with him was thorough this life experience, not through a book…My father did not know much about Sheikh Said, but he told me about Sheikh Hesen, who was a commander in Sheikh Said's Army. His village was close to ours in Hazro. My grandfathers knew him. My father told me how Sheikh Hesen was killed: One night they were encircled by hundreds of soldiers. They were only three people, but they fought till dawn. With the first lights of the day, they died. Their graves are close to our village. Some say they were three brothers. Others say they were

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Sheikh Hesen and his two fighters. I don't know that. But until he was killed, people called him only Sheikh Hesen. When he died, people started calling him Sheikh Hesenê Zeraq. "Zeraq" in Kurdish means "the first light of the day". The belief is that Sheikh Hesen did not die, but he joined the skies with zeraq. That is how people believe. If you go to their graves today, you will see many people. Some touch their faces, others their knees or hands to the grave. It is like pilgrimage.

Although it is forbidden to approach the Sheikh's burial site, people keep praying and reading verses from Koran forty-fifty meter distance away from the site, especially on Thursdays and after the Friday prayers. These prayers are not collective, however. At most three to five people come to the site. With often anxious eyes watching their surroundings, they spend only a few minutes because of the fear of being noticed by the police or soldiers. These visits may have diverse reasons. Some just wonder about the place they heard many times. But mostly people come to the Sheikh to ask for his help for the fulfillment of various wishes; such as a nice match for marriage, cure for the sick, or safety of a planned trip - practices people do in holy sites in most parts of Kurdistan.

One day when we were having a conversation with Ape Ziya, an old woman with traditional Kurdish attire approached the wall across Ape Ziya's shop, holding the hand of a young boy in his teens. She sat next to the wall, the boy next to her. She took out a book and started reading it silently. I waited until she was done. "They always come here and pray", said uncle Ziya mockingly as a secular nationalist who respected the Sheikh but was critical of the "stupid stories" people have on him. "These are ignorant people", he added in a self-confident voice, implying that there was no need to talk to them.

It took me some time to convince the old woman to talk about the Sheikh. As I approached her, she got anxious and rushed to leave. Probably, seeing my shaved head

she thought I was a soldier in civilian clothes. After a long conversation in Kurdish, I could assure her that I was not a soldier. The woman was from the Pêçar village of Lice, one of the main sites of the "cleansing" campaign after the repression of the rebellion. Her son was in the hospital for kidney problems for more than a month. She was reading verses from Koran and praying for her son in the Sheikh's grave:

> Sheikh Said Effendi was an ewliya (saint); he was the Sheikh of Kurds. In the *mesla Şêxan* (the event of the Sheikhs), my mother was a young bride. They made a big *qetl* (massacre). They killed my paternal uncle who was the Sheikh's soldier. Then they destroyed our village, killed people and put them in the river….Kemal wanted to destroy our religion. Sheikh Said Effendi did not accept that. They hanged him and then buried him somewhere there. But they could not easily hang him. Allah knows that the rope did not hang him. It broke. They could hang him only the third time. Then they put all of them there and built a cinema on their grave.

Ape Ziya told me that the cinema was established later. First a wine factory was established somewhere close to the grave. Alcohol and cinema are associated with sin and entertainment, which should be kept from the home of the dead. The story is that the Sheikh once insulted Atatürk, calling him a "drunk". Having heard of this, Atatürk got very angry and decided to give such a punishment that "even his bones would get drunk". He took revenge not only by denying the Sheikh a marked grave but also constructing a wine factory (or rakı, an alcoholic Turkish drink) on top of his burial site to disgrace him. It is true that an alcoholic beverage factory was constructed around the area, but probably not on top of the grave. Later a cinema was built in the place of the current German hospital. There are no remains of either the factory or the cinema. No matter where the factory and the cinema were built, people carry them "on top" of the grave; depicting an

image of the state so "immoral" and "vengeful" that even did not respect the Sheikh's dead body, extending the reach of its war with him to the other world.

Legendary stories are told not only by those who Ape Ziya would call "ignorant people", however. Fırat, a thirty-year-old educated Kurdish man as secular as Ape Ziya, told me a similar story about the factory and the cinema. He also told me the miracle of the Sheikh about the broken rope. According to Fırat, the rope was broken three times. At one point in our conversation, I interrupted: "Do you really believe in the breaking of the rope?" Normally I would not have asked this question in an ethnographic context so as not to disrupt the unfolding of the story. But I wondered how he would react when the factual validity of his story was questioned. Before my question, Fırat was talking in a very serious tone and posture. His bodily language and facial expressions were as if he was talking about an uncontested historical fact. His reply to my question, however, was a smile that turned into a shy look and then laughter. A bit disoriented, he continued:

> Well, that is what people say. They also say a mechanical digger was broken, while digging somewhere in Daĝkapı. I myself did not see it. But people say the digger was broken because it was digging some place close to the Sheikh's grave. The operator of the digger quitted the job. He did not want to work. Some say he got injured in the accident, others say he died. But people believe that if you do construction around this site, that would insult the Sheikh and something bad will happen to you.

In a few seconds, Fırat managed to regain his previous tone, but this time reframing the story by making frequent references to what others say. He was not only telling me a story; he was very much excited as if he was a part of it. I myself felt to be a part of it at times, as both the stories and his story-telling abilities were powerful. Fırat was not a practicing Muslim. He did not pray or fast, and was highly suspicious of

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religion and mythical thought as one of the "enlightened" Kurdish youth. But why was he telling me these stories that he himself did not "believe" but deeply felt to be a part? What was the compelling power of these stories about? I will return to this point in my conclusion. Now I will continue with the stories of the broken digger, the broken rope and the Sheikh's revenge from his oppressors.

The story of the broken digger is one that sanctifies the memory and missing grave of the Sheikh by promoting the belief that whoever does construction around the graves and disturbs the Sheikh would be cursed. This story is based on the breaking of the cogwheel of a mechanical digger in Daĝkapı square in the early 1990s. Nobody is sure about the exact date. According to one story, the operator died. But there are many versions. Some say not only the operator but also the owner of the digger died. Others add the owner's brother or son to the list. In still other narratives, those who died are not brothers but cousins. In some narratives, there is no death, only the wounded. I was also told that two workers had died during the construction of the German hospital. One claim is that the brother of the owner died, too. When the debates over the grave peaked during the construction, the owner of the hospital, who is a well-known businessman coming from another influential sheikhly family, felt the need to explain that the grave was away from the hospital, somewhere between the Army House and the hospital, because they did not see any bones during the construction. Family members of the Sheikh are very angry at the owner of the hospital and the municipality, who authorized the construction. The current Kurdish mayor argues that it was the previous mayor who gave the permission, a binding decision that he could not repeal legally. Stories and arguments do

not end. But whatever the stories and claims are, all of these arguments help to reproduce and increase the sacred authority of the Sheikh and his grave.

The miracles of the Sheikh date back to the day of his death. There were rumors in Diyarbakır the day before the executions that an earthquake would destroy the whole city when they would hang the Sheikh. The earthquake did not happen, but another miracle did. As it came through many stories, people believe that the rope the executioner used to hang the Sheikh was broken. Some say three times, others say once. Considering the rope as a key symbol of state power over life and death, one can interpret this as a story that not only grants the Sheikh divine powers (broken rope as divine intervention) but also denies the state the ability to kill. The Sheikh's execution was possible only when he ordered the rope to hang him, we are told. Through this the Sheikh becomes the master of his own death, while also transforming from a victim of state oppression into an undefeatable sacred authority. In the first story I presented, we are told, when the Sheikh was in front of the gallows, he could have destroyed the whole city with some soil in his hand. But he did not in order not to harm his own people who also lived in the city. In this story the Sheikh gains clearly godly qualities. He has the power to destroy the whole city with a single move of his hand and yet he has limitless mercy. He had to make a choice; either destroy the whole city or save his people at the expense of his own life. Hence, the Sheikh not only gains the power over his death but turns it into a self-sacrificial act for his people. The state's inability to kill is also highlighted in the story of Sheikh Hesenê Zeraq: He fought till down and then joined the skies, which is a typical messianic story that carries the possibility that he might return one day. Denying the state

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the power over death is also underlined in the case of Seyyid Rıza. In his case, however, it is not a miracle but a "fact" documented by the person in charge of his execution. As described earlier, the Seyyid pushed away the executioner, put the rope over his neck and hanged himself. With this, he dramatized his death into a refusal of state authority. This refusal of Seyyid also crystallizes in his words to the official accompanying him to the gallows: "Tell those in Ankara that I could not cope with their lies and intrigues, and this pains me. But I won't kneel down before them, and that is to pain them." Although the act and words of Seyyid were documented "facts" their reiterated and dramatized representation and circulation among the Kurds provide them with powerful heroic and legendary qualities.

After the execution of Sheikh Said, his followers still believed that he was alive; which kept inspiring them to continue the resistance in the form of small bands. When it became clear that the Sheikh really died, stories about his revenge from his oppressors and traitors flourished. These stories are typically organized around the theme of divine retribution. Here, for example, is what happened to his executioner.

> The executioner who hanged the Sheikh died in shame and poverty. Nobody talked to him. He lost his mind and suffered great pains until he died crawling in the streets of Diyarbakır. Allah gave what that ignoble man deserved.

Although many people told me this story, nobody knew who the executioner was, when exactly he died. Captain Kasım, who betrayed the Sheikh and arrested him on the Abdurrahman Paşa Bridge, also had a bitter end. When, where, how? Again, there are no clear answers. A person from the Sheikh's family said:

> He went to some town in the Aegean region [Western Anatolia]. He lived there for a long time. Maybe twenty years. I remember my father came home one day.

Then we were in Elaziz. I have never seen him like that. He just could not talk. He told my mother that he saw Kaso [Captain Kasım]. Kaso usually stayed at home and did not come in public. With what face could he do that? Nobody talked to him and his family until he died in pain and isolation.

The story about the prosecutor of the Sheikh is more interesting:

He earned lots of money by serving the state. But he could not have the opportunity to enjoy it. Allah has justice. He was sentenced to tens of years in prison. He was put in jail. There he was bit by a scorpion. He lost his mind and had a disgraceful death when eating his own shit in his cell.

The Kurdish landlords or communal leaders who fought against the Sheikh also received their share from divine justice. The state killed or imprisoned even those Kurdish collaborators who actively fought against the Sheikh on the accusation that "those who betray their own kind will never be loyal to us". One example is Cemilê Çeto, which was also written by Hasan Hişyar in his memoir. In popular stories, Cemilê Çeto and others who fought against the Sheikh usually die, but no details are provided. Hasan Hişyar Serdî (1994: 285) provides a detailed story under the subtitle "İhanetçi ve Rezil Ölüm" (Treacherous and Disgraceful Death):

That goddamn Cemilê Çeto, the agha of Pencinar aşiret (tribe), became brothers with Mustafa Kemal in 1919. When the Sheikh Said rebellion started for the Kurdish cause in 1925, Cemilê Çeto, Eminê Perixanê, Resulê Mehemmed and Kamil Bey from Evani fought against Kurdish warriors with their aşirets. But when the Third Army Corps entered and battlefield and Sheikh Said was captured, those gangs turned into greyhound dogs with no hunt. The enemy no longer needed them. Cemilê Çeto himself was tried in his brother Mustafa Kemal's court in Diyarbakır. He was sentenced to death. This was a good service of Mustafa Kemal to us. When I was in Niĝde prison, four sons of Cemilê Çeto were with me. His exiled children and wives were having a life and death struggle in the streets of Niĝde, trying to find a job…Eminê Perixanê and Resulê Mehemmed fled to Syria and applied to the French for shelter and asylum. But, although he served [the state] by providing the Ninth Army Corps with food for a long time and joining the war [against the Sheikh] for more than his 15000 gangs, their friend Kamil Bey of Evêni could not save his family from being exiled to Istanbul. In the end he died crawling on the streets of Istanbul.

Although in this depiction the story is more about the intrigues of the Turkish state which first used and then destroyed "Kurdish traitors", in popular stories the bitter ends of all "traitors" are told as divine justice: "Allah never allows the oppressors and traitors to stay with what they have done".

CONCLUSION

From the discourse of history-as-reason, most of these are "just stories". Yet, the significance of these stories does not lie in their factual validity. Besides, factuality does not say much about the symbolic and political presence of the event in current struggles. I understand these stories as attempts at turning what has been written in history as a failed rebellion into a sacred politico-symbolic cosmology resituated against an oppressive state intruding in Kurdistan. In this cosmology, the Sheikh becomes a sacred figure of embodied sovereignty situated at the center of an unfinished struggle. What these stories reveal are not "facts" but aspirations and desires for a political and moral order that would restore justice and allow the practice of a sovereign sense of self and community in a postponed future. And as long as the institutions and structures that keep the Kurds under oppression remain intact, such mythical stories are likely to circulate not to "understand" the past but to make it relevant to the present and a take a position within it.

I have argued that the Kurdish movement gained a hegemonic character when in the 1990s it rearticulated popular knowledges about past rebellions into a national-liberationist political discourse, which turned the movement and its leader into messianic figures to set the historical scales of justice right again. The recent revisions over Kurdish history and politics in exchange for state recognition have increased the gap between the

movement's historical discourse and popular narratives on the rebellion. This has not gone uncontested, however. Kurdish organizations such as Kurdistan Socialist Party (PSK), the Rights and Freedoms Party (HAKPAR), the journal of Serbesti, Europe-based Kurdish websites as well as those who disagreed with Öcalan and separated from the movement have harshly criticized him, mostly in personalizing terms. The main criticism is that Öcalan "sold out the Kurdish cause". These groups even argue that he has been serving Turkish state from the very beginning. Accordingly, they despise the Kurds who follow Öcalan as "ignorant crowds" incapable of recognizing "how Öcalan is trying to turn Kurds into Kemalists".

The members and sympathizers of the movement usually prefer not to talk about Öcalan's revisions, a form of political speech in which silence becomes a mode of non-compliance. A Kurdish musician, for example, expressed his non-compliance through Öcalan himself: "He always said that we had to rely on his first statements. Forget what comes next. Sheikh Said is a Kurdish hero, and he will remain so, as Öcalan himself once said." He added: "He is just doing politics; he does not really mean what he says". An active woman cadre of the PKK was more critical: "It is not easy to re-format the memories of people as the way you re-format a computer. Memories always find ways to survive until justice is restored, and whatever justice means for them." But the most common structure of thought and feeling about Öcalan's revisions finds its expression in the words of a neighborhood activist in Baĝlar: "Leader Öcalan and Sheikh Said are the same for us; they both fought and suffered for us. *The rest is unimportant*."

This sympathy and support for Öcalan, I argue, is neither because of incapacity of critical reason to "understand what he says", as Öcalan's opponents claim, nor because the sympathizers necessarily agree with the specific content of his revisions. In fact, they see "the rest", but prefer to find it "unimportant" or "merely instrumental" as a form of refusing the content of his ideas that would still allow appropriating his symbolic power. That is, while Öcalan seeks to distance himself from the Sheikh in exchange for dialogue with the state, this is how his followers stubbornly situate him next to the Sheikh for their struggles against the state, appropriating their leader into an oppositional political imaginary that he no longer seems to find useful.

Hence, I argue, the typical refusal to talk about or recognize the recent historical and political revisions in Kurdish politics can be understood as part of an effort to keep intact the master narrative of suffering and struggle that the Kurds have developed and elaborated through past and present experiences. It is within this persistent narrative space that Öcalan and the Sheikh can still stand next to each as legendary figures collaborating to promote and lead an oppressed community fighting a just struggle. After all, Öcalan and the Sheikh are more than what they have said or intended to do as rational actors. They are what the Kurds make of them; symbolic figures of a sacred story that still keep the Kurds united in a fierce struggle for recognition and power. And, I argue, it is this story that most Kurds like Fırat -whose mythical stories about the Sheikh I presented above and who self-defines as a committed follower of Öcalan- passionately want to be a part of.

This chapter detailed some of the ways in which the rebellion of 1925, its leader and its unknown grave have entered in historical and popular representations of the past within a violent process of socio-political and cultural transformation. I have shown that the past is "used and abused" as part of power politics, effectively instrumentalized as an object to shape present political arrangements and struggles. However, no matter how powerful these historical representations are, their hegemony over popular memories and stories is never complete. Besides, the historical constructions and reconstructions of the past does not mean that the past is simply a passive object that present actors acts upon and manipulate the way they wish, because the past as a "historical process", which is also constituted by earlier narratives about that process, constrains the form and content of historical representations in the present (Trouillot 1995). While the movement and its leadership have been reprocessing the previous knowledges on the Sheikh Said rebellion to reconcile the past with present political considerations, the resilience of popular stories shows that the past may work autonomously and in venues of representation other than history to constrain and shape the present political transformations and its negotiations. These interactions and tensions between the past and the present, between the historical and the mythical, are already a crucial site for struggle between the Kurds and the Turkish state and within the Kurdish community. And it is these multiple struggles which would define and re-define the symbolic and political significance of the Sheikh in the inseparable topographies of power and history, and yet always leaving some space for remembering otherwise.

Politics, in this case, is not the forward dialectical movement of Reason. Politics can only be traced as a spiral transgression, as that difference that disorients the very idea of the limit. More specifically, politics is the difference put into play by the violation of a taboo.

<div align="right">Achille Mbembe (2003:16)</div>

Chapter Five: Between Reason and Justice: The Politics of Politics and Struggle

This chapter discusses the political and popular constructions of a violent protest which followed a funeral ceremony in Diyarbakır in March 2006. At the broadest level, the protest entered in political and popular discourse via two rival narratives; those of Reason and Justice. Local businessmen, state and government authorities, the media, human rights activists and NGOs and some legal Kurdish politicians typically approached the protest from the perspective of legal political reason. Despite their often contradictory positions vis-à-vis the Kurdish issue, all these actors concurred that the protest was unacceptable, in one way or another. This, I argue, did not simply exclude the protestors as the unreason of politics by defining its normative boundaries but also rendered them more vulnerable to police brutalities and the force of law by doing so. The protestors, in response, highlighted a notion of justice, promoting a sense of self and community that transgressed the limits of reason-based political agency and representational politics. This chapter explores how normative limits of politics and subjectivity are created and/or transgressed through negotiations over death and violence in this tense zone between politics-as-reason and popular justice.

This protest was similar to other Kurdish protests that I have so far discussed, but with a striking difference. It also revealed increasing tensions between the protestors and

Kurdish legal politics centered in the DTP, particularly the municipalities. More precisely, this time the protestors also questioned the position of legal Kurdish politicians towards the funerals and the protests. Some of the protestors I interviewed distinguished between Kurdish "politics" and "struggle", appropriating the power of the dead into the latter in criticizing the former. The last section of the chapter reflects on this emergent intra-Kurdish tension within the context of larger classed hierarchies built into the bureaucratization of Kurdish politics as it has been restructuring itself since 1999.

THE PROTEST

That nobody was killed during the Newroz celebrations in 2006 was a good sign regarding the Kurdish issue, as the political atmosphere in Newroz usually shapes the conduct of Kurdish politics for the rest of the year. Small fights occurred between the police and the participants at checkpoints installed around the area where the celebrations took place, but these were rather insignificant when compared to the degree of state violence that characterized Newroz celebrations in the 1990s. However, this optimism and calm in Newroz quickly left its place to uncertainty, sorrow and rage, when the news about an armed conflict forcefully hit Diyarbakır three days later. On March 24, fourteen PKK guerillas were killed in the rural area between Muş and Bingöl provinces in the north of Diyarbakır, reportedly with chemical weapons. Dead bodies were transferred to Malatya state hospital for autopsy. Two days later, Kurdish media released the names and birth places of the guerillas. Four of them - Bülent Tanışık, Muzaffer Pehlivan, Fatih Çetin and Mahmut Güler- were from Diyarbakır and were to be buried in the city.

Soon, the families went to Malatya to identify their dead. The families of some of the deceased testified for the use of chemical weapons. The brother of Hüseyin Kızıl, one of the dead guerillas, spoke to the pro-Kurdish daily *Gündem* that he had seen two bodies at the hospital, but he could not identify his brother because the bodies were completely burnt and there were no bullet wounds. Such testimonies and comments were aired through the Brussels-based Kurdish satellite Roj TV together with a statement by the PKK that chemical weapons were used by the Turkish state and that this was a crime against humanity. The PKK called on the people to claim the cenazas.

On March 27th, Amed Democratic People Initiative distributed communiqués in the neighborhoods of the city, calling on people to pay their "debt of honor" to the dead:

> While Kurdish people are celebrating Newroz with peace calls, those who insist on war are continuing their massacres against our people with chemical weapons. We are deeply saddened with the murder of fourteen heroic children of our people in Şenyayla, Mus. Our pain is deep. To vehemently protest this massacre and claim these brave resistance fighters of Kurdish people is a debt of honor (onur borcu) for the people of Amed and Kurdish people as a whole. We call on our people to act in a way worth of the week of heroism that we are in, and to claim our martyrs by boycotting jobs, closing shutters and joining the funeral ceremony massively on March 28th.

The political climate in the city was tense, particularly in Baĝlar. The impatience to welcome the dead was mixed with rage and revenge. And no prophecy was needed to see that the city would "explode" soon. Six dead bodies arrived at Diyarbakır early in the morning on March 28th. Two of them, who were not from Diyarbakır, were sent to Siirt and Batman provinces for burial. The other four were taken to the Şefik Efendi Mosque located on the Medine Boulevard in Baĝlar. Around two thousand people, including family members of the deceased, local activists and the provincial executives of DTP,

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were present outside of the mosque to welcome the cenazas. The mourners were soon joined by high school kids who boycotted the schools. While the dead were being washed and shrouded inside the mosque for burial, F-16 war planes harassed those waiting outside by parading low over them. The coffins were decorated with green-red-yellow flags. Ululations and slogans marked the march from the mosque to the cemetery. Others joined the procession on the way. The police did not intervene and the dead were buried with political speeches and angry slogans.

On the way back to the city, however, at the Kuruçeşme crossroads in Bağlar the police at the *5 Nisan Police Station* intervened into the crowd with gas bombs and truncheons. The women and elderly ran away. The youth and children reciprocated with stones and Molotov cocktails. About half an hour later, a group of angry youth reached the Ofis district, the business center of the city. There they attacked the shops whose shutters were not closed as well as bank offices, state buildings and Turkish political party offices. This fight turned into a five-day protest that spread to all over the city, but mostly concentrated in Bağlar. Many streets of Bağlar were barricaded by the protestors, who fought the police day and night.

According to the Human Rights Association, about seventy people were wounded on the first day, a few of them with firearms. Among these wounded were also Mehmet Akbulut (18) and Halit Söğüt (78), who later died in the hospital. The protests ended around 9:30 pm with the mediation of the mayors of the city and DTP executives in dialogue with the governor, but only for a bigger and well-organized protest the next day. On March 29, the police was more aggressive and the protestors more agitated. Death toll

increased. Tarık Atakaya (23), Mehmet Işıkçı (19) and Abdullah Duran (12) were killed. Of approximately two hundred and fifty wounded, Emrah Fidan (17), Mustafa Eryılmaz (26), Mahsum Mızrak (17) died a few days later in the hospital.

On March 30, tens thousands of people gathered in front of the state hospital and the Şefik Efendi Mosque, this time for the funeral ceremonies of Tarık, Mehmet and Abdullah. In the protests on the way to the cemetery, Enes Ata (8) was killed by a police bullet. In the clashes with the police after the burial, İsmail Erkek, another eight-year-old kid, was murdered.

According to a report prepared by MAZLUMDER, a human rights organization, all but Halit Söğüt and Mehmet Işıkçı, were killed with the use of firearms. After the funeral ceremony on March 30, the police forced the families to bury their dead outside Diyarbakır, allowing only family members to join the ceremony. Enes and İsmail were taken from the hospital at 5.00am and sent to their villages for burial. Others were also secretly taken from the hospital by their families and buried in their towns and villages outside Diyarbakır.

According to Diyarbakır Legal Bar Association, 576 people were taken under custody and 363 of these were arrested. The Human Rights Association reported that 200 of those in custody were underage kids, and all of them were tortured. Systematic torture was also confirmed by MAZLUMDER and the Legal Bar Association. Ninety one of these children were arrested. Despite this grim situation, only one court case was launched against three policemen for the murder of Mahsum Mızrak, yet with no progress so far. Many protestors were arrested and imprisoned, however. A court case was opened

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against the mayor, as I discussed in Chapter 2. The governor was awarded for his "successful" management of the events. Soon he was promoted to the office of Undersecretary of Prime Minister, the highest bureaucratic rank in Turkey following the general elections in July 2007.

VIOLENCE OR DEVELOPMENT?

Local businessmen complained much of the broken windows of the banks and fancy shops in the Ofis district destroyed in the first few hours of the protests. For example, the chair of Diyarbakır Chamber of Trade and Industry, Kutbettin Arzu, who would enter the parliament in 2007 as a member of the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP), argued that the events were provocations that damaged urban economy with a cost of 50 million New Turkish Liras (about 35 million dollars). However, he added, the real economic harm was more than the monetary cost: "Diyarbakır had created a very nice image. Unfortunately these last events heavily destroyed this image…We have been struggling to enliven the economy of the city for years. But these efforts received a big hit. The business world is psychologically ruined."[45] Mahmut Dündar, a businessman and ex-chair of the AKP's Mardin organization, summarized the business position on the protests:

> The problems should be solved democratically, because the time we live in is not a time of violence. Violence is of help to nobody. In this kind of events, it is the people of the region, its tradesmen and industrialists who are harmed the most. If there is no tranquility in a region, there will be no investment. If there is no investment, unemployment and economic problems will increase and welfare and tranquility will decrease.[46]

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[45] http://www.zaman.com.tr/haber.do?haberno=271886&title=is-dunyasi-gdoguya-yatirim-icin-huzur-sart&haberSayfa=1

[46] "İş Dünyası Panik İçinde," *Söz,* April, 4, 2006.

The businessmen also worried about the high number of "unmanageable" children of the city. Şeyhmuz Akbaş, the chair of the Federation of Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia Industrialists and Businessmen, emphasized that it was the children who broke shop windows:

> The greatest problem is the street children. I mean the jobless children of jobless families. It is very easy to manipulate and use them. They have no jobs; they follow whoever wants them to do so. This problem has a history of twenty years. Those children born twenty years ago stoned the shops. If we provide these children with jobs and food, they would produce instead of throwing stones. If they don't have jobs, tomorrow they will use guns. If there is money, there will be no guns. But if there is no money, guns speak.[47]

By "the problem has a twenty-year history", Akbaş was pointing to the urban poor and displaced Kurdish children who were born in and lived through the violent conditions of the state of emergency rule during the 1990s. Turkish media and government sympathized with this pro-business position. Accordingly, businessmen from the city appeared in TV programs, whose criticisms of the protests were appreciated as "civil society speaking against terror". This sympathy for business became so powerful in the Turkish media that Murat Karayılan, a chief executive of the PKK, called on the Kurdish youth not to destroy property, assuring the businessmen that no Kurd wanted to destroy Diyarbakır's economy. After the protest, the DTP mayors of Bağlar, Yenişehir and Diyarbakır also visited the shop-owners, giving them flowers and sharing their good wishes. However, Taha Akyol, a conservative Turkish columnist, insisted that there was an irreconcilable difference between business mentality and the "militancy" of the PKK

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[47] http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=183291

and DTP. According to him, the PKK was consciously destroying the region's economy to deepen ethnic polarization:

> The militancy the PKK represents is irreconcilable with the rational and free mentality that business life and democracy requires. Have you ever heard from the PKK's parties (DTP) talking about "investment, production, exportation, employment"?! Why is this so? If the protests increase…there will be capital and brain migration from the region to western cities of Turkey! The region will drag into a more 'proletarian', a more 'pathological' situation! Such a deepening of economic disparity will sharpen ethnic polarization. Everybody, especially the Kurds, should be beware of such a disaster; a 'Kurdistan' that is proletarianized by the PKK will be a graver disaster for the Kurds.[48]

Local businessmen carefully refrained from mentioning dead guerillas and the political nature of the Kurdish conflict. Confining itself to the rhetoric of development and investment and the violence of the protestors, this position neatly overlapped with the conventional state discourse, which reduces the ongoing Kurdish conflict to "regional poverty", as described in the words of the governor of Diyarbakır. "Diyarbakır's main problem is unemployment. This kind of events greatly damage investment which would eradicate unemployment." According to the official state discourse, there was no Kurdish problem as such, and, consequently, no need to address Kurdish political demands. Rather, the conflict originated from regional underdevelopment and poverty which the PKK organized into "terrorism". It was within this developmentalist discourse that the reason of state security and the reason of capital came to complement each other as parts of the same strategy of counter-insurgency. Accordingly, it was the PKK, the DTP and the protestors who were kept responsible for the existing "underdevelopment" or "poverty" of the Kurds. The logical conclusion of this argument was not difficult to

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[48] http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2006/03/31/yazar/akyol.html

derive: The Kurds had to renounce their dead and violent protest in exchange of state benefits and economic development.

"TERRORISTS" OR CITIZENS?

According to the official state discourse, violence was not simply against capital and vice versa, but it was also against democracy and citizen rights. The Turkish Prime Minister, for example, stated that violence had nothing to do with civic behavior and demanding rights. On March 31, defending police brutalities, he put it bluntly in his speech to the fathers and mothers of the protestors and the mayor of Diyarbakır, who expressed his pain for the dead guerillas as described in Chapter 2:

> You who let your children roam the streets, or let your children be used by the terrorist organizations, tomorrow your cry will be in vain. Our security forces will intervene into anybody, whether children or women, who works as a pawn for terrorism. I want this to be known. Nobody should make miscalculations… (Criticizing the mayor of Diyarbakır) Neither democracy nor law will tolerate anybody who is in solidarity with terrorism, who says things that lead to violence and demonstration.[49]

At the end of his speech, the prime minister also called on the businessmen to maintain their trust in the government and promised to compensate their economic loss, which he did later. He further clarified his position, when Ahmet Türk, the chair of DTP, requested a meeting from him to talk about the protests, particularly the murder and torture of children. But the prime minister refused with the accusation that DTP was a supporter of terrorism.

> Before the meeting, you should first declare that the PKK is a terrorist organization. Only then we can speak…You protect villains, even present them as 'our martyrs', then you expect special care [a meeting] from the prime minister,

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[49] "Tahrik Devam Ediyor," *Vakit,* April 1, 2006.

the ministers. We don't have such a thing in our book. After all, we approached democratically when we came to power. My vice-prime minister visited the mayor of Diyarbakır in his office. My minister went and visited him in his office. He asked for an appointment. I gave it and talked to him. I talked to him in the office of Diyarbakır's governor. After all these we have done, if you still make such comments on the terrorists and approach and claim them with the resources of the state, I am sorry but we cannot have a positive attitude towards it.[50]

Although it was Ahmet Türk who asked for a meeting, the prime minister mostly targeted the mayor instead. According to him, DTP's politics towards the Kurdish dead exceeded tolerable limits and the mayor and his party did not deserve the good will and care of the government they sought. For the prime minister, being elected through a democratic process was not enough for the DTP and its mayors to qualify for a talk with him. He expected them to confirm a distinction in exchange of being recognized as legitimate actors. That is, DTP should have clearly distinguished itself from "the terrorists", dead or alive, and joined the state in condemning and fighting against them. This state reason was manifest also in the speech of the governor of Diyarbakır at the anniversary of the Turkish Police Organization on April 10, 2006. The mayor did not attend the celebrations without showing an excuse, which was taken by the governor as a part of the mayor's attitude to support terrorism. Talking to the police, the governor further promoted the distinction between terrorism and citizenship, which has gained impetus in Turkey after September 11 and rise of the discourse of "anti-terrorism":

> I want to thank you for your carefully distinguishing among citizens, terrorists and those who support terrorism while doing your duties despite difficult circumstances. I congratulate you...We know very well how to make the distinction between the citizens and the supporters of terror…We make the distinction between who use their rights and who use children very well…I would

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[50] "Önce PKK'nin Terör Örgütü Olduğunu Kabul Et, Sonra Gel Konuşalım," *Yeni Şafak,* April 5, 2006.

like to remind one thing by underlining it. Those who cannot make the distinction between democracy and terrorism do not have a right to demand democracy.[51]

VIOLENCE OR RIGHTS?

Local human rights activists also approached the protests from the perspective of rights, democracy and law, but what they understood from these was radically different from what the prime minister and the governor were promoting. They harshly criticized the use of "excessive" or "disproportionate" police force. Particularly active in this regard were the Human Rights Association (HRA), MAZLUMDER and Diyarbakır Bar Association, who also provided those under custody or in jail with legal assistance. In their separate and joint press releases, they invited the police and the protestors to reason and steadiness, pressuring state officials to monitor the police so as to keep their use of violence against the protestors within the limits of law. They also prepared reports on human rights violations in the protests. Unlike the government and business circles, they agreed that the approach of the officials and the police was "excessive" and the fundamental reason behind the protests was the inability of the state to develop a democratic approach to the Kurdish conflict. MAZLUMDER and HRA also argued that the claim about the use of chemical weapons should be investigated, and, if correct, it was a crime against humanity. Each of these organizations also had similar demands regarding the restoration of the rule of law and punishment of those who were responsible for murders and torture.

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[51] "Vali Ala'dan Baydemir'e Tepki," *Gözlem,* April 11, 2006.

There was another commonality among these organization, which, however, tended to overlap with the state discourse; their categorical rejection of violence as an illegitimate political means and the sharp distinction between violence and democracy as the boundary of tolerable political action. In a joint press release on March 30, for instance, the HRA and MAZLUMDER stated:

> The state's insistence on violence for the solution of problems, its use of firearms in intervening in social protests and killing its own citizens is unacceptable. On the other hand, it is an absolute necessity to renounce violence when using democratic rights…Our citizens who want to express their democratic reactions should definitely keep themselves away from violence. It is impossible to tolerate the violent events that led to destruction of many workplaces in Diyarbakır. The expression of reactions and demands should not involve violence and distance itself from provocations.

In a separate statement, MAZLUMDER went further and directly questioned the legitimacy of the Kurdish movement as a whole:

> Although the legitimacy of a movement can be measured by its historical and political rightfulness or direct participation of people in it, it is the legitimacy of the means it uses which sustains that movement's legitimacy. Otherwise, insisting on the use of illegitimate means (violence and the approach that finds anything legitimate that serves its goal) will first lead to immoderation and then new injustices. A movement that violates the fundamental human rights of others would lose its legitimacy.

This was a criticism against the attacks on shops and the pressures on shop-owners to close their shutters.This rejection of violence was also emphasized in the concluding part of the human rights reports prepared by MAZLUMDER and the Bar:

> MAZLUMDER views violence as an activity to be opposed regardless of who is using it or against whom, and invites everybody to oppose it.
>
> Refusing violence regardless of who uses it and why and expressing that violence should not be a method, we invite all parties to stand against violence.

The phrase "regardless of who uses it" has a dense texture in the specific context of the Kurdish issue. When state authorities or Turkish media question the legitimacy of human rights activists by accusing them of not being critical of "terrorists" and unjustly criticizing the police and the army, the rights activists often feel to publicly announce that they are against "all kinds of violence", that is both state and non-state forms of political violence. Condemning violence as something necessarily anti-political, anti-legal, anti-ethical and anti-human, the NGOs and human rights activists mostly occupied a position in between the protestors and the state. They tried to moderate the situation through an abstract language of reason, civility and law, but also practiced law to help those who were taken under custody or arrested. Regardless of their intentions, however, this totalizing rhetoric of anti-violence based on legal reason not only situated popular and state violence on the same plane and rendered invisible the institutional hierarchies between the stones and the police bullets, but also elevated anti-violence to a sublime ethical principle to differentiate between "good" and "bad" protest; which contributed to the criminalization of the protestors who insisted on stoning the police.

POLITICS AND ANTI-POLITICS

Kurdish politicians, particularly the DTP, also viewed the protests as a by-product of the state's inability to develop a peaceful solution for the Kurdish conflict. Attracting attention to the PKK's announcement of no-conflict before and after Newroz so that people would celebrate peacefully, they argued that the provocation was not the PKK's "pouring children on the streets" but the killing of fourteen guerillas with chemical weapons as the state's response to peaceful celebrations in Newroz. The chair of DTP

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called for an investigation on the use of chemical weapons. Ten days after the protests, the co-chair of DTP Aysel Tuĝluk gave a speech to the daily Vakit, which was exemplary of the DTP's public view:

> In Newroz, people expressed their demands in a democratic climate. They gave the message, "We want to live with Turkish people in the same vatan". These people want to live with other peoples in a democratic environment. But this commonsense was destroyed with the fourteen cenaza. The family members of these and the people of the region expressed their reaction to this pain. We say peace, fraternity democracy. We say no people should die; 'neither Turkish soldiers and police nor the people of the region, the Kurds'. In fact, people in the region started thinking in this way, and we were saying this, but the coming of the cenazas increased tension and psychological reactions were expressed. People of the region want the solution of the problem. While waiting for the solution of problems, they received new cenazas and this poured them into the streets.[52]

Not the mayors, but DTP's provincial executives were active in claiming dead bodies of the guerillas and organizing their funeral ceremonies. Many members and executives of the DTP were also arrested during and after the protests. But, it was again the DTP executives and mayors who worked hard to stop the protests, when they became violent and "went out of control". On the second day, the mayors of the DTP have a joint press release:

> There is a need to carry out an extensive and civilian democratic struggle against the politics of deadlock imposed on us. However, the methods to be used in this struggle to demand democratic rights and freedoms towards stopping the increasing repressive wave should also be democratic. The essence of each and every reaction should contribute the peaceful and democratic resolution of the problem. As a city our pain is big and we face the risk that this pain may increase every passing second. We understand the worries of our people and share their pain. In the current situation, in order to prevent further pain and damage, once again we invite everybody to reason and fortitude and contribute to the normalization of life.

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[52] "Çatışmalardan Beslenenler Var", *Vakit,* April 11, 2006.

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The mayors' invitation to reason and commonsense resonated with the human rights discourse. However, the DTP was less worried about legality than the practical consequences of the protests. The media was increasingly terrorizing the protestors as an irrational mob destroying the city, and Turkish political parties were accusing of the government of not using more aggressive violence to repress the protests, which made the protestors all the more vulnerable to police brutalities. DTP's worry was that if the protests continued, many more people would get killed. Besides, it was difficult for DTP to defend a violent protest, which, they thought, was ruining the "legitimacy" of Kurdish politics as a whole. Accordingly, party executives tried to stop the protests.

But DTP's two press releases that called for abstention did not find sympathy among the protestors. A crowded group of mourners protested the chair of DTP and left the cemetery earlier in the burial ceremony on March 30, which forced the chair to finish his speech abruptly. The mayor of the city was also criticized and protested, when he visited several barricades in Bağlar to convince the protestors to disperse. In the much polarized political atmosphere, the protestors were expecting the DTP politicians to take a clear side and support the protests rather than promoting a politics of abstention. The DTP, however, was not happy with the "chaotic" atmosphere that "uncontrollable violence" created. Squeezed in between totally opposing demands and expectations of the state authorities and angry protestors, the DTP both criticized police violence and imposed on the protestors the very distinction between democracy and violence that the government and media were imposing on the DTP and human rights activists, fulfilling an intermediary position to moderate the situation.

This was the largest violent protest since Vedat Aydın's funeral in 1991, and unlike the past, legal politicians were unable to control the protestors who "just did not listen". A senior DTP executive told me the following:

> I spent my life in funerals and protests. But I have never seen anything like this. Nobody was listening to us. Nobody was listening to anybody. There were kids all over the streets, as if playing a game. I was in the funeral of Vedat Aydın. We were one hundred thousand people. But no such thing happened. Everything was well disciplined and organized. This time there was no discipline. Children were everywhere. It was a mess. This is not how you do politics.

Hasip Kaplan, vice-president of the DTP, also commented on "the children" in his criticism of the government's repressive Kurdish policy.

> Nobody has the right to ignore the solution of the fundamental problem of this country (Kurdish problem) by using as an excuse an irresponsible protest by 10 children which we have also condemned. We will do whatever we have to in order to prevent such events and establish reason, peace and fraternity.[53]

Kaplan worried that the government might use the protest as an excuse to increase repression on Kurdish politics. In a short time political developments proved that Kaplan was right in estimating the coming of a more repressive wave. In fact, three weeks later the government amended the Terror Law, which equated participation in illegal protests with terrorism and paved the way for the prosecution of "stone-throwing" children as terrorists in the special criminal courts for the adults. Although the exact number of children prosecuted or imprisoned since then is not known, according to Children Rights Centre of the Diyarbakır Legal Bar Association, more than 3000 children have been prosecuted in criminal courts since 2006, and 1300 of these cases were in 2009. The

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[53] http://www.haber7.com/haber/20060403/Baydemir-Mufettislik-bir-sey-yok.php?id=147962

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sentences received so far have ranged from about seven up to twenty four years.[54] But these figures also show that Kaplan was wrong in underestimating the number of "irresponsible children" in the streets of Diyarbakır.

The "stone-throwing children" were a great source of anxiety, serving as the most crucial discursive site in and through which the protest was debated. For the DTP and human rights activists, the children were "uncontrollable" or "irresponsible", but they were also "innocent victims" in need of protection from police brutalities. For the state and most national media, they were "duped" and "used by terrorists", which denied the children any agency but still did not exempt them from the brutalities of the police and the court. Some local and national liberal circles also promoted the idea that the children were innocent. But, unlike Kurdish parties, they argued that the children should be protected not only from the police but also the PKK, depicting them as ultimate figures of innocence under cross-fire. They condemned the PKK for "using the children" and "pushing them to the fore and causing their death", while inviting Turkish state officials to develop a more "caring" approach, as these children did not really know the meaning of their actions, as a local lawyer claimed:

> They are throwing stones as a game. Seeing their friends throwing stones, these children think that it is a game and they also throw them. These children are not of the age to know about the meaning of their actions. They do not know they are throwing those stones at the state.[55]

Many Kurds argued against this infantalization, particularly questioning why the Palestinian children were depicted as resistance fighters, while Kurdish children were

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[54]http://www.gomanweb.com/2009_HABERLERI/HABERLER-2009/Kasim/17Kasim/baro.htm
http://bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/119702-yasa-tasarisi-askida-cocuklar-hapiste

[55] http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2006/04/06/gnd127.html

denied agency and criminalized as terrorists. Except for the PKK, who romanticized them as fearless heroes, all other parties situated childhood as an essentially anti- or pre-political category, universalizing adulthood as the norm of political agency. However, the problem was not simply the (mis)representation of children in a way so as to confine them to an idealized state of infancy and exclude them from the political. First, it was not only the children who were on the streets, although, compared with the protests in the early 1990s, they were more numerous. More importantly, as the children were the main site and objects through which the protest was debated and constructed, the constant and often exaggerated emphasis on children excluded the protest as a whole from the sphere of reason-based politics, which helped to legitimize "taking care of" the protestors through more aggressive police operations and interventions.

EMPATHY

Against the normativity of the discourse of legal and political reason, there were also few journalistic efforts to "understand" the protests. Ece Temelkuran's long article titled "Children at the Crossroads of Violence" was exemplary in this regard (Milliyet 17-22 April, 2006). With a humanizing rhetoric, she criticized the murder of children, "the insensibilities of state officials" and "the use of children" by Kurdish movement, implying that the violence of "stone-throwing children" was conditioned by multiple forms of violence that have shaped their lives.

> They came to occupy the center of Turkey's politics as "children throwing stones at the police". The prime minister directly mentioned them, even saying, 'whether women or children, the necessary intervention will be made if they become the pawns of terror". The ministers and soldiers talked about them for days. They

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were accused, brought to the court, appeared on the first pages of newspapers under main headings. But nobody has asked them "why?"[56]

Given the terrorizing news of the national media, this question was a rare effort to re-humanize the children by writing in their "own voice" about why they were doing what they were doing, triggering the circulation of other kinds of knowledges about the protestors in public debate. It was remembered that most of the protestors were poor; they were displaced by the state, their villages burnt down, their fathers, brothers or sisters imprisoned, tortured or killed, and they were grappling with precarious life conditions and multiple forms of political and structural violence in the slums of Diyarbakır, particularly Baĝlar. Without legitimizing the protests, these have no doubt nurtured some "empathy" for the protestors by deciphering the reasons behind their violence, summarizing the debate as the state's reaping what it had sown in the Kurdish region.

One obvious problem with this approach, however, was its view of violence in exclusively destructive and epiphenomenal terms, bypassing how it has been generative in the production of an oppositional imaginary of struggle and identity for the Kurds, even for those who did not join the protest. This generativity revealed itself as follows in an interesting observation that a Kurdish woman politician shared with me:

> All people say they were in the protests, but I know many people who say they were there, but they were not. I am not saying they are lying. But the fact that they imagine themselves as parts of it is very important. They like the feeling of being a part of the resistance…The first day I went to the Şefik Efendi Mosque. There was a group of youth who were waving flags in the middle of the crowd. Their faces were covered. When they started marching, I don't know why, but I just wanted to be with them. I wish there were no cameras there so I could also shout a few slogans (laughing).

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[56] http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2006/04/17/yazar/temelkuran.html

The more serious problem with this "empathy", I argue, was that although it was partly a response to the normativity of the dominant terrorizing discourse, it nevertheless renounced "what the protestors were doing". Accordingly, this empathy was limited to paternalistic calls for protecting the children; nuanced governmental policies of care to rehabilitate them, curing their rage, and preventing them from resorting to violence again –all positioned against the policy of subjecting them to more police violence.

BETWEEN STRUGGLE AND POLITICS

The main concern of the debates I have presented so far was the "violence" of the protestors and its "anti-democratic" and "anti-political" nature. Here I shift the focus towards the ways in which the protestors responded to the accusations and criticisms directed at them. In this, however, I am not concerned with deciphering the reasons behind their rage or including their "unreasonable" voices for a better representation or a politics of empathy or defense, although I think such efforts are useful, even if limited. Rather, relying on a group discussion and some interviews, I will discuss how they questioned the discourse of terrorism and the way it limits political subjectivity, and then trace how and why this time the power of martyrs was deployed as part of a moral critique of Kurdish politics itself.

With the help of two neighborhood activists, about three weeks after the protests I met some of the youth who joined the protests in the Fatih neighborhood of Baĝlar. Göçmenler was one of the three sites of barricade fights from the first to the last day of the protests. We met in a poor house located in a narrow street close to the avenue. Our host, Mehmet, was a garbage-collector who also involved in neighborhood organizing

when he had time. He had invited eight youth, introducing me as "a sensitive Kurdish researcher from an American university". Being introduced in these terms was my request - save the "sensitivity" part. Because, I was worried that if disclosed, my affiliation with the municipality would structure the dynamics of the discussion and either turn the debate into a criticism of municipal politics, which happened in some of my interviews and conversations, or lead my interlocutors to stay away from talking their minds on issues related to the state of Kurdish politics out of a hostly consideration of my presence. At one point in the discussion, however, I found it necessary to tell these youth about my position in the municipality with an apology, which they kindly well-received. Our discussion after this, however, would not be a part of this analysis, as I explain later.

Hüseyin, Kendal and Şiyar were in their mid-teens. Ahmet, Ömer, Salih, Abdullah and Veysel were between twenty and twenty five. They were all income-earning members of their families, except for Kendal, who was a student preparing for university entrance exams with the hope to become a lawyer. Others were primary or secondary school drop-outs. Hüseyin, Şiyar, Abdullah and Veysel were vendors, selling fruits and vegetables on the streets. Ahmet was a construction worker and Ömer and Salih were porters. Our host's twenty three year-old-son Baran joined us half an hour later. He, too, was working as a street vendor. Hüseyin and Veysel were married. Hüseyin had two daughters one of whom was attending primary school. They were all born in two neighboring villages in rural Diyarbakır and lived there until their villages were evacuated in 1993 and 1994. They have been politically active, joining in street protests, working in the youth branch of the DTP or organizing in the neighborhood.

Fortunately, none of them was taken under custody this time, but Hüseyin, Ömer and Veysel had been before, the latter two more than once, due to their participation in past protests.

Despite the fact that I refrained from asking questions that would squeeze the participants in a defensive position, they mostly responded to the discourse of terror, probably because they viewed me with a tape-recorder as an opportunity to speak back and reach outside. Abdullah complained, for example: "Each time I hear the word terrorist in Turkish TVs, I feel as if they talk about me. They say terrorists are different, citizens are different. We have nine martyrs from our village. How can I be a citizen, when they call them terrorists?" In a separate interview one week before this discussion, Ahmet, a youth from Kuruçeşme, expressed a similar frustration, connecting past injustices to the present towards a redefinition of terrorism:

> We fought, because we were angry. That anger was because they do injustice (haksızlık) to people; and when we react against this they call us terrorists. That is why our people go to the mountains. But the state does not even allow us to bury them…They tortured my father and tied him to a jeep and drove for three kilometers. They destroyed our house and our village. I will never forget these. Not us; the state is the real terrorist, because it uses violence to do injustice to people.

This redefinition of terror through injustice was a response to the hegemonic definitions of terrorism, which had an exclusive normative focus on the use stones as a violation of the law and the state's monopoly over violence. The notion of justice here is retributive in nature, "untamed" by the political reason of the legal-democratic field. That is, Ahmet's was not a liberal sense of justice to be attained through the restoration of the law or the exercise of citizen rights. The protestors and the dead were not citizens,

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anyway. As I discussed earlier, the discourse of terror operated to separate the living from the dead and Kurdish politicians from the protestors. Ahmet's redefining the term through retributive justice, however, allows simultaneously to reclaim the dead as "our people", to connect past injustices to the present, and to collapse the very distinction between "terrorists" (bad Kurds-dead or alive) and "citizens" (good Kurds, law obeying) so that the community can reproduce itself in and through death and violent protest. The dead bodies were not only martyrs to be reciprocated, however. They were reminders of an unjust and oppressed past, hence providing Ahmet and many others a unique opportunity to have their revenge and achieve immediate justice. In this sense, the state was reaping what it had sown in the Kurdish region, particularly in the last three decades.

Baran further questioned the talk of terrorism by shifting the debate towards the broken shop windows, promoting a similar notion of justice.

> First fourteen, then ten more people were murdered. Naturally people reacted to this and claimed the martyrs. The police used real bullets and gas bombs. But all TVs talk about stones and the broken windows. It is shame; it is shame. We had so many cenaza in the city. The whole city was exploding. But the shops were busy with making money. How one can be so insensitive? How can one think of money in such a situation? They do this all the time. Whenever there is a boycott, those shops in Ofis are open. This time people said "enough is enough". They were disrespectful to the martyrs and they got what they deserved. I don't care whether they call us terrorists or provocateurs.

Property rights were clearly not a part of Baran's sense of justice. Behind his words was a subtle juxtaposition of two irreconcilable economic orders; those of death and business (capital). For him, the economy of death was a moral domain of political sociality structured by reciprocity and obligations to the martyrs, while business was a field of "insensitive" calculations; of property, profit or rights, which should have been

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suspended on the day of the funeral. Accordingly, he believed, the shop-owners deserved the punishment as a swift and pure justice, a logic in which justice and property rights stand in stark opposition. Although he said he did not care about being called a terrorist, the anger in his words was clearly a response to the terrorizing news on the protestors.

Hüseyin supported Baran's comment, but his was a highly rational economic argument, which was oriented not towards business, but survival.

> The TVs show us like mad people destroying shops. But I think nobody in this room likes to fight. Why? Because when there are fights, all the streets are occupied and we cannot sell anything. This time for one week we fought the police rather than working for our families. Normally I make 20-25 million Turkish Liras a day (14-17 dollars). If I work without any vacation, it is 600-700 million TL a month. Rent and water and electricity are at least 300. The rest is for five people; me, my wife and three daughters. I mean we all want to work. But, when there are funerals, we pour into the streets.

For two hours our discussion was centered on the media, state authorities, police violence and how the people resisted. Veysel did not join the discussion at all, only sometimes nodding his head to show his agreement. When he started talking, however, he both shifted the focus and re-set the terms of the discussion. He was particularly disturbed with the representation of protestors as "destroyers of peace". But his criticisms were directed at Kurdish politicians rather than the state or the media:

> I agree with all of this. But I think what the state or the media say is not that important. I get angry when our politicians talk about us as provocateurs destroying peace. I think Diyarbakır needed these events. This was not only a warning to the state, but also a message to our institutions. People have accumulated many things over the years, and it exploded. Our politicians, our mayors became beggars for peace (parsekê aşiti); they beg peace from the state. They don't come to the funerals. Two months ago when we buried the guerilla

from Kulp, nobody came.[57] Why? But they know how to drive nice cars and sit on nice chairs. Did the martyrs die for these people to drive fancy cars? Why do they not come to the funerals? They should have been with their people, on the streets. Only the mayor came; but to stop us. They say throwing stones harms the Kurdish cause. They say we don't know politics. I am not educated. I am not a lawyer or doctor. I don't know much about politics. In the past, there was struggle (mücadele), now everything is politics (siyaset) and politics became trade (ticaret). I think the main problem is that our politicians separated themselves from the people, the martyrs and the struggle.

Before developing my chapter conclusion relying on Veysel's and other similar criticisms, I will briefly describe the reaction of other group participants Veysel's bold statements, which set new terms for the rest of the discussion. Upon Veysel's finishing his words, others in the room exchanged looks, which I then took as a sign of their discomfort with his sharing criticisms of Kurdish politics with me as an outsider. Our host was also disturbed, but for a different reason, I guessed. Probably he thought as his guest I was offended due to my affiliation with the municipality, one object of Veysel's critique. "Yes, but that is a different matter", said Hüseyin to change the topic. Baran wanted to continue with where Veysel ended, but nobody was willing to talk further, including myself. The silence of the room was discomforting. Thinking retrospectively, due to the discomfort of being viewed as an outsider and to end the embarrassing silence, I felt the need to tell them that I was working with the municipality, also with an apology about why I had not before. Although I did this without the intention to reposition myself as an "insider" in order to re-open the discussion, Hüseyin suggested to continue the discussion, but with new terms and conditions: "I think we should talk. But it should

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[57] On February 26th, Ergin Ekinci, a guerilla from Kulp, was buried with the participation of a crowded group of mourners in the Yeniköy cemetery. The police attacked the group in Dağkapı and took several people under custody.

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remain between us, not for your book. If you turn off the recorder, it would be better." It was eight o'clock. We continued off-the-record until two in the morning.

Internal criticisms of Kurdish politics always revealed themselves with varying degrees of uneasiness throughout my research. In other interviews, especially in those with who took me as an insider, I listened to criticisms similar to those raised by Veysel. But in these interviews, too, I was typically requested to keep the content "just between us"; something "not to write about, but to have in the back of [my] mind as a frame to better understand the situation", as one of my interviewees put it succinctly. The anxiety to protect "the struggle" by keeping criticisms as "community secrets" was very much understandable within the context of violent confrontations with the state. So, without going into their specific content, I will briefly summarize what Veysel's and some other criticisms made me think about intra-Kurdish contentions over the protest and how they relate to the larger transformation of Kurdish movement in the last decade .

CONCLUSION

As I outlined in the introduction, the transformation of Kurdish movement has not been a simple a discursive shift from the politics of national independence towards "democracy and peace", but a complex process structured by increasing legalization, bureaucratization, professionalization and the transformation of the class dynamics of Kurdish movement in favor of educated middle classes as local governments became key Kurdish political institutions. As in Veysel's narrative, one crucial way in which the discontent towards this process is expressed is an emergent distinction between Kurdish "politics" and "struggle", which is accompanied by a moral discourse structured through

a series of opposites. In this moral space, politics is often associated with business, instrumental action, compromise and corruption; while struggle stands for a pure and oppositional political imaginary, moral agency, comradeship, reciprocity and the loyalty to the cause and the dead, which often go with a romanticizing yearning for the revolutionary ethics and politics of the 1990s. Accordingly, politics is the space of nice buildings, inaccessible bureaucracy, educated professionals, nice salaries, legality and "empty talk", while struggle includes prisons, mountains, streets, stones, and usually illegal political action. Underlying this, I suggest, is a more fundamental binary; struggle as the domain of the sacred and politics as the realism of the profane. And, while struggle is often referred to with reminiscences of a vanishing golden past, politics turns into the gigantic monster of the present.

Here I would like make some clarifications so as not to overstate or reify this emergent distinction between struggle and politics. First, this distinction emerged as a critical assessment of the recent transformations in Kurdish politics. In popular narratives politics is almost exclusively used to denote the legal political field organized in and around the DTP, particularly the municipalities it runs. Besides, although Öcalan and the PKK initiated and promoted the politics of peace that set the larger context in which the municipalities gained prominence in Kurdish politics, Öcalan and the PKK are typically associated with struggle, and not with politics. This is so, mostly because both figures still inhabit the sacred domains of Kurdish political culture; prison and mountains, respectively. As such, they are viewed as self-sacrifical figures fighting for their people,

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who have neither "benefited from" the peace process nor were "contaminated" by its "corrupted politics" (yozlaşmış siyaset).

Secondly, although politics and struggle emerge as two irreconcilable modalities at the level of critical popular discourse, in practice this reified distinction is undermined in significant ways. For example, the people who raised such harsh criticisms of Kurdish politics were very much active in the campaigns for the general and local elections in 2007 and 2009 in the neighborhoods of Baĝlar, working day and night for the DTP candidates. That is, no matter how people are critical of it, "politics" is still viewed as part of the larger struggle, a "gain" (kazanım) or "by-product" (sonuç) of it, even if it may not meet popular expectations as a new and self-interested field of rational calculations, a space limited with and structured by dominant legal and political reason.

Besides, it is important to note that the March 2006 protest had two crucial results for the Kurdish struggle, which radically reconfigured Kurdish-Turkish state and intra-Kurdish negotiations over the dead. First, since after this protest no police intervention into the funeral ceremonies has taken place in Diyarbakır. That is, at least those dead bodies that have come to Diyarbakır gained the right to a proper burial and a safe passage to the afterlife. Given the political significance of "dying properly" in the context of the Kurdish conflict, this can be interpreted as a crucial success in defeating the state's power over the organization of the related field of death, national identity and sovereignty. Secondly, after this protest DTP executives, mayors and parliamentarians (after 2007 elections) have taken a more visible and decisive role in funeral ceremonies of the guerillas. As Selma Irmak, then the deputy co-chair of DTP, once put it regarding the

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state pressures on Kurdish politics to take distance from dead or alive "terrorists", the DTP refused to become "the well-behaved child of the Parliament". This outright refusal, which came to shape the political attitude of DTP towards the PKK particularly the 2007 elections, effectively undermined the state's distinction between "good" Kurds and "bad" Kurds as a part of its "war against terror". Relatedly, this attitude of the DTP has not only bridged the gap between Kurdish "struggle" and "politics", at least partially and discursively, but also transgressed a series of thresholds (citizens/terrorists, violence/rights and violence/democracy) that are imposed on the Kurds to shape and regulate their political conduct and subjectivity. The DTP, however, heavily paid for its transgressing these normative thresholds after the local elections of March 2009. In successive police operations since April 14, 2009, about one thousand and four hundred DTP executives and members were arrested and jailed; becoming thus a part of the popular imaginary of "struggle". Among these were also three vice-chairs of the DTP, one being Selma Irmak, seventeen mayors or ex-mayors and many provincial chairs and executives of the party.

Nevertheless, DTP and the municipalities still serve as the main screen onto which popular discontents and anxieties underlying the distinction between politics and struggle are projected. This is so primarily because these are spaces of institutional and economic power - the only spaces within the larger Kurdish struggle that are associated with bureaucratic hierarchies, material gains and benefits. The other simple fact is that the opportunity or ability to access these forms of power and resources is extremely limited for most of the uneducated urban poor in the marginal neighborhoods of the city.

In such a context, the municipalities are singled out as "corrupt" spaces that embody all the "ills" of whatever happened since 1999.

Considering this emergent and classed distinction between politics and struggle, it was not surprising that the DTP executives and mayors could not manage or stop the protests, because the protest also involved a "subtle message" to Kurdish politics itself, a recurrent theme in most daily conversations during and after the protest: "Either they correct themselves, or they will be superseded". One crucial criticism against Kurdish politicians was concerned with their relationship to the dead and the funerals: Veysel's question "Why don't they come to the funerals?" was frequently asked. The answers to this question were often articulated in personalizing terms and did not take into account the kinds of legal and political pressures they were faced with due to their relationship with dead "terrorists", as I discussed earlier.

It was true that at least some Kurdish politicians and mayors hesitated to take a clear and decisive position vis-à-vis the funerals, especially until March 2006, the reasons of which I described in Chapter 2 through the case of the mayor of Diyarbakır. Nevertheless, many mayors and politicians did still join the funerals and fulfilled the expected responsibilities towards the dead, which is also evidenced in the number of investigations and court cases launched against them. For example, in the funeral on February 26th, which Veysel referred to, the executives and provincial chair of the DTP were present at the cemetery, although the mayors were not. During the protests under inquiry, DTP executives were also arrested, including the provincial vice-chair and a key

administrator of the municipality. But, still Veysel and others consistently insisted that "the politicians" did not come to the funerals.

Here, of course, I do not question the factual truth of this claim, because the significance of this claim lies in its effect rather than its factual validity. I suggest that the often classed anxieties and discontents in the face of an increasingly hierarchical Kurdish politics are creatively displaced and sublimated into the moral discourse of death, which separates "politics" from "struggle" and re-appropriates the legacy of martyrs into the latter so as to exclude the former from the very moral domain death in and through which Kurdish national struggle and identity have been produced and sanctified. Most anxieties of the structurally and politically marginalized Kurds concerning the last ten decade of "peace politics" - and the place of the dead within it- may be captured in a question that Veysel asked: "Did the martyrs die for [the politicians] to drive fancy cars?" This question, I suggest, does not simply express in a succinct and condensed form the kinds of classed anxieties towards the institutional and economic power of the emergent Kurdish political elites of "the peace process" but also puts two other burning questions into the agenda of both Kurdish politics and struggle: Which Kurds own and have the power of the dead? And, what will be the place of the dead in "peace"?

Conclusion: Mourning and the Debt to the Dead

This study explored the production and contestation of sovereign limits of national politics and subjectivity in and through struggles over dead bodies in the Kurdish conflict in Turkey. To this end, I traced dead bodies and the kinds of practices, stories, imaginaries and subjectivities produced around them – which are squeezed into limit zones of dominant politico-discursive formations. Viewing limit zones as simultaneously liminal zones, I analyzed several liminalities in and through which the fights over the dead take place and the "insides" and "outsides" of the field of politics are normatively set or effectively transgressed. These liminalities include between life and death (Chapters 1, 2, and 3); human and "non-human" (Chapters 1, 2 and 3), history and myth (Chapter 4), reason and justice, and politics and struggle (Chapter 5). Foregrounding the knowledges of the dead, the "non-human", the mythical, the unreasonable and "struggle" - all disqualified and taken "outside" of the field of politics in one way or another, I showed how the disqualification of these knowledges was constitutive of the normative limits of the fields of politics and political subjectivity.

From such a larger perspective, in the first three chapters I explored the ways in which death and dead bodies are culturally and politically deployed in the figurations of national identity and sovereignty. On the one hand, I detailed the Turkish state's endeavors to eliminate the power of the Kurds it kills by obstructing their politico-symbolic regeneration as martyrs. Here I particularly tried to show how sovereignty struggle is waged fundamentally as a struggle over the symbolization and semantic constructions of death. These systematic state efforts, I suggest, seek to regulate the

collective dead body of the Kurds and set in process the normative content and limits of politics through the tabooing of the dead.[58] On the other hand, I traced the Kurds' reclaiming their dead into the realm of the sacred; processing death into value, meaning and life, and resurrecting their dead as affective political forces – subversive practices that transgress the state's sovereign arrangements of Kurdish politics, struggle and subjectivity. I particularly analyzed funeral ceremonies as unique and condensed performative sites where national identity and sovereignty are forged and contested through fights over death and territory. In the process, I showed, Kurdish dead bodies become contentious territories of meaning, while the territory they claim turns into the gendered national body to be created and protected by masculine forms of national comradeship (Najmabadi 1997).

The separation between life and death is the principal foundation on which state power is established (Baudrillard 1993: 130). "When the French say that 'power holds the bar'", suggests Baudrillard, "it is no metaphor: it is the bar between life and death, the decree that suspends exchange between life and death, the tollgate and border control between the two banks". Informed by this, I deciphered the state's arrest and abjection of the Kurdish dead in the time-space between life and death by separating them from the time of the living and the national space they claim, closing off a social or humane death to the Kurdish dead. In this sense, many Kurds killed by the state do not die; rather, they

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[58] In this analysis, I am inspired by Jean Baudrillard (1993: 144), who argues, "Just as medicine is the management of the corpse, so the State is the management of the dead body of the socious".

are "fabricated as corpses", to borrow a phrase from Heidegger.[59] Under such circumstances, the Kurdish politico-symbolic constructions of death and their efforts to have their dead die "properly" do not only turn the "disposed" bodies back into valued human entities but also deeply confound the Turkish state's claimed monopoly over life, death and territory in the Kurdish political landscape.

Chapters 4 and 5 shifted the focus of discussion more towards internal Kurdish negotiations over the past, the dead and political violence by using the rebellion of 1925 and an urban protest in 2006 as analytical cases. In Chapter 4, I traced how the emergent yet highly fragile politics of peace was accompanied by a particular rendition of history driven by an ideological motivation, in explicit and latent forms, to move beyond and normalize "the rebel past" and its memories toward a new beginning and "a better future" – an approach to the past that is characteristic of peace and reconciliation projects (Aretxaga 1997; Buur 2001; Norval 2001). I discussed in detail the revisions over the Sheikh Said rebellion as mnemonic operations to render the past compatible with the instrumentalities of the political present. This is a process that exemplifies what Raymond Williams terms a "selected tradition" (1973: 9) "in which from a whole possible area of past and present, certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis, certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded… [and] some of these meanings and practices are reinterpreted, diluted or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements" of the dominant political formation. This emergent Kurdish political tradition is tended towards a historicist linear political temporality that

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[59] Quoted in Agamben (2000: 74).

tends to turn its back to the past (war and antagonism) and look ahead (consensus and peace) – valorizing a future-oriented politics of the present. In the process, the struggles, solidarities, loyalties and rebellious memories, subjectivities and imaginaries of the past have somehow become "nonsynchronous" (Richard 2004: 11) – *structurally* dysfunctional and disqualified elements that do not fit into the rationality of the emergent politico-discursive order. This is happening "in the name of the instrumental realism of consensus and of its socio-communicative logic", which "attempts to file down every rough spot on the already too-polished and polite surface of the signs of agreement" (ibid. p. 6). And yet, the resilience of "the past" and the kinds of unruly and "impure" Kurdish memories and practices disrupt these consensus-seeking versions of the past to buttress the peace process. The questions that emerge from these contentions seem to mark the nature and content of Kurdish politics and struggle in the years to come: What was the place of the dead in the past and what it will be in peace? What does it mean for the Kurds "to forget" the past in order for peace to emerge? Would peace allow the Kurdish dead to rest in peace or would it bury them under its debris? In more specific words, would the grave of the Sheikh and other Kurds remain unmarked, or would they also be able to rest in peace at last, both corporeally and politically? These contentious questions have the potential to exacerbate intra-Kurdish conflicts and struggles. And, as I discussed in Chapter 5, it is likely that in such a case the dead would resist being relegated to passive "memories" of a vanishing past and would re-insert their haunting power into Kurdish struggle towards political possibilities that have not been imagined, yet.

The changes in Kurdish politics in the last decade can be understood as a complex process of the destruction and recreation of the field of the political that is also accompanied by a shift in the place of the past and the dead in Kurdish political imaginary – pointing to a deep crisis in political subjectivity in between the past and the present. I have somehow discussed what is being destroyed in the course of peace politics at the level of memories and political practices around the dead, and in what ways. However, I should note that the same political process also created certain political possibilities, even if in forms and contents limited and structured by hegemonic legal, institutional and political reason. For example, the much criticized municipalities are the first and only political institutions in the history of the Republic that serve as spaces where the Kurds are developing a political culture of self-governance with unprecedented institutional and economic power, no matter how problematic their use and distribution of this power and their disciplinary practices over space, identity and Kurdish populations might be. In the case of Diyarbakir, the institutionalization of the image of the city as the capital of the Kurds was a process in which the municipality had a central role in the last decade. Besides, Kurdish local governments produced significant "de-colonizing" effects in terms of reinscribing Kurdishness in the cultural and political space of the city that had been exposed to aggressive assimilation and homogenization policies throughout the Republic's history (Gambetti 2009; Jongerden 2009). More importantly, as a participant of my research put it: "Given that for the Kurds politics and death have historically meant one and the same thing, the process may create a possibility for the Kurds so that they

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would not need to die or be killed to express their political demands for the first time in modern history".

On a different register, the peace process initiated the historically "utopian" and confrontational vision of Kurdish struggle into "realist" politics – by which I specifically mean a consensus-seeking struggle within the hegemonic legal-institutional field towards recognition and peace building. It was within such a realist climate that legal-democratic politics, particular the municipalities, gained unprecedented significance in Kurdish politics. This has been a deeply contested process, however. As I discussed in Chapter 5, in this process Kurdish politics and struggle emerged as two modes of political imaginary that structurally contradict each other. I showed, for example, the uneasiness of Kurdish politicians in the face of popular violence; a political tendency that categorically relegates violence to the sphere of unreason as a confrontational political means that no longer serves "the Kurdish cause" and obstructs the kinds of democratic-peaceful efforts to reach an agreement with the dominant Turkish political establishment. However, I also discussed how popular imaginaries were dissatisfied with such reason-based consensus politics; articulating a moral discourse of death to critique politics as a self-interested and corrupt enterprise, a moral discourse of struggle marked by a yearning for a past that is "no longer" and a desire for immediate justice without rational political calculations.

Although in Chapter 5 I foregrounded the knowledges of "struggle" for a critical assessment of transforming Kurdish politics, I nevertheless refrained from reproducing a romantic yearning for the struggle and the past. In this I endorsed Gayatri Spivak's (1999: 309-310) criticism of the romanticization of the subaltern:

Access to "citizenship" (civil society) by becoming a voter (in the nation) is indeed the symbolic circuit of the mobilizing of subalternity into hegemony…When a line of communication is established between a member of subaltern groups and the circuits of citizenship or institutionality, the subaltern has been inserted into the long road to hegemony. Unless we want to be romantic purists or primitivists about "preserving subalternity"—a contradiction in terms—this is absolutely to be desired.

The Kurdish politics of peace has so far been unsuccessful to establish "a line of communication" with the hegemonic Turkish political order. On this road to hegemony, The Turkish state expects Kurdish politics to transform itself into an entity eligible for recognition, an entity that would not transgress sovereign limits of state toleration. This has been a difficult and tortuous path, for as Kurdish politics tries to restructure itself for state recognition its relationship with the Kurds it represents also gets transformed, and negatively so. In the process, those political, moral and symbolic imaginaries that were central to the oppositional liberationist struggle of the past – particularly the rebellious memories, imaginaries and practices around the dead- have been somehow reconfigured as structural margins of the emergent political present.

Under these circumstances the popular yearnings for the past and the struggle cannot be dismissed as simply romantic or unrealist attempts that stubbornly refuse to recognize the fact that the past is no longer. Besides, a critical assessment of the contents of this yearning is helpful in developing a constructive critical approach to the journey of Kurdish politics on its road to hegemony. It is important to highlight that this yearning emerged as a historically specific mode of relating to the past within a political moment with which many Kurds are dissatisfied. Hence I understand this yearning not simply as a psychological attachment to the past, but as a set of residual constellations of memories,

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unfulfilled dreams, hopes and aspirations for a genuine transformation towards establishing a moral and just socio-political order. That is, behind this yearning are the now-nonsynchronous popular aspirations for a life free of oppression and injustice. Accordingly, I explored "the mythical" (Ch. 4) and "the unreasonable" (Ch. 5) as two "nonsynchronous" sets of political temporalities and imaginaries that are increasingly relegated to the margins of Kurdish politics. My simple contention is that the popular yearning for the "pure" and "sacred" struggle of the past articulated in and through death –a past that might have never existed in the way it is imagined in the present- should be read as a trajectory into the disappointments and anxieties of many Kurds who feel squeezed in between two opposing political temporalities: the golden past and the monstrous present.

The question for both Kurdish politics and struggle that emerges from this state of in-betweenness is whether to bridge these contending political temporalities, and how. Going back and forth between the municipality and Baĝlar allowed me to transgress the thresholds of these political temporalities on a daily basis. I mean the difference between my research sites was not just an issue of spatiality, as these spaces were intrinsically marked with respective political temporalities. In simple even if reifying terms, if the municipality was the disciplinary time-space of politics, life and reason and the present, Baĝlar stands for subversion, struggle, death and unreason and the past. Hence, this dissertation was an analysis of the negotiations between two different modes of Kurdish political time-space: Going back and forth between the municipality and Baĝlar was simultaneously going back and forth between politics and struggle, life and death, reason

and justice, legality and illegality, compromise and confrontation, obedience and transgression, the moderate and the radical, citizens and "terrorists", the past and the present, and the like. These are all deeply contested and shifting thresholds that have emerged in the course of transforming Kurdish politics, which set foundational inclusions and exclusions to produce and regulate "proper" Kurdish political subjectivity while dialectically disqualifying "the improper".

This study was thus an analysis of how such foundational thresholds of politics and subjectivity are set in the first place and how they are transgressed. I particularly foregrounded the spaces of transgression as the actual sites of struggle and political identification; spaces in which the disciplinary thresholds imposed on Kurdish political subjectivity get effectively undermined. These spaces of transgression do not only reverse the hegemonic norms of politics and subjectivity but also, I argue, allow to think of a critical political space in which to tie together the knowledges and practices of the past and the present, of politics and struggle, and of the dead and the living into an open-ended political imaginary geared towards building a just socio-political order; an order in which the dead may also have an opportunity to rest in peace at last, both corporeally and politically.

This study was in part a critical assessment of instrumentalist constructions and reconstructions of the past and the dead in Kurdish politics and struggle. However, let me clarify that I do not want to reproduce a purist ethical position on the instrumentalization of death in politics. Specifically, I do not want to imply that the dead should rest "in their sacred world" and should not be "used" for "profane political realities of this world".

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Such an exclusion of the dead from this-worldly affairs is a fetishistic view that reproduces the ontological distinction between life and death, which is a rather recent modern invention of bio-political arrangements that isolate death from life and reduce it to mortality, obstructing the possibility of life and exchange with the dead (Foucault 2003; Tadiar 2009). Separating the dead from this-world is further problematic in the Kurdish context, precisely because state power establishes itself on that very separation, which the Kurds transgress through costly struggles.

Yet, I also do not mean to position Kurdish imaginaries regarding their dead "against" bio-political technologies of modern power per se, which would be a romantic move in search of an authentic Kurdish politico-cultural ontology regarding life and death. Such an ontology that is "untouched" by modernity does not exist. In fact, Kurdish martyrdom links the dead with the living through the modern grammar of nationalism. Yet, in this very process of nationalization, the Kurds promote a political ontology in which life and death become permeable domains, allowing space for political life and communicability with the dead - and not necessarily in instrumentalist terms. This Kurdish insistence to find a place for their dead in life and in struggle, I think, poses a set of other ethical and political questions to any struggle that is waged through reciprocities with the dead: How to live and communicate with those who die in struggle? How to "mourn" for them? What is owed to the dead, and how to pay the debt?

Researching and writing this study as a Kurdish ethnographer, I was no doubt motivated by my own personal, ethical and political responsibilities to contribute to those Kurdish efforts to secure a proper death for their dead. Both research and writing were

practices of "mourning" in a sense; attempts to find a secure and fixed place for the dead. Hence, I wish this text to be read as a "grave" I have tried to construct in writing, a grave particularly for those who still lie buried unmarked, for those who could not be mourned for properly. Considering the political nature of mourning and proper burial in the Kurdish context, this would also be the main political contribution of this study to the larger debate on the Kurdish conflict in Turkey. Besides, this study tried to look for some place for the dead in the political present, problematizing the emergent tendency to leave the past and the dead behind for a "better future". In this I was motivated by the convition that the creation of peace among the living is possible only if that peace also allows the dead to rest in peace. I mean both corporeally and politically.

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Vita

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