

“The Dream of Kurdistan is Buried Here”: History,
Violence, and Martyrdom in the Borderlands of the Middle
Eastern Nation-State

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctorate in Philosophy

Department of History
University of Toronto

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Abstract

This dissertation attempts to answer two main questions. Firstly, how do you tell a history of national struggle that has not ended in the foundation of a nation state? Secondly, is there a way to include women in histories of national resistance without erasing their own desires for and understandings of liberation or reducing their participation in national struggle to accommodation or critique? This dissertation poses these questions from Kurdistan, what many Kurdish scholars describe as the largest nation without a state. Rather than attempting to explain why Kurds have not achieved statehood despite a long history of national resistance, the dissertation’s four chapters explore ways to narrate the nation that has not ended in a nation-state. The dissertation is about the writing of history from Kurdistan and the processing of the past in Doğubayazıt, a Kurdish town in Turkey that sits in the foothills of Mount Ararat. How do ‘ordinary’ Kurdish men and women make sense of an unfinished history of national resistance? How do they use this history to make sense of the ongoing history of state violence? There is no attempt to corroborate or verify the histories told in Doğubayazıt. Rather, the dissertation engages ethnographically with the past.

Tracing and following the reanimation of the defeat of the Mount Ararat Rebellion (Ağrı Dağı İsyanı, 1926-1931) by its ‘descendants,’ this dissertation attempts to ‘rescue’ Kurdish history from the triumphal narrative of the nation-state. The reanimations of the defeat of the Mount Ararat Uprising by Kurdish resistance needs to be read as a critique rather than a celebration of the nation-state. Despite the profound transformations in the thought, practices, and goals of Kurdish nationalism over the last decades, scholars continue to confine the “dream of Kurdistan” to what Turkish Foreign Minister Tewfik Rüştü Bey described in 1927 as the two options for “smaller groups”—to “disappear” or to wait.. But if grasped as Walter Benjamin suggests as “it flashes up at a moment of danger,” Kurdish resistance is no longer the tragedy or romance of the nation-state in the Middle East but a desire for the possibility of other forms of belonging.

Acknowledgments

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my *xesî* (Kurdish for mother-in-law), Türkân Sökmen.

I could not have completed this project with the help of the people of Doğubayazıt, Turkey. Unfortunately, because of the current political turmoil in the country, I can not list their names here. However, I hope that by writing about their resilience, people will come to understand that the history Kurdish resistance is ongoing.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Jens Hanssen, for his trust in me and my work. He told me to explore the questions that seemed unanswerable but was there when I got stuck or lost my way. He was both intellectually supportive and patient, giving me the time and space to write, sending me reminder emails when necessary. PhD. students are often told that a good dissertation is a finished dissertation. However, Jens encourages his students to write a compelling story; to take the time to find the right word; to use language to capture a moment, a place, an idea, or the “leafy green” colour of the trees in Istanbul. I was introduced to Professor Mojab after I gave a talk on the situation of Kurds in Turkey for the University of Toronto’s Kurdish Students’ Association. Although I shared the stage with one of Kurdish Studies most preeminent scholars, her husband and comrade, Professor Amir Hassanpour, she took the time to listen to and comment on my presentation. Her commitment to the struggle of Kurdish women, like Amir’s, has both inspired and challenged me. And like Amir, she has been both a mentor and a friend. She is the busiest person I know and I am grateful that she has always made time for me. Professor Melanie Newton has kept me on my ‘intellectual toes.’ Although she is not a scholar of Kurdish history, she encouraged me to stay rooted in Kurdistan, to see it as a place not only from which to write history but to produce theory. As well, I would like to thank my external examiner, Professor Joost Jongerden. His thoughtful comments have provided me with both how to turn my dissertation into a book and future paths of inquiry. I also want to thank the many professors I worked with as a teaching assistant at the University of Toronto; Professor Sean Hawkins; Professor Mark Meyerson; Professor Joan Simalchik; and Professor Mairi Cowan. Readings from their syllabi appear in the dissertation’s works cited. And a well-deserved thanks to Vivian Chang, the graduate coordinator in the Department of History.

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“For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what has been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent.”

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Projects* [N2a, 3]

Introduction

Writing History from Kurdistan

1 What is a Nation?

In his famous essay “What is a Nation?” Ernest Renan argues that race, language and the “direction of mountain chains” are only elements of nationhood, shared ethnic origins, a common tongue and borders neither define the nation nor bind its members. The nation is held together by “[t]wo things that, in truth, are but one,” writes Renan, the past—a “rich legacy of memories”—and the present—“the will to perpetuate” the past. To his question, “What is a nation?” the nineteenth century philosopher answers: “To have common glories in the past, a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more.”¹ To the historian Renan charges two tasks. “Cultivated minds,” he explains, remember the nation’s “heritage of glory” and forget its “deeds of violence.” Violence is the “origin” of the nation. The union of Northern and Southern France, “was the result of massacres and terror lasting almost a century.” But while the nation the King of France “formed has cursed him,” the historian understands the value of his “achievements.” Each French citizen “must have forgotten the Saint Bartholomew’s Day massacre.” They do not know if they were “Burgundian, an Alan, a Taifal, or a Visigoth.” To his unasked but answered question: Who is not a nation? the nineteenth century French philosopher proposed the Ottomans. “[T]he Turk, Slav, Greek, Armenian, Arab, Syrian, and Kurd are as distinct today as they were on the day of the conquest.” The Sultan failed “to achieve what the king of France, partly through his tyranny, partly through his justice... brought to conclusion.”² If the historian of the nation is required to forget the massacred and silence those who remained “distinct,” is the historian of people without a nation left to write a history of slaughter and refusal?

¹ Ernest Renan. *What is a nation?: and other political writings*, translated and edited by M.F.N. Giglioli. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 261.

² Renan, 249-251.

Renan's "division" between the past and present is a "uniquely western trait" according to Michel de Certeau. It is not merely the historian's "initial act," its repetition determines what is "insignificant" and what is "forgotten." But there are "other relations to time," states de Certeau in *The Writing of History*. Modern "historiography takes for granted the fact that it has become impossible to believe in this presence of the dead that has organized (or organizes) the experience of entire civilizations; and the fact that it is impossible" for some "to accept the loss of a living solidarity with what is gone." How do you write histories of peoples who refuse to "confirm an irreducible limit" between the massacres of the past and present's deeds of violence?³ What about the conqueror's concubine, his child's wet nurse or the women who marched on Versailles to demand "his justice"? Are their stories remembered as the nation's triumphs or woven into the ongoing history of its defeated? For Renan "error" is an essential element of historical practice.⁴ But for de Certeau "remainders left aside" during "explication" re-enter the narrative. What was forgotten "comes back," writes de Certeau, and disturbs its "line of progress."⁵ Renan's incorporation of women in the story of France, however, is an act of erasure rather than exposition. He assigns women minor roles in France's heritage, appearing briefly as Latin concubines and wet nurses of conquering Franks, silent during the "heroic past" of the Revolution they fought and died in.⁶ How does the historian of the nation hold together the stories of massacred women and the women who participated in "deeds of violence"? Are their stories reabsorbed as "'resistances,' 'survivals' [or] delays"?⁷

This dissertation poses these questions from Kurdistan, what many Kurdish scholars describe as "the largest stateless nation in the contemporary world."⁸ Rather than responding to Renan's

³ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 4-5.

⁴ Renan, "What is a Nation?" 251.

⁵ de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 4.

⁶ Renan, 261.

⁷ de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 5.

⁸ Abbas Vali, "The Kurds and Their 'Others': Fragmented Identity and Fragmented Politics," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 18, v. 2 (1998), 82. Other versions of this are: "Kurdistan ('the land of the Kurds') is a strategically located region of the Middle East, comprising important parts of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. There has never been a state of that name": Martin van Bruinessen, *Martin, Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1992), 8; "the Kurdish people have the unfortunate distinction of being probably the only community of over 15 million persons who have not achieved some form of national statehood": Gerard Chaliand, ed. "Introduction," in *A People without a country: the Kurds and Kurdistan*, trans. Michael Pallis (New York: Oliver Press, 1993), 8; "Kurds have been labelled a 'stateless

‘other’ question: Why do some nations not become nation-states? and then attempting to explain why Kurds “have not achieved some form of national statehood” despite “almost a continuous series of...revolts” since the collapse of empire in the Middle East after World War One, the dissertation’s four chapters explore ways to narrate the nation that has not ended in a nation-state.⁹ At the same time, it considers the question Renan did not pose: Is there a way to include women in histories of national resistance without erasing their own desires for and understandings of liberation or reducing their participation in the national struggle to accommodation or critique? The dissertation is about the writing of history from Kurdistan and the “processing of the past”¹⁰ in Doğubayazıt, “a frontier town of Turkey in Asia” that “sits close under Mount Ararat.”¹¹ How do ‘ordinary’ Kurdish men and women make sense of an ongoing history of national resistance and the nation-state’s “deeds of violence?” What are their “visions of their past”? There is no attempt to corroborate or verify the histories told in Doğubayazıt. Rather, the dissertation “engage[s] ethnographically” with what the past does for “their present and future.”¹² Historians, argues Michel Rolph-Trouillot, “grossly underestimate the size, the relevance, and the complexity of the overlapping sites where history is produced.” Beyond the walls of the academy people “access” the past through “museum visits, movies, national holidays....primary school books,” commemorations, tourist brochures, blogs, YouTube videos and film. “Remember the Alamo?” asks Trouillot. “That was a history lesson delivered by John Wayne on the screen.” The writing of academic history is “one-sided,” historians writing about

nation', a 'people without a country', and are referred to as the largest national group in the Middle East without a state”: Gareth M. Winrow and Kemal Kirisci, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-state Ethnic Conflict* (London: Routledge, 1997), 4; “one of the largest non-state nations of the world”: Shahzad Mojab, ed. “The Solitude of the Stateless: Kurdish Women at the Margins of Feminist Knowledge,” in *Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2001), 1. “Kurds constitute one of the largest ethnic groups in the world without a state of their own”: Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State: Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 2; “largest ethnic minority in the Middle East without a state”: Fevzi Bilgin. “Introduction,” in *Understanding Turkey's Kurdish Question*, ed. Bilgin Fevzi and Ali Sarihan (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), xi-xii.

⁹ Michael Gunter, “An Historical Overview to the Kurdish Problem,” *The Copernicus Journal of Political Studies* 2, no. 4 (2013), 160.

¹⁰ David William Cohen, *The Combining of History* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 244.

¹¹ E.B. Soane, *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise* (Boston: Small, Maynard and Company, 1914), 388.

¹² Stephan Palmié, “The Trouble with History,” *Small Axe* 17, no. 3 (2013), 196-198. To consider “seriously the site of historiography is...not tantamount to the expounding of history,” explains de Certeau. “[T]aking the place seriously is the condition that allows something to be stated that is neither legendary (nor “edifying”) nor atypical (lacking relevance)...[M]oving discourse into a non-place...forbids history from speaking of society and of death-in other words from being history”; *The Writing of History*, 69.

what happened “as if” what is said to have happened “did not matter.”¹³ In the “vernacular use of history” writes Trouillot, “both the facts of the matter and a narrative of those facts matter.” Historians do not need to “correct” their overlap or reconfirm their distinction. They need to study “the concrete production of specific narratives,” argues Trouillot.¹⁴ “Before” deciding “what history says of a society,” advises de Certeau, “analyze how history functions within it.”¹⁵

1.1 The ‘Kurdish Question’

Inserting Kurds into Renan’s essay would perhaps go something like this: “Since the end of the [substitute: Ottoman] Empire, or rather since (its) dismemberment...[the Middle East] is “divided into nations, [all] of which, in certain [decades], have attempted to exercise a hegemony over [Kurds], without ever succeeding in a lasting fashion.”¹⁶ Explaining this is the ‘Kurdish Question.’ The ‘Kurdish Question’ varies according to a study’s temporal frame, geographical scope and thematic interests.¹⁷ For some scholars it is a question to be investigated: What are the national desires of the 20-25 million Kurds who live within and over the territorial borders of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria? For others it is a problem to be solved: How can the national ambitions of Kurds be accommodated without undermining the territorial sovereignty of the states they live in?¹⁸ But as Shahrzad Mojab argues, stories of peoples without nations are also

¹³ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 20-22.

¹⁴ Trouillot, 2-3 & 22. According to Trouillot, how communities determine the distinction between the two sides of history or negotiate their overlap is something that cannot be established “*a priori*.” While “an examination of French palaces as sites of historical production can provide illustrative lessons for an understanding of Hollywood’s role in U.S. historical consciousness...the rules that govern the relative impact of French castles and of U.S. movies on the academic history produced in these two countries” must be investigated on their own. Palmié points out that the historian’s quest for an “actual past” might be a product of western modernity. How about the people who find that its “totalizing historicist *weltanschauung*” does not describe “their own spaces of experience and horizons of expectations”? Do their stories become “redacted narratives”? he asks (“The Trouble With History,” pg. 198).

¹⁵ de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 68.

¹⁶ “Since the end of the Roman Empire, or rather since the dismemberment of Charlemagne’s empire, Western Europe appears to be divided into nations, some of which, in certain epochs, have attempted to exercise a hegemony over the others, without ever succeeding in a lasting fashion”; “What is a Nation?” 248.

¹⁷ For example, the ‘Kurdish Question’ reposed by Michael Gunter: “The Changing Kurdish Problem in Turkey,” *The International Journal of Kurdish Studies* 8, no. 1/2 (1995), p. 154. “The Continuing Kurdish Problem in Turkey after Öcalan’s Capture,” *Third World Quarterly* 21, no. 5 (2000), 849-869. “Turkey’s floundering EU candidacy and its Kurdish problem” *Middle East Policy* XIV, no. 1 (2007), 117-123; “Contrasting Turkish Paradigms Toward the Volatile Kurdish Question: Domestic and Foreign Considerations,” in *The Kurdish Question Revisited*, eds. Gareth Stansfield and Mohammed Shareef (Oxford University Press: Kindle Edition, 2017), 225-243.

¹⁸ Henry Barkey and Graham Fuller, *Turkey’s Kurdish question* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), xv. Barkey and Fuller’s main questions is: How can Kurdish needs in Turkey be met while preserving the integrity of Turkish territory?”

histories of peoples “forcibly incorporated” into states.¹⁹ “Unity is always achieved brutally” states Renan.²⁰ Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria have used strategies of assimilation, annihilation and denial to both ‘include’ and ‘exclude’ Kurds.²¹ The year before his arrest and imprisonment by the Turkish state, the co-leader of the ‘pro-Kurdish’ Peace and Democracy Party (HDP), Selahattin Demirtaş, summarized the Kurdish Question for *Vice News*. “The state is not the Kurds’ state and...the Kurds do not have a state in the Middle East.”²² Hakan Yavuz argues that Kurds are not only separated by borders but divided by “sub-ethnic loyalties.”²³ Nation-states are homogenous; Kurds are not a nation-state because they are heterogeneous. “[A]s with any society,” counters Hamit Bozarslan, “Kurdish society is...plural.” It has “produce[d] a variety of political, social, and cultural forms of expression, resistance, resilience, and in some cases [forms of] accommodation.”²⁴

¹⁹ Mojab, “The Solitude of the Stateless,” 10.

²⁰ Renan, “What is a Nation?” 251.

²¹ İsmail Beşikçi labels Kurds an “international colony”; *International Colony Kurdistan* (London: Parvana, 2004). As Hamit Bozarslan explains, although “Kurds are not the only “stateless nation” divided between different countries, they [are]...the only group to be divided between four countries”; “Being in Time”; The Kurdish Movement and Universal Quests,” in *The Kurdish Question Revisited*, 61. The ‘pacification’ of Kurdish tribes in Turkey and Iran in the 1920s and 1930s included the expropriation of communal property, the break-up of families and deportation. Both Turkey and Iraq (under the British Mandate and after independence) used bombing to ‘pacify’ Kurdish tribes (see Chapters I & II for a description of the violence that accompanied the suppression of Kurdish resistance during this time period). During the Anfal Campaign at the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the Iraqi army executed over 50,000 Iraqi Kurds, destroyed over 1200 Iraqi-Kurdish villages and displaced over a million people (Assyrian communities were also displaced and murdered). The Iraqi forces used chemical weapons against Iraqi Kurds, see Martin van Bruinessen, ‘Genocide of Kurds,’ in *The Widening Circle of Genocide*, ed. Israel W. Charney (Brunswick, NY: Transaction Publishers, 1994) 165-191. The almost forty year ‘conflict’ between the Turkish Army and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) has killed almost 50,000 people (5000 civilians, 40,000 PKK guerrillas, 5000 military); Bilgin, “Introduction,” in *Understanding Turkey's Kurdish Question*, viii. In the 1990s the Turkish army ‘evacuated’ (bombed and burned) almost 3000 Kurdish villages, displacing over one million people in attempt to destroy the PKK’s logistical support. Torture, extrajudicial killings, imprisonment, death squads were used by the state against the Kurdish opposition as well.

²² John Beck, “Caught Between the Islamic State and Erdogan: Turkey's Most Important Opposition Politician Talks to VICE,” *Vice* [online], December 18, 2015, https://news.vice.com/en_us/article/ney4yz/caught-between-the-islamic-state-and-erdogan-turkeys-most-important-opposition-politician-talks-to-vice-news8 November 2015. All leadership positions in the Kurdish movement are shared. The female co-chair of the party, Figen Yuksekdağ, was also imprisoned.

²³ Hakan Yavuz, “Five Stages of the Construction of Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey,” *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics* 7, no.3 (2001), 21.

²⁴ Bozarslan, “Being in Time,” 61.

With ‘defacto’ statehood in Iraq²⁵ and democratic autonomy in Northern Syria (Rojava),²⁶ the ‘Kurdish Question’ is now mainly Turkey’s Kurdish problem.²⁷ Is it a problem of Turkish democracy or a question for Turkish democracy?²⁸ Is it a question of the right of Kurds to self-determination? Or is it a “violent challenge to [the] authority and territorial integrity” of the Turkish state?²⁹ Kurdish demands, argues Fevzi Bilgin in the introduction to *Understanding Turkey's Kurdish Question*, need to be addressed to end “the violence and terrorism issuing from it.”³⁰ The ‘Kurdish Question’ after the failure of 2013-2014 peace process (*Çözüm Süreci*) is once again the violent conflict between the armed forces of the Turkish state and the guerillas of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK). However, in the same volume of essays, Turkish journalist Cengiz Çandar sticks to his assessment of the ‘Kurdish Question’ in 1995. For Çandar the

²⁵ For example: Gareth Stansfield, *Iraqi Kurdistan: political development and emergent democracy* (London; New York: Routledge 2003); Gülistan Gürbey, Sabine Hofmann, Ferhad Ibrahim Seyder, eds. *Between state and non-state: politics and society in Kurdistan-Iraq and Palestine* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Aram Rafea, *Kurdistan in Iraq: the Evolution of a Quasi-state* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018).

²⁶ The literature on the revolution in Rojava (Northern Syria) is extensive, for example: Nazan Üstündağ, “Self-Defense as a Revolutionary Practice in Rojava, or How to Unmake the State,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 115, no. 1 (January 2016), 197-210, doi: 10.1215/00382876-3425024; and Thomas Schmidinger, *Rojava: revolution, war and the future of Syria's Kurds*, trans. Michael Schiffmann (London: Pluto Press, 2018). For a comparison between the Kurdish Regional Government in Northern Iraq and Democratic Confederalism in Northern Syria see: Joost Jongerden, “Governing Kurdistan: Self-Administration in the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq and the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria,” *Ethnopolitics* 18, no. 1 (2019) 61-75. For a discussion of the impact of Kurdish autonomy in Syria on Turkey see Seda Altuğ, “The Syrian Uprising and Turkey’s ordeal with the Kurds,” *Dialectical Anthropology* 37, no. 1 (2013), 123-130.

²⁷ This is, of course, an over simplification and excludes Iran. Murat Güneş Tezcür argues that “external dynamics have become more decisive in Iraq and Syria” and “domestic political struggles remain decisive for Kurdish communities in both Iran and Turkey.” His assessment of “the contemporary evolution of Kurdish question” is that it “now has interrelated but highly distinct trajectories”: “A Century of the Kurdish Question: Organizational Rivalries, Diplomacy, and Cross-Ethnic Coalitions,” *Ethnopolitics* 18, no. 1 (2019), 1-12. See the other articles in the same special issue of *Ethnopolitics* (“The Kurds”) for a discussion of the complex history of the ‘Kurdish Question.’

²⁸ For example: Dogu Ergil, “The Kurdish Question in Turkey,” *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 3 (2000), 122-135. Fuat Keyman, “Rethinking the ‘Kurdish question’ in Turkey: Modernity, citizenship and democracy,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 38, no. 4-5, (2012), 467-476; Ayhan Bilgen, “The new constitution and the “paradox” of Kurdish problem,” *Dialectical Anthropology* 37, no. 1 (March 2013), 165-169.

²⁹ Zeynep N. Kaya and Matthew Whiting, “The Kurdish question,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Turkish Politics* (Routledge Online, 18 April 2019), <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315143842-18>. In 2014 Cengiz Gunes and Welat Zeydanlioglu broke-down the different interpretations of Turkey’s ‘Kurdish Question’: ethno-political problem; a nation without a state: problem with Turkish democracy; denial of the right of Kurds to self-determination: separatist terror: imperial plot to control Middle-Eastern Oil; “Introduction: Turks and Kurds,” in *The Kurdish Question in Turkey: New Perspectives on violence, representation, and reconciliation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 8. See also: Henri Barkey’s re-evaluation of the question he and Graham Fuller asked in 1998: “The Transformation of Turkey’s Kurdish Question,” in *Revisiting the Kurdish Question*, eds. Gareth Stansfield and Mohammed Shareef (Oxford University Press: Kindle Edition, 2017); and Hamid Akin Unver, *Turkey's Kurdish Question: Discourse and Politics since the 1990s* (London: Routledge, 2015).

³⁰ Fevzi Bilgin. “Introduction,” in *Understanding Turkey's Kurdish Question*, ed. Fevzi Bilgin and Ali Sarihan. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), xi-xii.

'Kurdish Question' is "still" the "aspiration of the only stateless people of the Middle East" for a state. Its resolution is "still" either a Kurdish nation-state or "the recognition of Kurds as equal citizens in the countries they live."³¹ But as other scholars point out, and the PKK explain, their desire for national liberation is no longer tied to the establishment of a nation-state. Solving the 'Kurdish problem' in Turkey (and Iraq, Iran, and Syria) is dependent upon the emancipation of Middle East from the political imagination and colonial heritage of the nation-state.³² The problem with 'Kurdish Question,' argues Kurdish scholars Jordi Tejel and Joost Jongerden in separate essays in Gareth Stansfield and Mohammed Shareef's 2017 *Revisiting the Kurdish Question* is its "methodological nationalism," what Craig Calhoun defines as the organization of history as "stories in or of nations" and assumption that nations are "comparable units of data."³³ Can Kurdish history be written "from a non-nationalist perspective that at the same time does not deny Kurds?" asks Tejel in the volume's opening essay.³⁴ Calhoun suggests recognizing how "deeply imbricated" nationalism is in our "conceptual frameworks" while taking national identities "seriously" as a "form a social solidarity" and belonging.³⁵ Jongerden argues that scholars can neither assume that "the existing nation-state" is a "natural" frame for the 'Kurdish Question' or conclude that "national independence" defines its political aspirations and goals. According to Jongerden, Kurdish scholars need to consider how "the right to self-determination" has been "refashion[ed]" by the PKK.³⁶

³¹ Cengiz Çandar, "On Turkey's Kurdish Question: Its Roots, Present State, Prospects," in *Understanding Turkey's Kurdish Question*, 59.

³² Adem Uzun, "Living Freedom": The Evolution of the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey and the Efforts to Resolve It," *Berghof Transitions Series* 11 (2014), <https://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications> For a description of the party's policy and philosophy of "Democratic Confederalism" see Abdullah Öcalan's *Democratic Confederalism* (London, Cologne: Transmedia Publishing Ltd, 2001), available at www.freedom-for-ocalan.com. See also Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya and Joost Jongerden, "Reassembling the Political: The PKK and the Project of Radical Democracy," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* [online] 14 (2012), <http://ejts.revues.org/4615>.

³³ Craig Calhoun, *Nations Matter: Culture, History, and the Cosmopolitan Dream* (London: Routledge, 2007), 27.

³⁴ Jordi Tejel, "New Perspectives on Writing the History of Kurds in Iraq, Syria and Turkey" in *Revisiting the Kurdish Question*, eds. Gareth Stansfield and Mohammed Shareef (Oxford University Press: Kindle Edition, 2017), 4-6. See also Djene Rhys Bajalan and Sara Zandi Karimi, eds. *Studies in Kurdish History: Empire, ethnicity and identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015) for essays that consider "alternative approaches to Kurdish history that go beyond national paradigms" (pg. 1).

³⁵ Calhoun, *Nations Matter*, 8.

³⁶ Joost Jongerden, "The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK): Radical Democracy and the Right to Self-Determination Beyond the Nation-State," in *The Kurdish Question Revisited*, 249. For studies that rethink Kurdish 'spaces' (a "field that has for decades been dominated by disciplines other than history") see Zeynep Gambetti and Joost Jongerden, *The Kurdish Issue in Turkey: A Spatial Perspective* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015).

The reformulation of Kurdish liberation as a project of radical democracy in Rojava has been taken up by feminist scholars, the prominent role of Kurdish women in the practice of Democratic Confederalism in Northern Syria viewed as the rejection of the nation-state's legacies of patriarchy, "racism and internal colonialism."³⁷ Gendering the 'Kurdish Question' has led others to consider the "contradictions" between national liberation's "claims of emancipation" and its use of "gendered discourses" in Iraq and Turkey.³⁸ Feminist critiques of nationalism, however, have inadvertently erased the long history of the participation of Kurdish women in national liberation. Women in Rojava are disconnected from this history (no longer part of the narrative of national liberation); the struggles of Kurdish women in Turkey and Northern Iraq are reduced to a story of compromise or miscalculation. Asking "Third World women to leave nationalist discourses" to male nationalists, argues Ranjoo Sedou-Herr, is to demand that they "abandon an important legacy that is rightfully theirs."³⁹ Marnia Lazreg argues that to "understand the relationship between gender and nationalism" in 'non-western' contexts it is essential to "unravel...the connecting links with colonialism." For Lazreg, national liberation is better understood as "decolonization" rather than nationalism. Thinking about Kurdish armed struggle as anti-colonial resistance accomplishes two things. Firstly, the struggle of Kurdish women against assimilation and state violence becomes "a rational response to an otherwise irrational historical situation." According to Lazreg, this captures the "meaning women imparted to their action." Secondly, it recognizes Kurdish women as "rational actors," their taking up of arms a choice rather than a mistake or an aberration.⁴⁰ Some women remain on the feminist margins because their resistance both exposes the role feminism has played in colonial projects

³⁷ Dilar Dirik, "The Revolution of the Smiling Women," in *The Routledge handbook of postcolonial politics*, eds. Robbie Shilliam and Olivia Rutazibwa (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 222-223. Dirik describes Rojava's revolutionary principles as being "safeguarded by women" (pg. 234). See also Michael Knapp, Anja Flach, Ercan Ayboğa, *Revolution in Rojava: democratic autonomy and women's liberation in Syrian Kurdistan*, trans. Janet Biehl (London: Pluto Press, 2016).

³⁸ Necla Açıık, "Re-defining the role of women within the Kurdish national movement in Turkey in the 1990s," in *The Kurdish Question in Turkey*, eds. Cengiz Gunes and Welat Zeydanlioglu (London: Routledge, 2014), 114; see also Jessie Hanna Clark, "Green, red, yellow and purple: gendering the Kurdish Question in south-east Turkey," *Gender, Place & Culture* 22, no. 10 (2015), 1463-1480.

³⁹ Ranjoo Sedou Herr, "The Possibility of Nationalist Feminism," *Hypatia* 18, no. 3 (2003), 151. "Third World feminists have an extremely high stake in how the national culture turns out; by letting the national culture be dominated by patriarchal nationalists, they risk losing whatever gains they've made with respect to gender equality and leaving an intolerably misogynist legacy for the next generation."

⁴⁰ Marnia Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 118-119.

(whether Algeria or Turkey) and challenges deeply held beliefs about the gender of violence (i.e. male). Chapter III explores this while Chapter IV examines how how ‘ordinary’ Kurdish men and women make meaning of ongoing state violence and women’s participation in political violence. Mojab’s *Woman of a Non-State Nation*, published in 2001, remains the only edited volume to focus on Kurdish women. It includes a number of chapters on earlier histories of women’s resistance in Kurdistan, the essays critical of the nation’s claims of female emancipation while leaving room for both women’s participation in national resistance and the possibility of future feminist ‘refashionings’ of national liberation.⁴¹ The dissertation enters into conversation with these essays, seeking to find ways to connect earlier histories of women’s resistance in Kurdistan to current struggles for liberation. Is there a way to write a history of Kurdish resistance that acknowledges “political struggles that cross[] the line of geography” and identity⁴² and also leaves room for stories of women “that get in the way”?⁴³

1.2 The Dialectical Image as Methodology

The following pages do not offer a singular, progressive, exhaustive or even solely national or Kurdish history of Kurdish resistance. Neither does the dissertation employ the resistance of Kurdish women to question and challenge national narratives. Using Walter Benjamin’s concept of the dialectical image, the dissertation attempts “to seize hold” of the past “as it recognized by the present as one of its own concerns.”⁴⁴ The “insignificant fragments” (discarded during what Renan describes as the historian’s selection of some events) are “rescued and redeployed” to reveal both the “hope” of the ‘massacred’ and the denial of their hopes. These discarded fragments, explains Max Pensky, are “rescued” from the trash of history “in such a way” that they expose this history for what it really is: “Hell, a history of catastrophe.” At the same time their rescue reveals “a history of unfulfilled wishes for a collective life free of violence, injustice, and want.”⁴⁵ While some historians, writes Benjamin in the “These on the Philosophy of History,” are content to “establish[] a causal connection between various moments in history,”

⁴¹ Mojab, “The Solitude of the Stateless”

⁴² Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 289.

⁴³ Carolyn Steadman, *Landscape for a Good Woman* (London: Virago, 2005), 139.

⁴⁴ Walter Benjamin, “These on the Philosophy of History,” in *Walter Benjamin: Illuminations, Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), Thesis V.

⁴⁵ Max Pensky, “Method and time: Benjamin’s dialectical images,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, ed. David Ferris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 187-192.

the historian who “stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary.... grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one.” This “constellation” (dialectical image) assists the historian “establish[ing] the conception of the present as the “time of the now.”⁴⁶ Stéphane Mosès describes Benjamin’s dialectical image as a “metaphor for the language the historian uses to decipher the past.” The “historical object” explains Mosès “is not given but constructed by the writing of history.” Each dialectical image expresses “the past’s perception of itself” while “highlight[ing] part of its illusion.” In “the process” the dialectical image “reveals the truth that past bears for us today.”⁴⁷ Using Benjamin’s dialectical image as both a “method” and an “alternative conception of time and historical experience,” the dissertation tells a history of Kurdish resistance from Doğubayzıt.⁴⁸ The dissertation places the stories of the men and women who participated in the Mount Ararat Uprising (1926-1931) alongside the history of “the main agent of Kurdish resistance” for the last forty years, the Kurdistan Workers’s Party (PKK).⁴⁹ It weaves together three periods of Kurdish resistance: the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising in the summer of 1930; the reanimation of its defeat in the summer of 2014; and 2012, a year of neither “political possibilities” nor “recurring political dangers” but ongoing struggle.⁵⁰

Lonely Planet describes Doğubayzıt as a city without “much charm.” However, the contributors to its 2017 Turkey guidebook admit that the “predominantly Kurdish town” of 120,000 people thirty kilometres from the Iranian border has the “certain appeal” of “border town wildness.” Whether coming from Tabriz or Erzurum, the travel guide informs the adventurous tourist that they will “quickly notice” Doğubayzıt’s “distinct atmosphere.” American and European tourists, like travellers during the nineteenth century, visit the city for its “superb” setting. To the south, surveying the “town from a rocky perch beneath jagged peaks,” is the eighteenth century

⁴⁶ Benjamin, “These on the Philosophy of History,” Thesis XIV.

⁴⁷ Stéphane Mosès, “The Angel of History,” in *The Angel of History: Rosenzweig, Benjamin, Scholem*, trans. Barbara Harshav (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 106-107.

⁴⁸ Pensky, “Method and Time,” 179.

⁴⁹ Mesut Yeğen, “Armed Struggle to Peace Negotiations: Independent Kurdistan to Democratic Autonomy, or The PKK in Context,” *Middle East Critique*, 25 no. 4 (2016), 380. The idea of telling stories “alongside” one another is taken from Frederick Cooper and Jane Burbank’s *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010).

⁵⁰ Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 304.

palace of İshak Paşa.⁵¹ The salmon coloured stone of its ceremonial courtyard is decorated with reliefs of pineapple and elaborate carvings of the tree of life. Below are the palace's damp and dark dungeons, ahead the rooms of the *harem* (the private quarters), their casements offering a spectacular view of the surrounding hills. According to the website of Turkey's Ministry of Tourism the palace is a "mixture of Ottoman, Persian and Seljuk architectural styles."⁵² However, the 2012 brochure produced by the Kurdish-run municipality, *Doğubayazıt Natural Treasures*, disagrees. The palace's "ornaments and motifs" are of "Iranian, Kurdish, Indian and Armenian origin." As the palace was built "500 years after" the rule of the Selcuk Turks it has "no Selcuk" influences.⁵³ To the castle's right stands the tomb of Ehmedê Xanî "the most celebrated Kurd of his time." In the seventeenth century, Ehmedê Xanî arrived from Hakkari, "built a mosque, wrote a number of philosophical, religious, and poetical works in his native tongue, and conducted a large school at which Kurds were the students, and their own language the chief subject of instruction."⁵⁴ Below the palace, points out *Lonely Planet*, are the ruins of old Bayazıt (Bayezid). It "was demolished" in the 1930s "by the Turkish army after a Kurdish uprising."⁵⁵ Struggles over the past, writes Barbara Cooper, are not about "the past itself" but its "meaning" for the present.⁵⁶

Scholars place the Mount Ararat Uprising amongst the "great Kurdish revolts"⁵⁷ to the challenge the Turkish Republic during its formation and "before" the PKK.⁵⁸ However, the organizers of the uprising's commemoration in Doğubayazıt in 2014 removed it from this chronology and wove it into ongoing history of resistance in Kurdistan. Describing the people of Doğubayazıt as the "descendants of the rebels" on the commemoration's flyer, the organizers invited the community to join them at the bottom of Mount Ararat to "demand an accounting" of the

⁵¹ James Bainbridge et al, *Lonely Planet Turkey* (Lonely Planet Global Limited: Kindle Edition, 2017).

⁵² "Ağrı İshak Paşa Sarayı," *T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı* [website], accessed December 12, 2014, <http://www.kulturvarliklari.gov.tr/TR,43858/agri-ishak-pasa-sarayi.html>.

⁵³ *Doğubayazıt Doğa Hazineleeri*.

⁵⁴ E.B. Soane, *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise* (Boston: Small, Maynard and Company, 1914), 388.

⁵⁵ *Lonely Planet Turkey* [Kindle Edition].

⁵⁶ Barbara Cooper, "Oral Sources and the Challenge of African History" in *Writing African History*, ed. John Edward Philips (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2007), 180.

⁵⁷ Michael Gunter, *Historical Dictionary of the Kurds* (Lanham, MD and Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, 2004), 9. The other two Kurdish rebellions are Sheikh Said (1925) and Dersim (1937-1938).

⁵⁸ "The most important Kurdish rebellion before the PKK"; M. Kalman, *Belge, tanık ve yaşayanlarıyla Ağrı Direnişi 1926-1930* (İstanbul: Pêri Yayınları, 1997), 8.

uprising's violent suppression.⁵⁹ The stage set up for the speeches of Kurdish members of parliament, PKK guerrillas and the performances of local musicians was decorated by two large banners. In the middle of the stage was the imprisoned leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan. On his left was İhsan Nuri, the commander of the Mount Ararat Uprising. To Öcalan's left, on her own banner, was local PKK martyr Sema Yüce. Yüce set fire to herself in a Turkish prison on March 21, 1998, Kurdish New Year (Newroz). The banner begins and ends the dissertation, used to hold together the multiple temporalities and sovereignties of Kurdish resistance that are sketched within.

The banner suggested both a different "relation of time" and other geographies of Kurdish resistance. It did not separate the Mount Ararat Uprising from the PKK by a "period of silence"⁶⁰ or divide Kurdish resistance into "pre-and non-PKK" phases.⁶¹ It did not confine Kurdish resistance to Turkey or Kurdistan. The banner placed both Nuri and Yüce in front of images of Mount Ararat, the mountain a 'stronghold' of the 1926-1931 uprising and the PKK. However, the view of the mountain behind Nuri was sketched from Armenia rather than Kurdistan, the order of Ararat's two summits reversed when viewed from its northeastern slopes. The banner reminded the Kurdish festival goers that the "monument of Kurdish resistance," was also the ancient homeland of the Armenian people.⁶² Missing from the banner was the leader of the Ararat rebels, Celali leader Biroyê Heskê Têllî (Biro). It was Biro, the head of the Hesesorî division of the large Kurdish tribe, who took refuge in the mountain in 1926 and began the uprising. The words below Öcalan, however, acknowledged "Serhed's martyrs." Serhed, the Kurdish word for frontier, is used to map the area of Kurdistan that overlaps with Armenia and

⁵⁹ See Chapter I: Fig. 1.30.

⁶⁰ Hamit Bozarslan, *Violence in the Middle East: From Political Struggle to Self-Sacrifice* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004), 22. After the violent suppression of the Dersim Uprising in 1937-1938 Kurdish resistance is quiet until its 'renewal' during the rise of the leftist politics in Turkey the 1960s (and the Kurdish armed struggle against the Iraq state) and the beginning of the PKK's armed struggle in the 1970s. See Chapter I for a discussion of Ararat's placement in chronologies of Kurdish resistance and the Turkish nation-state's "deeds of violence."

⁶¹ Yeğen, "Armed Struggle to Peace Negotiations," 366-367. Yeğen argues that Kurdish resistance in the 19th and early 20th centuries had its own "spaces, promises/propositions and instruments." He places the Ararat Uprising in the third phase of "pre-and non-PKK resistance." The uprising's suppression was not the end of a phase of Kurdish resistance but the end of "Kurdish resistance in toto" according to Yeğen. In the late 1950s "Kurdish resistance made a comeback, albeit with new people, new propositions, new instruments and in new spaces."

⁶² Mehmet Nuri Ekinci, "*Bir direniş abidesi olarak Agirî ya da Gıridax*," (Agirî or Gıridax a monument of resistance), Herêma Agirî [blog], July 27, 2010, accessed December 4, 2014, herema-ararat.blogspot.com/2012/06/bir-direnis-abidesi-olarak-agiri-ya-da.html.

that once sat in the frontier inbetween the Ottoman and Persian (and in the nineteenth century, Russian) empires. The Ministry of Tourism gives Ararat's names in: Turkish, Ağrı Dağı; Persian, Kuh-i Nuh; and Arabic, Cebel ul Haristir.⁶³ The brochure produced by the municipality adds the mountain's Armenian name, Masis and its 'local' name, Gri Dax (Girîdax). Agirî is Ararat's Kurdish name, Girîdax is what the Celali call the mountain. After the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising, explains a post on the local blog, *Herêma Agirî* (the region of Ararat), the "social fragmentation of Kurdish society created by the borders" of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria "developed in Girîdax." The Celali were divided between Iran and Turkey. However, "they did not recognize this artificial boundary." They continued to trade with one another and marry despite "barbed wire and mines."⁶⁴

The banner suggested the dissertation's two main interventions into the writing of Kurdish history. Firstly, it exposed how Kurds make meaning out of a history of national struggle that has not ended in the creation of nation-state, narrating it as both an ongoing history of refusal and the nation-state's "deeds of violence," and offering, in the process, a different temporality of Kurdish resistance. Most studies of Kurdish resistance focus on the 'means' rather than the meaning of violence, ignoring how "violence is wielded and resisted in the idiom of a society's distinctive history."⁶⁵ This prevents an understanding of the place and role of martyrs in the writing and narrating the history of Kurdish resistance. Martyrdom is an "act of speech" in which the martyr's suffering "communicates the injustice experienced by a community to a larger audience."⁶⁶ In other words, it includes a "story-teller and audience to whom the story is told."⁶⁷ When read 'in place' they reveal histories of Kurdish resistance written by its martyrs and their descendants. While scholars have begun to consider the way in which the PKK gives "meaning to their struggle," little attention has been paid to how 'ordinary' Kurds give meaning to both the

⁶³ "Ağrı Dağı," *T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı* [website], accessed October 16, 2016, <http://www.kultur.gov.tr/EN,99411/agri---mount-ararat.html>

⁶⁴ Ekinci, "Bir direniş abidesi olarak Agirî ya da Giridax."

⁶⁵ Fernando Coronil and Julie Skurski, "Dismembering and Remembering the Nation: The Semantics of Political Violence in Venezuela," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 2 (1991), 289.

⁶⁶ K. M. Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice: Agency, Body and Emotion in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 37.

⁶⁷ David Carr, "Narrative and the Real World: An Argument for Continuity," *History and Theory* 25, no. 2 (1986), 123.

struggle of the PKK and earlier histories of resistance.⁶⁸ Secondly, following the images of the banner as they “flash up” in online struggles over the nation-state’s geography exposes how “lands are narrated as inside the nation.” According to Mark Rifkin, the formation of the nation-state relies on the disavowal of alternative sovereignties and territories. The dissertation rereads the ‘Kurdish Question’ in Turkey as a conflict over geopolitical imaginaries rather than merely ethnic identities.⁶⁹ Tribalism is not a ‘sub-loyalty’ of Kurdish identity or a “fundamental component”⁷⁰ of Kurdish society, rather it is an alternative sovereignty that, like radical democracy and Kurdish nationalism, is one of the “range of alternative political forms and of political imagination that have been available” to Kurds “in different situations in history.”⁷¹ The work of scholars like Ceren Belge and Norbert Ross and Ahmad Mohammadpur have already begun to rethink tribalism as both “unorganized and less visible forms of resistance”⁷² and as “histories of deliberate and reactive statelessness.”⁷³ This dissertation adds to this scholarship and suggests that the ‘refashioning’ of self-determination has a longer history in Kurdistan.

1.3 Imagining the Archive outside the Nation-State

The dissertation relies on a number of sources rather than an archive. Many of the “fragments” used to form the chapters’ dialectical images were collected during fieldwork in Doğubayazıt in 2010, 2011-2012, and 2014. These include: local and national newspapers, cartoons, pamphlets, photos (collected and taken), invitations to and advertisements for various political and cultural events, local government reports, letters, songs, jokes and stories. These sources were gathered during time spent in the local municipality, the office of the pro-Kurdish political party, the

⁶⁸ Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya and Joost Jongerden, “Reassembling the Political: The PKK and the Project of Radical Democracy,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* [online] 14 (2012), <http://ejts.revues.org/4615>.

⁶⁹ Mark Rifkin, *Manifesting America: the imperial construction of U.S. nation space* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7.

⁷⁰ Norbert Ross and Ahmad Mohammadpur, “Imagined or real: the intersection of tribalism and nationalism in the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG),” *British Journal of Middle East Studies* (2016), 65. Tribalism and nationalism are “ideologies and forms of social organization that are evoked at specific times for specific purposes.

⁷¹ Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 158.

⁷² Ceren Belge, “State Building and the Limits of Legibility: Kinship Networks and Kurdish Resistance in Turkey.” *IJMES* 43 (2011), 96-98. Tribal sovereignties have “remained important source of allegiance and self-definition” that continue to undermine and challenge “the order of the Turkish state in significant ways.” They need to be seen as forms of resistance while not “romanticizing their inegalitarian nature.”

⁷³ Ross and Mohammadpur, “Imagined or real,” 45. See also Hanifi Baris and Wendelmoet Hamelink. “Dengbêjs on borderlands: Borders and the state as seen through the eyes of Kurdish singer-poets,” *Kurdish Studies* 1 (2014), 34-60.

municipal cemetery, outside of the state court, the city's shops, cafes, and the homes of neighbours and acquaintances. Sources were gathered during various events organized by the Kurdish Movement including meetings, protests, commemorations, concerts, film and cultural festivals, and PKK martyrs' funerals. Chapter IV is based on this ethnographic fieldwork. I was both a participant-observer and a resident of Doğubayazıt, my husband is from the city and we have a home in the town (with the best view of Mount Ararat). I have not referred by anyone by name except for people whose names were published in newspapers or on websites. I have avoided describing people in too much detail in order to not to identify them and have only included stories and conversations written down during my actual fieldwork when people were informed that I was doing research on the Kurdish movement.

The dissertation's 'archive' was two local blogs, *Bajarê Agirî*—which posts “everything about the uprising in Ağrı” —and *Herêma Agirî* —“news, history, and the archive of the Ararat Region.” They were used as ‘archives’ and paths into other sources. Their postings of “everything about the uprising” lead me to the cartoons and maps published in *Vakit*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Akşam* during the uprising's suppression in the summer of 1930. They are used in Chapters I and II. The blogs were not only used because Kurds do not have archives but because they help inform the dissertation's discussion of the production of history (beyond the academy). Arjun Appadurai argues that the internet has both freed the archive from the “orbit of the state” and returned it to a more “general status of being a deliberated site for the production of anticipated memories by intentional communities.” For Appadurai internet archives are not about “memory” but the “work of imagination.”⁷⁴ The struggle over the meaning of an air force memorial in the city of Ağrı discussed in the opening chapter uses these blogs as both an archive of the discussion and as one of the debates engendered by the mayor's determination to tear it down. “In exploring the promise and possibility of a “history without documents,” writes Omnia El Shakry, “we are reminded that the archive exists in both material and ideational iterations.” As well, in order to go beyond the search for “the root causes of a present postcolonial

⁷⁴ Arjun Appadurai, “Archive and Aspiration,” [archivepublic.wordpress.com](http://archivepublic.wordpress.com/texts/arjun-appadurai/), accessed January 12, 2014, <http://archivepublic.wordpress.com/texts/arjun-appadurai/>. For other discussions of alternative Kurdish archives see: Serra Haykemez, Margins of the Archive: Torture, the Heroism and the Ordinary in Diyarbakir Prison No 5,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 90, no. 1 (2017), 107–138; and Özgür Çiçek, “The Fictive Archive: Kurdish Filmmaking in Turkey,” *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media* 1 (2011), 1-18.

melancholia” historians need to turn to “textured local debates, endogenous forces, and minor literatures.”⁷⁵ Martyrs’ letters were gathered from various PKK websites. The organization’s official journal, *Serxwebûn*, was used in the final chapter alongside other party publications and literature.

The stories, editorials, photographs and government communications published during the uprising’s suppression are also employed throughout the first three chapters. They are not used to verify the blogs but as the Turkish state’s ‘archive’ of the uprising’s suppression. The publishers of *Vakit*, Hakkı Tarık Us, *Akşam*, Necmettin Sadak, and *Cumhuriyet*, Yunus Nadi, were all deputies of the ruling Republican People’s Party. As the Republican regime was directly involved in the press during the uprising they are viewed as its “mouthpieces.”⁷⁶ British diplomatic sources and American and British papers are also employed, at times to trace how the uprising was re-cited. The citation of women’s resistance during the Mount Ararat Uprising and the citation of PKK women is discussed in Chapters III and IV. The memoir of the commander of the uprising, İhsan Nuri, is used to read with and against the Turkish press’ cartoons and maps of the uprising as well as Prime Minister İsmet İnönü’s summary of the rebels’ defeat and the memoirs of Turkish gendarme officer, Zühtü Güven. Nuri and Güven’s “mentions and silences” of the women who participated in the revolt are used in Chapter III to both restore their resistance to Kurdish history and expose how violence is used to make gender.⁷⁷ Nuri’s memoir was originally published in the *Hêvî* journal of the Kurdish Institute of Paris and translated into French and Turkish. I use the Turkish version I bought in Turkey. Rohat Alakom argues that Nuri’s memoirs are the most important source about uprising but “not organized systemically.”⁷⁸ As Nuri is the only Kurdish leader to have written his memoirs, they are a “rare document,” according to Chris Kutschera. However, like Alakom, he concludes that they are “a strange

⁷⁵ Omnia El Shakry, “History without Documents”: The Vexed Archives of Decolonization in the Middle East,” *American Historical Review* (June 2015), 934. See also in the same volume: Jean Allman, “Phantoms of the Archive: Kwame Nkrumah, a Nazi Pilot Named Hanna, and the Contingencies of Postcolonial History-Writing,” 104-129.

⁷⁶ Şahin Alpay, “Two Faces of the Press in Turkey: The Role of the Media in Turkey’s Modernisation and Democracy,” in *Turkey’s Engagement with Modernity: Conflict and Change in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Celia Kerslake, Kerem Öktem, Philip Robins (Basingstoke, England and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 372.

⁷⁷ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*.

⁷⁸ Rohat Alakom, *Xoybûn Örgütü ve Ağrı Ayaklanması* (Istanbul: Avesta, 1998), 99-100.

mixture of Kurdish lyricism and historical facts.”⁷⁹ But it needs to be re-stated that Nuri wrote a memoir of the uprising not his autobiography. In other words, he sat down, forty years later, to grapple with the meaning of the uprising’s defeat and the violence of its suppression during the ‘renewal’ of Kurdish resistance in Iraq and Turkey in the 1960s rather than to merely ‘record’ its “historical facts.” Additionally, most discussions of the Mount Ararat Uprising focus on the role of Xoybûn, the Kurdish nationalist organization based in Syria who sent Nuri to Ararat in 1927 to help organize the rebels. In Xoybûn’s literature the uprising is woven into a long history of Kurdish nationalism. While Xoybûn called Kurd Ava the rebels’ capital, Nuri admitted that it had been a Türkmen village, their residents expelled by the Ararat fighters in 1927.⁸⁰ Xoybûn’s description of the uprising is less lyrical but more persuasive, Ararat incorporated into an argument for a Kurdish nation-state. The focus on what British diplomats called those who wrote (Xoybûn) rather than those who fought not erases the men and women on Ararat but the mountain’s other sovereignties.⁸¹ Nuri’s memoir provides a window into “non-national sources of power and belonging” not as competing forms of allegiance but as local and overlapping understandings of authority and space.⁸²

Like *Doğubayazıt Natural Treasures*, the dissertation uses European travel writings. As the brochure explains, they are “in our hands.” Early Kurdish history is “dispersed in various archives” and often inaccessible in Turkish and Ottoman archives. While the travel writing of Napoleon’s ambassador Jaubert, continues the brochure, contain the typical story of “a cruel Kurdish *paşa* and Kurdish bandits,” they “illuminate the history” of Bayezid. From Jaubert, states the brochure, “we learn where the Murat river passed,” and that the city “had a number of neighborhoods.” Jaubert informs us that “Armenians lived below the palace and Muslims on its upper side” while the districts outside the town were “divided between tribes.” Most importantly,

⁷⁹ Christ Kutschera, *The Kurdish National Movement* [electronic edition], originally published as *Le Mouvement National Kurde* (Paris: Editions Flammarion, 1979).

⁸⁰ See Chapter II.

⁸¹ FO424/274 Doc. 181, enclosure in Doc. 180 [E 1717/68/44] O’Leary to Mr. Morgan, Angora, March 24, 1931. “The self-conscious race fighting for unity and independence against Turkish tyranny exists, I venture to suggest, on in the theory of propagandist organisations, such as Kheybun [sic] and Dashnak [sic], largely composed of Armenians and westernized Kurds, of in the minds of those who are won by such propaganda. The outbreaks are in many cases spontaneous, and are not directed by any central organisation, and there is little connexion between those who write and those who fight.” All British diplomatic sources were accessed online via the British National Archives.

⁸² Belge, State Building and the Limits of Legibility,” 96.

it concludes, we learn the structure of the local government. Kurdish ruler Mahmud Paşa “had an advisory council, judges, chief soldier, and stewards working in the villages.” Maria O’Shea dismisses the use of nineteenth century travel writings by Kurds, arguing that “[p]roof of existence is considered more important than political correctness.”⁸³ But as Christopher Houston argues, the “appropriation” of travel literature by Kurds is also an “antidote to the Turkish state’s own fabrication of ethnographic knowledge about them.” Houston argues that Orientalist critique “neglects” how Turkey, Iran, and Iraq use images of ‘backward’ Kurds as to “secure` their own “sovereign subject status.” Kurds are not defined by western “oriental” discourses but national stories that represent them as non-national others in need of assimilation.⁸⁴

Lastly, I want to acknowledge the work of two scholars, Sedat Ulugana and Kemal Suphandağ. Their histories of the Mount Ararat Uprising highlight how ‘Kurdish’ histories of the revolt both differ from the scholarship in English that casts it as an episode in the story of Kurdish nationalism and how ‘Kurdish’ scholarship has been ignored by western historians. Both Ulugana and Suphandağ use a wider variety of sources: *kilam* (oral epics), oral history, family stories and memories, Turkish and English newspapers and Turkish state archives. They are also part narrative and part archive, British diplomatic communications and stories from the Turkish press placed in the final pages for the reader to consider on their own and for themselves. Perhaps “numerous sources” for Kurdish history remain “unexplored” as Metin Yüksel argues. However, his conclusion that the uprising is an “unknown chapter in the social history of the Middle East” inadvertently erases the important work of scholars like Ulugana and Suphandağ. As well, the stories of the revolt are not “unknown” in Doğubayazıt. Ulugana and Suphandağ’s stories of the women who participated in the uprising “flash up” throughout the dissertation.⁸⁵

1.4 A Note About Footnotes

There are a lot of footnotes in the dissertation. There are a few reasons for this. Firstly, both the diversity of the Kurdish movement and Kurdish society demand footnotes. They are used to

⁸³ Maria O’Shea, *Trapped Between Map and Reality: Geography and Perceptions of Kurdistan* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 130.

⁸⁴ Christopher Houston, *Kurdistan: Crafting of National Selves* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008), 24-30.

⁸⁵ Metin Yüksel, “On the borders of the Turkish and Iranian nation states: The story of Ferzende and Besra.” *Middle Eastern Studies* (2016), doi: 10.1080/00263206.2016.1147436 13

explain, for example, that in 2012 Doğubayazıt was run by the pro-Kurdish party, the BDP, but in 2014, the HDP ran the municipality. A footnote is then used to clarify that they are actually the same party, providing a history of the Turkish state's closure of Kurdish political parties. I use Kurdish Movement generally to mean (borrowing Necla Açıık's definition): "[T]he processes and aspirations of various parties, organizations, groups, and individuals that address the Kurdish question. This can range from armed struggle to a mere articulation of Kurdish identity."⁸⁶ It is a "generic signifier," explains Hamit Bozarslan that "also designates a plurality of political and/or military movements." The Kurdish movement is "simultaneously unified and diverse."⁸⁷ Footnotes add to or amend this definition when necessary. As well, because Kurdish resistance is often written as a paragraph or chapter in histories of the Middle East, the footnotes provide necessary background and detail. They also, however, retell the history that has been "explicated" in order to maintain the continuity of the narrative. The dissertation attempts to tell the history of Kurdish resistance around Mount Ararat without erasing the mountain's Armenian histories and geographies. At times they are kept on the same page, other times put in the footnotes as they "belong to narratives other than the one you happen to be following."⁸⁸ And because the romance and tragedy of Kurdistan is often ironic, jokes occasionally find their way into the notes on the bottom of the dissertation's pages.

1.5 Chapter Outlines

Chapter I, "The Dream of Kurdistan is Buried Here": Remembrance and Mourning in the Borderlands of the Middle Eastern Nation-State begins and ends in the summer of 2014. Inbetween it returns to the summer of 1930 to examine the cartoons used by the Turkish press to illustrate the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising. The cartoons not only reaffirmed the defeat of the Ararat rebels, they captured the violence of the Turkish state's 'pacification' of its "smaller groups."⁸⁹ The chapter then traces the cartoon of a headstone that proclaimed the defeat of the "dream of Kurdistan" on September 17, 1930, following the re-appropriation of its epitaph to rethink the temporality of Kurdish resistance. The chapter argues that over the summer of

⁸⁶ Açıık, "Re-defining the role of women within the Kurdish national movement in Turkey in the 1990s," 114.

⁸⁷ Bozarslan, "Being in Time": The Kurdish Movement and Universal Quests," 61.

⁸⁸ Sven Lindqvist, *A History of Bombing* (New York: The New York Press, 2000), 1.

⁸⁹ FO424/266 Doc. 4 [E 256/74/65], Sir G. Clerk to Sir Austen Chamberlin, Angora, January 4, 1927.

2014 the cartoon flashed up not to place the uprising in a history of national redemption but to reanimate the nation-state's "ongoing history of compulsion, violence, and disappointment."⁹⁰ Chapter II: The "*Kibla* of Kurdistan" and a "Corner" of the Turkish Nation-State: Imagining National Space during the Mount Ararat Uprising (1926-1931) uses the memoir of İhsan Nuri, the commander of the Mount Ararat rebels, and Turkish Prime Minister İsmet Paşa's speech to parliament at the end of the Mount Ararat Uprising to read with and against the maps of Mount Ararat and the Turkish-Iranian border published on the front pages of the Republican press during the uprising's suppression. The dissertation's second chapter tells the story of Ararat's incorporation into the time and space of the Turkish nation-state in the summer of 1930 alongside its re-imagination as the direction of Kurdish resistance from 1926 to 1931. Rather than reducing the uprising to a story of competing territorial claims—one victorious, the other impossible—the chapter argues that it is better read as a conflicting conception of sovereign space. The chapter highlights how nation-states make space by "foreclosing countervailing political geographies."⁹¹ At the same time it argues against those who read the beginning of the nation-state as the end of the frontier's other sovereignties. Using the work of borderlands scholars, the chapter concludes that the Ottoman frontier did not end in the Middle East nation-state. Rather it was transformed into a national periphery, a space that continues to both reinforce and "undermine[]" the nation-state's authority and imagination.⁹²

Chapter III "Fighting side by side with their Men": The Women of the Mount Ararat Uprising and the Feminist Erasures of (Some) Histories of Resistance in Turkey examines the erasures of some women's resistance. The chapter argues that not only did the emancipation of Turkish women coincide with the 'pacification' of Kurds, the history of female liberation in Republican Turkey relies on the erasure of the participation of Kurdish women in the Mount Ararat Uprising. To put it another way, the resistance of Kurdish women to Turkish modernization is "determined insignificant" by the intertwined narratives of the emancipation of Turkish women and the 'pacification' of Kurdistan.⁹³ The chapter is both an examination of how erasure works and how

⁹⁰ Max Pensky, "Method and Time," 188.

⁹¹ Rifkin, *Manifesting America*, 9.

⁹² Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett, "On Borderlands," *Journal of American History* 98, no. 2 (2011), 348.

⁹³ Pensky, "Method and time," 187.

erasure can be read to restore the resistance of Kurdish women to both feminist and Kurdish history.

Chapter IV: Bequeathal and Inheritance: The History of Women's Resistance as Written by its Kurdish Female Martyrs and their Descendants uses the histories of violence told by the female martyrs of the PKK and their 'descendants' to write an ongoing history of women's resistance from Kurdistan. The chapter does not restore Kurdish women to feminist history but challenges some of its assumptions of political violence by telling particular histories of female martyrdom in Kurdistan and a universal history of feminism from its Kurdish margins. It follows a photograph of PKK martyr, Fatma Sağın, as it flashes up over the summer of 2012 in Doğubayazıt to also show how 'ordinary' Kurds make meaning out of Kurdistan's violent history. It weaves together two histories of women's resistance, one told by its Kurdish female martyrs, the other by their descendants.

The following stories of Kurdish resistance are, at times, told as romance, other moments as tragedy. However, neither is used to organize the plot. A "longing" for revolution "is no bad thing," argues Bill Schwarz, however "it is a question, not a solution." We should not evict this longing from "the radical imagination." Without romance all have is tragedy. "Terrible things happen" but history is not fiction, it has "no predetermined, fateful end." Rather it is tragedy in "colloquial terms."⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Bill Schwarz, "Decolonization as Tragedy?" in *History after Hobsbawm: Writing the Past for the Twenty-First Century*, eds. John H. Arnold, Matthew Hilton and Jan Rieger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 105-106, 115.

“History decays into images, not into stories.”
Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

Chapter 1

“The Dream of Kurdistan is Buried Here.” Remembrance and Mourning in the Borderlands of the Middle Eastern Nation-State



Fig. 2.1: “The Dream of Kurdistan is Buried Here” (*Milliyet*, September 19, 1930)

2 “The Dream of Kurdistan is Buried Here”

On September 19, 1930, the Turkish newspaper, *Milliyet*, published the above cartoon (fig. 1.1) to announce the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising, one of the “three great Kurdish revolts” to challenge Kemalist rule during the formative years of the modern Turkey.⁹⁵ The cartoon, placed prominently on the newspaper’s front page, depicted a gravestone on the summit of Mount Ararat. Celebrated as the resting place of the ark, this “sublime and venerable mountain”⁹⁶ in Eastern Anatolia has been admired for how “unlike” it is, “in details” and

⁹⁵ Michael Gunter, *Historical Dictionary of the Kurds* (Lanham, MD and Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, 2004), 9. The other two Kurdish “uprisings” (Turkish *ayaklanmalar*) or “rebellions” (Turkish *isyanlar*) were Sheikh Said in 1925 and Dersim, 1937-1938. Dersim is also referred to as the Dersim Massacre (Turkish *katliam*) or Genocide due to brutality and violence of its suppression.

⁹⁶ James Moirer, *Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor to Constantinople, in the years 1808 and 1809* (Philadelphia: M. Carey, 1816), 299.

“general effect,” to other great heights.⁹⁷ While “considerably lower than several of the Himalayan peaks,” biblical scholar Henry Hyverant insisted that Ararat was more imposing. “The farther one stands from it the more he is impressed by its size, as all the other mountains around it look like insignificant mounds, whilst Ararat towers alone and grand above them.”⁹⁸ No caption appeared either above or below the cartoon to set its “moral and political” message.⁹⁹ Instead, the cartoonist etched a caption-like epitaph onto the cartoon headstone. With the words: “Here lies buried the Dream of Kurdistan” the “mouthpiece”¹⁰⁰ of the Turkish state consigned the Mount Ararat Rebellion to the “gigantic cemetery of...nations” which had never achieved independence.¹⁰¹ The last region of Kurdish resistance “has become a grave,” Turkish General Salih Paşa informed the readers of the nation’s largest paper, *Cumhuriyet*. As of September 12, 1930, Ağrı Dağı’s (Mount Ararat) “troubles” were “history.”¹⁰²

The “pendulum” of history, explained Tewfik Rüştü Bey to the British Ambassador after Turkey acquiesced to the League of Nations’ decision to ‘attach’ the former multi-ethnic Ottoman province of Mosul to British Mandate Iraq, “swings between...period[s] of empire” and “independent nations and races.”¹⁰³ According to the Turkey’s foreign minister, the “pendulum”

⁹⁷ James Bryce, *Transcaucasia and Ararat: Notes of a Vacation Tour in the Autumn of 1876*, 3rd edition (London: MacMillan and Co.: 1878), 231.

⁹⁸ Rev. Henry Hyverant, “Armenian, Past and Present,” in *The Armenian Massacres 1894-1896: US Media Testimony*, ed. Arman Kirakossian (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004/1895), 101.

⁹⁹ Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 60. The artist sets the “critical force” of the image with a caption (pg. 90). “What we must demand from the photographer,” states Walter Benjamin in *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, “is the ability to put such a caption beneath his picture as will rescue it from the ravages of modishness and confer upon it a revolutionary use value.”

¹⁰⁰ Şahin Alpay, “Two Faces of the Press in Turkey: The Role of the Media in Turkey’s Modernisation and Democracy,” in *Turkey’s Engagement with Modernity: Conflict and Change in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Celia Kerslake, Kerem Öktem, Philip Robins (Basingstoke, England and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 372. While *Milliyet* was the “semi-official” newspaper of the Kemalist Regime, strict press and censorship laws introduced after the suppression of the Sheikh Said Rebellion in 1925 meant that all newspapers were government “mouthpieces.” The publishers/editors of *Cumhuriyet* (Yunus Nadi Ablaoğlu), *Akşam* (Necmettin Sadık Sadak), and *Vakit* (Hakkı Tarık Us) were all members of parliament for the ruling Republican Peoples’ Party (CHP), the sole political party in Turkey until the introduction of multiparty elections in 1950.

¹⁰¹ Etienne Balibar, “The Nation Form: History and Ideology,” *Review* 13, no. 3 (1990), 335.

¹⁰² “Ağrı dağımı şakilere nasıl mezar yaptık?” (How did we dig a grave for the bandits on Ararat?), *Cumhuriyet*, September 17, 1930. Salih Paşa [Omurtak] was the commander of the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising over the summer of 1930. He served as the Chief of the General Staff, the head of the Turkish Armed Forces, from 1946-1948.

¹⁰³ Tewfik Rüştü [Aras] served as the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1925 to 1938. According to the Turkish scholar, Tancer Akçam, Aras had, as an Ottoman official with the Supreme Hygiene Council during the First World War and Armenian Genocide, overseen the disposal of Armenian corpses, sent with “thousands of

had reached the “maximun” of its trajectory “towards...separate nations.” Perhaps also alluding to Turkey’s defeat of the Kurdish leader Sheikh Said two years previously, Tewfik Rüştü Bey told the British ambassador that during the pendulum’s “inevitable” swing back into “national units” Kurds were “doomed.” Their “low cultural level” hindered their assimilation into the Turkish nation-state. They were “unfitted for the struggle for life in competition with the more advanced and cultured Turks.” Tewfik Rüştü Bey concluded that Kurds living in Turkey would either have to “emigrate” to Iraq or Persia, or like the “Hindoos of America,” simply “disappear.”¹⁰⁴

2.1.1 Smashing the Epitaph

In the late spring of 2014, *Milliyet*’s cartoon resurfaced on the front page of the ‘pro-Kurdish’ newspaper *Özgür Gündem* (fig. 1.2), its caption-like epitaph shattered into pieces to announce the election of the city of Ağrı’s first Kurdish mayor, Sırrı Sakık, of the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP).¹⁰⁵ The city, like the province it became the capital of, took the Turkish name of the mountain, Ağrı, after the suppression of the uprising.¹⁰⁶ Cartoonist Halil İncesu celebrated

kilograms of lime” to the Eastern provinces and given “six months to complete the task.” See *A shameful act: the Armenian genocide and the question of Turkish responsibility*, trans. Paul Bessemer (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), 363-364.

¹⁰⁴ FO424/266 Doc. 4 [E 256/74/65], Sir G. Clerk to Sir Austen Chamberlin, Angora, January 4, 1927. While Tewfik Rüştü Bey estimated that there were only 500,000 Kurds left in Turkey, a former Ottoman provincial governor told Clerk that there were at least a million and a half Kurds living in the Republic. Clerk (the British Ambassador to Turkey) concluded that the Turkish government could “never hope to eliminate,” all of its Kurds, noting that despite the army’s large presence in the “Eastern provinces” there had been no sign of their “extinction.”

¹⁰⁵ Pro-Kurdish is used to mean sympathetic to the Kurdish cause rather than language or ethnicity. Sakık had won the election in March, however, the results were disputed by the Truth and Justice Party (AKP) incumbent and a new election was called for June 1, 2014. Sakık, like many other Kurdish mayors, was removed from his elected position after the “coup” of 2016 and replaced by a governor (*kaymakam*) appointed by Ankara. Sakık was Ağrı’s co-mayor. Since the mid-2000s the Kurdish movement in Turkey has followed a policy of gender-parity in which all leadership positions are shared. This system is not recognized by the Turkish state and therefore Sakık was the “official” mayor of Ağrı. This, however, did not prevent the arrest and imprisonment of his unrecognized co-mayor, Mukkades Kubilay, in December of 2016. In the 2018 municipal national elections, the AKP ‘took back’ Ağrı (the mayor is now the bellicose Savcı Sayan).

¹⁰⁶ Ağrı had been called Karaköse (literally black rock), the name given to town by General Kazım Karabekir when he ‘liberated’ the town from Armenian forces in 1919. Although officially called Sarbulak before then, the town was known as Karakilise for its Armenian church (*kilise*) made out of Ararat’s black (*kara*) rock. Its name change in 1919 was an erasure of the town’s Armenian history, its inhabitants told by Karabekir that they lived in a Turkish state. For a discussion of Ağrı’s Ottoman history and its transformation after the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising into the capital of the province of Ağrı, see: M. Kalman, *Belge, tanık ve yaşayanlarıyla Ağrı Direnişi 1926-1930* (İstanbul: Pêrî Yayınları, 1997), 9.



Fig. 1.2: Smashing *Milliyet*'s epitaph after the election of Sırrı Sakık (Halil İncesu, *Özgür Gündem*, June 3, 2014)

celebrated Sakık's victory by drawing a hand bursting through Ararat's summit, its index and middle fingers forming the "V" for victory (*zafer işareti*) as it broke *Milliyet*'s cartoon headstone into three pieces.¹⁰⁷ The largest fragment, "dream" (*muhayyel*), exploded into the sky while the two smaller pieces, "here Kurdistan" (*Kurdistan burada*) and "is buried" (*metfundur*), were sent tumbling to the ground below. "President Sırrı [Sakık] is our voice" (*Sırrı başkan dengê me ye*) sang local rapper SeKa over the summer of 2014, the jubilation of Sakık's victory both an expectation for the future and a redress of the past. "We want freedom, we won't let Ağrı go" (*ez dixwazen azadî, ez nahilînen Agirî*), SeKa promised in Kurdish before switching to Turkish to warn that "freedom runs through our veins like a drug" (*özgürlük damarlarımızı işleyen bir uyuşturucu*):

Kurds always oppressed,
Our people believed,
We were not intimidated and we fought,
On the evening of June 1st, a bomb exploded.¹⁰⁸

At the end of the summer the epitaph reappeared on the flyer for Doğubayazıt's 2014 commemoration of the Mount Ararat Uprising. While Ağrı, ninety kilometres from Ararat, had been the headquarters of the Turkish army during the uprising, Doğubayazıt, twelve kilometres

¹⁰⁷ The *zafer işareti* is held up during protests and commemorations to honor the jailed leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Abdullah Öcalan.

¹⁰⁸ In Turkish: "Ezildi hep Kürtler, halkımız inandık, yılmadık ve savaştık, bir Haziran gecesi bir bomba patladık"; SeKA [Serhat Kaya], "Mesopotamya III," 2014 [Music Video], accessed November 1, 2014, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HyFfpJ-Gcz4>. The video has been taken down but a viewer has uploaded the song (last accessed on January 28, 2019), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxeEG8XXd_A.

southwest of the mountain and the headquarters of the Kurdish rebels, had been the provincial capital.¹⁰⁹ After Kurds attacked Bayezid (like Ağrı it was renamed after the uprising) in the fall of 1927 and “carried off a number of Turkish officers and soldiers,” the provincial administration was moved to the “safety” of Karaköse (Ağrı).¹¹⁰ “The Kurdish movement has destroyed the dream of colonialism by shattering this grave into pieces,” stated the photocopied “invitation” (*davet*) to the commemoration on the fourth of September. Eighty-four years after the “mouthpiece” of the Turkish state announced the defeat of the Mount Ararat Uprising with the image of a gravestone on the summit of a cartoon Mount Ararat, the “descendants” of the rebels re-painted its caption-like epitaph onto the side of a coffin-shaped monument in its foothills (fig. 1.3).¹¹¹ The epitaph no longer proclaimed the death of “the Dream of Kurdistan.” Neither



Fig. 1.3: “The Dream of Colonialism is Buried Here,” Commemoration of the Ararat Uprising, Doğubayazıt, Turkey, 2014¹¹²

did the monument’s fresh paint promise its resurrection. Kurdistan had been removed and replaced with the Turkish word for colonialism (*sömürgeçilik*). “Here Lies Buried the Dream of Colonialism” announced the epitaph, its letters squeezed onto the side of the reimagined grave. What exactly was being commemorated here? Were the attendees mourners or festival-goers?

¹⁰⁹ Bayezid/Bayazıt (Kurdish Bazîd) had been an Ottoman *sancak* (a subdivision of a province or *eyalet*). It was an important city on the trade route that took merchants from the Black Sea port of Trabzon through Erzurum to Tabriz. It was moved east (*doğu*) after the suppression of the revolt. Some residents say it was moved because the original site lacked water. Others argue that it was punished after the revolt, destroyed by the army, and rebuilt six kilometres east. There is an association (*dernek*) in Doğubayazıt dedicated to getting the city’s provincial capital status “back.”

¹¹⁰ FO416/81, Doc. 138 [E 4398/2822/34], Clerk to Chamberlain, Constantinople, October 13, 1927.

¹¹¹ From the commemoration’s flyer (fig. 1. 32).

¹¹² “Ağrı Dağı’nda bir mezar: Hayali sömürgeçilik burada meftundur!” (A Grave on Mount Ararat: The dream of colonialism in buried here), *Herêma Agirî* [blog], posted on September 4, 2014, accessed September 30, 2014, <https://herema-ararat.blogspot.com/2014/09/agr-dagnda-bir-mezar-hayali.html>.

Were they invited there to reclaim the “dream of Kurdistan” or mourn the “dream of colonialism”?

The “dream of Kurdistan” is often interpreted as the unfulfilled yearning of Kurds “to be what what more fortunate people are—a nation state.”¹¹³ This reading removes the defeat of the Mount Ararat rebels from *Milliyet*’s triumphal story of the making of modern Turkey and incorporates the uprising into the ongoing romance of the not-yet Kurdish nation-state. However, the uprising’s commemoration in the month of its defeat suggests a different reading of the “dream of Kurdistan.” While the epitaph’s destruction on the front page of the Kurdish newspaper *Özgür Gündem* in June 2014 can be placed in a narrative of a national redemption, its reconstruction at the foot at the end of the summer recalled the nation-state’s “ongoing history of compulsion, violence, and disappointment.”¹¹⁴ The remembrance of Mount Ararat Uprising in September both celebrated and mourned “the Dream of Kurdistan.” The winners of history, argues Stéphane Mosès, maintain their “illusion” of victory by “wip[ing] out all traces of the history” of the defeated. However, the losers of history are “doomed to forget nothing, neither the rule of the powerful that victimizes them nor the tradition of victims that it must perpetuate.”¹¹⁵ Over the summer of 2014, the resistance and defeat of the Mount Ararat Uprising was recognized by the present as one of its “own concerns.” The cartoon’s caption-like epitaph flashed up in a “moment of danger” to reanimate the history of the defeated.¹¹⁶

2.1.2 “Possibility” and “Danger” in the Summer of 2014

İncesu’s smashing of the epitaph on the front page of *Özgür Gündem* in June, like Kurdish commander İhsan Nuri’s description of the Ararat rebel’s “joy” at the beginning of the summer of 1930,¹¹⁷ anticipated “new political possibilities.”¹¹⁸ The resurfacing of the cartoon captured the

¹¹³ Wadie Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006), xv.

¹¹⁴ Max Pensky, “Method and time: Benjamin’s dialectical images,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, ed. David Ferris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 188.

¹¹⁵ Stéphane Mosès, “The Angel of History,” in *The Angel of History: Rosenzweig, Benjamin, Scholem*, trans. Barbara Harshav (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 110.

¹¹⁶ Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007 [1968]), 255. “The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again.” [Theses V]. “To articulate the past historically.....means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger” [Theses VI].

¹¹⁷ Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı* (İstanbul: Med Yayıncılık, 1992), 55.

¹¹⁸ Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 304.

euphoria of Sakik's win. Its destruction reanimated the hope that peace negotiations (the "Solution Process" or *Çözüm Süreci*) would end the forty year conflict between the Turkish state and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the expectation that Kurdish politicians would finally break the ten percent threshold (*baraç*) and enter parliament as a party in 2015 and the possibility of Kurdish autonomy in Rojava (Western Kurdistan/Northern Syria).¹¹⁹ But while the festival-like atmosphere of commemoration of the Mount Ararat Uprising reflected the summer's optimism, the remade cartoon grave at its centre recalled "recurring political dangers."¹²⁰ Its painted epitaph was a reminder that the Ararat rebels had been crushed by "every device of modern warfare."¹²¹ In the month before the commemoration, *Da'ish* (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) attacked Yezidi Kurds living in the Sinjar (Şingal) district of Northern Iraq. Kurdish news channels showed images of Yezidis fleeing on foot, their reporters asking where the military forces (*pêşmerge*) of Iraqi Kurdistan were as their cameras filmed PKK guerrillas rescuing fleeing Yezidi villagers in the back of pick-up trucks. On August 15, the anniversary of the PKK's resurrection (*diriliş*) of armed struggle, the unveiling of a statue of martyr (*şehit*) Mahzum Korkmaz (Ağıt) in Lice, Turkey, led to violent altercations between the police, trying to tear it down, and protestors trying to prevent its destruction.¹²² A few weeks after the commemoration, *Da'ish* attacked Kobane (Kobanî), one of the three regions of Kurdish autonomy in Rojava. In October, a number of Kurdish protestors in Turkey were killed when they took to the streets to demonstrate their support for the men and women defending Kurdish autonomy in Rojava. The peace process was almost over.¹²³

¹¹⁹ For background to the peace process see: Yılmaz Ensaroğlu, "Turkey's Kurdish Question and the Peace Process," *Insight Turkey* 15, no. 2 (2013), 7-17, http://file.insightturkey.com/Files/Pdf/20130415155719_15_2_2013_ensaroglu.pdf.

¹²⁰ Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of seeing*, 304.

¹²¹ Rosita Forbes, *Conflict: Angora to Afghanistan* (London, Toronto, Melbourne and Sydney: Cassell and Company Limited, 1931), 262.

¹²² On August 15, 1984 PKK commander Mahzum Korkmaz fired the "first bullet" and "resurrected" Kurdish armed struggle. Although formed on November 27, 1978, August 15 is celebrated as the PKK's anniversary (the party's the rebirth of armed struggle and the liberation of all of Kurdistan).

¹²³ The peace process officially came to an end in 2015. Kobanî is/was one of the three "cantons" of Kurdish autonomy in Northern Syria or Western Kurdistan (Rojava), liberated during the initial years of the Syrian Civil War. The ruling Kurdish party in Rojava is the Democratic Union Party (PYD-*Partiya Yekiti a Demokratik*) which is a "sister party" of the PKK. Like the PKK (Turkey), the PÇDK-Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party (Iran), and PJAK-Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (Iran), the PYD is one of the many organizations that make up the KCK (Union of Communities in Kurdistan, in Kurdish *Koma Civakên Kurdistan*). After the capture/kidnapping of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999, the military-political organization underwent a number of institutional and philosophical changes. Over the 2000s, it transformed into the umbrella organization, KCK, and to a project of radical democracy (PKK, however, is still the term used by most people to describe the whole organization). Öcalan

After a brief discussion of the uprising's inbetween position in chronologies and temporalities of Kurdish and Turkish nationalism, the chapter begins in the summer of 1930 with the cartoons used by the Turkish press to illustrate the defeat of the Mount Ararat Uprising. *Milliyet's* cartoon was not the only cartoon to appear in the pages of the Turkish during the uprising's suppression. It was merely the last, placed on *Milliyet's* front page to proclaim the end of the uprising and Kurdish national ambitions. Afterwards news of the army's "clean-up" of the remaining rebels was regulated to the inside pages and the Turkish past. The chapter then examines the epitaph's re-appropriation by Kurdish nationalists, beginning with the 're-emergence' of Kurdish resistance in Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s, and then after the capture/kidnapping of PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan, in 1999. The final section of the chapter returns to the summer of 2014 and follows the cartoon's reanimation of the violence that accompanied the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising. The flashing up of its caption-like epitaph not only revealed different meanings of this violence but its conflicting temporalities. For Ağrı's governor, the suppression of the Mount Ararat rebels was "over and done with."¹²⁴ But for their "descendants," their defeat was "endlessly present."¹²⁵

2.2 Inbetween Resistance and Massacre

2.2.1 One of the "Three Great Kurdish Revolts" (in Turkey)

The Mount Ararat Uprising was the longest of Republican Turkey's "three great Kurdish revolts," beginning in 1926 and continuing beyond its suppression to 1932.¹²⁶ Geographically, it

first sketched the idea of "Democratic Confederalism" in his death penalty appeal to the European Human Rights Court in 1999, laying the groundwork for the transformation of the party's goal of a Kurdish nation-state to the liberation of the peoples of the Middle East from the nation-state. See Öcalan's *Democratic Confederalism* (London, Cologne: Transmedia Publishing Ltd, 2001), available at www.freedom-for-ocalan.com. The party's transformation at the same time into a feminist organization is discussed in Chapter IV. For background to and discussions of the party's ideological and institutional changes see: Adem Uzun, "Living Freedom": The Evolution of the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey and the Efforts to Resolve It," *Berghof Transitions Series* 11 (2014), <https://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications>; Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya and Joost Jongerden, "Reassembling the Political: The PKK and the Project of Radical Democracy," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* [online] 14 (2012), <http://ejts.revues.org/4615>; Seevan Saeed, *Kurdish Politics in Turkey: From the PKK to the KCK* (Routledge: London and New York, 2017).

¹²⁴ Stephan Palmié, "Slavery, Historicism, and the Poverty of Memorialization," in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, eds. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 368.

¹²⁵ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 37. "History is played along the margins which join a society with its past and with the very act of separating itself from that past."

¹²⁶ Gunter, *Historical Dictionary of the Kurds*, 9. Scholars give various dates for the rebellion. Those who date it from 1927 to 1930 place its beginning in the formation of the nationalist organization Xoybûn and its end with

was also the largest. Fighting between the Kurdish rebels and the Turkish army stretched “150 miles,” from Hoşap to Van, and spilled into Iran, Iraq, and Syria.¹²⁷ The violence that accompanied its suppression over the summer of 1930 was both ruthless and openly acknowledged by the Turkish press. “More than 15,000 were annihilated in the operation in Zilan,” stated the front page of *Cumhuriyet* on July 16, 1930.¹²⁸ “Most of the dead are local ignorant Kurds who were driven by religious propaganda” explained İbrahim Tali Bey, the Inspector General of the Eastern Provinces. “Their villages were burned and their children were resettled in Erciş.”¹²⁹ At the time, as General Salih Paşa warned on July 15, 1930, the Mount Ararat Uprising was more threatening than the Sheikh Said Rebellion.¹³⁰ Retrospectively, scholars of Kurdish nationalism have labelled Ararat the “most purely nationalist” of the three “great Kurdish rebellion[s]” to challenge the Turkish Republic.¹³¹ It is, however, the “least studied” of the three.¹³² An event’s historical importance, explains Michel-Rolph Trouillot in *Silencing the Past*, does not always reflect the “victories and setbacks, gains and losses” of its participants, nor can it be read simply as the extension of its “original impact.” The uneven distribution of historical power “makes some narratives possible and silences others.”¹³³

Nuri’s escape to Iran. Others, mainly Kurdish scholars (writing in Kurdish or of Kurdish descent), begin the rebellion in Ararat in 1926, the year Celali leader, Biro (Biroyê Heskî Tellî), fled to the mountain to escape deportation to Western Turkey. They also end it a year or two later as many of the rebels continued to resist. While the title of the French translation of Nuri’s memoir dates the rebellion from 1927-1930, Nuri described the rebellion as lasting four to five years. “For five and a half years Kurds liberated an area inside the Turkish state” states the last page of the Turkish version of his memoir (pg. 112). Nuri described June 1930 as the “beginning” of the uprising’s suppression (*büyük saldırısı*, pg. 77).

¹²⁷ FO424/273, Doc. 56 [E 3687/1511/44] Clive to Henderson, Constantinople, July 10, 1930.

¹²⁸ *Tayyarelerimizin bombardımanı devam ediyor*,” (Our pilots continue their bombing campaign), *Cumhuriyet*, July 16, 1930.

¹²⁹ “*Kat’i netice yakındır*” (A decisive resolution is close), *Cumhuriyet*, July 16, 1930. Described as “[t]he apostle of pacification in Kurdistan by persuasion, road-making and education,” by British diplomats (FO424/273, Doc. 75 [E 4322/1511/44], Helm to Henderson, Constantinople, August 6, 1930), Dr. İbrahim Tali [Öngören] was appointed the first Inspector General of the East in January of 1928. The Eastern Inspectorates were military administrations that ruled the Eastern provinces after the suppression of the Sheikh Said Rebellion. Uğur Ümit Üngör compares the Inspectorate system to internal colonialism, explaining that it played the main role in organizing the Republic’s “re-settlement” of Kurdish tribes in the 1920s and 1930s. The Eastern Inspectorates were set up to “track down, arrest, and deport Kurds earmarked for removal, and receive, register, and assign property to Turkish settlers moving in from the west”; *The Making of Modern Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 145.

¹³⁰ “*Kürdistan Krallığı!*” (Kingdom of Kurdistan), *Cumhuriyet*, July 15, 1930.

¹³¹ Martin van Bruinessen, “Genocide in Kurdistan? The Suppression of the Dersim Rebellion in Turkey (1937-38) and the Chemical War against the Iraqi Kurds (1988),” in *Conceptual and Historical Dimensions of Genocide*, ed. George J. Andreopoulos (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 151.

¹³² Rohat Alakom, *Xoybûn Örgütü ve Ağrı Ayaklanması* (Istanbul: Avesta, 1998), 99.

¹³³ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 47 & 17. The “serious task,” argues Trouillot, is “determining not what history is....but how history works” (pg. 25).

Due to Ararat's position in the chronology of the Kurdish rebellions in Republican Turkey, occurring after Sheikh Said (1925) and before Dersim (1937-1938), only some narratives of its defeat have seemed possible to scholars. Its depiction as the "most nationalist" of the three casts it as a phase in the development of national consciousness, set inbetween the "first large-scale Kurdish rebellion" that set "the pattern" for resistance "between World War I and 1938"—Sheikh Said—and before Dersim, its violent suppression in 1938 both the cowing of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey until the 1960s and Republican Turkey's darkest moment.¹³⁴ Ararat's resistance is both "*deja-vu*" —"[a]gain, the Kemalists responded with violence and a local conflagration grew into a guerrilla war quite similar to the Sheikh Said"—and an augur, its suppression over the summer of 1930 foreshadowing the unprecedented destruction of Dersim seven years later.¹³⁵ Mount Ararat also occupies a medial position in temporalities of violence in Turkey. In June of 1930, Rosita Forbes visited Ararat and described the uprising as the "last act in a long tragedy that started with the Armenians."¹³⁶ Placed after the Armenian Genocide and before Dersim,¹³⁷ Ararat is mostly a rebellion, the violence of its suppression "a short-term reaction to a concrete uprising" that was not, unlike the destruction of Ottoman Armenians and the Kurds of Dersim, "prepared in advance."¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Paul White, "*Primitive Rebels or Revolutionary Modernizers? The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2000), 83-87. For a critique of Dersim's incorporation into "the long history of Kurdish nationalist struggles against the Turkish Republic" see Nicole Watts, "Relocating Dersim: Turkish State-Building and Kurdish Resistance, 1931-1938," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 23 (2000), 5-30.

¹³⁵ Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 148. What Alessandro Portelli describes as "a repetition of things known" in "Form and Meaning of Historical Representation: The Battle of Evarts and the Battle of Crummies" (Kentucky: 1931, 1941), in *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 100. The portrayal of Ararat as "more nationalist" extends the debate over the nature of Sheikh Said's rebellion. Some scholars describe Sheikh Said as a Kurdish nationalist, others a religious leader, and a few place a hyphen between these two possibilities. For a summary of the debate see Robert Olson, "The Kurdish Rebellions of Sheikh Said (1925), Mt. Ararat (1930) and Dersim (1937-8): Their Impact on the Development of the Turkish Air Force on Kurdish and Turkish Nationalism," *Die Welt des Islams* 40, no. 1 (2000), 67-95. For a more nuanced reading of the rebellion and its impact on Kurds see: Hisyar Ozsoy, "Between Gift and Taboo: Death and the Negotiation of National Identity and Sovereignty in the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey," PhD diss. (University of Texas at Austin, 2010).

¹³⁶ Forbes, *Angora to Afghanistan*, xii.

¹³⁷ Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 110. For scholars of the Armenian Genocide it is the "seminal moment" in the Ottoman Empire's transition into a modern nation-state. For scholars of Kurdish nationalism, the defeat of Sheikh Said is modern Turkey's "pivotal moment," both the "departure" point "for Kurdish claims for an independent state" and the consolidation of Turkey's legal and political institutions...in strictly secular and nationalist terms." (Ozsoy, pg. 145).

¹³⁸ Kieser, "Dersim Massacre, 1937-1938," in *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*, [online], July 27, 2011, Accessed January 3, 2019, <https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/dersim-massacre-1937-1938>, ISSN 1961-9898. Zeynep Turkyilmaz calls the Turkish Republic's "solution to the Dersim

2.2.2 The Importance and Scale of the Uprising at the Time

The Turkish press, relying on the state news agency's "sparse"¹³⁹ reports of Kurdish 'bandits' (*eşkiya*) after the suppression of Sheikh Said, initially dismissed the fighting on Turkey's northeast border with Iran as "incidents of ordinary banditry."¹⁴⁰ But while the "Kurds from Iran" were repelled "without difficulty," the army was unable to dislodge them from Ararat.¹⁴¹ Every summer the Turkish press informed their readers that Kurdish 'bandits' had been suppressed and pushed back across the Persian frontier. Unable to appreciate the seasonal rhythm of fighting in mountains, the press assumed that the suspension of army operations in October meant that the "disturbances" in the East were over. When the mountain's snow melted the following spring and the army was able to resume its suppression of "Eastern banditry," Turkish newspapers once again informed their readers that the Kurds attacking Bayezid had been "routed and pursued to the frontier." Their reassuring tone, however, could not conceal the fact that the soldiers who had given chase had been "practically wiped out" and a number of their officers taken prisoner in 1927.¹⁴² In July of 1930, General Salih Paşa warned that the attacks on the Eastern border were "far from brigandage." Insisting that the fighting on Ararat was "more serious than the Sheikh Said," he told the readers of *Cumhuriyet* that "two army corps" were at the same time "occupied" with an uprising (*kıyam*) in the Zilan Valley, ninety kilometres

question" genocide due to the "unmatched" level of destruction and the "rare degree of premeditation and intent that went into it"; "Maternal Colonialism and Turkish Woman's Burden in Dersim: Educating the "Mountain Flowers" of Dersim," *Journal of Women's History* 28, no. 3 (2016), 165. According to Martin van Bruinessen, over ten percent of the population of Dersim was killed during its 'pacification' in 1937-1938. However, he labels Dersim "ethnocide" rather than "genocide," describing it as a campaign of "massive" and "indiscriminate" violence rather than a policy of elimination ("Genocide in Kurdistan," 148). While "less well-known" than Sheikh Said, Dersim occupies a "central place" in Kurdish memory (Watts, "Relocating Dersim," 5). "[T]he synthetic longue-durée of memory" often "overrides chronology," explains Portelli. The more "dramatic" event is often chosen as being representative of a period (pg. 101).

¹³⁹ "Şarktaki Hadise: Ağrı Dağındaki eşkiya tamamen çevrilmiştir" (Events in the East: The bandits on Ararat have been completely surrounded), *Vakit*, June 30, 1930.

¹⁴⁰ "Türk-İran hududu" (Turkish-Iranian border), *Vakit*, June 27, 1930.

¹⁴¹ "The Exchange of Ararat: Tewfik Rushdi Bey's Persian Visit," *The Times*, January 22, 1932; pg 9. This was the *Times*' description of how the "problem" of Ararat led to the redrawing of the Turkish-Iranian border in 1932. The 1932 border agreement made Ararat Turkish territory, prior to the uprising the mountain had been partly in Turkey and partly in Iran. See chapter II for Ararat's transformation during the uprising's suppression into what Salih Paşa described as a "beautiful corner of the [Turkish] homeland."

¹⁴² FO424/26, Doc. 136 [E 4285/2822/34], Clerk to Austen Chamberlain, Constantinople, October 4, 1927. The British Ambassador's report of the attack on Bayezid in the fall of 1927 was based on what he described as the "hazy communiqués" of the Turkish state news agency, *Anadolu Ajansı* (AA). As the "Eastern provinces" were closed to outsiders, foreign officials and journalists relied mostly on AA and the Turkish press for information about the uprising.

southwest of the mountain and the Turkish-Iranian border.¹⁴³ He repeated claims that foreign agents and organizations were behind the disturbances.¹⁴⁴ By the middle of July the Turkish press had also “realized” the importance and scale of the uprising:

Considerable armed forces are being utilised and bands which at first were stated to consist of at most 100 Kurds are now reported to have suffered hundreds of casualties. Turkish frontier posts...have been attacked by vastly superior forces and aeroplane bombardment is daily reported. Moreover, it seems clear that the insurgents are active on a front of some 150 kilom[etres]— from Ararat to Khoshab [Hoşap], just east of Van— mention is now openly made of insurrection and rebellion and of plans for a very extensive movement, agitators have been arrested as far afield as Erzerum [Erzurum], Mush [Muş] and El Aziz [Elazığ] and the press reports the deaths of a number of Kurdish chiefs as the result of an engagement near Ercis [Erciş] on the north-western shores of Lake Van. The public is daily assured that the authorities have the situation well in hand, that the encirclement of the rebels is complete and that their final annihilation—for nothing less is apparently contemplated—only a matter of days.¹⁴⁵

Major O’Leary, the British military attaché in Turkey, informed the British ambassador that the rebels’ attempt to take the Zilan Valley and the nearby town of Erciş indicated that uprising had more “ambitious objectives” than the earlier skirmishes between Kurds and the Turkish army. He told Sir Clerk that after winning the support of “disaffected elements,” Kurds had planned to “march” to Diyarbakır. However, while Turkish troops had possibly “sustained heavy casualties” they had been “successful in breaking the Kurdish resistance” in the Zilan Valley with aerial bombardment.¹⁴⁶ When O’Leary summarized the “Kurdish Revolt-1930” a few months later, he called the army’s burning of homes and villages in Zilan “a ruthless policy of destruction.” According to O’Leary, Turkish soldiers had wanted revenge for the rebels’ “savage treatment” of

¹⁴³ The Zilan Valley, north of Erciş and Lake Van, is a landscape of canyons, rivers, hills and grassy plateaus. For a description of the Zilan Valley (Gelîyê Zilan in Kurdish) see Sedat Ulugana, *Ağrı Kürt Direnişi ve Zilan Katliamı, (1926-1931)* (İstanbul: Pêrî Yayınları, 2010), 11-14.

¹⁴⁴ *Kürdistan Krallığı!* *Cumhuriyet*, July 15, 1930. The foreign organizations were the Kurdish nationalist organization Xoybûn (with their “headquarters” in Syria) and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnak). For the cooperation of Xoybûn and Dashnak during the uprising and the participation of Armenians in uprising see Chapter II. The foreign agents were “the English spy Lavrens” (Lawrence of Arabia) and the Circassian “rebel” Kiraz Hamdi.

¹⁴⁵ FO424/27, Doc. 56 [E 3687/1511/44] Clive to Henderson, Constantinople, July 10, 1930. According to Major O’Leary, the British military attaché in Turkey, two special army corps were formed in April of 1930 to suppress the rebellion. One had been composed of units from the 9th army and stationed north of Ararat. The other was made up of soldiers from the 6th and 7th armies and placed south of the mountain and along the border. Each had about 500 men backed up by cavalry and airplanes (Doc. 57, enclosure in Doc. 56, Major O’Leary to Clerk, Constantinople, July 4, 1930).

¹⁴⁶ FO424/273, Doc. 63, enclosure in Doc. 62 [E 3895/1511/44], O’Leary to Clerk, Constantinople, July 16, 1930.

downed pilots.¹⁴⁷ “The conviction here” stated the *Tabriz Military Diary and News*, “is that the Turkish “successes” near Ergish [Erciş] and Zilan were really gained over a few armed men and a large percentage of non-combatants.”¹⁴⁸

2.3 Cartoons as Tools of Repression

2.3.1 “Sketches (not photographs)”

Milliyet’s cartoon headstone was not the only cartoon used by the Turkish press to depict the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising. As Robert Olson observes, Republican papers used “sketches (not photographs)” to document the suppression of the Ararat rebels over the summer of 1930.¹⁴⁹ *Milliyet*’s cartoon was the final visual confirmation that the uprising had “indeed” (*bilfiil*) come to an end.¹⁵⁰ Afterwards, the “clean-up” (*temizlemek*) of the remaining ‘bandits’ was confined to the inside pages of *Cumhuriyet*, *Vakit*, and *Akşam*, their cartoonists turning to other events for inspiration such as Turkey’s first female political candidates and its new political party.¹⁵¹ In order to understand the reanimation of “the dream of Kurdistan” beyond the desire for a Kurdish nation-state, or “at least cultural autonomy,” it is helpful to examine the other cartoons published alongside *Milliyet*’s declaration of the end of Kurdish resistance.¹⁵² The cartoons used to illustrate the Mount Ararat Uprising over the summer of 1930 not only

¹⁴⁷ FO424/273, Doc. 111, enclosure in Doc. 110 [E 5104/1511/44], Major O’Leary to Sir G. Clerk, Constantinople, September 16, 1930.

¹⁴⁸ FO424/273, Doc. 122, enclosure in Doc. 121 [E5319/1511/44], “Extracts from “*Tabriz Political Diary and Military News*,” No. 8, for Period from August 7 to September 6, 1930.

¹⁴⁹ Olson, “The Kurdish Rebellions of Sheikh Said (1925), Mt. Ararat (1930) and Dersim (1937-8),” 83.

¹⁵⁰ The headline in *Cumhuriyet* on September 15, 1930 was “The Suppression Operation on Ararat has **indeed** come to an end” (*Ağrı’da Tenkil harekâtı bilfiil hitam buldu*). *Vakit*’s front page on the same day announced that: “The bandits on Ararat have been **completely** destroyed” (*Ağrıdaki haydutlar tamamen mahvedildiler*). The following day *Akşam* reconfirmed that: “The bandits on Mount Ararat have been **completely** suppressed” (*Ağrı dağındaki eşkıya kâmilten tenkil edildi*).

¹⁵¹ Over the summer the Turkish press was filled with stories and photographs of women registering to be municipal candidates for the first time (municipal suffrage was granted to women in April of 1930). In August, former Prime Minister, Fethi Okyar, opened the Liberal Republican Party (*Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*) at the request of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk). However, the regime’s “experiment” with multiparty democracy ended three months later when Okyar “voluntarily” decided to close the party. The success of Okyar’s last minute campaign tour before the municipal elections, in which he was met by large crowds excited by his promises of economic assistance and tax relief, lead to accusations that the party was “working hand in hand” with anti-republican elements (non-Muslims, Islamists, and communists) who wanted to “to return property to the Greeks,” use the Arabic alphabet once again and wear the fez; Cem Emrence, “Politics of Discontent in the Midst of the Great Depression: The Free Republican Party of Turkey (1930),” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 23 (2000), 44-45.

¹⁵² Michael Gunter, “An Historical Overview to the Kurdish Problem,” *The Copernicus Journal of Political Studies* 2, no. 4 (2013), 160.

reaffirmed its defeat, they documented Republican Turkey’s ‘civilization’ of its “smaller groups.”¹⁵³ All “document[s] of civilization,” explains Walter Benjamin, are “at the same time a document of barbarism.”¹⁵⁴

As soon as stories of Kurdish ‘bandits’ resurfaced in state news agency’s wires in June of 1930, cartoons appeared on the front pages of the Turkish press to illustrate their suppression. On July 2, 1930, *Cumhuriyet* used a cartoon of a Turkish soldier, his combat boot pressed down on the mouth of a sharp-toothed serpent, to inform its readers that the government was determined



Fig. 1.4: The Turkish state “crushing the serpent of Kurdish nationalism” (*Cumhuriyet*, July 2, 1930)

to finally solve the “Eastern problem” (fig. 1.4). The caption explained that the cartoon was an “imaginative representative of the [Republic’s] crushing of [Kurdish] reaction and fundamentalism.” Behind the soldier and the serpent was a cartoon-like map of Ararat and the Iranian border. The mountain, like the long tail of the “serpent” of Kurdish nationalism that stretched out underneath it, reached “promiscuously” across the border. The cartoon illustrated both the ‘Eastern problem’ (Ararat was a “foci of irredentism”) and its solution (the crushing of the Kurdish secessionists it sheltered).¹⁵⁵ During the first decades of the Turkish Republic

¹⁵³ From Tewfik Rüşti Bey’s description of the “pendulum of history”; FO424/266 Doc. 4 [E 256/74/65].

¹⁵⁴ Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” 256. “And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to the other [Theses VII].

¹⁵⁵ James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 6 & 11-12. Mount Ararat’s history as a refuge for peoples “fleeing” the state is discussed in Chapter II.

cartoons became an “integral” component of Turkish journalism.¹⁵⁶ Republican cartoons had a “didactic function,” placed on the front pages of Turkish newspapers to preach the merits of secularization and westernization.¹⁵⁷ B. Yasemin Gencer describes the “excitement and the anxieties” that accompanied Kemalist reforms (shifts in daily habits, gender roles and the family, and legal changes to the status and visibility of women and Islam) as being “poured into the visual imagery” of Republican newspapers and periodicals.¹⁵⁸ Cartoons had played an important role in the propagation of Ottoman “westernization” and in reflecting its accompanying “anxieties,”¹⁵⁹ often employed to mock its pretensions and “delegitimize Western rulers.”¹⁶⁰ Efrat Eviv places the origins of the “Turkish political cartoon” in Ottoman satire, arguing it “borrowed and adapted [its] humorous themes” from shadow puppet theatre (Karagöz). Like Karagöz, cartoons “voiced” the concerns of those not in power and mocked the “attitudes, customs, and mannerisms” of the governing elite.¹⁶¹ Scholars have made similar observations about the cartoons of the Republican period, noting that they too poked fun at “the customs, habits, and beliefs” of Kemalist elite.¹⁶² Less examined, however, is how the satirical cartoon’s

¹⁵⁶ Efrat E. Aviv, “Cartoons in Turkey from Abdülhamid to Erdoğan,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 49, no. 2 (2012): 226.

¹⁵⁷ L. Perry Curtis Jr., *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*, revised ed. (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), xvi. Curtis describes the British satirical press’ images of Irish nationalists as “preaching and reformist.” Efrat Aviv calls Republican cartoons “tool[s] of enlightenment” (pg. 225).

¹⁵⁸ B. Yasemin Gencer, “Pushing Out Islam: Cartoons of the Reform Period in Turkey [1923-1928],” in *Visual culture in the modern Middle East: rhetoric of the image*, eds. Christiane Gruber and Sune Haugbolle (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 207.

¹⁵⁹ Patricia Brummett, “Dogs, Women, Cholera and Other Menaces in the Streets: Cartoon Satire in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27 (1995), 434-436. Brummett argues that the 1908 Constitutional Revolution’s “unique conjuncture of intense political and cultural insecurity” and “an uncensored press” lead to a “cartoon revolution.” Informed by the twinned desires of freeing Ottoman society from the authoritarian rule of the sultan and its “subordination to the West,” the revolution had to implement “western-style” reforms and negotiate their “threat.” According to Brummett, cartoon images of various plagues (dogs, cholera, and westernized women) reflected the anxieties of a “society struggling to articulate [a]...new identity.”

¹⁶⁰ Fatma Müge Göçek, ed. “Political Cartoons as a Site of Representation and Resistance in the Middle East,” in *Political Cartoons in the Middle East*, (Princeton: Markus Winer Publishers, 1998), 6.

¹⁶¹ Aviv, “Cartoons in Turkey from Abdülhamid to Erdoğan,” 223-226. Aviv argues that “[t]he satirical press succeeded in manifesting the reality, which the serious, non-satirical press could not or would not publish.” Karagöz was actually the name of one of the puppets (see Gencer, “Pushing Out Islam,” 194-195 for a description of the Ottoman shadow puppet theatre and its characters).

¹⁶² Ayhan Akman, “From Cultural Schizophrenia to Modernist Binarism: Cartoons and Identities in Turkey,” *IJMES* VI (2007), 90. Akman argues that 1930 was a “turning point” for cartoons in Turkey. According to Akman, 1930 marks the consolidation of Kemalism and its transformation of the “social, political, and economic” world the cartoons described and in which their artists worked (pg. 86).

“unique capacity to simultaneously represent ideas and resist control” was profoundly impacted by the Republican regime’s suppression of Kurdish resistance and identity.¹⁶³

During the Sheikh Said Rebellion in 1925, the Turkish parliament passed the “Law on the Maintenance of Order” (1925), investing the regime with the power to quell political dissent generally, and, more particularly, giving the army the unchecked authority to crush Kurdish resistance. As press restrictions and censorship accompanied the suppression of political dissent during the Sheikh Said Rebellion, newspapers could no longer use cartoons to “get around censors.”¹⁶⁴ The newspapers that survived the Republican regime’s bans and closures were its enthusiastic supporters. Since the Turkish War of Independence, the satirical journal, *Karagöz*, had been using cartoons to voice support for, rather than criticism of, the Kemalist political project.¹⁶⁵ Two and a half years after the defeat of Sheikh Said, a British diplomat in Mersin watched a theatre company transform the Ottoman tradition of Karagöz into a “somewhat childish” tale of the Sheikh’s execution:

A house packed to suffocation duly guffawed at the odd old oriental costumes of these funny old rebels and roared with glee as the rebellion was scotched in a few melodramatic jerks and the body of the sheikh...finally appeared before their eyes dangling by the neck from his gibbet. The authorities must have been delighted to see the local villagers and Farmer Gileses, who include many Kurds, laugh so heartily and spontaneously at this neat little effort.¹⁶⁶

Like the depictions of Irish nationalists as “degenerated, grunting, shillelagh-wielding, and priest-ridden Yahoos” in Victorian periodicals like *Punch*, the troupe’s re-enactment of Sheikh Said’s death was not “worthy of a guffaw;” it was an “ideologically charged” representation of a “degenerated” people in need of “rule.” As L. Perry Curtis points out, satirists not only make fun of themselves or those in power, they employ humour to “destroy” those perceived to be “other.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Göçek, “Political Cartoons as a Site of Representation and Resistance in the Middle East,” 1. My argument here is simply that during the Republican period the cartoon was not a tool of resistance but a tool of repression (of Kurdish resistance).

¹⁶⁴ Sandy Sufian, “Anatomy of the 1936–39 Revolt: Images of the Body in Political Cartoons of Mandatory Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 37, no. 2 (2008), 39.

¹⁶⁵ Gencer, 191-192. Eight popular Istanbul newspapers were closed in the summer that followed the suppression of the Sheikh Said rebellion. One of the banned papers, *Vatan*, was shut down because of a cartoon.

¹⁶⁶ FO424/269, Doc. 170, enclosure in Doc. 169 [E5738/128/44], Consul Chafy to Mr. Edmonds, Mersina, November 20, 1928.

¹⁶⁷ Curtis, *The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*, 146-147. Curtis argues that the Victorian image of the “ape-like” Irish guerrilla still haunts the British press, concluding that it “refuses to disappear.”

2.3.2 “Poking fun” at Turkish Secularism

Republic cartoonists still made “fun of the world around them.”¹⁶⁸ However the object of their mockery was not the regime but the social pretensions of its new citizens—shopkeepers, petty bureaucrats, nosey neighbours, overly-modern urban women and inadequately-westernized (boorish) men. Perhaps the best example of the Republican cartoon as social satire was the loveable, rotund figure of Amca Bey (Mr. Uncle).¹⁶⁹ Amca Bey made numerous appearances during the suppression of the Mount Ararat Rebellion, popping up in *Akşam*’s pages to counsel acquaintances and strangers on how to cope with life in secular Turkey. On July 30, 1930, Amca Bey offered marriage advice to a young man he bumped into on the beach (fig. 1.5). “Sport is a good thing” the skinny youth told Amca Bey whose one piece bathing costume



Fig. 1.5: Amca Bey poking fun at the new pastimes of Republican youth (Cemal Nadır Bey, *Akşam*, July 30, 1930)¹⁷⁰

highlighted his belly. While posing in a headstand for the curious Amca Bey, the youth explained how sport had made him a new man. His strict exercise regime kept him on his feet all day. He lifted weights and walked in the morning. In the evening he boxed. “If you are standing around so much” observed Amca Bey in the cartoon’s last frame, “you should marry right away.” Amca Bey’s presence on the beach, a site of secular embodiment with its bare-chested men and bare-legged women, poked fun at the new pastimes of Republican youth and secular ideals of masculinity. But the humor of Amca Bey was always playful, never caustic or cruel.

¹⁶⁸ Akman, “From Cultural Schizophrenia to Modernist Binarism,” 88-91.

¹⁶⁹ Amca Bey (later Amca Bay), was the creation of Turkey’s first professional cartoonist, Cemal Nadır Güler, who contributed regularly to *Akşam* from 1927 to 1942. As Akman points out, Güler was interested in “social issues” rather than politics.

¹⁷⁰ Reading Left to Right: “Sport is a good thing. I have begun a new life through sport; Every morning I get up and exercise; From morning to night I walk and carry heavy weights; In the evening I spend my time boxing; (Amca Bey to Athletic youth) “If you stand around so much (have so much free time), why don’t you marry?”

His friendly advice often expressed skepticism over, rather than ridicule of, the regime's 'modern' ideas of gender.¹⁷¹ On the front page of *Akşam* a few weeks later, Amca Bey advised his neighbour, worn down by domestic chores since his wife entered municipal politics, to throw his own hat into the political race. "If you have so much free time" he tells him, "you too should join municipal politics."¹⁷²

Holly Shissler argues that while Republican cartoons exposed "the profound unease" that accompanied the regime's "emancipation" of women, they also lessened the "tensions" around its gender reforms.¹⁷³ However, cartoonists were particularly uneasy with the effect of secularization on women and the family, using their pencils not just to poke fun at the regime's gender reforms but to reimpose the societal limits of the "liberation" of Turkish women. In a large, colour cartoon published in the bottom right corner of *Cumhuriyet*'s front page on July 11, 1930, an annoyed father attempted to read his newspaper as his children played at his feet



Fig. 1.6: Gender Anxieties? (*Cumhuriyet*, July 11, 1930)¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ In 1926, Turkey replaced the *Sharia* (Islamic Law) with a civil code that established women as legal persons. Women gained equal access to property, education and work. See Chapter III for a discussion of the debates over the regime's "emancipation of women" as well as its impact on Kurdish women.

¹⁷² *Akşam*, August 15, 1930.

¹⁷³ A. Holly Shissler, "Beauty is Nothing to be Ashamed of: Beauty Contests as Tools of Women's Liberation in Early Republican Turkey," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 1 (2004), 118.

¹⁷⁴ Father: "Little ones, play nicely. Why are you quarreling?" Son: "We are not fighting, dear father. We are playing husband and wife."

at his feet (fig. 1.6). Peeking over his paper to learn why his daughter was sobbing, he addressed his son: “Little ones, play nicely; why are you quarreling?” The boy, holding his sister’s ponytail tightly in one fist as he threatened to smack her in the face with a large wooden spoon clutched in the other, replied: “Dear father, we are not fighting. We are playing house.” It is difficult to laugh off a cartoon that depicted “playing” domestic abuse or the message of its caption. Despite the government’s noble attempts to ‘reform’ gender, the cartoon reminded the readers of the nation’s largest paper that it would be impossible to reform deeply held beliefs about the patriarchal family. The most “venomous ink” of Republican cartoonists, however, was employed against Kurdish nationalists.¹⁷⁵ Cartoons published during the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising were not ambivalent over how to ‘reform’ the East. The moral lesson of images of impaled and decapitated Kurdish “bandits” published on the front pages of the Turkish press over the summer of 1930 relied on the demonstration of the state’s “exemplary violence.”¹⁷⁶ Violence was not subtext; it was the subject of the cartoons that depicted the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising.

2.3.3 Cartoons and Violence

The most violent cartoons of the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising were published during the ‘pacification’ of the Zilan Valley in July, 1930. On July 14, *Akşam* published the cartoon below (fig. 1.7). The cartoon was actually two images printed side by side.

In the first, a human-headed snake hissed at the reader, his long body coiled tightly around Ararat’s summit. In the second, a large Turkish sabre swept down from above and released the snakes’ hold on the mountain by cutting off its head. The cartoon was double-captioned. “The annihilation of the Eastern bandits” explained the headline-like caption overhead. “The head”

¹⁷⁵ Roy Douglas, Liam Haret and Jim O’Hara, *Drawing Conclusions: A Cartoon History of Anglo-Irish Relations 1798-1998* (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 1998), 2-3. British cartoonists such as *Punch*’s John Leech and John Tenniel “reserved their most venomous ink for...Irish separatists” who they believed threatened their “middle class values and imperial interests.”

¹⁷⁶ Priya Satia, “Air Control,” in *Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain’s Covert Empire in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 259. British bombing of Iraqi tribes in the 1920s and 1930s “rested on” the idea that the demonstration of the “exemplary violence” of “unfamiliar technology” had a particular impact on “the mind of the tribesmen.” Satia argues that “literal” not just epistemic violence is performed by cultural representations (pgs. 247-248).

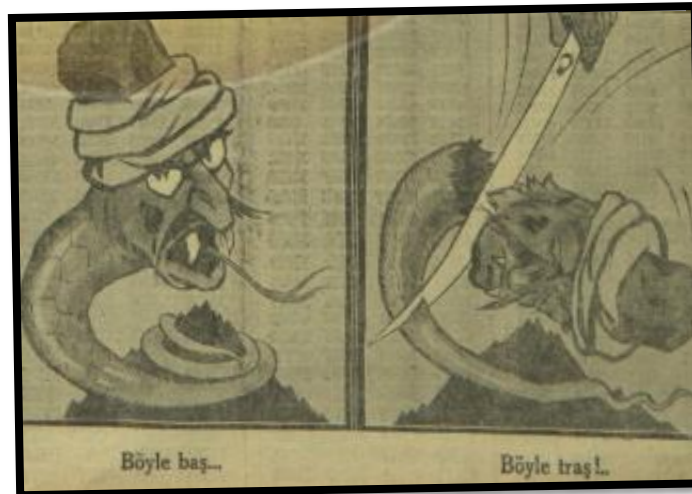


Fig. 1.7: “The head...In this way shaved!” (*Akşam*, July 14, 1930)

(*baş*) stated the caption underneath the first image. The snake’s headdress, part turban, part *külûh* (a conical hat worn by Kurds), was a sartorial marker of the uprising’s ‘reactionary’ politics (religious and Kurdish).¹⁷⁷ “In this way shaved” answered the caption placed underneath the image of the snake’s beheading. When Kurdish scholar Rohat Alakom came across the cartoons published on the front pages of the Turkish press during the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising at an exhibit at Istanbul’s Turkish Press Museum, he was shocked not by their violence but how openly their images of bayonets, bombs, iron fists, and vice-grips exposed the “brutal mentality of domination.”¹⁷⁸ Sedat Ulugana had a similar reaction to *Cumhuriyet*’s image of a Kurdish rebel impaled on a Turkish bayonet when doing research in the newspaper archive of Selcuk University (fig. 1.8). Neither were surprised by the violence of the Republican regime but how the cartoons published during the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising celebrated it. Alakom suggests that the Ararat cartoons need to be studied alongside the cartoons published during the ‘pacification’ of Dersim and Sheikh Said. Ulugana places the cartoon of the impaled Ararat “bandit” next to the violence of Koçgiri, Sheikh Said and “afterwards Dersim.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Republican secularism was defined against both religion (Islam) and ethnicity (Kurds).

¹⁷⁸ Alakom, *Xoybûn Örgütü*, 101. Alakom published many of the Ararat cartoons (including *Milliyet*’s cartoon grave) in the back of his translation of Turkish officer Zühtü Güven’s memoir of revolt, *Bir Türk Subayının Ağrı İsyanı Anıları* (İstanbul: Avesta, 2011).

¹⁷⁹ Ulugana, *Ağrı Kürt Direnişi ve Zilan Katliamı*, 9. The Koçgiri Revolt of 1920-21 was an Alevi Kurdish Uprising in Dersim, see Elise Massicard, “The Repression of the Koçgiri Rebellion, 1920-1921: Fall of the Ottoman Empire Turkey, *Mass Violence and Resistance - Research Network* [online], September 28, 2009, accessed January 1, 2018, <https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/repression-koa-giri-rebellion-1920-1921>.



Fig. 1.8: “Surrounding the Bandits” (*Cumhuriyet*, July 8, 1930)

Read alongside the more “emblematic” repression of the Sheikh Said Rebellion and destruction of Dersim exposes the violence that accompanied the Turkish state’s destruction of Kurdish identity in the 1920s and 1930s. However, this comparison also obscures how openly acknowledged some of this violence was, particularly during the Mount Ararat Uprising. The violence of Dersim is not just more “emblematic” because of its scale but because it was actively silenced at the time, recoded as ‘civilizing mission.’¹⁸⁰ Ararat, on the other hand, was celebrated as “annihilation” (*imha*). The Turkish state’s open acknowledgement of its violence during Ararat is shocking because it is often silenced by Dersim. In other words, the cartoons published during the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising do not need to be read against the grain. *Milliyet*’s cartoon grave is not just a declaration of the “end” of the uprising and its “dream” of an autonomous Kurdistan. It is a document of the violence that accompanies the nation-state’s ‘pacification’ of its “smaller groups.”¹⁸¹

The cartoons published on the front pages of *Cumhuriyet*, *Vakit* and *Akşam* over the summer of 1930 did not just document the violence of the army’s suppression of the Ararat Kurds, they underwrote it. *Cumhuriyet*’s image of an impaled Kurdish ‘bandit’ (fig. 1.8) depicted the beginning of the army’s destruction of Zilan, like the accompanying headline the cartoon confirmed that: “The Bandits are being surrounded!”¹⁸² *Vakit* used two cartoons to illustrate the “clean up” (*temizlemek*) of Zilan after its defeat. On July 17, it published a sketch-like image of a

¹⁸⁰ Watts, “Relocating Dersim,” 5.

¹⁸¹ From Tewfik Rüşti Bey’s description of the “pendulum” of history.

¹⁸² “Şakiler ihata ediliyor!” *Cumhuriyet*, July 8, 1930.



Figs. 1.9 (Left) & 1.10 (Right): Cleaning up Zilan in *Vakit*, (July 17 and July 21, 1930)

Turkish soldier sweeping away a cloud of grasshopper-like ‘bandits’ with a large broom (fig. 1.9). The “huge success” in Zilan “honors our army” declared the headline. The “struggle” of the insect-like bandits “has been completely thrashed.”¹⁸³ A few days later, the paper reused the metaphor to inform its readers that now that the uprising in Zilan was over the suppression of Ararat would begin (fig. 1.10). Some cartoons, for example *Akşam*’s decapitated snake-like bandit (fig. 1.7) and *Cumhuriyet*’s cartoon of children “playing” husband and wife (fig. 1.6) were corner cartoons, placed at the bottom of the front page. In corner cartoons artists often expressed their own anxieties and critiques of the world around them. But the cartoons of the uprising, for example the Turkish soldier sweeping up Zilan (figs. 1.9 & 1.10) or the impaled Kurdish ‘bandit’ (fig. 1.8), were placed in articles about the rebellion. They functioned as sketches and cartoons, used to report and comment on the “events in the East.”¹⁸⁴

If you look closely at the piece of music impaled alongside *Cumhuriyet*’s ‘bandit’ you can almost read a title, the faint letters seeming to spell out: “*Kurdi marş*” (Kurdish anthem). The Ararat rebels did have an anthem, “*Hilbe Agirî*.”¹⁸⁵ While the lifeless body of the Kurdish rebel justified the state’s “harsh measures against the agents of aggressive nationalism,” the bayoneted lyrics denied “the political aspirations” that guided them.¹⁸⁶ Like General Salih Paşa,

¹⁸³ “*Ordumuza şeref veren büyük muvaffakiyet. Eşkiya çekirge mücadelesi, usulile tepelendi,*” *Vakit*, July 17, 1930.

¹⁸⁴ The press often referred to the fighting on Ararat as “*Şark hududumuzda hâdiseler*” (Events on our eastern border), *Cumhuriyet*, June 29, 1930.

¹⁸⁵ “Sublime Ararat.”

¹⁸⁶ Curtis, *The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*, xi-xii.

Vakit's cartoons reaffirmed that that foreign governments and organizations were “pulling the strings” of the uprising (fig. 1.11). Newspapers often used cartoons to help illustrate the Turkish



Fig. 1.11: Iran pulling the strings of the Mount Ararat Uprising (*Vakit*, July 7, 1930)

regime's demands that Iran stop assisting the 'Kurdish bandits' (by letting them pass back and forth over the border).¹⁸⁷ “Who is fanning the flames of the furnace of banditry on Ararat?” demanded a cartoon in *Vakit* on July 9 (fig. 1.12). In the cartoon, placed within a story about the intelligence service's assessment of the uprising's “interested parties,” three figures sit around a small fire, each supplying it with oxygen. The caption's description of the outsiders “fanning the flames” of uprising played on Ararat's image as a “furnace of brigandage (*fesat ocağı*) and its volcanic origins. While *fesat ocağı* is more accurately translated as “den of thieves,” *ocak* on its own means hearth or stove. Each character represented a different source of the uprising's



Fig. 1.12: “Who is fanning the flames of banditry on Ararat?” (*Vakit*, July 9, 1930)

¹⁸⁷ For example, *Cumhuriyet* likened the Iranian border to a sieve on July 3, 1930 (“*Şark'ta*”) and on a map in *Vakit* on July 5, the Iranian city of Maku was marked as the “bandits' weapon depot” (*eşkıyanın erzak deposu*).

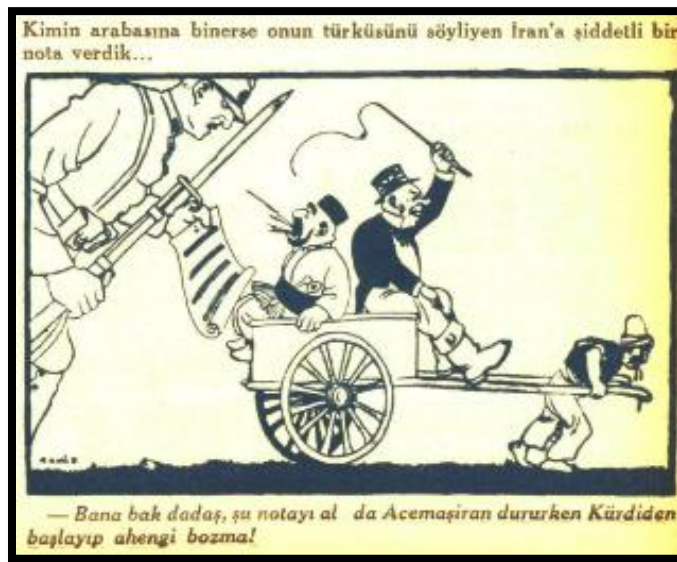
“flames.” The figure marked “Maku,” pumping his bellows the most vigorously, represented the uprising’s biggest source—Iran. Next to him was the turbaned Kurd of Mosul. While he seems less committed to keeping the fire from going out, he sits the closest to it. Last was the “secular” Syrian Kurd marked Halep, the “headquarters” of the Kurdish nationalist organization involved in the uprising, Xoybûn. He is closest to the fire but is unsure of how to use the instrument to keep the flames of Kurdish nationalism from going out. *Vakit*’s cartoon did not reveal anxieties over uprising or its suppression, rather it recast the “dream” of Kurdistan as a fantasy supported by foreign governments and organizations. On July 18, the newspaper transformed the Ottoman shadow puppet Karagöz into a Pinocchio-like mask concealing the identity of another foreign agent poking its “nose” (*burnu* in the caption) in the uprising (fig. 1.13). The accompanying story reprinted the *Daily Telegraph*’s claims that Russia was behind the unrest on Mount Ararat.¹⁸⁸ And like the numerous stories of “Lavrens” of Arabia’s involvement in all things anti-Turkish, Republican cartoons insisted that the British were ultimately responsible for the uprising. The piece of music pierced by the Turkish bayonet (fig. 1.8) on July 8 resurfaced a



Fig. 1.13: “Who is sticking their nose into the Mount Ararat Uprising” (*Vakit*, July 18, 1930)

¹⁸⁸ “*Burunu sokan kim? Bir İngiliz gazetesi, eşkiyanın Rusyadan yardım gördüğünü iddia ediyor.*” The Soviet government had actually cooperated with Turkey to suppress the rebellion, guarding the border north of Ararat and preventing the rebels from crossing the Aras (Araxes) into Armenia and Iran. A few days before the publication of *Vakit*’s cartoon, the Russians had fired on the Ararat rebels. “Russians fire on bandits trying to enter Russian territory from Ararat” (*Ruslar, Ağrıdağdan Rus topraklarına kaçmak isteyen şakiler ateş açtılar*) from *Akşam*, July 14.

month later in a cartoon by Ramiz Gökçe, like Güler (the creator of Amca Bey), one of Turkey's first full-time cartoonists.¹⁸⁹ “We have given a strongly worded note to Iran who sings a Turkish folksong (*türkü*) no matter whose bandwagon they jump on” stated the cartoon's caption-like headline (fig. 1.14). In the cartoon John Bull cracked a whip to force a small, exhausted Kurd to pull the cart he is steering. Behind him, dangling his feet nonchalantly over the back, was an Iranian official. As he sung his “Turkish tune” to the Turkish soldier hovering over him, he is interrupted. “Look pal,” warned the soldier, “take this note [piece of music] and don't spoil the harmony [and my nerves] by stopping during [your singing of] an *Acemaşiran* [a song from the Azerbaijani ('Turkish') region of Iran] and starting [to sing] the *Kürdi* [Kurdish] anthem.” The differing scales of the figures in the cartoon also helped *Cumhuriyet* dismiss the political ambitions of the rebels. The Turkish soldier is the largest, twice as big as the Iranian



Imperial Britain as the “driving” force of Kurdish (and Arab) nationalism in the Middle East (Ramiz [Gökçe], *Cumhuriyet*)
 Fig. 1.14 (Left): August 3, 1930; Fig. 1.15 (Right): July 12, 1930

official and John Bull and three times the size of the Ararat Kurd. He forcefully barked out his demands while the miniscule Kurd in front struggled to pull the cart. The impaled Kurd from July 8 was similarly doll-like, his killer effortlessly dangling his small body from his Turkish bayonet. In a cartoon from July 12, 1930 (fig. 1.15), the impaled Kurd comes briefly back to life,

¹⁸⁹ His cartoons in *Cumhuriyet* were also more “political” than Güler’s *Akşam* cartoons. The editor of *Cumhuriyet*, Yunus Nadi, was a devout Kemalist and a vehement critic of British foreign policy (as Güler’s July 12 and August 3 cartoons reflected).

waving his sabre over his head as an acrobatic John Bull (*oyantan*-the one who controls the play) juggled Britain's "stooges" (*oyunyanlar*-those who get played) in the Middle East.

2.3.4 Kurds as Cartoons (and Turkish Soldiers as Sketches)

In the cartoons published to illustrate the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising over the summer of 1930, Turkish soldiers were sketched, Kurds were cartoons. Caricature uses "varying degrees of realism" to ridicule and disempower.¹⁹⁰ Images of Turkish soldiers seemed like they had been ripped out of an artist's sketch book, their Atatürk-like visages captured on the field of battle (fig 1.16). Kurds, however, were caricatures, big noses, dumbfounded expressions, and always wearing a 'funny' (and illegal) hat (fig 1.17).¹⁹¹ Placing these sketches of Turkish



Figs. 1.16 (Left): Sketches of Turkish Soldiers; Fig. 1.17 (Right): Kurdish Caricatures (*Cumhuriyet* July 16 and 9, 1930)

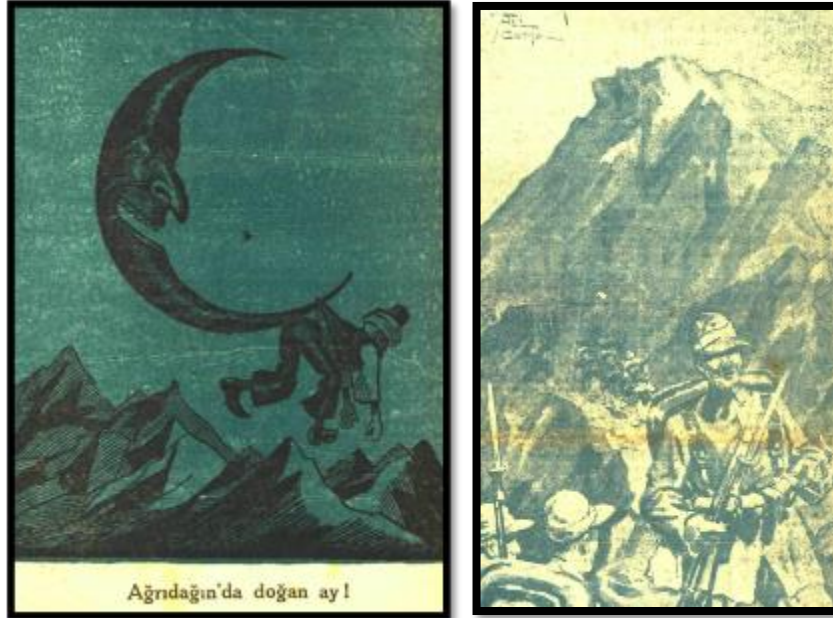
soldiers and cartoons of the Ararat rebels side by side helps demonstrate this. *Cumhuriyet* often used their corner cartoons to highlight the "backwardness" of the Ararat rebels' political desires. On July 15, *Cumhuriyet*'s cartoonist drew a Kurdish rebel hanging by his baggy trousers (*şalvar*) from the corner of a crescent shaped moon (fig 1.18). "Moonrise on Ararat" stated the caption. The sneering face of the crescent moon confirmed that the national ambitions of Kurds, like the Ottoman Empire, belonged in the past. The rebels "had wanted to set up a Kurdish kingdom" stated the headline on the top of page.¹⁹² Four days later, *Cumhuriyet* used a sketch of Turkish soldiers to announce that Salih Paşa had set up headquarters on Mount Ararat (fig. 1.19). The

¹⁹⁰ Gencer, "Pushing Out Islam," 190.

¹⁹¹ The ban of Islamic headdress ("the hat reform") was enacted during the 1925 Law of the Maintenance of Order. For a discussion of the implementation and impact of Republican Turkey's hat reform see Camilla T. Nereid, "Kemalism on the Catwalk: The Turkish Hat Law of 1925," *Journal of Social History* 44, no. 3 (2011), 707-728.

¹⁹² "Kürdistan Krallığı!" *Cumhuriyet*, July 15, 1930.

soldier faced the reader, a rifle gripped firmly across his chest. “Our brave common soldiers have begun to clean the hills surrounding Ararat” declared the caption underneath.¹⁹³ Photographs also documented the rebellion’s suppression; portraits of its leaders; foot soldiers at the bottom on Ararat, planes overhead; brave pilots posing in bombers; Salih Paşa surveying Ararat; Turkish commanders in front of Bayezid or at army headquarters in Karaköse 90 kilometres away



Figs. 1.18 (Left) & 1.19 (Right): Depicting the ‘backwardness’ of Kurdish Political Ambitions (*Cumhuriyet* July 15 and 19, 1930)

(fig. 1.20). There were few photographs of the Ararat rebels, cartoons stood in their place. The caption for a July 4 *Vakit* cartoon of an Iranian *mullah* (someone trained in Islamic Law)



Photos of Turkish Soldiers; Cartoons of Kurdish rebels
 Fig. 1.20 (Left): Salih Paşa (1) with the commanders of the suppression of the Mount Ararat Rebellion (*Cumhuriyet*, August 14, 1930)
 Fig. 1.21 (Right): “A Picture of Iranians counselling the bandits” (*Vakit*, July 4, 1930)

¹⁹³ “Ağrıdağı eteklerini saran ve havaliyi temizlemeğe başlıyan kahraman Mehmetçiklerimiz” (Our brave soldiers surrounding Ararat, about to begin the clean-up of the area), *Cumhuriyet*, July 19, 1930.

counselling a group of Kurdish “bandits,” however, described the cartoon as: “A picture of Iranians advising the bandits” (fig. 1.21). On August 1, *Vakit* published a picture of İhsan Nuri, the commander of the Kurdish fighters, wearing an Ottoman military uniform and an Astrakhan hat. “A picture of the traitor İhsan Nuri, the leader of the Ararat bandits,” stated the caption.¹⁹⁴

After British Consul Chafy had finished describing the “crude propaganda play” of Sheikh Said’s defeat to Cecil Edmonds, he told his colleague in Iraq about the escape of an “important exiled Kurdish Pasha.” The authorities in the central Anatolian town of Kayseri “had allowed him to move freely about.” To “avert suspicion” explained Chafy, the exiled Kurdish lord had “behaved in an exemplary manner.” But one day “he made a dash and succeeded in escaping with a band of chosen champions.” The “*ghazi*” (Atatürk) had been so “upset” at the news that he had cancelled his inspection of the “hastily laid out flower garden” in front of his unfinished residence.¹⁹⁵ Like Chafy’s side by side stories of the re-enactment of Sheikh Said’s hanging and the escape of an “exiled Kurdish pasha,” *Cumhuriyet*’s re-use of cartoons from the defeat of the Sheikh Said to reaffirm the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising re-summoned the 1925 rebellion. On July 14, it published a cartoon of the bombing of the Zilan Valley (fig. 1.22). “The steel eagles [the air force] bringing misery to the rebels” explained the accompanying caption. The same image “of the rebels being scattered by bombs” appeared in *Cumhuriyet* on April 12, 1925 (fig. 1.23) during the suppression of the Sheikh Said Rebellion.¹⁹⁶ The same number of planes (five) appeared in the sky over the Kurdish ‘bandits’ (the cartoons were also accurate, bombing raids were carried out by five bombers at a time). The same explosion dispersed them (there are more “bandits” in the earlier image, however, in each just one rebel escaped on horseback). Whether this had been a cost cutting measure, newspapers and Journals were struggling to survive after the switch from the Arabic to Roman alphabet in 1928, or the same

¹⁹⁴ “*Ağrıdağı eşkiyasının elebaşısı İhsan Nuri haini*” (The traitor İhsan Nuri, the leader of the bandits on Mount Ararat) *Vakit*, August 12, 1930.

¹⁹⁵ FO424/269, Doc. 170, inclosure in Doc. 169 [E5738/128/44]. Chafy is most likely referring to Hüseyin Paşa of the Hayderan. A 1927 deportation order had exiled Hüseyin Paşa and most of his family to Kayseri and Izmir. He did not make it back to Ararat, murdered when trying to cross the Iraqi border into Turkey. However, his sons joined the rebellion, Nadir and Mehmet playing important roles. See Chapter II.

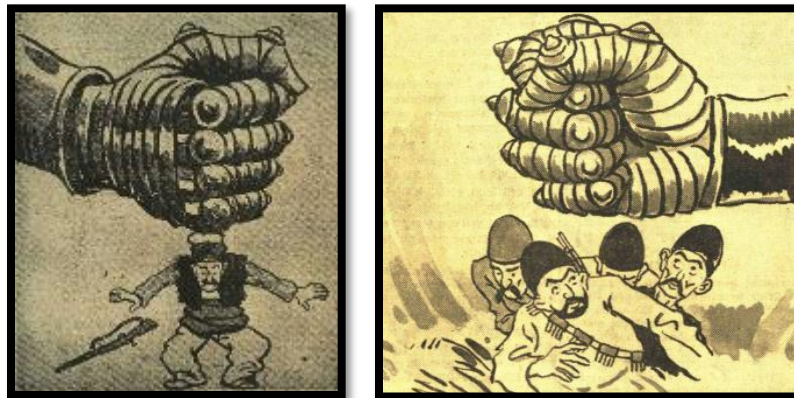
¹⁹⁶ Translated caption is taken from Susan Meiselas, *Kurdistan: In the Shadow of History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 127.

cartoonist was still drawing for *Cumhuriyet* five years later, the paper's re-employment of the Sheikh Said cartoons exposed the ongoing history of Kurdish resistance in Turkey.¹⁹⁷ Like the



Fig. 1.22 (Left): Bombing the Sheikh Said rebels (1925); Fig. 1.23 (Right): Bombing the Ararat rebels (1930), *Cumhuriyet*

cartoons it published to illustrate the suppression of Mount Ararat, the Sheikh Said cartoons celebrated the Republic's violent punishment of its 'unruly' (Kurdish) citizens. *Cumhuriyet* used the same image of a large steel fist to illustrate the 'smashing' of the rebellions of Sheikh Said (fig 1.24) and Mount Ararat (1.25). Appearing below the cartoon of Ararat rebels covering



The Steel Fist of the Turkish Republic crushing Kurdish resistance in *Cumhuriyet*
 Fig. 1.24 (Left): Sheikh Said Rebellion (April 25, 1925); Fig 1.25 (Right): Mount Ararat Uprising (July 6, 1930)

under the Republic's steel fist was a story of the ongoing trial of one of Sheikh Said's sons. He was not being tried for participation in his father's rebellion but for spreading propaganda for the

¹⁹⁷ While the government provided economic assistance to the press to offset low circulation after the implementation of the Roman alphabet in 1928, many papers and journals were forced to close. Some argue that cartoons "saved" the Republican press, helping them maintain readers who could not read but could look at cartoons (Akman, "From Cultural Schizophrenia to Modernist Binarism" and Aviv, "Cartoons in Turkey from Abdülhamid to Erdoğan."). However, readers still could not read their captions.

Kurdish nationalist organization involved in the Ararat uprising, Xoybûn.¹⁹⁸ On July 24, 1930 *Cumhuriyet* and *Vakit* incorporated the steel fist into cartoons that commemorated the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. Laussane had recognized the borders of the Turkish Republic, annulling the Treaty of Sèvres signed by the defeated Ottoman state in 1920 and its vague promises of Armenian and Kurdish states. *Cumhuriyet*'s cartoon has the Republic (pictured as a Amazon-like woman) smashing a clay pot labelled "Sevr" with her sandaled foot while Prime



The Steel Fist of the Republic Signing of the Treaty of Lausanne on July 24, 1923
Fig. 1.26 (Left): From *Cumhuriyet*; Fig. 1.27 (Right): From *Vakit* (1930)

Minister İsmet Paşa's steel grip signed the Treaty of Lausanne (fig. 1.26).¹⁹⁹ *Vakit*'s cartoon was simpler, the artist re-using the steel fist to sign the treaty into law in 1923 (fig. 1.27). Like the reuse of the steel fist from Sheikh Said, the recall of Sèvres in the cartoons that commemorated Lausanne exposed Turkey's ongoing anxiety over the "dream of Kurdistan." After the suppression of Dersim in 1937-1938 the Turkish state renamed the region Tunceli. The new name—steel (*tunc*) fist (*eli*)—was, like *Milliyet*'s cartoon grave, another attempt to declare its impossibility.

¹⁹⁸ "Şeyh Saidin oğlu Hainlerin muhakemesine devam edilecek" (The treason trial of Sheikh Said's son continues), *Cumhuriyet* July 6, 1930. The trial was of Sheikh Said's son, Selahaddin, who had been arrested with a number of his father's men as well as his brother, Ali Rıza, in 1928. He was sentenced to twelve years. His brother was held in custody for an extended period but was eventually released; Ahmet Kahraman, *Kürt İsyanları Tedip ve Tenkil* (İstanbul: Evrensel Basım Yayın, 2003), 226-227.

¹⁹⁹ İsmet İnönü negotiated the treaty for Turkey. He served as Turkey's prime minister a number of times and was twice president, after Atatürk's death (1938-1950) and after the 1960 coup (1961-1965).

2.4 Cartoons as Tools of Kurdish Resistance

2.4.1 “Ammunition” in the Kurdish Nationalist Struggle

What is buried in the [cartoon] grave? İhsan Nuri asked from exile forty-years after the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising. “It is the dream of Kurdistan or Turkish domination over Kurdistan?”²⁰⁰ Nuri escaped to Iran after the army’s final assault on Mount Ararat in September 1930. He lived in Tehran during Turkey’s pacification of Dersim. Unlike Sheikh Said and the leader of Dersim’s resistance, Seyit Riza, he was not captured and hung by the Turkish State.²⁰¹ Before Nuri reappropriated *Milliyet*’s cartoon, he reflected on how it had celebrated the violence of the Turkish nation-state, used to announce the army’s “successful suppression of Ararat with the assistance of the Soviet Union and Iran, hundreds of cannon and airplanes, and 66,000 soldiers and gendarme.”²⁰² Nuri pointed out that the infamous speech of Turkey’s Justice Minister, Esat Mahmut Bozkurt—“Those who are not genuine Turks can have only one right in the Turkish fatherland, and that is to be a servant”—was published alongside *Milliyet*’s cartoon. “The pens of the Turkish press and the speeches of its ministers gave fresh blood to Ararat’s defeat” Nuri wrote.²⁰³ The period between Dersim’s suppression and what Nuri described as “the sounds of the corpse in *Milliyet*’s grave echoing throughout the mountains of Turkish Kurdistan” is known as the “period of silence.”²⁰⁴ In this chronology of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey the

²⁰⁰ Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*, 111.

²⁰¹ Seyit Riza (1862-1937) was the religious and political leader of the Zaza Alevi Kurds of Dersim. Like Sheikh Said his body was buried in an unmarked grave. Turkey’s foreign affairs minister, İhsan Çağlayangil, witnessed his hanging. “Did you come from Ankara to hang me?” Seyit Riza asked him. Çağlayangil described the condemned Kurdish leader being brought to an “empty square.” His last words were: “It is shame. It is cruel. It is murder!” He then placed the noose around his own neck “kicked away the chair and executed himself”; İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil and Tanju Cılzoğlu, *Çağlayangil’in anıları: kader bizi una degil, üne itti* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 2007), 72-73.

²⁰² Nuri got the figure of 66,000 soldiers and 100 airplanes from a July 30, 1930 second page article in *Cumhuriyet* which itself was based on the wire of the London Times correspondent in Istanbul. In August 1930 a “Turkish military attaché” told British officials that Turkish forces numbered “10,000 to 15,000” and had “fifteen bombing aeroplanes” (“several of which were shot down by rebels”). He estimated that the Kurds had “5000-8000 armed men”; FO424/273, Doc. 93 inclosure in Doc. 92 [E 4766/1511/44], R. Clive to A. Henderson, Gulhek, August 26, 1930. While Nuri (or the Times correspondent) overestimated the Turkish forces, he insisted the Turkish press inflated the number of Kurdish fighters. On the same day forty years later a member of the Turkish General Staff told *Cumhuriyet* that “thousands” of Kurds had been involved in the uprising. “It was not thousands,” Nuri clarified in his memoirs. “[I]f there had been 500 armed Kurds at Ararat, the Turkish army would not have been able to seize Ağrı for at least a year” (*Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*, 79).

²⁰³ Nuri, 110-111. The full quote is: *Benim fikrim ve kanaatim şudur ki, memleketin kendisi Türk’tür. Öz Türk olmayanların Türk vatanında bir hakkı vardır. O da hizmetçi olmaktır, köle olmaktır*; qtd. in Mete Tunçay, *T.C.’nde tek-parti yönetiminin kurulması, 1923-1931* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1981), 301.

²⁰⁴ Hamit Bozarslan, *Violence in the Middle East: From Political Struggle to Self-Sacrifice* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004), 22. After Dersim Kurdish nationalists accepted their lot and faded into the official memory,”(McDowall, *Modern History of the Kurds*, 287).

devastation of Dersim silenced Kurdish resistance until it tentatively reemerged in the 1950s in the writing of Kurdish intellectuals and then, more politically, in the next decade within the Turkish Left.²⁰⁵ But when this chronology of Kurdish resistance is expanded geographically, the period of “silence” is shortened. Nine years after Dersim, Kurds in Iran established the ‘first’ Kurdish state,” the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad. Its leader, Qazi Mohammed, was executed by the Iranian government on March 30, 1947.²⁰⁶ The Iraqi Kurdish leader Mullah Mustafa Barzani joined the Republic, fleeing to Iran after the failure of his revolt against the Iraqi monarchy in 1941-1943. He escaped to the Soviet Union after the fall of Mahabad and returned to Iraq after the 1958 revolution. By 1961, Iraqi Kurds were once again rebelling against the Iraqi state. According to Chris Kutschera, Nuri had offered his services to both Qazi Mohammad and Mullah Mustafa Barzani but was turned down by both of them.²⁰⁷ Kurdish nationalist Zinnar Silopi (the pseudonym of Kadri Cemilpaşa), like Nuri living in exile (in Syria rather than Iran) and a former member of Xoybûn, had travelled to Mahabad in 1946. He joined Qazi Mohammad’s newly formed Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDP-Iran) but returned to Syria after a few months. In Silopi’s sixty year history of his participation in Kurdish resistance, *Doza Kurdistan*, he changed *Milliyet*’s cartoon, amending it to read: “Independent Kurdistan is buried here” (*Müstakil Kürdistan burada medfundur*). “The Turkish press” wrote Silopi had “enjoyed placing the grave on place where the Kurdish had flown.” Silopi included the cartoon in the last pages of his memoir. Underneath *Milliyet*’s cartoon he placed his own caption. “Kurdistan lives, Kurdistan will live.”²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ *Doğuculuk* (Eastism) is used to describe the 1950s generation of Kurdish writers like Musa Anter who “rediscovered” their Kurdish identity through the ridicule of Turkish students (Where is your tail? they were asked when they left their Turkish villages to attend city high schools). The movement focused on the need for economic development in ‘the East’ (the state’s euphemism for the Kurdish part of Turkey). Their journal, *İleri Forward* (Foreword Homeland), like the movement, did not survive the 1960 coup. A more radical Kurdish movement emerged alongside the formation of the social-democrat Workers Party of Turkey (TİP) after the coup. See “The Organic Intellectuals and the re-emergence of Kurdish Political Activism in the 1960s” (pg. 49-64) and “The Emergence of Kurdish Socialists Movement” (pgs. 65-80) in Cengiz Gunes, *The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey: From Protest to Resistance* (New York; London: Routledge, 2012).

²⁰⁶ David McDowall calls the Shah’s execution of Qazi Mohammad “vindicative” as he had been willing to negotiate with the Iranian authorities and his rebellion had been “largely non-violent” (*Modern History of the Kurds*, pg. 143).

²⁰⁷ Chris Kutschera, *The Kurdish National Movement* [electronic edition], originally published as *Le Mouvement National Kurde* (Paris: Editions Flammarion, 1979). Nuri’s memoirs were translated into French by a member of the Barzani family. Christine Allison states that Nuri had tried to convince Mullah Mustafa Barzani to write his memoirs but was unsuccessful; “Kurdish Autobiography, Memoir and Novel: ‘Ereb Yemo and His successors,” *Studies on Persianate Societies* (2005), 113.

²⁰⁸ Zinnar Silopi [Kadri Cemilpaşa], *Doza Kürdistan [Dosa Kurdistan]: Kurt Milletinin 60 seneden beri essaretten Kurturlus Savasi Hatirati* (Stewr basim-evi, 1969), 114.

“As many people have witnessed in recent decades,” wrote Nuri in the last pages of his memoir of the Mount Ararat Rebellion, “the corpse inside *Milliyet*’s grave is not dead.”²⁰⁹ Before Nuri died in a car accident in Tehran in 1976, another coup in Turkey had “ushered in a fresh round of repression and radicalisation.”²¹⁰ Turkey was divided into leftists and fascists, leftists were spilt between reformists and revolutionaries, and revolutionaries were separating into Turks and Kurds. Nuri did not live to witness the birth of the Kurdistan Workers’s Party (PKK) at the end of the decade. However, his reappropriation of *Milliyet*’s cartoon became ‘ammunition’ for Kurdish resistance after his death in 1976. On the first anniversary of the PKK’s armed struggle in 1985, the editors of the party’s official journal, *Serxwebûn*, used *Milliyet*’s cartoon to commemorate the party’s resurrection (*dîrlîş*) of the dream of an independent Kurdistan (fig 1.28). The artist had removed the coffin buried underneath the Turkish newspaper’s eulogy to



Fig. 1.28: “The Dream of Kurdistan is not Buried Here” (*Serxwebûn*, August 1985)

Kurdish nationalism and placed it on top of Ararat’s summit. A huge “x” crossed out the epitaph written on coffin. The headline above declared that: “The Dream of Kurdistan is not buried here.” The coffin cast its large shadow over the people (*halk*) gathered below. In the hands of one member of the crowd was the flag of the PKK. “Our people live here” was written to the left of the mountain. The opposite side finished the sentence. “And under this flag they fight.” The article underneath explained the meaning of the original cartoon. “The Turkish press published a cartoon at the end of the Mount Ararat Uprising to confirm that the dream of establishing a

²⁰⁹ Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*, 111.

²¹⁰ Djene Rhys Bajalan, “Pan-Kurdish Nationalism: Theory or Praxis?” 19th Annual ASEN Conference-Nationalism & Globalisation, London School of Economics: March 31-April 2, 2009.

Kurdish state was over.” But on August 14, 1984, commander Agit had fired the first bullet and reclaimed the goal of liberating Kurdistan:

This time the war will be conducted differently, not with old tribal alliances but with an army that is militarily and ideologically trained. The cartoon was indeed right. The dream of Kurdistan is buried here. Its fire is still burning, it cannot be extinguished. Again, Kurdistan resists.²¹¹

Serwebûn's redrawing of *Milliyet*'s cartoon removed the Mount Ararat Uprising from its place inbetween Sheikh Said and Dersim and transformed it into the “most important Kurdish rebellion before the PKK.”²¹² In this larger chronology of Kurdish resistance (*direnîş*), the defeat of the Ararat rebels is rewritten as a cautionary tale. İsmail Beşikçi, the first Turkish academic to write sympathetically about Kurds in Turkey, placed the original cartoon on the front cover of his 1998 study of Kurdish Resistance in Turkey. The epitaph, however, was changed when Beşikçi reappropriated it for his title: *The Resurrection of the Dream of Kurdistan. Milliyet's grave*, wrote Beşikçi, symbolically cemented the division of Kurdistan into four parts (*parçalamak*) and marked the beginning of the destruction of Kurdish culture and identity. However, with the establishment of the PKK, Kurds had entered a “new stage” of history. The Marxist sociologist described this new phase of Kurdish history as the liberation of Kurdistan from colonial rule.²¹³

2.4.2 Redeploying the “Dream of Kurdistan”

After the kidnapping/capture and imprisonment of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan and the establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Northern Iraq, scholars of Kurdish nationalism adjusted the “dream of Kurdistan” to the reality of a Kurdish “quasi-state” in Iraq and the possibility of “at least cultural autonomy” in Turkish Kurdistan.²¹⁴ However, the

²¹¹ “*Muhayyel Kürdistan Burada Meftun Değildir*,” *Serxwebun*, August 1985; pg. 19.

²¹² Kalman, *Belge, tanık ve yaşayanlarıyla Ağrı Direnişi*, 8.

²¹³ İsmail Beşikçi, *Hayali Kürdistan'ın Dirilişi* (İstanbul: Aram Yayınları, 1998), 2-3. In a later work, Beşikçi describes Kurdistan as an “international colony.” Öcalan argues that, “colonialism does not adequately describe the policy of annihilation” that threatened Kurds with “extinction until the 1970s.” For a long time, survival rather than liberation was the “priority” of Kurds in Turkey. “Those long decades of military occupation, assimilation and threatened annihilation must be seen as a concerted effort to deprive Kurds of any national identity”; Abdullah Öcalan, “Declaration on the Democratic Solution of the Kurdish Question,” 1999, [Öcalan's appeal to the European Court of Human Rights], accessed November 11, 2016, <http://web.archive.org/web/20071020183517/http://www.geocities.com/kurdif/ocalan.html>.

²¹⁴ Michael Gunter, “An Historical Overview to the Kurdish Problem,” *The Copernicus Journal of Political Studies* 2, no. 4 (2013), 160. The PKK was the only Kurdish organization to envision the liberation of all of Kurdistan, not just one of its “four parts.” Some scholars have read the party's change from the goal of a liberated Kurdistan to the idea of “democratic autonomy” in Turkish Kurdistan as a sort of compromise, the party's acceptance of the “reality” of the nation-states Kurds live in as long as they are granted “cultural autonomy” in Turkey. However, as Uzun

“flashing up” of *Milliyet*’s cartoon during recent transformations in the political goals, organizational structures, and philosophies of the Kurdish resistance offers other possibilities for the dream of Kurdish independence. In Ahmet Kahraman’s 2003 book, *Kürt İsyanları Tedip ve Tenkil* (The Discipline and Punishment of Kurdish Uprisings), the cartoon is once again a reminder of the “hellish” origins of the nation-state.²¹⁵ There are only three Kurdish uprisings in Turkey argues Kahraman—Sheikh Said, Mount Ararat and the armed struggle of the PKK. “The rest were campaigns of suppression.”²¹⁶ Like other discussions of the Mount Ararat Uprising, the rebellion is a chapter in Kahraman’s book. However, on two blogs, *Bajarê Agirî*—which posts “everything about the uprising in Ağrı” —and *Herêma Agirî* —“news, history, and the archive of the Ararat Region” —the uprising is the whole story. On June 22, 2011, *Bajarê Agirî* asked: “Where is the Dream of Kurdistan Buried?” Now a blog post, *Milliyet*’s cartoon included a new caption (fig. 1.29). The caption was not placed above or underneath the cartoon. It was written on it, typed into the original cartoon’s black ink:

In September 1930, *Milliyet*, the mouthpiece of the Turkish Press [wearing its boots], used the above cartoon to proclaim with joy the bloody suppression of uprising. “The Dream of Kurdistan” it declared, knowingly being wrong...

The post later compared the uprising’s suppression to a “child exploring its new teeth by rubbing them against the skin of a peach.” The new Turkish Republic “formed its teeth on the Kurdish people.” Alongside the continuing history of state violence, the blog reinterpreted the “dream Kurdistan” as a desire for an “honorable peace.”²¹⁷ In 2012, described by the International Crisis Group as the worst resurgence of violence in Turkey “in the last 13 years,” *Özgür Gündem* serialized the chapters of Kahraman’s book.²¹⁸ “According to official history there were twelve Kurdish revolts from 1803 to 1914; all were rewarded with massacre” stated the first

explains in “Living Freedom,” after Öcalan’s imprisonment the party “developed specific solutions for each part of Kurdistan; the thesis of ‘democratic autonomy’ [not cultural autonomy] was developed for Turkish Kurdistan.” As stated in the KCK’s 2005 Newroz message, the movement’s new philosophy of liberation, Democratic Confederalism, was about transforming the state: “The self-determination of Kurdistan is about the aspiration to form a democracy that is not concerned with political borders – rather than the formation of a state on nationalist principles. Kurdish people in Iran, Turkey, Syria and Iraq will form their own federations and unite in a confederal superstructure,” (pgs. 21-23).

²¹⁵ Pensky, “Method and Time,” 192.

²¹⁶ Kahraman, *Kürt İsyanları Tedip ve Tenkil*, 236. Kahraman is referring to a statement by former President Süleyman Demirel that the PKK was the 29th Kurdish revolt.

²¹⁷ “Hayali” *Kürdistan Nereye “Gömüldü”?* *Bajarê Agirî* [blog], June 22, 2011, accessed October 15, 2015, <http://ararat-welat.blogspot.com/2011/06/hayali-kurdistan-nereye-gomuldu.html>.

²¹⁸ “The conflict is becoming more violent, with more than 700 dead in fourteen months, the highest casualties in thirteen years”; International Crisis Group, “Turkey: The PKK and a Kurdish Settlement,” *Europe Report* N°219,



Fig.1.29: *Milliyet*'s cartoon re-captioned on the blog *Bajarê Agirî* (July 11, 2011)

article on January 29, 2012. The title for Kahraman's history of the Mount Ararat Uprising and the Zilan Massacre (“#7”) was: “The Massacre of Kurds Underneath the Shadow of Illusionary Rebellions” (*Hayali İsyandar Gölgesinde Kürt Kırımı*).²¹⁹ The article published the day before was not about the Sheikh Said Rebellion but the army's “conquering of Kurdistan” after its suppression. The story of the army's pacification of Dersim had no title. It began with the sentence: “Dersim, the price of being Kurdish.”²²⁰ *Bajarê Agirî* reposted Kahraman's article on Ararat and Zilan, retitling it: “*Özgür Gündem*: The Valley of Zilan Cries Blood.” *Milliyet*'s cartoon appeared in the collage that was posted above it; however, it had been pushed to the side to make room for a photograph of the corpse of Ararat fighter, Reşoyê Silo (fig. 1.30).²²¹ “The hero of Bekıran” was shot and decapitated by the Turkish army in 1931. His wife, Zeyno, was killed after him. In Nuri's memoirs, Reşo's murder was how “Independent Ararat passed into the hands of the Turkish state.”²²² *Cumhuriyet*'s July 8, 1930 cartoon of the impaled Ararat rebel

September 11, 2012, accessed January 2, 2014, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/turkey-pkk-and-kurdish-settlement>.

²¹⁹ *Hayal* (dream, *hayali*-illusionary) is the modern Turkish version of *muhayyel* (the word used in *Milliyet*'s epitaph).

²²⁰ Kahraman's series appeared in *Özgür Gündem* from January 29 to February 6, 2012.

²²¹ “*Özgür Gündem*: Zilan Deresi Kan Ağlıyor,” *Bajarê Agirî* [blog], February 5, 2012, accessed November 12, 2012, <http://ararat-welat.blogspot.com/2012/02/ozgur-gundem-gazetesi-zilan-deresi-kan.html/>.

²²² Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*, 108.



Fig. 1.30: The Cartoon in a History of Massacre (*Bajarê Agirî*, February 6, 2012)

(fig. 1.8) appeared next to Reşo. During Ağrı's May Day celebrations that year a member of the local BDP told *Özgür Gündem* that the march was “an answer to the state's claim that it had buried the dreams of the Kurdish people on Mount Ararat.”²²³

Since 2005 the Turkish State had been talking with the PKK (the negotiations were kept secret at the time). In Turkey's 2009 municipal elections, the ‘pro-Kurdish’ Democratic Society Party (DTP) won ninety-nine cities. The excitement of election victory did not last. The party was closed down by the state for allegedly having ties to the PKK. A number of mayors, activists, and politicians were arrested as well.²²⁴ In October, a peace delegation made up of PKK guerrillas arrived at the Turkey's border with Iraq. They were questioned by Turkish officials but allowed to continue their journey to Diyarbakır. Along the way they were greeted by crowds of “jubilant” Kurds. This “joy” was interpreted as “provocative triumphalism” by members of the political opposition and the members of the delegation who managed to avoid arrest returned to Northern Iraq.²²⁵ At the end of 2012 Prime Minister Erdoğan announced that the government was in official peace negotiations with the PKK. In his 2013 Newroz (Kurdish New Year)

²²³ “Bölge’de her yer 1 Mayıs alını,” (The Celebration of May 1 across the Region), *Özgür Gündem*, May 2, 2012; pg. 7.

²²⁴ The DTP was replaced by the BDP. The DTP was the successor of the Democratic People's Party (HADEP) which had been banned by the Constitutional Court in 2005. The current Kurdish party, the People's Democracy Party (HDP), succeeded the BDP. The arrests in 2009 were the beginning of the “KCK Operation.” By 2012 over 8000 people had been arrested on suspicion of supporting or being members of the PKK. See footnote 29.

²²⁵ Uzun, “Living Freedom,” 30.

message Öcalan told the guerillas of the PKK to leave Turkey. The peace process had begun (again).²²⁶

2.4.3 The “Flashing Up” of the “Dream of Kurdistan” over the summer of 2014

A month after *Özgür Gündem* announced the election of Ağrı’s first Kurdish mayor by destroying *Milliyet*’s cartoon, the blog *Herêma Agirî* posted a call of PKK commander, Murat Karayılan, to write the “dream of colonialism is buried here” on Mount Ararat (fig. 1.31).²²⁷ The day before, on July 14, the leader of the People’s Defense Forces (HPG, the armed wing of the PKK) had commemorated the ongoing history of Kurdish resistance (*direnîş*) by connecting the anniversary of the 1982 death fast of Kemal Pir, M. Hayri Durmuş, Ali Çiçek and Akif Yılmaz in Diyarbakır’s Military Prison to “the spirit of the Kurdish youth in Kobanî.” Karayılan reminded the readers of *Özgür Gündem* that Kurdish men and women in Northern Syria were “resisting the tanks and bombs of the Islamic State with Molotov cocktails and hand grenades.”²²⁸ The bloggers at *Herêma Agirî* reposted *Özgür Gündem*’s article, squeezing *Milliyet*’s cartoon inbetween the Diyarbakır prison resistance and the defense of Syrian city of Kobanî:

After the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising, they made a symbolic tomb on Mount Ararat and wrote: The dream of Kurdistan is buried here. Now again it is necessary to make a symbolic tomb on Ararat [and write]: “The dream of colonialism is buried here. Now the fantasy is that colonialism lives in Kurdistan.”²²⁹

Gurdal Aksoy argues that because Kurdish nationalists are held captive by daily politics they employ a “cut and paste method” when writing Kurdish history. “Rather than constructing a convincing synthesis, the [Kurdish] historian incorporates whatever material they stumble

²²⁶ For the debates over when Turkey’s recent authoritarian turn began, see Sinan Erenşü and Ayça Alemdaroğlu “Dialectics of Reform and Repression: Unpacking Turkey’s Authoritarian “Turn,” *Middle East Studies* 52, no. 1 (2018), 16-28.

²²⁷ “Murat Karayılan: Ağrı dağı tepesine ‘Hayali Sömürgecilik Burda Bitmiştir’ yazmak lazım,” *Herêma Agirî* [blog], July 15, 2014, accessed November 28, 2014, <http://herema-ararat.blogspot.com/2014/07/murat-karayilan-agr-dag-tepesine-hayali.html>. Karayılan is one of the founding members of the PKK. He is currently the commander of the HPG (*Hêzên Parastina Gel*).

²²⁸ “Kobanê 14 Temmuz ruhunun yansması” (Kobane reflects the spirit of July 14), *Özgür Gündem*, July 15, 2014, retrieved September 10, 2014, <http://ozgur-gundem.com/haber/113491/koban-14-temmuz-ruhunun-yansimasi>. Their death fast (*ölüm oruç*) began on July 14, 1982. See Chapter IV.

²²⁹ “Ağrı dağı tepesine ‘Hayali Sömürgecilik Burda Bitmiştir’ yazmak lazım.”

upon.”²³⁰ Hamit Bozarslan makes a similar argument in *Violence in the Middle East: From Political Struggle to Self-Sacrifice*, arguing that both “an extremely violence past” and the present’s “rapid procession of political events” prevents Kurds “from mentally organizing their immediate history into comprehensible and meaningful experiences separated by clear-cut



Fig. 1.31: “It is necessary to write on Ararat: The Dream of Colonialism is Buried Here” (*Herêma Agirî*, July 15, 2014)

temporal landmarks.” Rather than being the link between a “meaningful past” and a “possible future” the present is the “moment in which one lives, acts....survives.” Gursoy and Bozarslan seem to suggest that Kurds lack a foundational moment of violence to organize their history. The “confused ensemble of tragic events that follow one after another,” according to Bozarslan, prevents temporalization.²³¹ But the re-appropriation and reanimation of *Milliyet*’s cartoon suggests that Kurds have discovered other ways to narrate ongoing histories of violence. As Bozarslan suggests, traumatic or foundational violence plays a structural role in the writing of national histories. However, the repetitive nature of violence can either shatter or consolidate identity. The shattering of identity offers the possibility of “working through” traumatic histories rather than “compulsively” re-enacting them argues Dominick LaCapra. “Working through” these histories he suggests, forces people to come to terms with violent events “in a way that opens different possibilities in the present and future.”²³²

²³⁰ Gurdal Aksoy qtd. in Christopher Houston, “‘Set aside from the pen and cut off from the foot’: Imagining the Ottoman Empire and Kurdistan,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 2 (2007), 402.

²³¹ Bozarslan, *Violence in the Middle East*, 40-43.

²³² Dominick LaCapra, “Tropisms of Intellectual History,” in *history and its limits: human, animal, violence* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 2009), 203-204.

2.5 Working Through Ongoing Histories of Violence

2.5.1 The History of Kurdish Resistance as Written by the Descendants of the Ararat Rebels

At the end of the summer of 2014, *Milliyet*'s epitaph appeared on the flyer for Doğubayazıt's commemoration of the Mount Ararat Uprising. The organizers of the commemoration, calling themselves the uprising's "descendants" on flyer, placed Ararat's defeat in a history of resistance in attempt to work through the nation-state's ongoing history of violence:

Being one of Mesopotamia's original people, the Kurds—stateless—have endured massacre. Having their own languages, cultures, and living their own identity, [Kurds] have refused to live under domination of any state. For this reason they have been subjected to continuous massacre by colonial, pillager states. Without a doubt one of these massacres from 1926 to 1930 was the Ararat Revolt and the Zilan Massacre. In this massacre tens of thousands of people were killed. The bloody pens of the Turkish press wrote that: "The steel eagles [airforce] have annihilated the rebels." They filled up to the mouth of the Valley of Zilan with corpses and then placed a cement grave on Ararat announcing that 'here lies the dream of Kurdistan.' The Kurdish movement has broken this grave into pieces and killed dream of colonialism. Being descendants of [Ararat] rebels we demand an accounting of this massacre, inviting all patriotic people to the commemorate the struggle of Ararat fighters in the foothills of Mount Ararat (fig. 1.32).

The flyer took its description of the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising directly from the front pages of the Republican press. The line: "The steel eagles [airforce] have annihilated the rebels" (*Türk'ün demir kartalları asilerin hesabını temizlemektedir*) was cut from *Cumhuriyet*'s front page, removed from its position below the July 14, 1930 cartoon that depicted Turkey's "steel eagles bringing misery to the rebels," (fig. 1.23) and then pasted onto the commemoration's flyer. The description of the Zilan Valley being "filled with corpses" appeared in *Cumhuriyet* the day before, July 13, 1930. Underneath a huge banner headline that declared: "The Rebels were annihilated in five days (*Asiler 5 Günde İmha Edildi*), the paper confirmed that the "clean-up" of Zilan was underway.²³³ The rebels "in the Zilan Valley had been completely annihilated—not one person survived." The story continued into the inside pages:

Not one of the bandits who joined the first attacks on the villages in Zeylân [Zilan] escaped from the Zeylân [Zilan] valley. Not even one of them survived. The bandits abandoned their livestock. In this manner the incidents of banditry have been finished and closed.²³⁴

²³³ "Zeylân nahiyesindeki siyasî ve irticâî kıyam hitam bulmuştur" (The political and reactionary uprising in Zilan has come to an end), *Cumhuriyet*, July 13, 1930.

²³⁴ "Temizlik başladı," (Clean-up has begun), *Cumhuriyet*, July 13, 1930.

A part-sketch, part-cartoon accompanied İbrahim Tali Bey's announcement of Zilan's 'pacification' (fig. 1.33). Two terrified 'bandits' held up their hands as two Turkish soldiers threatened them with the bayonets at the end of their long rifles. At the bandits' barefeet was a



Fig. 1.32: The Flyer for the 2014 Commemoration of the Mount Ararat Uprising in Doğubayazıt

skull, overhead a Turkish bomber. The story of Zilan's "pacification" appeared in a corner of *Akşam*'s front page the same day:

The clean-up operation in Zeylan Valley was completed on July 9. The bandits who had attacked villages were first surrounded and then annihilated. None were spared.. The valley was filled with hundreds of corpses. There are too many dead to count.²³⁵

The dead were counted by *Cumhuriyet* on July 16. "More than 15,000 were annihilated in the operation in Zilan." Only "1500" remain on Mount Ararat which is "resounding with explosions and artillery fire." They rebels "are being subdued into submission by the death raining down on them from the sky."²³⁶ During the bombing of Zilan, the press frequently celebrated the skill and bravery of air force while highlighting rebels' fears of the planes. As Turkish pilots bombed the valley for "three hours," Kurds "fled in panic."²³⁷ *Akşam* used a cartoon to illustrate the wretched

²³⁵ "Zeylan deresindeki eşkiya imha edildi," (The bandits in the Zilan Valley have been annihilated), *Akşam*, July 13, 1930.

²³⁶ "Tayyarelerimizin bombardmanı devam ediyor," (Bombardment continues), *Cumhuriyet*, July 16, 1930.

²³⁷ "Ağrıdağı, İhata Edildi" (Ararat has been surrounded), *Cumhuriyet*, July 17, 1930.

state of the rebels, “caught between” the bombs of the air force and the bayonets of the army (fig. 1.34). “The sound of the propeller [was] more frightening than Ezrail,” (the Angel of Death and Destruction). “When the rebels hear a plane overhead they mimic the sound of its



Fig. 1.33: The pacification of Zilan (*Cumhuriyet*, July 13, 1930)

propeller, screaming “*vir, vir*” they are coming.”²³⁸ Believing “they can save themselves” from machine gunfire and bombs “they hide themselves amongst Ararat’s rocks and dare not



Fig. 1.34: The Ararat rebels caught between the bombs of the air force and the bayonets of the army (*Akşam*, July 17, 1930)

move.”²³⁹ Four Turkish soldiers who had “escaped” from the rebels’ camp on Ararat told the state news agency that “even the dogs and sheep wail[ed] when they heard the bombers

²³⁸ “*Tenkil hazırlığı bitti,*” (Preparations for Repression of the Revolt finished), *Cumhuriyet*, July 24, 1930.

²³⁹ “*Ağrı’da ve cennapta vaziyet*” (State of Affairs on and South of Ararat), *Cumhuriyet*, August 1, 1930.

approaching.”²⁴⁰ At the end of July, *Akşam*’s “Eastern correspondent,” Esat Mahmut Bey, told his readers that he was waiting impatiently for “the annihilation of the bandits who scream and hide behind rocks like animals when they hear the sound of an airplane.”²⁴¹

While the Turkish press credited the army for bringing about the “annihilation” of the Kurdish rebels (Salih Paşa and the 9th Army Corps “dug” their “grave on Ararat”) headlines, cartoons, and sketches over the summer celebrated the airplane.²⁴² The use of the airplane’s advanced technology to put down the uprising affirmed that Turkey was an advanced nation. In the early twentieth century, explains Peter Fritzsche “airplanes...were the measure of nations.” Their possession separated “European genius from an African or Asian mean” and determined who were “the truly great...European nation-states.” Nations unable to join the airplane age would not benefit from its technological competition nor be protected from its imperial conquests.” The airplane not only brought together “modernist visions” and “national dreams” it linked technological progress to national survival.²⁴³ Like the modern buildings of the new Republican capital, Ankara, the airplane was both an instrument and symbol of Kemalist modernization. “The future is in the skies,” announced Atatürk at the foundation of the Turkish Aviation Society (*Türk Tayyare Cemiyeti*) in 1925.²⁴⁴ The society promoted the airplane as a sign of national progress and cohesion, organizing “airplane celebrations” (*Tayyare Bayramları*) during national holidays like August 30 (Victory Day) and Youth and Sport Day (May 19).²⁴⁵ It also ran the first national lottery, winners of the airplane lotto (*tayyare piyangosu*) announced throughout the

²⁴⁰ The story of “the four escaped soldiers” appeared on July 17, 1930 in *Cumhuriyet* as “*Eşkiyanın elinden kaçan dört askerimizin anlattıkları*” (Four of our soldiers describe their escape from the bandits” and in *Akşam* as “*Ağrı dağındaki eşkiya-Kaçmağa muvaffak olan dört neferimiz oradaki vaziyete dair neler anlatıyorlar*” (The Bandit’s on Ararat-Four soldiers explain how they escaped). They were probably released as the Kurdish rebels had limited supplies and could not feed captured soldiers.

²⁴¹ Esat Mahmut Bey, “*Şakiler Ağrıdağda nasıl yaşarlar ve ne yaparlar,*” (How the bandits live and survive on Mount Ararat), *Akşam*, July 28; pgs. 1 & 2.

²⁴² “*Ağrı dağıni şakilere nasıl mezar yaptık?*” *Cumhuriyet*, September 17, 1930.

²⁴³ Peter Fritzsche, *A nation of fliers: German aviation and the popular imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 3. “[A]viation is a crucial part of the modernist experience. Because of the fearsome dangers it posed and also the unexpected opportunities it presented, the “air future” was inscribed with all kinds of reforms, plans, and projects.”

²⁴⁴ “Aviation was an important theme of republican modernity” notes architectural historian Sibel Bozdoğan in *Modernism and nation building: Turkish architectural culture in the early republic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 126. “The future in in the skies” (*İstikbal Göklerdedir*) is written on the wall of the *Türk Hava Kurumu* (The Turkish Aeronautical Society), the predecessor of the Turkish Aviation League.

²⁴⁵ Ahmet Aslan, “*Tayyare Cemiyeti’nin Propaganda Faaliyetleri ve Tayyare Bayramları,*” *Anadolu Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 14, no. 3 (2014), 141-150.

bombing of Zilan and Ararat.”²⁴⁶ On the day *Akşam* published the cartoon of an rebel looking up to find an airplane dropping a huge bomb on him and Mount Ararat (fig. 1.31), it informed three lucky citizens that they had each won the airplane lottery’s “grand” prize of 4000 lira. British officials praised Turkish pilots for their “great courage and initiative in bombing and firing machine guns from a low altitude.”²⁴⁷ During the “clean-up” of the rebels in Zilan, *Cumhuriyet* inserted a cartoon of a pilot dropping a bomb into a headline about the army’s preparation for the suppression of the Kurdish fighters on Ararat (fig. 1.35). In the cartoon the pilot hangs over the side of the plane, caught just before he released its terrifying power. While his ‘skill’ (flying a plane at a low altitude) affirmed Turkish superiority, his precision confirmed



Fig. 1.35: Celebrating the “skill” of Turkish Pilots (*Cumhuriyet*, July 18, 1930)²⁴⁸

the humanity of the state’s violence, his faceless victims rebels not villagers. The airplane’s “power” derived not only from its “the actual destruction” but from its “threat” of violence.”²⁴⁹ The “effect on the tribesmen is claimed to have been very great” stated British military attaché

²⁴⁶ The lottery was run by the Turkish Aviation League until 1939 when it became the national lottery. See “*Türkiye’de Milli Piyango*,” *Tarih Toplum*, accessed January 6, 2019, <https://www.tarihtoplum.org/osmanlida-milli-piyango/>.

²⁴⁷ FO424/273, Doc. 63 inclosure in Doc. 62 [E3895/1511/44], Major O’Leary to Sir G. Clerk, Constantinople, July 16, 1930.

²⁴⁸ The headline reads: “Salih Paşa: Preparations for Ararat’s encirclement have begun. The combing operation in Çaldıran will be finished by the 20th.”

²⁴⁹ Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 163 & 245-248. The “humanity” of aerial bombardment is based on the “lie” of its precision. Commenting on the use of the British air force to “pacify” Iraqi tribes Satia states the following: “In theory, terror inspired by occasional demonstrations of destructive power would awe tribes into submission. Alternatively, interference with its victims’ daily lives, through destruction of homes, villages, fuel, crops, and livestock, would ‘infallibly achieve the desired result.’ Of course, the inhumanity of the system ultimately stemmed from its inability to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants.” For a history of bombing ‘the savage’ see Sven Lindqvist’s *A History of Bombing*, trans. Linda Haverty Rugg (New York: The New Press, 2000).

Major O’Leary after admiring the ‘skill’ of Turkish pilots during the bombing of the Zilan Valley.²⁵⁰ Cartoons often pictured air-raids, four or five planes dropping bombs on the bandits hiding in Ararat’s caves and amongst its rocks and boulders. While stories about Salih Paşa’s plans to encircle Ararat revealed the army’s difficulty of fighting in terrain deeply familiar to the



Fig. 1.36: A solitary plane flying past Great Ararat’s snow-covered summit (*Akşam*, July 22, 1930)²⁵¹

rebels, cartoons of bombing raids asserted the state’s monopoly of violence:

In the past there were dangerous avalanches and violent snow storms [on Ararat]. Now, like Ebabel birds the Turkish planes come and go, swooping down low, raining destruction, and then flying away.²⁵²

In the nineteenth century, European mountain climbers conquered Ararat’s summit. In the twentieth century, suggested *Akşam*’s side by side photos of the mountain and a solitary bomber, Turkish pilots would conquer its icy peak (fig. 1.36).

2.5.2 “Tear Down that Shameful Monument”

Within days of being elected, Ağrı’s first Kurdish mayor, Sırrı Sakık, promised to tear down the city’s Air Force Martyrs Monument (*Hava Şehitleri Anıt*). Sakık insisted that the propeller attached to the monument was from one of the planes used during the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising. “Everyday the people of Ağrı are forced to see the propeller,” he told the

²⁵⁰ Major O’Leary to Sir G. Clerk, Constantinople, July 16, 1930. As the Turkish army was preparing its suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising in the spring of 1930, British parliamentarians were debating the effectiveness of the British Airforce’s bombing of Iraq’s “turbulent” Kurdish tribes. H. Dobbs, Iraq’s former High Commissioner, wrote to the Times to weigh in on the debate. Because of the difficulty of employing other methods of “civilization” in the mountains of Kurdistan (the terrain making it difficult and costly to “build roads and police stations”) he stressed that the airplane was the most effective tool of “policing” Kurdistan (“Air Control,” *The Times*, May 08, 1930; pg. 12).

²⁵¹ The caption for the image on the left reads: “The view of Great Ararat’s snow-covered summit from a plane.” The right reads: “Our planes flying over the mountain.”

²⁵² “*Irana yeni bir nota verdik*” (We have given a new note to Iran), *Cumhuriyet* July 30; pg 2. The Ebabel were the swallow-like birds that protected Mecca from the Ethiopian General Abraha by dropping rocks on his invading army (the story is told in the Quran: 104).

Turkish media. Calling it a “monument of massacre” Sakık vowed to destroy it.²⁵³ Provincial authorities, however, insisted that the memorial did not honor the pilots who had bombed the area during the uprising. They explained that Ağrı’s airforce monument had been erected to commemorate two pilots who had crashed over Ararat in 1939 when they encountered bad weather during their return home from the Shah of Iran’s wedding. After the commemoration of the Mount Ararat Uprising on September 3, 2014, Sakık reaffirmed his commitment to “tear down that shameful monument.” Reiterating that “a propeller from one of the bombers shot down during the uprising” was attached to the monument, he told Turkey’s Prime Minister, Recep Tayip Erdoğan, to come to Ağrı and explain its “continuing presence.” Sakık dismissed the monument’s ‘official’ history. During his September press conference, he picked up a stack of documents and photos and told journalists that the monument on the city’s main thoroughfare had not been built to honor Machinist Sıddık Uyar and Petty Officer Fethi Sülker (the two pilots killed in 1939 on their way home from Iran):

In my hands are pictures and photos. I am not talking out of my hat. They brought [the propeller] from the rebellion and put it here. There are pictures from the time. Afterwards, because of complaints, they changed it to 1939. Why would two pilots even go to the Shah’s wedding? If that isn’t lie, this is [that the memorial was built for them]... This is a propeller of a plane that was shot down during the rebellion.

Sakık brought up the state’s destruction of a statue of the PKK martyr Mahsum Korkmaz (Agit) in Lice in August. It was torn down, he said, because it had offended the Turkish public and threatened peace process. “Do Kurdish people not have feelings?” he asked. “You bring a similar monument here, you put a real propeller on it, and you don’t connect these things to the peace process?”²⁵⁴ Ağrı’s governor (*vali*), Mehmet Tekinarslan, told reporters that the pilots buried underneath the memorial “definitely did not die during the rebellion.” He then explained that the Airforce Martyrs Monument could not be torn down because it was registered as an “immovable cultural asset.” Such “politics,” he insisted, were “not good for the peace process or the future of

²⁵³ “*Kazım Karabekir’in ismi silinecek*” (Kazım Karabekir’s name will be erased), *Milliyet* [online], June 6, 2014, accessed November 27, 2014, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/kazim-karabekir-in-ismi-silinecek/siyaset/detay/1891694/default.htm>.

²⁵⁴ “*Sırrı Sakık: O anıt yıkacağım*” (Sırrı Sakık: I will tear down that monument), *Yeniakit* [online], September 5, 2014, December 1, 2014, <http://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/sirri-sakik-o-aniti-yikacagim-28688.html>; Asef Ulaş “*Sırrı Sakık: O anıt ucubedir*” (Sırrı Sakık: That shameful monument”), *Hurriyet* [online], September 6, 2014, accessed December 1, 2014, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/27149009.asp>.

our children.”²⁵⁵ The monument and the 3000 square metre site it sits on had been renovated in 1969 in order to incorporate a statue of Atatürk into its design. At the time, explained the governor, the bodies of Sülker and Uyardır had been removed and buried in the city’s military cemetery (*şehitlik*). When the work was completed in 1981 they were re-interred and the site was registered with the Erzurum Culture and Heritage Protection and the Van Directorate of Cultural Heritage Conservation District Board as the “Air Force Martyrs Monument.” Because it was the property of the Ministry of National Defense it could “not be torn down.”²⁵⁶

On July 17, 1930, *Cumhuriyet* had called for the building of “small monument” to remember the “savage” (*vahşî*) deaths of pilot Salâhattin Bey and “his comrade” Şerafettin Bey:

Our pilots were killed in a terrible manner by the accursed bandits. After being shot down while firing on the rebels at close range they were captured. While being taken prisoner their noses and ears were cut off and their eyes gouged out.²⁵⁷

They were “stripped naked, tied with aircraft wire to the back of a horse, and dragged to death,” stated *Vakit* a week later. Their “skeletons” were found afterwards, abandoned “in the revolt area.”²⁵⁸ Stories of their “savage” deaths even made it into the pages of the American newspapers:

Kurdish invaders, beleaguered high among the volcanic rocks of Mount Ararat, today shot down one Turkish airplane, gouged out the eyes of the aviator and tore the machine to shreds during a terrific bombardment by an aerial squadron...In the engagement the Turkish planes flew to an altitude of 20,000 feet, higher than Mount Blanc, before swooping down on their hidden foes and dropping tons of bombs.²⁵⁹

When British writer Rosita Forbes visited the area in late June of 1930 she noted that the mood of the Ararat fighters was “jubilant.” They had just “repulsed three successive attacks, captured

²⁵⁵ “Ağrı Valisi: Hava Şehitleri Anıtı'nın yıkılması mümkün değil,” (Governor of Ağrı: It is not possible to tear down the Airforce Memorial), *Milliyet* [online], September 6, 2014, accessed December 3, 2014, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/agri-valisi-hava-sehitleri/siyaset/detay/1936416/default.htm>.

²⁵⁶ “Ağrı Valiliği'nden Sırrı Sakık'a "Anıt" Yanıtı” (Governor of Ağrı’s “monument” response to Sırrı Sakık), *Haberler* [online], September 6, 2014, accessed December 3, 2014, <http://www.haberler.com/anit-hezeyanina-aciklama-hava-sehitleri-aniti-6456048-haberi/>.

²⁵⁷ “Şehit düşen iki tayyarecimiz” (Our two martyred pilots), *Cumhuriyet*, July 17, 1930; pg. 2.

²⁵⁸ “Hududun tahdidi değil, tashihi mevzuu bahistir” (The Topic is not Border Delimitation but Border Correction), *Vakit*, July 23, 1930.

²⁵⁹ The AA (Turkey’s state news agency) wire appeared on July 17 in the *Washington Post* as “Kurds Shoot Down Turkish Airplane,” pg. 3 and in the *New York Times* as “Kurds Down a Turkish Plane and Maim Pilot; Pursuing Forces Raze 200 Hostile Villages,” pg. 7.

several Turkish guns and brought down two aeroplanes.”²⁶⁰ The year before, after the Turkish Air Force’s bombing of the ‘loyal’ Ararat village of Kanikork (Topçatan), the Ararat rebels destroyed a crashed plane.²⁶¹ They took the bomber’s machine gun, poured gasoline on the plane, and blew it up. Nuri described the explosion as the “sound of Kurdish victory.” The dead pilot had been removed beforehand. In order to prevent the authorities from “concealing his death from the local community,” Nuri and his men stripped off his uniform and sent his naked corpse on the back of a horse to Bayezid. “The plane that the enemy had used to kill Kurdish women and children was shattered into pieces” wrote Nuri.²⁶² British military officials estimated that by August 1930 the Turkish Air Force had lost “eight to ten” planes.²⁶³ After uprising’s suppression Britain sold the Turkish government “21 observation aeroplanes, 9 fighting aeroplanes, 2 bomber seaplanes, 2 observation seaplanes, [and] 15 training machines.”²⁶⁴ By 1932, Turkey had a fleet of 240 airplanes.²⁶⁵ The military made widespread use of bombers to ‘pacify’ Dersim Kurds five years later.²⁶⁶

2.5.3 The ‘Real Story’ of Ağrı’s Airforce Monument

According to writer and historian Kemal Suphandağ, a plane was shot down by the rebels (his father, Nadır Bey, was the commander of the group) near the village of Dedeli (between Erciş and Patnos) in late June, 1930. The plane’s two pilots were killed and buried in Patnos opposite where the Yıldırım Palas Hotel stands. “It was [then] announced that a monument would be built to honor them.” Suphandağ describes the killing of the pilots as initiating the destruction of Zilan in July, 1930. In 1950, the memorial and the pilots were moved to the province’s new capital, Ağrı. “This is the monument that Sırrı Sakık and everyone is talking about” he clarified a few days after Ağrı’s new mayor first vowed to destroy it in June of 2012.²⁶⁷ In the writer’s corner of

²⁶⁰ Forbes, *Angora to Afghanistan*, 264.

²⁶¹ Topçatan sits “on” Ararat (at 2200 metres).

²⁶² Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyani*, 49-51.

²⁶³ FO474/273, Doc. 75 [E 4322/1511/44], Helm to Henderson, Constantinople, August 6, 1930.

²⁶⁴ FO474/272, Doc. 30, inclosure in Doc. 28 [E 1936/1936/44], B.J. O’Leary, March, 1930.

²⁶⁵ FO474/273, Doc. 298 [E529/529/44], “1932 Annual Report Turkey,” Clerk to John Simon, Angora, January 17, 1933.

²⁶⁶ See Olson, “The Kurdish Rebellions” for the Airforce’s role in the suppression of Kurdish resistance in the 1920s and 1930s.

²⁶⁷ Suphandağ’s article was published online by the online local paper, *Agrihürses* [www.agrihurses.net], and then posted on *Herêma Agirî* on June 7, 2014 as “*Kemal Suphandağ Yazdı: Hava Şehitleri Anıtı ve Patnos Kuşatması*” (The Airforce Martyrs Monument and the Siege of Patnos), accessed December 1, 2014, <http://herema-ararat.blogspot.com/2014/06/kemal-suphandag-yazdi-hava-sehitleri.html>. A longer version of the article was posted

the local paper, *Voice of Ağrı*, Mehmet İzçi repeated Suphandag's story that the pilots interred in Ağrı's memorial had first been buried in Patnos in 1930 and had been transferred to Ağrı twenty years later. However, İzçi was less concerned with settling the controversy over who was buried underneath the monument, more interested in contributing to the debate over changing the "militaristic" names of Ağrı's neighbourhoods. "Let us take a look" he suggested. "Kazım Karabekir...Fevzi Çakmak...the Selcuk ruler Alparslan, Ottoman sultans Fatih, Yavuz, Murat." Why shouldn't Kazım Karabekir's name be removed he asked, responding to the Turkish press' criticism of Sakık's plans to not just tear down the monument but to erase the Turkish general's name from the city's street signs.²⁶⁸ İzçi then offered a list of candidates that would enable Kurds and Turks to create a "common history," suggesting the names of Sufi mystics Mevlana Cellaledinî Romî [Rumi] and Hacı Bektaş and the Kurdish scholar and philosopher buried in Doğubayazıt, Ehmedê Xanî.²⁶⁹ In 2015, Sakık applied to have the name of Marshall Fevzi Çakmak removed from one of the city's districts and rename it the "Neighborhood of İhsan Nuri Paşa."²⁷⁰

According to "the real story of the monument" posted on the blog *Herêma Agirî*, Sakık's photographs proved that Ağrı's Airforce Martyrs Monument had been erected in 1930. The

on August 25, 2010 on the blog *Bajarê Agirî* as "*Ağrı Kürt Cumhuriyeti*" (The Kurdish Republic of Ağrı), accessed December 4, 2014, <http://ararat-welat.blogspot.com/2010/08/muradiye-ercis-ve-patnos-kusatmalari.html>. The 2010 post is about the events that lead to the Zilan Massacre, the 2014 post begins the same way with the story of the pilots and the monument (leading into a shorten description of Zilan) and then references the debate over the memorial. Most of the information is from Suphandağ's book, *Hamidiye Alayları Ağrı Direnişi ve Zilan Katliamı* (İstanbul: Pêrî, 2012).

²⁶⁸ During Sakık's June press conference he was asked if he would also remove street signs. He responded that Turkey needed to deal with its legacies of "militarism." The Turkish press then criticized him for wanting to "erase" Karabekir, pointing out that the hero of the Eastern Front during the War of Independence had actually fallen out with the Kemalists over Sheikh Said. Sakık later clarified that his response had been misunderstood. "I said that I thought perhaps Karabekir had had a role in Mustafa Kemal's [Atatürk] Armenian Question. But that I didn't want to be dragged into this type of argument"; "*Sırrı Sakık'tan 'Kazım Karabekir' açıklaması*" (Sırrı Sakık's 'Kazım Karabekir' clarification)," *Cumhuriyet* [online], June 11, 2014, accessed November 27, 2014, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/siyaset/81467/Sirri_Sakik_tan_Kazim_Karabekir_aciklamasi.html.

²⁶⁹ "*Kazım Karabekir, Pilotlar Anıtı ve Sırrı Sakık*" (Kazım Karabekir, Pilots, the Monument, and Sırrı Sakık). The piece was published online at *agrininsesi.com* and then posted on the blog *Herêma Agirî* on June 9, 2014, accessed December 2, 2014, <http://herema-ararat.blogspot.com/2014/06/kazim-karabekir-pilotlar-ant-ve-srr-sakk.html>.

²⁷⁰ Asef Ulaş, "*Ağrı'daki mahalleye Kürt isyancı adı*" (A Neighbourhood in Ağrı named for Kurdish rebel), *Hurriyet* [online], March 4, 2015, accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/28355222.asp>.

September 6 post included, “the following picture” (fig. 1.37) of “two friends of the deceased pilots” beside the monument in Karaköse (Ağrı).²⁷¹ According to the blog, the photographer had captioned the photo: “1930-The memorial in Karaköse that honors our pilot friends martyred on Mount Ararat.” Writer and local historian, Nihat Öner, purchased the postcard from the online

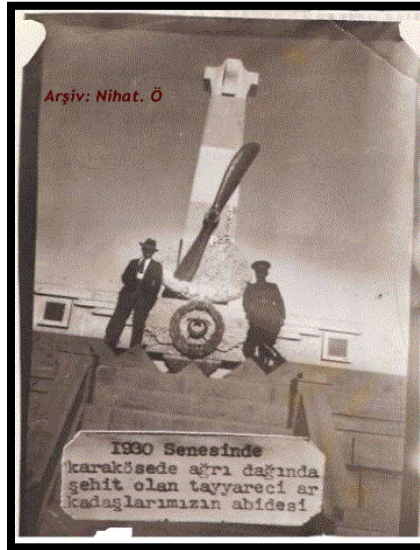


Fig. 1.37: Postcard of Ağrı’s Air Force Martyrs Monument posted on the blog *Herêma Agirî* (September 6, 2014)

auction site, *gittigidiyor.com* (a Turkish affiliate of ebay). The ‘real’ names of the cenotaph’s occupants, further explained the blog, were written on the back. Like the advertisement on the



Fig. 1.38: Both sides of the postcard of Ağrı’s Air Force Martyrs Monument sold on *gittigidiyor.com* (*Herêma Agirî*, September 6, 2014)

²⁷¹ “Ağrı’daki Abide’nin Gerçek Hikayesi” (The Real Story of the Monument in Ağrı), *Herêma Agirî* [blog], September 6, 2014, accessed December 4, 2014, <http://herema-ararat.blogspot.ca/2014/09/agridaki-abidenin-gercek-hikayesi.html>.

online auction site, *Herêma Agirî* included a shot of the names scrawled over the lines meant for the address of the postcard's recipient (fig. 1.38). *Gittigidiyor.com* had helpfully listed the names, posting them underneath in red: Captain Mehmet Selahattin and Lieutenants Abdurrahman Şerif, İshak Korkut, and Alırıza Bey. The website for Airforce Academy Museum, stated the bloggers continuing their investigation, listed the four Turkish pilots as martyred in Ağrı in 1930 (fig. 1.39).²⁷² Captain Mehmet Selahattin Bey and Lieutenant Abdurrahman Şerif died on July 2, and Petty Officer Ali Reza Bey and Lieutenant Ishak Korkut four days later, July 6, 1930. The bloggers circled their names and placed and date of their deaths on a screen shot of the museum's webpage. The museum listed two other pilots killed in Ağrı, Seyit Bey and Mehmet Zeki Korkut, on September 3, 1930. *Herêma Agirî* instructed skeptical readers to again “take a look” for themselves. “It says 1930, not 1939 as the Turkish media and the governor claim.” The museum also has the uniform of “Mount Ararat Operation martyr Rıfat Neşet Bey”

HAVA KUVVETLERİ MÜZESİ		Ulaşım İletişim			
Müze Tarihi	Yılı.	Mustafa Rıfat Bey	1912-785	İHLİP	12.06.1930
Hük. Havacılık	Yılı.	Abdülrazık Bey	1913-133	İHLİP	12.06.1930
Dünya Havacılık	Yılı.	Mehmet Selahattin Bey	1915-237	AĞRI	02.07.1930
Aviye Alan	Öğret.	Abdurrahman ŞERİF	1921-283	AĞRI	02.07.1930
Uçak Hemen	Öğret.	Ali Reza Bey	19	AĞRI	06.07.1930
Şerif Salama	Öğret.	İshak KORKUT	1921-125	AĞRI	06.07.1930
Aviye Salama	Öğret.	Sakı TAMIR	1925-15	AĞRI	15.07.1930
İshak Salama	Öğret.	Mehmet Zeki KORKUT	1917-187	AĞRI	03.09.1930
Seyit Salama	Öğret.	Seyit Bey	1921-223	AĞRI	03.09.1930
Mehmet Zeki Korkut	Yılı.	Mehmet Zeki KORKUT	1915-385	AĞRI	03.09.1930
1931					
1932					
Uçak Listesi	Öğret.	Hüseyin Nuri	1925-5	ESNÖĞEĞER	08.09.1932
İletişim	Yılı.	Galip FERİP	1921-195	ESNÖĞEĞER	05.12.1932

Fig. 1.39: Airforce Academy Museum's list of the pilots martyred during the Mount Ararat Uprising (*Herêma Agirî*, September 6, 2014)

on display in their Memory Salon it added.²⁷³ The blog's investigation suggested that even if the postcard's caption of “Karaköse, 1930s” was removed, by following the reappearance of the names scrawled on its back it was clear that the memorial had been erected to honor the pilots killed during the Mount Ararat Uprising. The postcard of “our martyred friends” in Ağrı not only challenged the state's ‘official’ history of the monument (that it was constructed to commemorate two pilots who crashed on their way home from the Shah's wedding), it connected

²⁷² Now the Istanbul Airforce Museum (istanbulmuze.hvkk.tsk.tr). The *şehit* list found by the blog on the website of its predecessor, *Havanın Kuvvetleri Müzesi* (hho.edu.tr), is no longer available.

²⁷³ “Ağrı'daki Abide'nin Gerçek Hikayesi,” *Herêma Agirî*, September 6, 2014.

Ağrı's Airforce Martyrs Memorial directly to the bombing of 'non-combatants' in Zilan in July of 1930. According to the Airforce Academy's website, the four "martyred friends" named by the postcard all died during the Zilan Operation in 1930, Captain Mehmet Selahattin Bey and Lieutenant Abdurrahman Şeref on July 2, 1930 and Petty Officer Ali Reza Bey and Lieutenant Ishak Korkut Valley four days later on July 6, 1930. The postcard's unrecorded martyrdom of Lieutenants Seyit Bey and Mehmet Zeki Korkut during Salih Paşa's final assault on Ararat in the beginning of September 1930 dates the memorial's construction more precisely, placing it before their deaths in September. Its acknowledgement of the four pilots killed in July and its omission of the two killed in September suggests that it was built to specifically honor the pilots who bombed Zilan in July, 1930. It also seems likely that two pilots killed on July 2, Captain Mehmet Selahattin Bey and Lieutenant Abdurrahman Şeref, are the two "tortured" pilots that prompted *Cumhuriyet*'s editors to demand the construction of a "small" memorial for Salâhattin Bey and "his comrade" Şerafettin Bey.²⁷⁴ Allowing for *Cumhuriyet*'s transliteration of the Ottoman Arabic script into the latin alphabet of modern Turkish, Mehmet Selahattin and Abdurrahman Şeref are *Cumhuriyet*'s Salâhattin and Şerafettin Bey. Their "savage" deaths were reported when their "skeletons" were found afterwards "in the revolt area" according to *Vakit*.²⁷⁵ It is perhaps their corpses that Suphandağ says were found and buried in the ground opposite Patnos' Yıldırım Palas Hotel after his father, Nadir Bey, and a group of fighters shot down a Turkish plane in late June 1930 near the village of Dedeli. If so, the two "friends" of "our pilots" martyred during the Mount Ararat Rebellion were posing next to a cenotaph not a grave. The memorial was transformed into a grave when the pilots were brought from Patnos to Ağrı in 1950 and re-interred. Or maybe the two pilots killed on July 2 were buried in Ağrı in 1930 and the two pilots killed four days later, Petty Officer Ali Reza Bey and Lieutenant Ishak Korkut, were buried in Patnos. According to the complete list of all martyred Turkish pilots on the website *tayyareci.com*, Captain Mehmet Selahattin Bey and Lieutenant Abdurrahman Şeref were killed in Erçis and Petty Officer Ali Reza Bey and Lieutenant Ishak Korkut died in Patnos. The website, however, lists the four killed in July, as well as Seyit Bey and Mehmet Zeki Korkut (martyred on September 3, 1930 "on Mount Ararat") and the officially recognized occupants of the monument, Sıddık Uyar and Fethi Sülker (martyred on April 29, 1939 "returning from Iran"),

²⁷⁴ "Şehit düşen iki tayyarecimiz," *Cumhuriyet*, July 17, 1930.

²⁷⁵ "Hududun tahdidi değil, tashihi mevzuu bahistir," *Vakit*, July 23, 1930.

as all buried in Ağrı's Military Martyrs Cemetery.²⁷⁶ Does it matter who is buried underneath the monument? Does it matter if no one is buried underneath Ağrı's Airforce Martyrs Memorial?

The monument's "conflicting appropriations" suggests two things. Firstly, "facts" do matter. For the bloggers of *Herêma Agirî*, Sakık, Suphandağ and Ağrı's governor "what happened" is as important as "what is said to have happened."²⁷⁷ The blogs' investigation, Sakık's "documents and photos," Suphandağ's first-hand account, and the governor's warning that the memorial's 3000 square metre site is "an immovable cultural asset" confirm this. But while the lope-sidedness of the "facts" seem to prove that the memorial in Ağrı was built to honor the men who bombed "combatants and non-combatants" during the Mount Ararat Rebellion, it is the governor's recitation of the memorial's registration that exposes the weight of official state history. It is the monument's archived history that the bloggers, Sakık, and Suphandağ are required to dig up in order to discover evidence to challenge its silences. The facts matter, argues Trouillot, because they "set[] the stage for future historical narratives."²⁷⁸ The battle over "the real story of Ağrı's monument" eighty-four years after the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising not only exposed the unequal weight of its "conflicting appropriations," it highlighted the conflicting temporalities of its violence.

For Ağrı's governor the uprising was "over and done with."²⁷⁹ Its 'calling up' threatened the peace progress. But for the rebellion's "descendants," who everyday walk past the propeller soddered to its front, they were "still experiencing events" that resembled it."²⁸⁰ For them, it was the refusal of Ağrı's governor to recognize the uprising's ongoing history that threatened the peace process. According to N. Robîn Jan's "Ağrı's Monument and the Shadow of History" the "history of the postcard" established that the monument had been built in 1930 to honor the pilots who had bombed Zilan and Ararat. Growing up in Ağrı, he remembered when the monument was just a "pile of cement." When it was dug up during renovations in 1980, locals said the Kurdish gravediggers had found the bodies underneath completely preserved, the pilots

²⁷⁶ From: <http://www.tayyareci.com/hvsehitle/sehitle.asp> (last accessed January 11, 2019).

²⁷⁷ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 28.

²⁷⁸ Trouillot, 28-29.

²⁷⁹ Palmié, "Slavery, Historicism, and the Poverty of Memorialization," 368.

²⁸⁰ "Kazım Karabekir, Pilotlar Anıtı ve Sırrı Sakık," *Herêma Agirî*, June 9, 2014.

still holding their rifles. What were martyrs doing with rifles in their hands? Jan thought when he heard these stories. In 1992, Jan interviewed a Kurdish women, Cemile Xanim, about the bombing of her and her tribe’s tents in the Meydanok Plateau in May of 1930. A number of Bruki (Birukî) fighters were visiting the encampment including their leader, Hamit Bey, whose wife Susan and six-month-old baby were staying in one of the tents. They could see Turkish surveillance planes flying overhead so a few of the fighters and Hamit Bey decided to stay when their companions moved on. They encampment was bombed, Hamit Bey’s wife and child and hundreds of others were “blown to pieces” according to Cemile Xanim. The bombers returned, bombing the tents a second time. The fighters shot down one of the planes, its pilot surviving the crash. “Hamit Bey pulled him out of the wreckage and killed him by stabbing him in the eye” she said.²⁸¹

2.6 Conclusion: Mourning the Nation-State in its Kurdish Borderlands



Fig. 1.40: The ‘unofficial’ (PKK) Martyrs Cemetery (front) and the official Martyrs Cemetery, Doğubayazıt

²⁸¹ N. Robîn Jan’s (a pseudonym) article “Ağrı’daki Ant Mevzusu ve Tarihin” was published by The Voice of Ağrı Europe and then posted on the blog *Herêma Agirî* on September, 9, 2014, accessed December 5, 2014, <http://herema-ararat.blogspot.com/2014/09/agrdaki-ant-mevzusu-ve-tarihin-golgesi.html>.

The “battle of postcard” broke out in the days after the uprising’s commemoration on September 4, 2014. A group of PKK guerrillas came down from their camp on Ararat and unveiled the remade cartoon, now a coffin-shaped physical monument with the words: “The Dream of Colonialism is Buried Here” painted on its side. Over the summer, guerrillas on Ararat and Mount Tendürek, their caves and rocks still offering shelter and camouflage for Kurds fighting the Turkish state, had been holding tribunals. Locals visited them to settle disputes with neighbours and business partners. One of the fighters, his face unmasked, told the large crowd that the anniversary of the Mount Ararat Rebellion was both “painful and joyful.” In September 1930, the Turkish press announced: “We killed Kurds. Now we place a grave on Kurds,” he stated, explaining the meaning of the remade cartoon. “Our message” he continued, it that “Leader Apo” [Öcalan] and PKK have defeated colonialism in Kurdistan.”²⁸² After the commemoration, a few small stories of the “PKK show” on Mount Ararat appeared in the back pages of the Turkish press.²⁸³ However, the attempt of villagers in Lice to put up a fibreglass statue of PKK commander Mahsum Korkmaz (Agit) three weeks before had caused outrage, the police employing tear gas and plastic bullets to warn off protestors as they took it down. Stephane Palmié, calls commemorations “instances of forgetting,” arguing that they often create “a safe distance between loudly proclaimed past crimes...and the inequities of the present.”²⁸⁴ However, David Cohen believes that they can bridge the space between the “usurpation” of historical knowledge and its “restoration.” During these “struggles over the control of knowledge” argues Cohen, the meaning of an event can either be hollowed out or restored. Commemorations reveal “conflicting temporalities.” For some the events they recall are “remote or distant.” But for others, they “seem close and intimate.”²⁸⁵

During the speech of the PKK commander two plain clothes Turkish police officers sat underneath one of the few trees in Doğubayazıt’s municipal cemetery. They were posted there to

²⁸² “Ağrı Dağı’nda bir mezar” (A grave on Mount Ararat), *Özgür Gündem*, September 4, 2014.

²⁸³ For example, “Ağrı’nın eteklerinde PKK şov!” (A PKK show on Mount Ararat) in *Milliyet* on September 5, 2015 and “Ağrı Dağı’nda silahlı PKK gösterisi” (A Display of Armed PKK on Ararat) in *Zaman* the same day.

²⁸⁴ Palmié, “Slavery, Historicism, and the Poverty of Memorialization,” 370-371. For Palmié, commemorations “disestablish a connection between unquestionably immoral pasts, and morally questionable presents.”

²⁸⁵ David William Cohen, *The Combing of History* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 246.

guard the empty flag pole in the ‘unofficial’ PKK martyrs’ section of the cemetery.²⁸⁶ While the green, red, and yellow of the Kurdish flag decorated many of the graves, the state did want a PKK flag fluttering opposite the four Turkish flags flying over the official martyrs’ cemetery. Its wrought iron gate was locked. The gate of the low fence that surrounded the PKK graves was easily unlatched, mourners able to open it and walk amongst the headstones when they pleased. The Turkish officers, like their colleagues in Lice, seemed to be waiting for some sort of foundational act of Kurdish nationalism to tear down. But the mourners at the commemoration of the Mount Ararat Uprising twelve kilometres away were remembering the nation-state’s ongoing histories rather than its foundational moments, reanimating *Milliyet*’s declaration of the end of the “dream of a Kurdistan” in order to imagine forms of future belonging unmarked by its violence.

²⁸⁶ They were there when I visited the cemetery a few days prior to the commemoration so I am assuming they were still there on September 3. When I last visited the cemetery cameras had been installed.

“Loose ends and ongoing stories are real challenges to cartography.”
Doreen Massey, *for space*

Chapter 2

The “*Kibla* of Kurdistan” and a “Corner” of the Turkish Nation-State: Imagining National Space during the Mount Ararat Uprising (1926-1931)

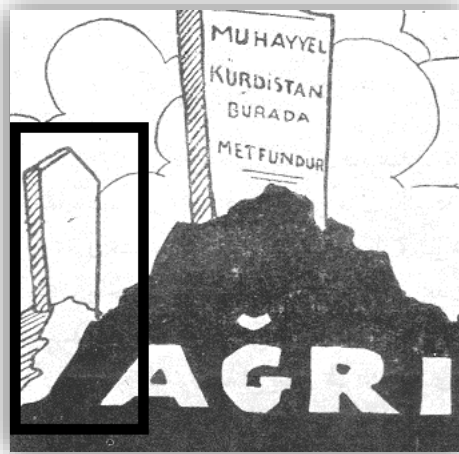


Fig. 2.1: The footstone behind the headstone of the grave of “the Dream of Kurdistan” (*Milliyet*, September 17, 1930)

3 A Corner of the Turkish Nation-State

Milliyet's cartoon of the grave of the “dream of Kurdistan” included a footstone (fig. 2.1). While the headstone's caption-like epitaph proclaimed the end of the Mount Ararat Uprising from the swirls of newspaper ink that represented Mount Ararat's 17,000-foot summit, the second grave marker transformed the mountain's second, lower peak into a border pillar of the Turkish nation-state. Coming upon Ararat while travelling from Kars to Bayezid (Doğubayazıt) after the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-1878, British officer James Creagh concluded that no other mountain “on the face of the earth” affected “the mind of the beholder” like Mount Ararat. With nothing “green or pleasant to relieve his sight” during his journey, the uniformly hued cliffs and valleys of the Ottoman Empire's eastern frontier blending into one another like the “waves of a melancholy sea,” Creagh was struck by Ararat's “white and dazzling winding-sheet.” Observing that the snow on higher peaks melted away in the summer months while Ararat's remained,

Creagh concluded that the “Mountain of the Ark” defied “time and space.”²⁸⁷ The famous mountain is, “correctly speaking, two.” At 12,000 feet the lower peak is dwarfed by its Great Ararat’s perpetually snow-covered summit seven miles away. Little Ararat, however, is “considerably steeper,” the elegance of its “almost perfectly conical” peak heightened by the majesty of its neighbour’s dome.²⁸⁸ Like a “minaret” next to the “vault of a Byzantine temple” wrote H.F.B Lynch admiring Ararat’s “parts” while concluding that the high, rocky plateau that connected their opposing forms constituted them in a “whole.”²⁸⁹

İhsan Nuri, the defeated “*generalissimo*”²⁹⁰ of the Mount Ararat rebels, contemplated the whole and the parts of *Milliyet*’s cartoon grave from his double exile in Tehran, his Iranian hosts pressured by Turkey to host the Kurdish leader far from Mount Ararat and their eastern border.²⁹¹ He began by questioning the cartoon’s celebration of an army operation that was supported by “66,000 soldiers and gendarme, more than a 100 planes and cannon” and the governments of Iran and the Soviet Union. Nuri challenged the headstone’s epitaph by asking whether it was it a eulogy for “the dream of Kurdistan” or “Turkish domination over Kurdistan.” In the Turkish translation of Nuri’s memoirs, *Milliyet*’s eulogy to “the dream of Kurdistan” was changed slightly, the Ottoman phrase “*metfundur*” (is buried) replaced by the present-continuous form of “to sleep.” The modern Turkish verb insisted that the “corpse in *Milliyet*’s grave is not dead.”²⁹² But while Nuri reclaimed the headstone’s caption-like epitaph, he seemed to leave the footstone in place, noting that “the corpse inside *Milliyet*’s grave stretched its feet to place them on Little Ararat.”²⁹³ Nuri understood the reality of the cartoon’s symbolic reinforcement of

²⁸⁷ James Creagh, *Armenians, Koords, Turks, Volume II* (London: Samuel Tinsley & Co., 1880), 230-235. In the Biblical story of the flood (Gen. 8: 4, King James Translation), Noah’s Ark reaches land on “the mountains of Ararat.” In the Islamic tradition the ark comes to rest on Mount Cudi (located southwest of Ararat on Turkey’s current border with Iraq).

²⁸⁸ Friedrich Parrot, *Journey to Ararat*, trans. W.D. Cooley (New York: Harper & Brothers: 1846), 143. Great or Big Ararat (Büyük Ağrı Dağı) is 16,884 feet or 5137 metres; Lesser or Little Ararat (Küçük Ağrı Dağı) is 12,782 feet or 3896 metres.

²⁸⁹ H.F.B. Lynch, *Travels and Studies in Armenia: The Turkish Provinces, Volume II* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901), 152. The rocky saddle between the two peaks ranges from 5000 to 11,500 feet (1500 to 3000 metres).

²⁹⁰ Kurdish League, *Memorandum on the Situation of the Kurds and Their Claims* (Paris: Imprimerie Louis-Kean-Gap, 1949), 13.

²⁹¹ Rohat Alakom, *Xoybûn Örgütü ve Ağrı Ayaklanması* (Istanbul: Avesta, 1998), 122-123.

²⁹² İhsan Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı* (İstanbul: Med Yayıncılık, 1992), 111. For a discussion of Nuri’s memoir see the Introduction.

²⁹³ Nuri, 111.

Turkey's territorial sovereignty and ethnic homogeneity. Like other Kurds in the Middle East after World War One, he had experienced the violence of living both within and beyond the nation-state.

When Turkey's prime minister reopened parliament after suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising in September 1930, he used the geography of Little Ararat to reinforce that the "dream of Kurdistan" was over. "Before the Republic a large portion of Ararat was not Turkey's," İsmet Paşa told his republican colleagues.²⁹⁴ At that time, the mountain had been a cornerstone of the Russian, Ottoman, and Persian empires, their boundaries "meeting up" on top of Little Ararat. The mountain's Kurdish tribes were granted "military titles" and "left alone to run their own small governments" inbetween the competing sovereignties of the "Czar, Turkey, and Iran." Kurdish "bandits" used Ararat to rob merchants and "hard-working peasants," its "special advantage"²⁹⁵ keeping them beyond "reach" of the state.²⁹⁶ In the last few years "political intriguers from outside, reactionaries, and all sorts of troublemakers" had tried to use this "bandits' den" (*fesat ocağı*) on Ararat to "weaken our national unity" he explained. In the beginning of the summer, the government had decided to finally settle the 'problem' of Mount Ararat.²⁹⁷ By September the army had surrounded the mountain and trapped the Ararat Kurds, "bayonets" along Ararat's eastern side preventing the rebels from fleeing to Iran. On the morning of September 7, 1930 the army began to tighten their "vice-grip" on Little Ararat. Within five days the uprising was over.²⁹⁸ "The hearth that had given hope" [*ümit bir veren yuva*] to the

²⁹⁴ İsmet İnönü (1884-1975). İsmet Paşa was given his surname, İnönü, by Atatürk after the passing of the surname law in 1934. His speech was published in *Akşam* on September 24, 1930 as: "*Şark hadisatı, nasıl başladı, nasıl bitti?*" (Eastern events, how did they begin, how did they end?).

²⁹⁵ "*Şark hadisatı, nasıl başladı, nasıl bitti?*" Living in a "buffer" zone between two or more competing empires had enabled Kurdish tribes to maintain their autonomy by using their ability "to choose between several sovereigns" as political "leverage"; Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1992), 135-136.

²⁹⁶ James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 6. Scott describes mountains as "zones of refuge" for peoples wishing to flee the state. As *Akşam* explained at the beginning of the uprising's suppression in June of 1930, the Ararat rebels used Great Ararat as a "stronghold" and Little Ararat as an escape route, fleeing the army by using its northeastern slopes to escape to Iran; "*Şarkî Anadoluda son eşkiya döküntüleri temizlendi*" (Remnants of the remaining bandits in Eastern Anatolia have been wiped out), *Akşam*, June 27, 1930.

²⁹⁷ "*Şark hadisatı, nasıl başladı, nasıl bitti?*" İsmet Paşa explained that with the first stage of the railroad near completion the government had decided to commit resources to putting an end to the uprising on Ararat.

²⁹⁸ "*Ağrıdağı şimali şarkisinde tetricen daraltılan ihata ve imha çemberimiz içinde sıkıştırılarak.*" From a statement of General Salih Paşa's (Salih Omurtak) published in *Cumhuriyet* on September 17, 1930; "*Ağrı dağına şakilere nasıl mezar yaptık?*" (How did we dig a grave on Mount Ararat).

‘fantasy’ of Kurdistan had been “crushed” concluded İsmet Paşa over enthusiastic applause.²⁹⁹ In the words of commander of the Ararat Operation (Ağrı Hareketi), General Salih Paşa, Mount Ararat was once again “a beautiful corner” of the nation-state.³⁰⁰

3.1.1 The Direction of Kurdish Resistance

“We read so often of the conquest of space,” notes geographer Doreen Massey. “[B]ut what was/is at issue is also the meeting up with others who are...also making geographies and imagining space.” Thinking “otherwise,” she warns, is to “imagine people without history.”³⁰¹ While Nuri recognized Turkey’s conquest of Ararat, he challenged the erasure of the mountain’s other sovereignties—those that remained and those emerged alongside its incorporation into the Turkish Republic during the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising.³⁰² From 1926 to 1931, Ararat was also the direction of Kurdish resistance. Fighters (*fedai*) from all over Kurdistan joined the Ararat rebels, the uprising on its slopes transforming the mountain into the “*kıbla* of Kurdistan.”³⁰³ Ararat’s coeval transformation into a “corner” of Turkey and the “*kıbla* of Kurdistan” is not merely a story of competing territorial claims—one victorious, the other impossible. Rather, the uprising’s suppression over the summer of 1930 exposed conflicting imaginations of national space.

The previous chapter removed the Mount Ararat Uprising from the triumphal narrative of the nation-state—both finished (Turkey) and not-yet (Kurdistan)—to suggest that the “flashing up” of *Milliyet*’s cartoon headstone over the summer of 2014 reanimated, rather than redeemed, the nation-state’s “history of compulsion, violence, and disappointment.”³⁰⁴ This chapter, using Nuri’s memoirs and İsmet Paşa’s parliamentary address to read with and against the maps of Ararat’s “vicinity and neighbourhood”³⁰⁵ published by the Turkish press over the summer of

²⁹⁹ “*Şark hadisatı, nasıl başladı, nasıl bitti?*”

³⁰⁰ “*Ağrı dağına şakilere nasıl mezar yaptık?*” It was perhaps Salih Paşa’s description of the Ararat as the “bandits’ grave” and a “corner” of the “beautiful homeland” (*güzel vatanımızın bir köşesi*) that inspired *Milliyet*’s cartoonist.

³⁰¹ Doreen Massey, *for space* (London: Sage, 2004), 120.

³⁰² “There are other knowledges of space, either residual or emerging, operating to contend” with the territorial nation-state. It is “always subject to challenge”; Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 131.

³⁰³ Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*, 55 & 17. The *kıbla* is the direction Muslims face while praying (the direction of Mecca).

³⁰⁴ Max Pensky, “Method and time: Benjamin’s dialectical images,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, ed. David Ferris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 186.

³⁰⁵ The caption for a map published on *Vakit*’s front page on June 30, 1930 (fig. 2.2).

1930 continues the dissertation's attempt to "rescue" Kurdish history from the time and space of the nation-state.³⁰⁶ While *Milliyet's* cartoon headstone cast the uprising as a brief episode in the history of modern Turkey, the footstone used its suppression to reaffirm its geography. Placed on top of Little Ararat as a border pillar, the footstone recast the uprising's suppression as an epilogue to the mountain's "multiple, layered, and conflicting" sovereignties.³⁰⁷ This chapter tells the story of Ararat's conquest by the nation-state alongside its re-imagination as the direction of its resistance to suggest that like other national peripheries, Mount Ararat continued to both symbolize and subvert the "power" and imagination of the territorial nation-state.³⁰⁸ It offers what Doreen Massey calls a "radical history of space,"³⁰⁹ an understanding of space as the "product of a multitude of histories whose resonances are still there."³¹⁰ Rather than placing the history of Ararat's coeval transformation into a "corner" of the nation state and the direction of its resistance in the intertwined narratives of the making of Turkey and the unmaking of Kurdistan, the following chapter re-reads the making of national space during the Mount Ararat Uprising to expose the frontiers of the nation-state. As Michel Hogue argues, territorial nation-states do not merely mark their borders on the ground, they continually remake themselves at their borders.³¹¹ The defeat of the Mount Ararat rebels is a story of the making of Turkish Kurds, Iraqi Kurds, Iranian Kurds, Syrian Kurds, those who are "included" in the nation-state as

³⁰⁶ Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

³⁰⁷ Michel Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 5.

³⁰⁸ Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett, "On Borderlands," *Journal of American History* 98, no. 2 (2011), 348.

³⁰⁹ Doreen Massey, "Places and their Pasts," *History Workshop Journal* (1995), 191. "Perhaps a really 'radical' history of a place would be one which did not try to present either simple temporal continuity or only spatial simultaneity with no sense of historical depth." Rather, it would be a recognition "that what has come together, in this place, now, is a conjunction of many histories and many spaces."

³¹⁰ Massey, *for space*, 118. "Not buried histories" Massey clarifies, "but histories still being made now."

³¹¹ Benedikt Korf, Tobias Hagmann, and Martin Doeve, "Geographies of Violence and Sovereignty: The African Frontier Revisited," in *Violence on the Margins: States, Conflict, and Borderlands*, eds. Benedikt Korf and Timothy Raeymaekers (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 40.

“excluded.”³¹² It is also the story of the making of Serhat, a space that is both part of and beyond the “reach” of the the nation-state.³¹³

The chapter begins by removing the uprising from nationalist historiography and placing it in conversation with borderlands theory. The first section of the chapter, using the cartoon-like maps published by the Turkish press during the uprising’s suppression, exposes how Ararat’s transformation into corner of Turkey not only relied on its reimagination as a territorial border but also on the denial of its Armenian histories, the overriding of its Kurdish geographies and the making of Iranian sovereignty on its other side. The second section uses Nuri’s memoir of the uprising and İsmet Paşa’s summary of its defeat to re-read the arrows of “Kurds attacking from Iran, Iraq, and Syria” in order to capture Ararat’s “residual” sovereignties and its transformation into the “*kable* of Kurdistan.”³¹⁴ The final section of the chapter brings together Ararat’s Kurdish and Armenian histories in order to expose geographies that both reinforce and resist the imagination of the territorial nation-state. In it is from Serhat/Serhed (a place unmarked on maps) that the chapter ends by rethinking the intertwined histories of states and statelessness.

3.2 A Short History of the History of the Ottoman-Persian Frontier

3.2.1 The “Line of Mountains” From Ararat to the Persian Gulf

Despite appearing to “stand in independent grandeur by themselves”³¹⁵ Great and Little Ararat crown a “line of mountains, which, after disentangling itself from the confused mountain-mass of Armenia” almost reach “the top right hand corner of the Persian Gulf.”³¹⁶ G.E. Hubbard

³¹² Benedikt Korf, Tobias Hagmann, and Martin Doevenspect, “Geographies of Violence and Sovereignty: The African Frontier Revisited,” in *Violence on the Margins: States, Conflict, and Borderlands*, eds. Benedikt Korf and Timothy Raeymaekers (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 40. Michel Hogue, writing about the Canadian-American border and the “alternative sovereignties and belongings” of Indigenous peoples who lived over them, states: “The contests over territory as well as the content and meaning of the terms of belonging did not simply disappear in the national era, nor did the work to create national borders come abruptly to an end. Indeed, the United States and Canada continued to derive their coherence, to constitute themselves and their territorial imaginaries, out of the efforts to incorporate fully the lands and peoples on these new national peripheries”; *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 13.

³¹³ Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, 6.

³¹⁴ Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 131.

³¹⁵ Parrot, *Journey to Ararat*, 145.

³¹⁶ G. E. Hubbard, *From the Gulf to Ararat* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1917), 1-3. The Ararat Massif is about 35 square kilometres. North are the Caucasus, southwest the Anti-Taurus (where the southern Taurus, rising in

described the “line of mountains” that Ararat crowns as “one of Nature’s” great barriers, impossible to cross in the winter and challenging in the summer months. Similar to “the Alps or the Pyrenees,” argued the British secretary of the 1913-1914 Turco-Persian Boundary Commission, nations had always “conformed” to its opposite sides.³¹⁷ But like all boundaries, the mountains that had marked the eastern limits of Ottoman rule and the western periphery of Persian sovereignty since the 16th century “[p]ossessed breadth as well as length.”³¹⁸ The mountainous frontier separated the imperial rivals but not the people that lived inbetween them.³¹⁹ According to Reşat Kasaba, the frontier “mediated” and “facilitated” the interaction of peoples of different backgrounds. It had its “own ethos, culture, and special practices.” However, it was the presence of nomadic pastoralists that made it “distinct.”³²⁰

After the Treaty of Turkmenchay (1828) confirmed Russian rule over Persian Armenia, Little Ararat became the “cornerstone” of western Asia’s “three chief forms of faith,” the borders of the Russian, Ottoman, and Persian Empires’ “meeting up” on its peak. According to James Bryce, Russian officials advised the Czar to extend his southern border to Ararat not because it was a “convenient natural division” but because its “veneration” extended to those who ruled over it. For Armenians, Ararat was “the ancient sanctuary of their faith” and the “centre of their once famous kingdom.” And while “less sacred” to the Muslim pastoralists who grazed their sheep

the Mediterranean, and the Pontic, rising in the North, come together), and southeast the Zagros (forming the border between Iran and Iraq).

³¹⁷ Hubbard, 2-3. Hubbard conceded that the mountainous frontier had at times been “united within a single empire,” for example when Alexander...thrust through to India” or Tamerlane “engulfed everything.” However, he argued that it had always “resumed its original *rôle* as a divider of nations.”

³¹⁸ Lord Curzon, *Frontiers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 26.

³¹⁹ Hamit Bozarslan identifies the Ottoman annexation of Eastern Anatolia (Western Armenia) and Iraq (Mesopotamia) after their defeat of the Safavids at the Battle of Çaldıran (1514) as the “first division of Kurdistan”; the “second division of Kurdistan” is World War One (the transformation of the Ottoman and Persian Empires into the nation-states of Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran). The First Division of Kurdistan separated “empires but not their populations.” The Second Division of Kurdistan separated nation-states and Kurds. In order maintain family relationships and tribal communities (political sovereignties and economic livelihoods), Kurds now had to “militarily challeng[e] the national sovereignties that the borders represented”; *Violence in the Middle East: From Political Struggle to Self-Sacrifice* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004), 28.

³²⁰ Reşat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants & Refugees* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 39. This “frontier ethos” argues Sabri Ateş “transcended” the frontier’s social divisions (imperial officials, merchants, peasants, nomads, tribes) and its religious and ethnicity diversity (“Lurs, Arabs, Kurds, Turks, Jews, Armenians, Persians and Nestorians”). Ateş prefers the term borderlands as the Ottoman-Persian frontier was an “interdependent crossboundary region” that was both “ill-defined” and “highly porous”; *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands: Making a Boundary 1843-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 3-8.

and cattle on its grassy plateaus, it was “still an object of awe and wonder.”³²¹ The presence of the “Imperial Eagle” on Ararat’s northern side emboldened Professor Frederich von Parrot of the University of Dorpat to fulfill his “long suppressed” desire to stand on its “icy dome.”³²² Parrot was not alone during his climb, assisted by the Armenian villagers of Arguri (Akori),³²³ or on the summit, accompanied to the top by his Armenian translator, Khatchur Abovian, and two Russian soldiers.³²⁴ When Bryce climbed the mountain in 1876 he replaced the wise council of Parrot’s Armenian villagers with the “wisdom and bodily force of a Kurd named Jafaar,”³²⁵ his Cossack soldiers complaining that they were too few to restrain the “unrestrained sovereignty” of the Ottoman-Persian frontier’s “unruly” tribal inhabitants.³²⁶ If “attacked on any one of the three soils” Bryce conceded, “predatory” Kurds could still “retire into one of the other two” and “snap their fingers at justice.”³²⁷ In October of 1914, a “small party” of Russian, British, Turkish, and Persian surveyors arrived at Mount Ararat. Forgoing ceremony due to the outbreak of the First World War they hastily erected “an unobtrusive stone pillar” in the shadow of Great Ararat’s dome to mark the Ottoman-Persian frontier’s transformation into a territorial border and quickly returned to their respective capitals.³²⁸ During the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising

³²¹ James Bryce, *Transcaucasia and Ararat: Notes of a Vacation Tour in the Autumn of 1876*, 3rd edition (London: MacMillan and Co., 1878), 234. For Ararat’s place in the national imagination of Armenia see Razamik Panossian, *The Armenians from Kings and Merchants and Commissars* (London: Hurst & Company, 2006). According to R.E. Taylor and Rainer Berger, the idea of Ararat as the resting place of Noah’s Ark is a product of nineteenth century British and American Christian fundamentalism; “The date of ‘Noah’s Ark,’” *Antiquity* 54, no. 210 (1980): 34-36. See also Peter Harrison, “Noah’s Flood and the Western Imagination,” in *Flood: Essays Across the Current* (Lismore: Southern Cross, 2004).

³²² Parrot, *Journey to Ararat*, 16.

³²³ Arguri (Akori) was destroyed by an earthquake in 1840.

³²⁴ Parrot, 175. Parrot reached the summit on October 9, 1829. It was the advice of Stepan Malik of Arguri that got him to the top, the Armenian headman advising him to abandon his second attempt and try again the next day. “Time alone is wanting” he reassured the impatient Parrot. “[F]or the rest, we are nearly on the top.” When Abovian climbed Ararat with Parrot he was a young deacon at Ejmiatzin (Etchmaidzan, now Vagharshapat), the centre of the Armenian Apostolic Church. His novel *Verk Hayastani* (Wounds of Armenia) is considered the foundational text of Armenia’s “national awakening” in the 19th century; Panossian, *The Armenians from Kings and Priests*, 142-143.

³²⁵ Bryce, *Transcaucasia and Ararat*, 253. Because of his “ferocious” looking Kurdish porters, Bryce had to hire more Cossack guards as the two he had originally employed insisted that “[t]he terrors of the mountain and the Kurds” required a detachment of at least seven. According to Bryce this put him in the “odd position” of employing one set of guides to “save” them from “being robbed and murdered by the other half.”

³²⁶ Parrot, 230. Parrot described the rocky saddle between the Ararats (before the arrival of Russian soldiers in 1828) as a “convenient retreat” for “predatory Kurds” (144).

³²⁷ Bryce, 248.

³²⁸ Hubbard, *From the Gulf to Ararat*, 1. Although a member of the survey, Hubbard did not witness the end of the frontier’s transformation into a border. “Accidentally” shot by a group of Shikak Kurds a few weeks earlier, he was already on his way back to London when his colleagues arrived in the foothills of Mount Ararat. Hubbard described the placement of the last pillar as “the culminating act of seventy odd years of diplomatic pourparlers, special commissions, and international conferences between” the Russian, Persian, Ottoman, and British Empires. The first

sixteen years later, Turkey's Republican regime announced the formation of a Turkish-Iranian border commission. The surveyors, explained a headline in *Vakit*, would not be "delimitating" a border. They would simply be "correcting" it around Little Ararat.³²⁹

3.2.2 The End of the Ottoman Frontier

For some Turkish scholars, the end of the Ottoman frontier is the story of a "multi-ethnic" empire's violent transformation into a "mono-ethnic" nation-state. Interested in the story of Turkish nationalism rather than Kurdish resistance, these scholars leave little room for the Mount Ararat Uprising, the "*kibla* of Kurdistan" assumed to mirror other "ethnic" nationalisms.³³⁰ For scholars asking why part of the Ottoman-Persian frontier did not become a Kurdish state after World War One, the uprising's defeat continues the story of the end of Kurdish political autonomy.³³¹ Simultaneously incorporated into the narrative of the "retribalization" of Kurdish society after the destruction of the Kurdish Emirates during the *Tanzimat* reforms of the nineteenth century, the "*kibla*" of Kurdistan becomes either a precursor to or the antithesis of the

few pages of his memoir only give a "brief outline" of the border's history as the "dossier containing its record" was as long as the 1080-mile frontier. For a history of the Turco-Persian Boundary Commission see Ateş, *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands* and Richard Schofield, "Narrowing the frontier: Mid-nineteenth century efforts to delimit and map the Perso-Ottoman boundary," in *War and Peace in Qajar Persia*, ed. Roxanne Farmanfarmian (New York: Routledge, 2006), 162-184.

³²⁹ "*Hududun tahdidi değil, tashihi mevzuu bahistir*," (It is not border delimitation but border correction), *Vakit*, July 23, 1930.

³³⁰ Kerem Öktem "Incorporating the time and space of the ethnic 'other': nationalism and space in Southeast Turkey in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries," *Nations and Nationalism* 10, no. 4 (2004), 563 & 573. Öktem argues that the Turkish Republic's "aggressive ethno-nationalist project" has provoked, "as expected," even more chauvinistic minority nationalisms. His thoughtful examination of the Turkification of Urfa, however, assumes rather than explores this in any detail. See also Ayşe Kadioğlu and E. Fuat Keyman's portrayal of the destructive impact of ethnic (Turkish, Kurdish, Islamist) nationalism on Turkey's liberal democracy, "Understanding Nationalism through Family Resemblances," in *Symbiotic Antagonisms; Competing Nationalisms in Turkey* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2011). For a more nuanced comparison of the relationship between Turkish and Kurdish nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s see Jordi Tejel Gorgas, "The Shared Political Production of 'the East' as a 'Resistant' Territory and Cultural Sphere in the Kemalist Era, 1923-1938," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* [online] 10 (2009), <http://journals.openedition.org/ejts/4064>.

³³¹ The destruction of the Kurdish emirates (semi-independent principalities) took place during the centralization and modernization of the empire in the nineteenth century. According to Michel Eppel, Kurdish emirates like Botan would have "serve[d] as the basis for a core of modern Kurdish statehood" or could have "provide[d] political support for the dawning Kurdish nationalist movement"; "The Demise of the Kurdish Emirates: The Impact of Ottoman Reforms and International Relations on Kurdistan during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," *Middle Eastern Studies* 22, no. 2 (2008), 237. For a critique of the scholarship's reliance on Botan to tell the story of the end of Kurdish autonomy see Nilay Özok-Gündoğan's "Ruling the Periphery, Governing the Land: The Making of the Modern Ottoman State in Kurdistan, 1840-70," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 34, no.1 (2014), 160-175.

a territorial nation-state.³³² More recently, however, historians have begun to rethink the intertwined narratives of the making of Turkey (or Iraq, Iran, and Syria) and the unmaking of Kurdistan, removing stories of Kurdish resistance from national historiography and placing them in conversation with borderlands theory. As Mathew Ellis argues, borderlands concepts have allowed some Middle Eastern scholars to view the making of the nation-state in the Middle East as “contested processes” between “different territorial sensibilities” rather than merely “fixed facts on the ground” or competing nationalisms.³³³ The work of Janet Klein on the Hamidiye tribal regiments³³⁴ and Sabri Ateş’ history of the Turco-Persian Boundary Commission have challenged assumptions that the Ottoman-Persian frontier was a “rough boundary line” that lasted from the from the Battle of Çaldıran (1514) to the World War I with “little modification.”³³⁵ Both scholars have exposed how the remaking of this “rough boundary line” in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries relied on the “destruction of local autonomies.”³³⁶ However, they end this history in World War One. For Klein the war is a temporal marker, the destruction of the Armenians marking the end of the Ottoman Empire and the beginning of the Turkish state’s “making of... Kurds into a minority.”³³⁷ For Ateş, it is a spatial marker, the

³³² “Retribalization” according to Kasaba (*A Moveable Empire*); “devolution” for Bruinessen (*Agha, Shaikh, State*). According to David McDowall, with the end of the emirates, Kurdish tribes lost their mediators with the outside world and between each other resulting in “less law and order” and “inter-tribal conflicts”; *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 3rd ed. (New York and London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 49.

³³³ Mathew H. Ellis, “Over the Borderline? Rethinking Territoriality at the Margins of Empire and Nation in the Modern Middle East (Part I),” *History Compass* 13, no. 8 (2015), 412. See also Part II, same volume, 423-434.

³³⁴ Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 3-11. The Hamidiye Tribal Regiments (*Hamidiye Hafif Süvari Alayları*) were an irregular (mostly Kurdish) militia formed by Sultan Abdülhamid II in 1890. According to Klein, the formation of the Hamidiye was an attempt to transform a local power (Kurdish tribes) that threatened Ottoman authority into an arm of the state that would manage the “bigger threat” of Armenian nationalism. For Klein, the end of Kurdish autonomy is a story of how the modernizing Ottoman state attempted to incorporate its “Kurdish tribal zones” by “neutralizing them” rather than attempting to govern them. “Power and periphery intersected in a profoundly new manner in late-Ottoman Kurdistan, with many tragic short- and long-term results” (the Hamidiye regiments were responsible for the massacre of between 100,000 to 300,000 Armenians from 1894-1896).

³³⁵ Nelida Fuccaro, “The Ottoman Frontier in Kurdistan in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 238. Bruinessen makes a similar argument in *Agha, Sheikh, State*: “the border line” determined by the “military success and diplomatic wisdom” of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century underwent “only minor modifications in later centuries,” (pgs. 136-137).

³³⁶ Sabri Ateş, *The Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands*, 5. Ateş argues that the frontier’s transformation into a territorial border in the nineteenth century alongside Ottoman and Persian modernization and centralization “had far-reaching consequences that even today ripple through the borderland: traditional ways of life were shattered, migratory patterns were altered, and long-held mechanisms of conflict resolution were abandoned without being replaced.”

³³⁷ Klein, *The Margins of Empire*, 261-262. Ateş’ study of the Turco-Persian Boundary Commission does not include Armenians, explaining that “even though the process impacted them significantly, Armenians did not directly participate in the making of the frontier and are rarely mentioned in frontier negotiations” (*The Ottoman-*

placement of the last pillar of the final Turco-Persian boundary commission on Mount Ararat in October 1914 signifying the transformation of the *serhadd* (frontier) into a *sınır* (border).³³⁸ While inspired by the work of Klein and Ateş, this chapter rethinks their spatial and temporal markers. Alongside the story of the remaking of the Ottoman *serhadd* into a *sınır*, the following pages tell the story of the *serhadd*'s transformation into Serhat/Serhed.³³⁹ It is not just that, as Ateş argues, that “alternative conceptions of space and identity” endured after the making of territorial borders in the Middle East.³⁴⁰ The re-imagination of Mount Ararat as the “*kıbla* of Kurdistan” from 1926 to 1931 reveals that there were “other visions” of space and identity that emerged at the same time to challenge their geographies.³⁴¹

Iranian Borderlands, 27). A recent collection of essays edited by Yaşar Tolga Cora, Dzovinar Derderian, and Ali Sipahi, argues for the need to write Ottoman histories that recognize “the coeval present of Armenia, Kurdistan and Turkey in the lives of every people in the region”; *The Ottoman East in the Nineteenth Century: Identities, Societies, Identities and Politics* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2016). However, like Klein their idea of writing “shared” Kurdish, Turkish, and Armenian histories ends at World War One. Their shared space of the East is temporally divided into an Armenian past and Kurdish present (presence).

³³⁸ Ateş, *The Ottoman-Persian Borderlands*, 10. Both Ateş and Klein use the work of Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron to describe this process as the transformation of Ottoman-Persian borderlands into the bordered lands of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria; “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples inbetween in North American History,” *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (1999), 814-841.

³³⁹ *Serhat* means frontier in Turkish; *serhed* means frontier in Kurdish. Serhat or Serhed is what Kurds call the area today. This is explained in more depth in the last section of the chapter.

³⁴⁰ Ateş, 320. Ateş describes the transformation of the frontier into the border as a “tightening in time and space,” an description that in someways echoes General Salih Paşa’s description of the Mount Ararat Operation as a “vice-grip” around Mount Ararat.

³⁴¹ “The challenge” of borderlands histories, argues Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett “is to respect the very real power of empires and nations” without overlooking the “vast stretches...where the visions of empires and nations often foundered and the future was far from certain”; “On Borderlands,” 340.

3.3 Transforming Mount Ararat into a “Corner” of the Nation-State

3.3.1 An “Unknown” but “Important” Part of the the Turkish Republic



Fig. 2.2: “Ağrı Dağı’s locality and vicinity” (*Vakit*, June 30, 1930)

At the beginning of the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising in the summer of 1930, Ararat was an unknown corner of Turkey, “unfamiliar” and far away to both the Republican press and their readers.³⁴² The maps that *Cumhuriyet*, *Vakit*, and *Akşam* used to illustrate their initial reports of fighting around Mount Ararat in late June and early July suggest that they knew neither where Ararat was nor that it was the same mountain that “the state news agency referred to as Ağrı Dağı.”³⁴³ On June 30, 1930 *Vakit*’s frontpage showed Ararat as two different mountains (fig. 2.2). The mountain’s Turkish name, Ağrı Dağı, was placed in Turkey while the last few letters of what “the British press refer to as Ararat,”³⁴⁴ seemed to “spill[] promiscuously” over the border into Iran.³⁴⁵ The accompanying story attempted to clear-up the cartographer’s confusion:

Ararat is name given by the Bible to the mountain of Noah’s Ark. In the Koran the ark comes to rest on Mount Cudi. Ağrı Dağı is in the sancak [province] of Beyazıt, located in the neighbourhood of the borders of Turkey, Russia and Iran. Armenians call the

³⁴² Description of Mount Ararat as “unknown” but “important” part of Turkey is from the advertisements for Esat Mahmut Bey’s “*Akşam* in the Eastern Provinces” series (published on July 10, 11, and 12, 1930).

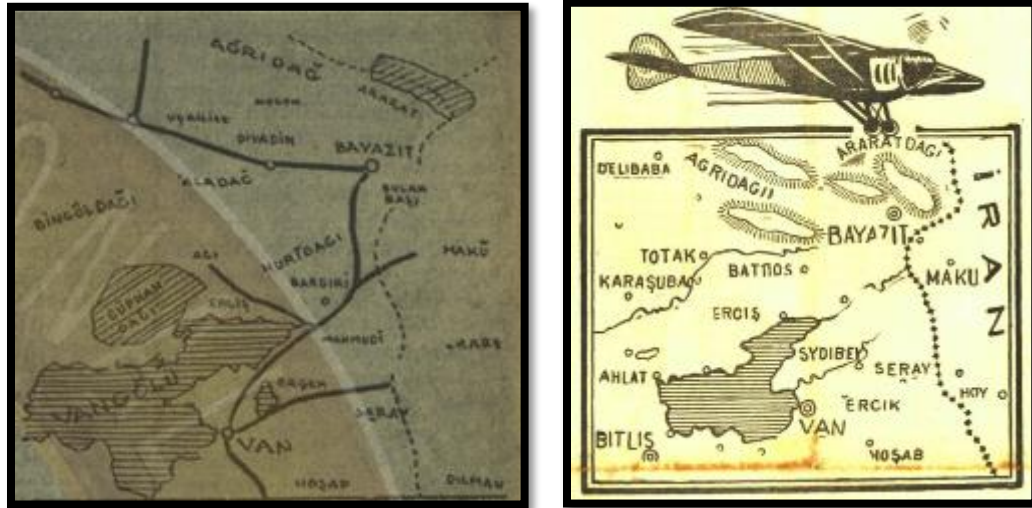
³⁴³ *Anadolu Ajansı*. The state news agency’s wires (and maps) provided the Turkish and foreign press with most of their information about the uprising.

³⁴⁴ “*Ağrı dağındaki eşkiya tamamen çevrilmiştir*” (The bandits on Mount Ararat have been completely surrounded), *Vakit*, June 30, 1930. A similar map appeared on *Akşam*’s front page two days later.

³⁴⁵ Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, 12.

mountain Masis, the Iranians Guhu Nuh. It has two peaks, the higher one of 5400 metres is always covered with snow, the other is 4,000 metres.³⁴⁶

Vakit's map-maker was still drawing Ararat and "Ağrı Dağ" as two separate mountains a week later (fig. 2.3). At the same time, the nation's largest paper, *Cumhuriyet*, multiplied "Ağrıdağı"



Ağrı and Ararat as Separate Mountains
Fig. 2.3 (Left) in *Vakit*, July 10, 1930; Fig. 2.4 (Right) in *Cumhuriyet*, July 7, 1930

and "Ararat Dagi" (sic) into four separate peaks (fig 2.4). Hovering over *Cumhuriyet*'s map was a cartoon of a Turkish bomber, its landing gear breaking through the frame to extend Turkey's monopoly of force over its farthest corner.³⁴⁷ Unlike *Vakit*, *Cumhuriyet* placed all of Ararat within Turkey, the border moved over to highlight that the mountain "should be" completely in Turkey.³⁴⁸ At the same time, stories in the "foreign press" were reporting that Turkey was "again having serious trouble with the Kurdish tribes." According to *The London Times*, Kurds from Persia had "overpowered" the border's "thin screen of frontier guards" and, joined by "sympathizers in Turkish Kurdistan," had recently made "inroads" around Mount Ararat. Turkey's 'Kurdish problem,' concluded the writer, was that "Kurds were not confined" by its territorial borders:

A number of Turkish Kurds have settled of late years in the northern marches of French Syria. Some dwell in Soviet Armenia, and the Mosul province of Iraq is mainly Kurdish. But the most important Kurdish element outside Turkey is found in North-West Persia...[T]hese people...are connected by many ties with Turkish Kurds and have

³⁴⁶ "Şarktaki Hadise: Ağrı dağındaki eşkiya tamamen çevrilmiştir," *Vakit*, June 30, 1930.

³⁴⁷ Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, 11.

³⁴⁸ İpek K. Yosmaoğlu, "Constructing National Identity in Ottoman Macedonia," in *Life in the Borderlands: Boundaries in Depth and Motion*, ed. William Zartman (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 169.

harboured many refugees from Turkey...It must be remembered also that part of Turkish Kurdistan was a debatable land until the middle of the nineteenth century.³⁴⁹

The Turkish army successfully repressed ‘tribal raids’ but not their recurrence. When “dispersed,” Kurds “took refuge behind Little Mount Ararat” from where “it was impossible to dislodge them.”³⁵⁰ As Nuri explained in his memoir of the uprising, Ararat was like a “shield.” It “protected the Kurdish nation from attack.”³⁵¹ In the summer of 1930, Turkey’s Kurdish problem was Mount Ararat.

On July 11, *Akşam* announced that it had sent its “special correspondent,” Esat Mahmut Bey to Mount Ararat in order to acquaint their readers with “unfamiliar” but “important” corner of the Republic:

We have sent our correspondent Esat Mahmut Bey on a tour of the Eastern provinces, mostly unfamiliar to our readers but an important part of the nation. We have already begun to publish his wires about the incidents of brigandage on the Eastern border. Soon our readers will be able to enjoy the letters he wrote and posted during his tour of the Eastern provinces. This is the first time we have sent a correspondent to the East and we are sure our readers will benefit from this important initiative.³⁵²

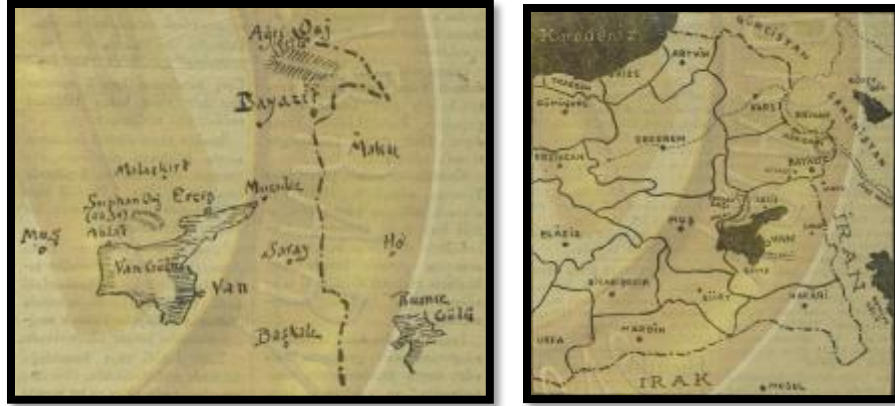
The front page advertisements for Esat Mahmut’s reports on the army’s suppression of the ‘banditry’ around Mount Ararat and his observations of life in “the Eastern provinces” were published above sketch-like maps of Mount Ararat and the eastern border. On the first map, the border floated between the two countries, its northern end held in place by Mount Ararat (fig. 2.5). Its dashed line veered sharply and suddenly east to keep the mountain in Turkey and then resumed its southerly direction to continue separate Turkey from Iran. The border ended before the map did, left unfinished and unattached in the unlabelled space north of Iraq. The scale of the next day’s map had been decreased in order to bring all of Eastern Turkey into

³⁴⁹ “Turks, Kurds, and Persians,” *The Times*, July 12, 1930; pg. 13.

³⁵⁰ “The Exchange of Ararat,” *The Times*, January 22, 1932; pg. 9.

³⁵¹ Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*, 17.

³⁵² *Akşam*, July 10, 1930. Esat Mahmut Karakurt (1902-1977) was one of Turkey’s most popular novelists, many of his sentimental and patriotic romances made into movies. His novel ‘based’ on the Mount Ararat Uprising, *Dağları bekleyen kız* (The Girl Waiting in the Mountains), is discussed in Chapter III.



The Eastern Border and the Eastern Provinces in *Akşam*
 Fig. 2.5 (Left): July 10, 1930; Fig. 2.6 (Right): July 11, 1930

view (fig. 2.6). Like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, each of the Republic's eastern provinces fit neatly into the next. The eastern border now separated Turkey from Gürcistan (Georgia), Ermenistan (Armenia) and Iran before transforming itself into Turkey's southeastern border in order to separate the Republic from Iraq and Syria.³⁵³ Rather than projecting itself into Iran south of Ararat, the border inverted itself, reserving its direction north of Ararat in order to keep the mountain out of Armenia. Esat Bey's first "*Akşam* in the East" letter was published on July 13, placed next to his report on the progress of the army's encirclement of Ararat. Sharing the front page was a "detailed" map of Ararat's "surroundings" (fig. 2.7).³⁵⁴ A similar map appeared on *Vakit*'s front page on July 12. The caption underneath *Vakit*'s map encouraged the paper's readers to tear it out and keep it:

We have made a detailed map of the areas where our army is repressing the bandits in the East. Our esteemed readers can tear out the map above and keep it in order to follow with ease the daily news of the army's suppression and punishment operation.³⁵⁵

Vakit and *Akşam*'s detailed maps filled in the empty space of the earlier maps—on the Turkish side of the border. Roads connected the provincial capital, Bayezid (Doğubayazıt), to the army's

³⁵³ Turkey is divided into seven regions; Eastern Anatolia runs along the Iranian border and Southeastern Anatolia separates Turkey from Iraq and Syria.

³⁵⁴ Esat Mahmut Bey, "*Tenkil harekti ileriyor*" (Encirclement operation is proceeding) and "*Şark vilâyetlerine giderken...Her kamarası ayri bir apartman olan vapurlar*" (Heading to the Eastern provinces...A steamer in which every cabin is a separate apartment), *Akşam*, July 13, 1930.

³⁵⁵ *Vakit*, July 12, 1930. Both the suppression of the Ararat Uprising over the summer and the "pacification" of the villages in the Zilan Valley (north of Lake Van) in July were described by the Turkish press as a "*tedip ve tenkil harekti*" (suppression and punishment operation). While Kurds describe Ararat as an uprising (*isyan*), they call Zilan a massacre (*katliam*).



Fig. 2.7: *Akşam*'s “detailed” map of Ararat and its “surroundings” (July 13, 1930)

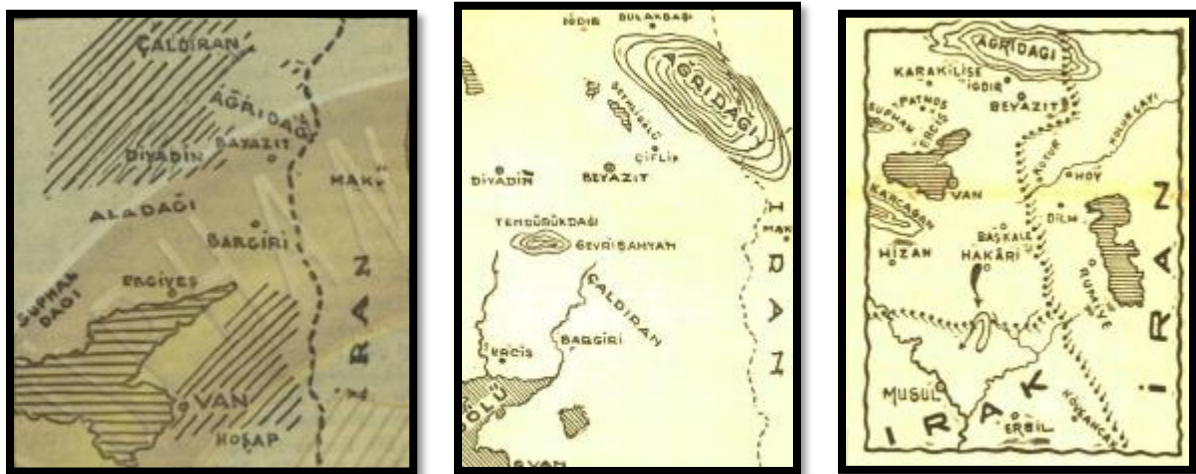
headquarters in Karakilise (Ağrı), Erciş (running through the recently “pacified” villages in the Valley of Zilan), and the province of Van.³⁵⁶ The trade route used by travellers and merchants—who disembarked at the Black Sea port of Trabzon, continued by road to Erzurum, and then travelled along Ararat’s southern slopes before crossing the Ottoman-Persian frontier to reach Tabriz—was gone. No roads connected the people on the Turkish side of the border to those on its Iranian side, the map severing Bayezid, Turkey from Maku, Iran. While the border kept Ağrı Dağı in Turkey, the name of its lower peak, Küçük Ağrı, placed the mountain partly in Iran. All the mountains between Ararat and Lake Van were labelled, their elevations painstakingly represented by circles of small side by side lines. A small, boxed article at the bottom of *Akşam*’s front page announced the defeat of the uprising in the Zilan, the map’s topographical detail reaffirming that it had been ‘pacified.’³⁵⁷

Akşam and *Vakit*’s detailed maps suggest that by the middle of July, Ararat was no longer an unfamiliar corner of the Republic. But as quickly as they filled in the empty spaces of the maps

³⁵⁶ “*Tayyarelerimizin bombardmanı devam ediyor,*” (Our pilots continue their bombing campaign), *Cumhuriyet*, July 16, 1930. The sub-headline declared that “more than 15000 [bandits] had been annihilated in Zilan.”

³⁵⁷ “*Zeylan deresindeki eşkiya imha edildi*” (The bandits in the Zilan Valley have been repressed”), *Akşam*, July 13, 1930.

that preceded them, their detail was erased by maps published after them. On July 14, *Vakit*'s mapmaker once again drew the border as a simple straight line (fig. 2.8). The eastern border no longer followed the contours of the Aras (Araxes) River, turned southeast at Serdarbulak (the old Russian blockhouse located on the rocky plateau between the summits) or hugged the eastern slopes of Little Ararat before it continued straight south to divide Turkey from Iran. There was no attempt to represent the region's mountainous terrain either topographically or label its numerous peaks and valleys, towns and villages, and rivers and lakes. Ağrı Dağı, like the few cities marked around it, was identified by its name only, its last few letters nudging the border into Iran. The village of Müradiye reverted to its Kurdish name, Bargiri, the mapmaker no longer bothering to note its Republican nomenclature in brackets above. A missing detail of the "detailed" maps, the village of Çaldıran (the site of Sultan Selim's victory over his Safavid rival, Shah Ismail, in 1514), was marked. However, it was in the wrong location. Çaldıran was drawn northwest instead of southwest Ararat, putting it where Iğdır should have been. *Cumhuriyet* fixed this a few days later, its cartographer moving Çaldıran so that it was correctly placed inbetween



Mount Ararat completely in Turkey; Ararat inbetween Turkey, Russia, and Iran
 Fig. 2.8 (Left): *Vakit*, July 14, 1930; Fig. 2.9 (Middle): *Cumhuriyet*, July 17, 1930; Fig. 2.10 (Right): *Cumhuriyet*, July 28, 1930.

Bayezid and Bagiri (fig. 2.9). *Cumhuriyet*'s mapmaker had also corrected a detail of *Vakit* and *Akşam*'s "detailed" maps, moving Bulakbaşı from Ararat's southeastern to northeastern slopes, now correctly represented as a small dot next to the dashed line of the Soviet, rather than the Iranian, border. *Cumhuriyet*'s map accompanied a story about a raid north of Mount Ararat, Aralık's gendarme station attacked by "Kurdish bandits" after they cut the border town's telegraf

lines.³⁵⁸ While *Cumhuriyet*'s mapmaker corrected the errors of his colleague's maps, he pushed the mountain back in time, moving the Russian border back over Ararat to highlight its history as a cornerstone of empire. A small story on the next page reassured the paper's readers that Soviet border guards had fired on the 'bandits' when they attempted to use Ararat's northerneastern to escape to Iran: "Soviet border guards did not abandon their posts. Iranian forces [however] continue to leave the border unguarded."³⁵⁹ At the end of the month, Iğdır was in wrong place, squeezed into the space between Bayezid (at the foot of Ararat) and Karakilise, the headquarters of the army 70 kilometres away (fig. 2.10).³⁶⁰ The border, however, was back in its correct time and place, Little Ararat once again only partly spilling into Iran.

Examining the maps used by the Turkish Army during its suppression of the Dersim Uprising in 1937-1938, Zeynep Kezer concludes that one of their "most remarkable" features was their "pervasive" lack of detail. According to Kezer, these maps exposed the Turkish army's "infamiliarity" with Dersim's (Tunceli) mountainous landscape and help to explain the violence of its 'pacification.' Viewing the terrain as "treacherous" and the local Alevi Kurds' knowledge of its "every nook and cranny" as a "weapon," the army "resorted to the use of...overwhelming force."³⁶¹ Above its July 17, 1930 map (fig. 2.7) of the rebels' attack on Aralık, *Cumhuriyet* reported on the airforce's 'pacification' of Ararat, their bombs "scattering" the Kurdish rebels between its rocks "like lizards."³⁶² Over the summer, the front pages of *Cumhuriyet*, *Vakit* and *Akşam* commented on the animal-like dexterity of 'bandits' who fled effortlessly over the mountain's slipperly rocks and scaled its perilous cliffs. Like the mountain, the Kurds on its slopes were "savage and frightening" (*vahşi ve korkunç*) wrote *Akşam*'s eastern correspondent, Esat Mahmut Bey:

³⁵⁸ "Iğdır'ın Aralık nahiyesine baskın yapan şakiler" (Bandits raiding Aralık in Iğdır), *Cumhuriyet*, July 17, 1930.

³⁵⁹ "Rus karakolları eşkiyayı geçirtmiyor" (Bandits did not pass the Russian border post), *Cumhuriyet*, July 17, 1930; pg. 2.

³⁶⁰ During the uprising the provincial administration was moved from Bayezid to Karakilise.

³⁶¹ Zeynep Kezer, "Spatializing Difference: The Making of an Internal Border in Early Republican Elazığ, Turkey," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 73, no. 4 (2014), 510-512.

³⁶² "Ağrıdaki harekâtı-Tayyarelerimizin üç saatlık bombardımanı" (Ararat Operation-Our pilots bomb for three hours), *Cumhuriyet*, July 17, 1930.

Even wolves and bears are not brave enough to live on this mountain. The rebels working to destroy our army climb this peak. Now imagine, if even bears and wolves are not brave enough to wander on these steep rocks how savage those that live here are.³⁶³

Over the summer stories about Ararat's "treacherous terrain" justified its continuous bombing.³⁶⁴ However, the "pervasive lack of detail" on the maps that accompanied these stories was persuasive in another way. The maps of Ararat and Turkey's eastern border were, in the words of Thongchai Winichakul, "a model for" rather than "a model of...what they purported to represent." Alongside illustrating the tightening of the army's "vice-grip" around Ararat, the "image" of Turkey "on a map"³⁶⁵ encouraged the Republic's new citizens to imagine Little Ararat as a territorial limit of their "horizontal friendship."³⁶⁶ If you gathered all the maps published by the Turkish press during the final months of Mount Ararat Uprising, stacked one on top of the other and then ran your thumb over their edges in order to animate them, Turkey's eastern border would move over Ararat, travelling backwards and forwards in space and time to show where it was (partly in Iran), where it had been (inbetween the Ottoman, Persian and Russian Empires) and where it "should be" (completely in Turkey). Whether or not Republican mapmakers placed Ararat completely in Turkey or partly in Iran and Russia, they reaffirmed that some of the Kurds on Ararat lived in the Turkish Republic.

In 1925, after sitting patiently through the Royal Geographical Society lecture of Colonel Charles Ryder, the chief surveyor of the 1913-1914 Turco-Persian Boundary Commission, Sir Arnold Wilson stood up to correct the impression that Russian, British, Turkish and Persian officials had failed to transform the Ottoman-Persian frontier into a border. During the lecture,

³⁶³ Esat Mahmut Bey, "Ağrı dağında yaşayanlar nasıl insanlardır?" (How do the people on Ararat live?), *Akşam*, September 1, 1930; pg. 5.

³⁶⁴ Kezer, "Spatializing Difference," 514. According to Kezer, even as state officials and the locals "stood side by side in the same physical location" they "were never quite in the same representational space." For the former, the Dersim's mountainous landscape was "dangerous terrain," for the latter a "refuge." Because the state was "unable to permeate what looked to be an indomitable landscape and opaque social structures" (Dersim is predominantly Alevi) they "resorted to the use of blunt instruments and overwhelming force, costing...many lives and causing...extensive destruction."

³⁶⁵ Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 13. Nationhood "appears to be concrete to the eyes as if its existence does not depend on any act of imagining" obscuring the fact that its territoriality is "merely an effect of modern geographical discourse whose prime technology is a map." See also Karen Culcasi, "Cartographically constructing Kurdistan within geopolitical and orientalist discourses," *Political Geography* 25 (2016), 680-706.

³⁶⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London; New York: Verso, 2006).

Colonel Ryder had commented that the “fixing of a frontier” had been “repugnant to the finer feelings” of the frontier’s Kurdish pastoralists. According to Ryder, “most of our pillars survived their erection a bare twenty-four hours” in the “Kurdish hills.”³⁶⁷ Wilson did not take issue with his former colleague’s evidence, conceding that many of their pillars had been “pulled down.” However, he disagreed with his conclusions. Telling the audience that Ryder had stayed in the frontier for “less than a year” while he had remained in Iraq for “seventeen,” (fighting in the Mesopotamia Campaign and serving as British Iraq’s first civil commissioner), Wilson insisted that the pulling down of the pillars by Kurds and their being put back up “every two years” by Turkish and Iranian authorities proved that the idea of a territorial border had “been permanently established.” It just needed to be adjusted to reflect “grazing rights and tribal custom.”³⁶⁸

3.3.2 Denying Armenian Histories and Overriding Kurdish Sovereignties

“Maps,” writes historian Ronald Grigor Suny, “tell stories that states would rather forget.” In the nineteenth century, explains Suny, regardless of “what Ottomans” named the northern part of its eastern frontier or “how they divided it up,” foreign cartographers labelled it Armenia while others (“local and foreign”) called it Kurdistan.³⁶⁹ The maps of the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising erased these overlapping geographies. As they transformed Ararat into a corner of Turkey, they denied its Armenian histories and overrode its Kurdish sovereignties. Unlike Kurdistan, “Ermenistan” was mapped, appearing on the front pages of *Cumhuriyet*, *Vakit* and *Akşam*. However, when Armenia appeared on the maps of Ararat’s “vicinity and neighbourhood,” it was placed within the territorial borders of the Soviet Union (fig. 2.11). Republican map-makers removed Armenians from Ararat by re-affirming the “exclusive” sovereignty of the twentieth century nation-state.³⁷⁰ Like the accompanying stories about the organizations behind the uprising, maps depicted Armenians as foreigners. Republican newspapers frequently reported that Armenians had “a hand in the uprising.” However, they

³⁶⁷ Colonel C.H.D. Ryder, “The Demarcation of the Turco-Persian Boundary in 1913-1914,” *Geographical Journal* LXVI, no. 3 (September 1925), 234-235.

³⁶⁸ “Comments of Arnold Wilson,” in “The Demarcation of the Turco-Persian Boundary in 1913-1914,” 238. As Priya Satia points out, Wilson used his “special knowledge” of (and ‘sympathy’ for) ‘tribal’ Kurds to persistently deny the idea of an autonomous Kurdish state; *Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain’s Covert Empire in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 209 & 227.

³⁶⁹ Ronald Grigor Suny, *“They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else”: A History of the Armenian Genocide* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 31.

³⁷⁰ Scott, *Art of Not Being Governed*, 11.



Denying Armenia; Overriding Kurdistan
 Fig. 2.11(Left): *Cumhuriyet*, July 10, 1930; Fig. 2.12 (Right): *Vakit*, July 16, 1930.

described them as “outside instigators” who were “cooperating with other external actors to organize a bunch of mad upstarts” to sabotage “the peace and security” of the Eastern provinces’ “Turkish majority and Kurdish citizens.”³⁷¹ *Akşam*’s complete map (fig. 2.7) doubly separated Armenian from Ararat, placing it on the other side of the Soviet border and behind the thick black line of the Aras (Araxes) River. When the press discussed the problem of the ‘den of brigandage’ on Ararat, Armenia disappeared (fig. 2.12). Ermenistan was not shown on *Vakit*’s “sketch of the hills where the bandits find refuge.” The July 16 map displayed the part of Ararat that was “inside of Turkey,” and the portions that “remained” in Russia and Iran. “This is where the army will begin its assault [against the ‘bandits’] in the next few days,” stated its caption as it moved Ararat back in time in order to highlight the mountain’s Kurdish tribal geographies.³⁷² Ararat was no longer in Russia; Soviet sovereignty had been formerly removed from its northeastern side with the signing of the Treaty of Kars in 1922. Over the summer, Turkey had “at least the assurance” of the Soviet Union’s “careful watch” along its portion of Turkey’s eastern border. As British officials observed, the Soviets secured their Turkish border around

³⁷¹ “*Ermeni’ler de alâkadar*” (Armenians playing a role), *Cumhuriyet*, July 9, 1930; pg. 2. Armenians were involved in the uprising. Members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksuthiun or Dashnak) were at Xoybûn’s founding congress in Lebanon in 1927 and provided support to the rebels. This is discussed further on in the chapter. The Kurdish nationalist organization, Xoybûn (based in Syria) was also labelled a “foreign” organization. Other “outsiders” involved in the uprising (according to the Republic Press) were “Lavrens” (Lawrence of Arabia) and the “Yüzellilikler” (the 150’ers). The Yüzellilikler were members of the former Sultan’s entourage, Ottoman military and civil officials, journalists, and “rebels” (Kurdish and Circassian leaders, some of whom, like Çerkes Ethem, heroes of the War of Independence) who were declared *persona non gratae* in 1927 and stripped of their citizenship (most were already living in exile). For a discussion of the 150’ers see Hakan Özoglu, *From Caliphate to Secular State: Power Struggle in the Early Turkish Republic* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011).
³⁷² Full caption in Turkish is: “*Bu krokide eşkiyanın tepelerine sığındığının Türkiye, İran ve Rusya arasında kalan kısımları görülüyor. Buradan bugünlerde başlamak üzere olan askeri harekâta sahne olacaktır.*”

Ararat with cavalry and, at night, with dogs “tied to barbed-wire entanglements.”³⁷³ Soviet border guards also helped the Turkish army repress raids on Aralık, opening fire on the Ararat rebels after they attacked the border town’s gendarmerie station in July.³⁷⁴ However, the part of Ararat that faced the Soviet Union was “without doubt,” being used by ‘bandits’ to escape to the part of Ararat that remained in Iran.³⁷⁵ Mapmakers moved the Russian border back over Ararat in order to expose that İsmet Paşa called it “the politics of the past.” However, at the same time they were careful not to reveal that these past politics had once taken Ararat into Ermenistan.³⁷⁶

The initial stories of “incidents of banditry” on the Iranian border insisted that the Republic’s “eastern provinces had been rendered secure and safe from brigands.” It was only their “remnants” on Mount Ararat that 10,000 Turkish soldiers that been sent to “wipe out” in June.³⁷⁷ “Ağrı Dağı was the last refuge of banditry” repeated the caption underneath a photo of Great Ararat in *Akşam* two months later (fig. 2.13). “For a long time” this mountain on our Eastern



Fig. 2.13: “Ağrı Dağı: The bandits’ last refuge” (*Akşam*, August 10, 1930)

border has been a “stronghold” of brigandage explained *Akşam* in June. Ararat is “Anatolia’s highest and most eastern mountain.” It is “virtually inaccessible, without roads, covered by loose stones, and surrounded by deep snow in the winter.” Bandits hide amongst its rocks, “waiting for an opportunity” to attack merchants travelling between Erzurum and Tabriz. Ararat’s bandits

³⁷³ FO 424/273, No. 97 inclosure in No. 94 [E 4771/1511/44], Consul Palmer to Clive, Tabriz, August 19, 1930.

³⁷⁴ “İğdir’in Aralık nahiyesine baskın yapan şakiler,” *Cumhuriyet*, July 17, 1930. British Consul Palmer told Sir Robert Clive, the head of the British mission in Tabriz, that “apparently the Turkish commander realized his posts in the Aralık plain were not strong enough” and “invoked Russian cooperation”; FO 424/273, No. 97.

³⁷⁵ “Ağrı dağı isyanı: Ağrı dağındaki haydutların tepelenmesi pek yakın!” (Mount Ararat Uprising: The thrashing of the bandits on Ararat is near!) *Vakit*, July 16, 1930.

³⁷⁶ “Şark hadisesi, nasıl başladı, nasıl bitti?”

³⁷⁷ “Şarkî Anadolu da son eşkiya döküntüleri temizlendi” (Remnants of the remaining bandits in Eastern Anatolia have been wiped out), *Akşam*, June 27, 1930.

then “evade their pursuers,” by fleeing to Iran. The mountain is a “hotbed of banditry” (*eşkiya yatağı*) the paper concluded.³⁷⁸ As Mesut Yeğen points out, the “discourse of banditry was particularly popular” during the Mount Ararat Uprising. Like tribalism, religious reaction and economic ‘backwardness,’ banditry was one of the ways the Turkish state talked about the ‘Kurdish problem’ without talking about Kurds. Kurds were not “resisters...with an ethno-political cause, but simply Kurdish tribes, Kurdish bandits, Kurdish sheikhs — all the evils of Turkey’s pre-modern past.”³⁷⁹ It was in “this area” explained Prime Minister İsmet Paşa in his summary of the uprising’s suppression at the end of September, that Sultan Abdülhamid had formed the Hamidiye tribal regiments, “a privileged class free of obligation.” When the Republic removed this “special status” and Ararat’s Kurdish tribes were obligated to pay taxes “they revolted.” According to İsmet Paşa, Ottoman rule had encouraged the leaders of Ararat’s Kurdish tribes to act like “feudal lords.” The mountain’s unique geography (located inbetween the Russian, Persian and Ottoman Empires) and its natural “advantages” (height, deep snow, caves and crevices, rugged cliffs and slippery rocks) made it an ideal refuge for ‘bandits.’ However, it was the geographies of the mountain’s tribal pastoralists, travelling back and forth over the Turkish-Iranian border to reach their summer pastures and winter encampments, up and down the mountain with its melting and falling snow, and their “radically different” political and moral logics that undermined Turkey’s territorial integrity. It was these “local sources of authority” and allegiance (tribes, kinship, religious networks, landlords) that the maps published over the summer attempted to override.³⁸⁰ “National unity in that part of the country” stressed İsmet Paşa, depended upon the “elimination” of Ararat’s “politics of the past.”³⁸¹

³⁷⁸ “*Şarkî Anadolu da son eşkiya döküntüleri temizlendi.*”

³⁷⁹ Mesut Yeğen. “The Kurdish Question in Kurdish State Discourse,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, no.4 (1999), 555, 567-568. Yeğen argues that by recasting the social spaces of Kurdish identity (tribes, the Sufi brotherhoods and peripheral economies) as remnants of the past the Turkish state both excluded the possibility of Kurdish ethnicity and exposed its exclusion of Kurdish identity. As Yeğen explains, the state’s exclusion of Kurdish identity was part of the transformation of an “a-national, de-central and disintegrated political, administrative and economic space into a national, central and integrated one”.

³⁸⁰ Ceren Belge, “State Building and the Limits of Legibility: Kinship Networks and Kurdish Resistance in Turkey.” *IJMES* 43 (2011), 96 & 110. What Belge describes as “non-national sources” of power and belonging and “unorganized and less visible forms of resistance.”

³⁸¹ “*Şark hadisatı, nasıl başladı, nasıl bitti?*”

3.3.3 Mapping Ararat's "Politics of the Past"

In early July, *Cumhuriyet* published a local map of the “area underneath the administration of the sons of the Kurd Hüseyin Paşa” (fig. 2.14). Hüseyin Paşa, the former chief of the “famous” Hayderan,³⁸² the “most powerful and largest tribe in the region,” was one of was “one of the

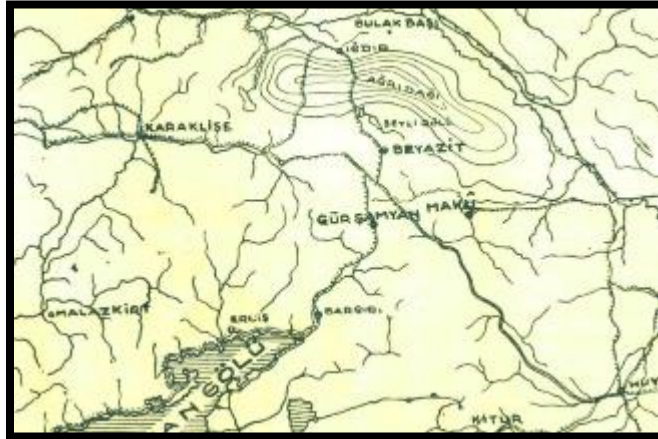


Fig. 2.14: Mapping the “Politics of the Past”: The area under the tribal administration of the sons of Kurd Hüseyin Paşa (*Cumhuriyet*, July 9, 1930)

parties most connected” to Ararat’ “politics of the past.”³⁸³ As a leader of the Hamidiye, he had used his position to “expand his influence and wealth,” grabbing the land of the area’s Armenian and Kurdish peasants.³⁸⁴ Instead of assisting the Ottoman state to extend its “authority over eastern Anatolia,” the tribal regiments increased the power of men like Hüseyin Paşa and the violence between Armenians and Kurds.³⁸⁵ Like İsmet Paşa’s summary of Ararat’s “politics of the past,” *Cumhuriyet*’s story of the “tribe who had been nourished by the bread and salt of the Ottoman Empire” was a history of perpetrators without victims.³⁸⁶ The orientating markers of previous maps—towns and roads—were lost amongst the vein-like lines that represented the

³⁸² P.H.H. Massy, “Exploration in Asiatic Turkey, 1896 to 1903,” *The Geographical Journal* 26, no. 3 (Sep., 1905), 274. According to Mark Sykes, the Hayderan numbered around 20,000; “The Kurdish Tribes of the Ottoman Empire,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 23 (Jul.-Dec., 1908), 479.

³⁸³ Klein, *Margins of Empire*, 187-189.

³⁸⁴ Janet Klein, “Conflict and Collaboration: Rethinking Kurdish Armenian Relations in the Hamidian Period, 1876-1909,” *Int. J. Turkish Studies* 13, nos. 1&2 (2007), 155. As Kurdish tribal chiefs like Hüseyin Paşa came to understand that their power relied on the control of land and agriculture, land-grabbing “became a feature of life that contributed significantly to the level of violence” in the eastern periphery of the Ottoman Empire.

³⁸⁵ Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert*, 110. One of the “[t]hree elements” [that] came together” and resulted in the 1894-1986 Armenian Massacres. The other two “factors” were the “breakdown” of the established hierarchy of “Kurds ruling over local Armenians” and Armenian resistance (Suny arguing that Armenians were fed up with the tax burden imposed by this system and this led to “clashes with Kurds and Turks”).

³⁸⁶ “*Ermeni'ler de alâkadar*,” *Cumhuriyet*, July 9, 1930.

numerous streams that are fed by Ararat, Lake Van and the Murad and Araxes rivers. The map's removal of the Turkish-Iranian border removed the "area under the administration of the sons of Kurd Hüseyin Paşa" from a "larger, stable geographic context" in order to override the mountain's Kurdish geographies.³⁸⁷ The map's local scale brought into view the area of the "different army operations from Bulakbaşı" (north of Mount Ararat) to the "bandits' headquarters" south of the mountain "in Maku." The caption underneath identified the Hayderan as a tribe of northwestern Iran, stating that their villages around Maku were "assisting the bandits on Ararat." The map's removal of the Turkish-Iranian border obscured the fact the Hayderan were also a tribe of northeastern Turkey. They lived, like most of the other tribes involved in the uprising, on both sides of the border. Many of the Hayderan, including the "sons of the Kürd Hüseyin" were citizens of Turkey. Until the deportation of "80 rebel families" from Bayezid in 1927, Hüseyin Paşa and his family lived in Patnos, their villages located in Turkey north of Mount Suphan.³⁸⁸ As pastoralists, their livelihood often took them across the border, seasonal migrations making them temporary residents of Iran. After their deportation in 1927, many of the Hayderan returned to Ararat, fleeing Kayseri, Izmir, Balıkesir, Konya and Manisa to join the uprising. Hüseyin Paşa did not make it to Ararat. He was killed as he crossed the Iraqi-Turkish border.³⁸⁹ His sons Nadir and Mehmet, however, joined the uprising. It was the bandits under their "management" that *Cumhuriyet* promised would be punished for the uprising's crimes against the Turkish state.³⁹⁰ The paper's zealous Kemalist publisher, Yunus Nadi, reassured its readers that the "Turkish citizens who were calling themselves Kurds racially" were just "a few bandits on (Mount) Suphan and Ararat." Despite "religious and ethnic differences" everyone in the Turkish Republic was "politically Turkish."³⁹¹

³⁸⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 172.

³⁸⁸ DOC. 16 [E 2835/74/65], Clerk to Chamberlain, Therapia, June 22, 1927. For a list of the families deported under Law 1097 see Sedat Ulugana, *Ağrı Kürt Direnişi ve Zilan Katliamı* (1926-1931) (İstanbul: Pêri Yayınları, 2010), 24-25.

³⁸⁹ For a description of Hüseyin Paşa's involvement in the Hamidiye, his deportation in 1927, and the role his sons and relatives played in the Mount Ararat Uprising see Kemal Suphandağ, *Hamidiye Alayları, Ağrı Direnişi ve Zilan Katliamı* (İstanbul: Pêri, 2012).

³⁹⁰ "Ermeni'ler de alâkadar" *Cumhuriyet*, July 9, 1930.

³⁹¹ Yunus Nadi, "Şark'taki hâdise ve İran!" (The Events in the East and Iran), *Cumhuriyet*, July 13, 1930. Nadi was a close friend of Atatürk and an early supporter of the Republican movement, opening *Cumhuriyet* in 1924 at Atatürk's request. M. Kalman argues that Atatürk wrote many of Nadi's editorials during the Mount Ararat Uprising; *Belge, Tanık ve Yaşayanlarıyla: Ağrı Direnişi 1926-1930* (İstanbul: Pêri Yayınları, 1997), 170. However, as Erik Zürcher notes, men like Nadi were enthusiastic believers in the Kemalist 'civilizing mission'; *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 181.

3.3.4 Reinforcing the Sovereignty of the Nation-State on Iran's Side of Little Ararat



Fig. 2.15: The problem of with Iran's side of Ararat (*Vakit*, July 7, 1930)

“The problem of Ararat,” concluded İsmet İnönü when reflecting on the Mount Ararat Uprising in his memoirs was that “half the mountain” had been Turkey’s and the “other half” Iran’s:

Every year after the Sheikh Said Uprising political bandits would emerge in the East and try to incite people to revolt. One of these was a man by the name of İhsan Nuri who had taken up residence in Iran. There he created a movement for an independent Kurdistan. Every year, passing over Ararat, molesting the area, and then escaping back to Iran.³⁹²

Over the summer of 1930, Turkish officials sent “severe but friendly notes” to their Iranian neighbour, reminding them of Iran’s duty to project their sovereignty over their part of Ararat.³⁹³ The Turkish-Iranian border resembled a “sieve” argued Yunus Nadi in a front-page editorial on August 12. It was “unbelievable” he wrote that “any sane government would encourage and protect bandits who disturb its neighbours.”³⁹⁴ Salih Paşa claimed that the border resembled an “open military encampment” more than an “international boundary.” According to the General it was clear that Iran was arming the rebels: “Tribes do not have the latest weapons like machine guns and rifles. The Celali tribe and the sons of Kör Hüseyin do not own weapons factories.”³⁹⁵

³⁹² İsmet İnönü, *Hatıralar* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 2009), 526.

³⁹³ “Şiddetli bir not verdik İrandan şakilere yardım devam ediyor” (We sent a strongly worded note to Iran but the bandits continue to receive assistance), *Akşam*, July 30, 1930.

³⁹⁴ Yunus Nadi, “Şark mes’alesi” (The Eastern Question), *Cumhuriyet*, August 12, 1930.

³⁹⁵ “Kürdistan Krallığı!” (Kingdom of Kurdistan), *Cumhuriyet*, July 15, 1930. Kör (blind) Hüseyin Paşa. The Celali like the Hayderan lived on both side of the border. The role of the Celali in the rebellion is discussed further on in the chapter.

When the news that the Iranian army had killed the “infamous” Kurd Simko, the leader of Iran’s second largest Kurdish tribe the Shikak, reached Turkey, the Republican press reported his death as the establishment of “peace and security” on Iran’s border with Azerbaijan.³⁹⁶ “Iran is Responsible!” declared the caption to a three-dimensional map-like sketch of Little Ararat in *Vakit* that reminded Iran of its responsibility to establish peace and security on its northwestern border with Turkey (fig. 2.15). Three Turkish bombers hovered over Ararat, their shadows on the ground below highlighting that the mountain’s Iranian side remained open to ‘bandits.’ Underneath the map, a report from the state news agency warned that “a large number of tribes” had gathered north of Ararat, pitching their tents around Bulakbaşı. According to the report, Iranian authorities had allowed eight hundred members of the Halıkanlı (Xelikan) tribe to pass through its territory to reach pastures on Ararat. The Turkish state news agency warned that by doing so Iran had bolstered the rebels ability to avoid Turkish justice. The Xelikan were now positioned to help “their Persian relations” escape the army by assisting their retreat to Iran.³⁹⁷

The Iranian government repeatedly denied that they were assisting the Ararat rebels. We too are “advocate[s] of centralization” stated an editorial in the newspaper *Iran* in July. Iran and Turkey just needed to develop a “common policy” until the “question” of Turkey’s latest Kurdish insurgency was settled argued the editorialist.³⁹⁸ According to British officials in Tehran, Turkey left Iran with two “unpalatable” options. Either they ceded their portion of Little Ararat to Turkey or allowed “Turkish troops to pursue Kurdish fugitives into Persian territory and deal with

³⁹⁶ “*Smiko nasıl öldürüldü?* (How did Smiko Die), *Cumhuriyet* August 7, 1930; pg. 2. *Vakit* reported his death on July 23, “*Simiko öldürüldü*,” (Simiko killed). Simko Shikak was killed by Iranian forces at the end of June. Martin van Bruinessen calls him “the most dominant personality of the Persian-Turkish frontier” during and after the First World War. According to Bruinessen, Simko skillfully negotiated with the Turks, Persians, Russians, and the British to control most of Iranian Azerbaijan after World War One; “A Kurdish Warlord on the Turkish-Persian Frontier,” 1. For a critique of his portrayal as a warlord see Kemal Soleimani’s, “The Kurdish image in statist historiography: the case of Simko,” *Middle East Studies* (2017), 1-17. By labelling him a warlord, argues Soleimani, historians both reinforce the state’s silencing of Kurdish resistance and its practices of domination by effacing the “complex” reasons for “peripheral dissent,” (13). For a similar re-reading of tribal resistance see Stephanie Cronin, “Re-Interpreting Modern Iran: Tribe and State in the Twentieth Century,” *Iranian Studies* 42, no. 3 (June, 2009), 357-388.

³⁹⁷ “*İran mesul’dur!*” (Iran is the problem), *Vakit*, July 8, 1930. The wire both reinforced that Halıkanlı (Xelikan) were Turkish (its complaint was that a Turkish tribe was being allowed to temporarily live in Iran) and the Ararat rebels were not Turkish (“Persian relatives” of the Xelikan). The Xelikan are a division of the Celali.

³⁹⁸ FO 424/273, No. 67, Enclosure in No. 66 [E 3932/1511/44], “Extract from Tehran Newspaper “Iran” dated July 10, 1930,” Clive to Henderson, Gulhek, July 14, 1930. Sir Clive doubted the accuracy of the “official” view stated in *Iran*, noting that the majority of Persians had sympathy for the situation of Kurds in Turkey.

them there.”³⁹⁹ In the summer of 1930, Iran’s Kurdish problem was the “sympathy aroused amongst [its] Kurdish tribes” by its neighbour’s “repressive measures.”⁴⁰⁰ According to the Iranian Minister of Court, Abdulhussein Teymourache, the Shah was more worried about “the Turkish policy towards their Kurdish population” than the Kurdish movement in Turkey.⁴⁰¹ Teymourache told the head of the British mission in Iran, Sir Robert Clive, that İsmet Paşa’s policy of extermination was “an impossible policy to maintain” as a government “could not annihilate an entire people.” Iran’s Kurdish policy was to “leave things alone.” In the past, it had done little for the Kurds but had also “tried not to annoy them.” Iraqi authorities (guided by Britain) “had adopted a policy of encouraging the Kurds by allowing them to maintain their language...promising them schools” and attempting improve their “general standard of living.” He feared that this, like the Kurdish policy in Turkey, would have “a disturbing effect” on Kurds. Teymourache admitted that if he was a Kurd “his whole sympathy would be with the policy of the Iraq Government.” However, the Shah was “perturbed” and Iranian authorities “looked to the future with anxiety.”⁴⁰²

By the middle of August, Iran was cooperating with Turkey, Iranian forces “punishing rebels seeking refuge on their soil.”⁴⁰³ After the uprising’s suppression, the Turkish press celebrated the “friendship” between the Turkish and Iranian republics. “The end of the Mount Ararat Uprising has secured the borders of both countries and restored Turkey’s internal security” stated *Vakit* at

³⁹⁹ FO 424/273, No. 46 [E4322/1511/44], Mr. Helm to Mr. A Henderson, Constantinople, August 6, 1930. As Helm pointed out, Turkey was already violating Iranian sovereignty and pursuing the rebels into Iran. However, the Turkish press repeatedly denied this. “We asked Iran to suppress the bandits. The Iranian government agreed to this and together we are preparing an operation.” “*Harekât baslamadı: İran toprağına girdiğimiz doğru değildir*” (The operation has not started: It is not true we entered Iran), *Cumhuriyet*, August 13, 1930.

⁴⁰⁰ FO 416/113, “Annual Report for Persia,” Enclosure in No. 276 [E3067/3067/34], Sir R. Clive to Mr. A Henderson, Tehran, May 22, 1931. Chris Kutschera argues that Iran had achieved a sort of “calm” after the death of Smiko Sakik and did not want to jeopardize this by “using force against” the Ararat rebels, many of whom belonged to tribes living in Persia.” According to Kutschera, Iranian authorities were “not hostile to the idea of the independence of Turkish Kurds.” Their concern was with the Armenians nationalists involved in the uprising as their crossing back and forth over the Soviet-Iranian border to carry messages back and forth between *Xoybûn* and the rebels was disturbing their northern neighbor; *The Kurdish National Movement* [Electronic Edition], 2303-2304, originally published as *Le Mouvement National Kurde* (Paris: Editions Flammarion, 1979).

⁴⁰¹ FO 424/273, No. 53 [E 3687/1511/44] Clive to Henderson, Constantinople, July 10, 1930.

⁴⁰² FO 424/273, No. 109 [E 5039/1511/44] Sir Clive to Mr. A Henderson, Gulhek, September 3, 1930.

⁴⁰³ “*İran toprağına iltica eden asilerin tedibi*” (Punishment of rebels seeking refuge on Iranian soil), *Cumhuriyet*, August 17, 1930.

the end of September.⁴⁰⁴ According to Nuri, the rebels were unaware of Iran's cooperation with Turkey, waiting anxiously for food and supplies to arrive from Maku at the end August:

We expected that the authorities in Maku would (as usual) help us....We were deceived....They detained [the caravan]. The next day, 33,000 Turkish soldiers, cannons, tanks, and planes attacked us. After the Iranian portion of Ararat fell into the hands of the Turkish army and the order was given to surround [the mountain].⁴⁰⁵

Nuri compared the tightening of the “enemy’s vice-grip” (*düşman çemberi*) around Ararat in September to “Kerbala.”⁴⁰⁶ On January 23, 1932, Iran exchanged its portion of Little Ararat (described by Sir Robert Clive, as a “barren tract of lava ground which has no value, agricultural or otherwise”) for “fertile tracts of land” around Kotur.⁴⁰⁷ In Britain’s report for Turkey that year, Ambassador Sir George Clerk noted that, “unlike previous years,” Turkey’s eastern provinces had been free of “Kurdish insurrection.” However, he admitted that Turkey’s Kurdish region still required “constant policing.” As the Ararat rebels were being “rounded up” and tried in Adana, tribunals were being set up to deal with the new “heinous offense” of smuggling.⁴⁰⁸



Fig. 2.16: The Shah’s 1934 journey along Turkey’s Eastern Border (*Cumhuriyet*, June 11, 1934)

On the morning of June 10, 1934 the Shah of Iran arrived in the Iranian border post of Bazargan. Waiting for him and his large motorcade in Gürbulak, the Turkish town just across the border,

⁴⁰⁴ “*Türk İnan dostluğu*,” (Turkish-Iranian friendship), *Vakit*, September 30; pg. 4.

⁴⁰⁵ Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*, 105. Nuri invokes both the shared “racial” origins of Kurds and Iranians and the assistance of the Iranian authorities as the reasons why they waited patiently for the caravan to return.

⁴⁰⁶ Nuri, 107. By encircling the mountain, the army was able to concentrate all its fire power in one area. The battle of Kerbala took place in 680 between the army of the Umayyad Caliph, Yazd I and supporters of the Prophet Muhammad’s grandson, Hüseyin. Hüseyin was beheaded on the battlefield. The remembrance of the battle and Hüseyin’s martyrdom has a central place in Shi’i theology.

⁴⁰⁷ FO 424/273, Doc.121 [E5319/1511/44] Clive to Henderson, Gulhek, September 23, 1930.

⁴⁰⁸ FO 424/277, “Annual Report Turkey 1932,” No. 298 [E529/529/44] Clerk to John Simon, Angora, January 17, 1933.

was a large delegation of Turkish military officials. The Shah got out of his car and, according to a reporter with *Cumhuriyet*, stepped into Turkey at the “precise point” where the road from Maku, Iran turned into the road to Bayazıt (Bayezid), Turkey. After a military band played the Turkish and Iranian anthems, General Ali Sait Paşa welcome Reza Shah to the Republic of Turkey. The hosts and their guests enjoyed tea and refreshments and then climbed back into their cars to begin the Shah’s first official visit to Turkey. Soldiers lined the road to Bayazıt, saluting the Shah saluted at “every 100 metres” of the thirty kilometre journey. The motorcade arrived at the city’s military headquarters (“decorated with Iranian and Turkish flags”) at “exactly 11:15.” The Shah enjoyed a small plate of “stewed pumpkin and grilled lamb” and rested. Waiting for the Shah outside of his next stop, Iğdır, was its “governor, the head of the municipality, various civil servants, and members of the public” (and a band playing the Turkish and Iranian national anthems). Local manufacturer, Ali Bey (given the honor of hosting his Majesty for the evening), lead the Shah of Iran over a “path of carpets” to his home across from his factory.⁴⁰⁹ By June 16, 1934 Reza Shah was in Ankara. When his train from the Black Sea port of Samsun pulled into the capital’s new railway station it was met by the founder of Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, a twenty-one gun salute, and crowds of flag waving spectators. Over the next few days the leaders attended the opera, visited the Turkish parliament, mingled at elaborate diplomatic receptions, and stood at attention during numerous flag-raising ceremonies and a large military parade. Before the Shah arrived in Ankara, *Cumhuriyet* published a map of the first part of his visit, a black line representing his journey along Turkey’s eastern border and Ararat’s southwestern slopes (fig. 2.16). His nearly month-long tour of western Turkey at Atatürk’s side had confirmed Iran’s friendship with Turkey and their membership in the international system of nation-states. His arrival in Gürbulak, however, reconfirmed the impossibility of other sovereignties remaining inbetween their “hard boundaries.”⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁹ “*Rıza Şah Hz. Memleketimizde*” (His majesty Reza Shah visits our Nation), *Cumhuriyet*, June 11, 1934: pgs. 1 & 5.

⁴¹⁰ Afshin Marashi, “Performing the Nation: The Shah’s official state visit to Kemalist Turkey, June to July 1934,” in *The Making of Modern Iran: State and society under Rıza Shah, 1921-1941*, ed. Stephanie Cronin (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 106-109. The Shah was inspired by many of Turkey’s secular reforms, including the “emancipation” of women and its determination to end Kurdish tribalism.

3.4 The *Kibla* of Kurdistan

3.4.1 The Celali on Ararat

In the winter of 1926, Celali leader, Biroyê Heskê Têllî (Biro), was eating breakfast with his family in Bayezid when his son İlhami arrived from their village on Ararat to warn his father that Turkish soldiers were looking for him.⁴¹¹ Like the Hayderan, the Celali had relatives and pastures on both sides of the border. But while the Hayderan lived south of Ararat, the Celali lived “on” the mountain (fig. 2.17).⁴¹² And while the Hayderan were “famous,” the Celali were infamous. According to nineteenth travellers and merchants, Ararat was the “most lawless part” of the Ottoman-Persian frontier and the Celali the frontier’s most ‘lawless’ tribe.⁴¹³ The “thievery and insolence” of the Celali took up a “comparatively large space” in their accounts of brigandage on the Erzurum-Tabriz road.⁴¹⁴ In William Spottiswoode’s “Sketch of the Tribes of Northern Kurdistan,” the Celali were “wild set of fellows” who recognized “neither sultan, nor tsar, nor shah.” According to Spottiswoode, they were not “purely” Kurdish as they had intermixed with Armenians, Yezidi, and Turkoman.⁴¹⁵ In 1842, the border depredations of Celali pushed the Ottoman and Persian states “to the brink of war,” each accusing the other of “encouraging” their brigandage. The Turco-Persian Boundary Commission was formed following year, Russian and British officials encouraging the rivals to place territorial limits on their empires and to determine the sovereignty of the frontier’s ‘unruly’ Kurdish tribes⁴¹⁶ Major

⁴¹¹ Biro was from the Hesesorî “division” of the Celali (the Celali were a tribal confederacy). Other divisions include the Sakan, Qoti (Kotan), Xelikan (Halıkan) Keskoî (Keskoi).

⁴¹² The Celali have their own name for Ararat, Girıdax; Mehmet Nuri Ekinçi, “*Bir direniş abidesi olarak Agirî ya da Girıdax*,” (Agirî or Girıdax a monument of resistance), *Herêma Agirî* [blog], July 27, 2010, accessed December 4, 2014, herema-ararat.blogspot.com/2012/06/bir-direnis-abidesi-olarak-agiri-ya-da.html.

⁴¹³ William Spottiswoode, “Sketch of the Tribes of Northern Kurdistan,” *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, 2 (1863), 244-248.

⁴¹⁴ Reinhold Schiffer, *Oriental Panorama: British Travellers in the 19th Century* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), 250.

⁴¹⁵ Spottiswoode, “Sketch of the Tribes of Northern Kurdistan,” 244. Spottiswoode “doubted whether they really represent a tribe at all,” arguing they were “descendants of a mixed multitude of followers of a chief who appears to have lived some two centuries since.” He numbered them at “five thousand tents” and while “subject to the Persian governor of Maku” they wintered in villages around Diyadin, Lake Balık, Ararat to the Aras River. He felt the Hayderan were the “best specimens among the northern Kurds” as they had been “humanized by their trade with Christians.” He placed the Hayderan on the northern shores of Lake Van, noting that their “eastern” division numbered four thousand tents and their “western” division one thousand.

⁴¹⁶ Ateş, *The Ottoman-Persian Borderlands*, 122-123. As Ateş points out, the establishment of the boundary commission coincided with the final stages of the Ottoman state’s “campaign to replace the indirect rule of the [frontier’s] Kurdish lords with direct rule” (pg. 87).

Henry Rawlinson, the British co-commissioner, felt that the fixing of a frontier “intersected by ranges running in every possible” and “untenanted by fixed inhabitants” relied on determining



Fig. 2.17: The Celali on Mount Ararat (British Army Map, 1946)⁴¹⁷

the “dependency” of the Celali, Hayderan, and the Zeylan (another tribe involved in the Ararat Uprising). Rawlinson argued that the Kurdish tribes around Ararat needed to be either “coerced” to settle or “removed” as “their lawless habits” would once again “renew misunderstandings between the Governments to which they respectively belong.”⁴¹⁸

Mount Ararat “sits on the border of Turkey, Iran, and Russia” stated *Cumhuriyet* in the first weeks of the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising. And “on Ararat sits a notorious tribe called the Celali.” They are a “tribe that takes its breathe from Satan” explained the writer, adding that they had “15,000 members” and had not been “disarmed after the defeat of Sheikh Said.” However, the government has decided to remove the Celali from Ararat and “wipe out the source of eastern banditry.”⁴¹⁹ While banditry had existed on Ararat for “2,000 years,” explained *Akşam*’s eastern correspondent Esat Mahmut Bey, its “den of thieves,” was an “inheritance” of

⁴¹⁷ “Kurdish Tribes of Persian Kurdistan,” compiled by Captain H.A. Durrer, Baghdad, 1946 (WO 106/59611) in *Records of the Kurds: Territory, Revolt and Nationalism, 1831-1979*, British Documentary Sources, Volume 13, ed. Anita Burdett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), M.325.20.

⁴¹⁸ FO 424/7C, Enclosure 2 in No. 7, “Memorandum by Major Rawlinson, Consul at Baghdad, on the Perso-Turkish Frontier as defined in the Treaty of 1639,” Sir Stratford Canning to Lord Aberdeen, Buyukdere, July 18, 1844, in *The Turco-Persian Boundary Report 1913-1914, Volume II*.

⁴¹⁹ “Şark’ta” (In the East), *Cumhuriyet*, July 3, 1930.

the Ottoman past.⁴²⁰ As the headline over a *Cumhuriyet* cartoon of a Turkish soldier with his combat boot pressed down on the head of a large serpent clarified, “the government has decided to solve the root of the Eastern problem”—the ‘unrestrained’ sovereignty of Ararat’s Kurdish tribes.⁴²¹

Biro had ignored warnings that he was on a list of Sheikh Said deportees.⁴²² Like the Hayderan leader, Hüseyin Paşa, Biro had not supported the 1925 rebellion. He had been loyal to the state during the War of Independence as well. When the Bolsheviks pulled Russia out of the World War I, Biro retook Bayezid from Armenian revolutionaries, and when the Ottoman army to arrived to officially liberate the city on April 14, 1919, handed over the key to the city, married the mayor’s sister, and bought a small shop in the town centre.⁴²³ İlhami told his father than one of the villagers, thinking that the soldiers wanted to seize Biro’s favourite horse, jumped on the animal and galloped off. A few of the soldiers pursued him. We heard shots soon afterwards, İlhami told his father. Biro instructed his son to return to Ararat and fetch his rifle:

Once he was on his way, I left the house. In front of the mosque I stopped and turned towards the kible to pray. ‘Allah, you know that I have not done anything against the state. I live in Bayezid...but they look for me in the village. This is surely your command. Allah, it is enough that you retrieve my rifle for me. Afterwards, whatever happens happens.’⁴²⁴

Outside of the city, a shepherd informed Biro that a fight had broken out between the Turkish soliders and a group of Keskoçî smugglers. When he arrived on Ararat he found two wounded Keskoçî men in his house and the soldiers gone. “It was winter,” Nuri wrote in his recounting of the beginning of the Mount Ararat Uprising in 1926. “Ararat was still wrapped in its white shroud.”⁴²⁵

⁴²⁰ “Şakiler Ağrıdağda nasıl yaşarlar ve ne yaparlar,” *Akşam*, July 28, 1930.

⁴²¹ *Cumhuriyet*, July 2 (see fig. 1.4 in Chapter I)

⁴²² For a history of the various deportations that preceded and followed the suppression of the Sheikh Said Rebellion and their impact on Kurdish society and political leadership, see Uğur Ümit Üngör, “Deportation of Kurds, 1916-1934,” in *The Making of Modern Turkey*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 107-160.

⁴²³ According to Nuri, during the war Biro and the Kurds on Ararat had made an agreement with the Russians occupying Bayezid. They agreed not to attack the Russians if they left them alone and supplied them with sugar, rice, and other items every month (*Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*, 21)

⁴²⁴ Nuri, 22-23.

⁴²⁵ Nuri, 24. Biro “lit the spark” of the uprising; Şiyar Koçgiri, “Ağrı İsyan ve Kürt Kahramlığı,” *Herêma Agirî* [blog], May 16, 2015, accessed May 25, 2015, <http://herema-ararat.blogspot.ca/2015/05/agr-isyan-ve-kurt-kahramanlg.html#more>. Biro and a group of fighters attacked Bayezid soon after his flight to Ararat. They failed to

3.4.2 The Shelter of the Oppressed⁴²⁶

Timur Ağa, the head of Şemkan who resided north of Ararat, and his brother Serxo soon joined Biro on Ararat.⁴²⁷ Sakan leader, Sheikh Abdulkadir, who had been deported to İzmir from his home west of the Ararat, escaped and returned to mountain with one of his nephews. Once he returned other members of the Sakan joined the rebels.⁴²⁸ It was the spring of 1927, the “weather was warm” and the mountain “was now ready to welcome its guests.” At that time, explained Nuri, many of the villages north of Ararat were still “obedient” to the state. This had allowed the Turkish army to set up their headquarters inbetween Big and Little Ararat. The Sakan fighters sent their families to safety in Iran and took up positions against the “enemy.” Sakan from Iran soon came to their aid. The battle was violent as the Turkish army was determined not to retreat and allow the rebels join up with Kurds fighting Turkish troops south of the mountain. According to Nuri it was raining heavily and the battle’s “blood and death” were hidden by a thick fog. The rebels took advantage of the weather and “fought like lions.” When the fog lifted the rebels discovered that the Turks had scattered. They collected their abandoned machine guns and cannon and took a number of soldiers prisoner.⁴²⁹ “From every direction, brave Kurds began to arrive on Ararat.” Hesenanlı Ferzende, who had taken the city of Malazgirt during the Sheikh Said Rebellion, arrived with his brother, Kâzım Bey, and one of their uncle’s sons.⁴³⁰ Seyithan and Alican (also of the Hesenan), who had fought side by side in the 1925 rebellion, fought together on Ararat. Alican was killed in 1931 but Seyithan continued to harass the Turkish army until his death in 1932.⁴³¹ Halis Bey, son of Sipkî leader Abdülmecit, joined the uprising as did

take the city but rescued Biro’s wife Rabia and brought her to Ararat. See Chapter III for the roles and participation of women in the uprising.

⁴²⁶ “*ezilenlerin sığınağı*” (Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*, 17).

⁴²⁷ Nuri, 27. Timur Ağa or Temirê Şemki (in Nuri) features heavily in the memoirs of Turkish officer, Zühtü Güven, who served in a mobile gendarme unit stationed north of the mountain during and after the uprising, see Rohat Alakom, *Bir Türk Subayının Ağrı İsyanı Anıları* (İstanbul: Avesta, 2011). The Şemkan (Şemika/Şemikî/Şemekanlı) live around Kars, Iğdır, Ağrı, and Lake Van.

⁴²⁸ Nuri, 27. Şêx Evdilqadir in Kurdish.

⁴²⁹ Nuri, 27-29. The Turkish prisoners were released that next day as the rebels did not have enough provisions to feed them.

⁴³⁰ Nuri, 30-31. Alakom calls Ferzende Ararat’s “most legendary” leader. There are numerous *kilams* (oral epics) about his bravery during both the Sheikh Said Rebellion and the Ararat Uprising; *Xoybûn Örgütü*, 130-131. After the uprising’s suppression in September, he fought against Iranian forces around Maku. He was captured and died in a jail in Tehran. His wife, Bese Hanim, and mother, Asiye Hanim, also participated in the uprising. See Metin Yüksel, “On the borders of the Turkish and Iranian nation states: The story of Ferzende and Besra,” *Middle Eastern Studies* (2016), DOI: 10.1080/00263206.2016.1147436 and Chapter III for their stories during and after the uprising.

⁴³¹ For the story of Seyithan (Seyîtxan) and Alican (Elîcan) see Alakom, *Xoybûn Örgütü*, 144-145 and Kahraman, *Kürt İsyanları Tedip ve Tenkil*, 216. The mother of Turkish-Kurdish filmmaker and actor, Yılmaz Güney, was from

the leader of the Zerki, Taceddin Bey.⁴³² Numerous Hayderan escaped exile and joined the uprising: Ezoyê Ezizan (Edo'yê Azizi) Ehmedê Heci Bro (Ehmedê Hacı Bero) and a number of his brothers, Seyit Abdurrahman and his uncle's son Seyit Resul Berzenci.⁴³³ According to Nuri, Seyit Resul Berzenci "shouldered the burden of Zilan." Biro was elected Ararat's governor, Timur Ağa chosen as the commander of the gendarme, and Sheikh Abdulqadir the Sheikh al-Islam.⁴³⁴ During Xoybûn's founding congress in October 1927 in Lebanon, Nuri, "the tactical genius of Kurdish resistance" was selected to command the rebels and sent to Ararat.⁴³⁵ Eyüp Ağa, head of the Qoti, took refuge north of Ararat in village of Korhan (Korxan) after his oldest brother was deported. He soon joined the Ararat rebels. In this way, explained Nuri, the mountain's northern slopes also came "underneath the sovereignty" of the government of Ararat.⁴³⁶ Reşoyê Silo, "the hero of the Bekiran," and his wife Zeyno fought until 1931, hiding in the caves on Mount Tendürek. They were trapped by Turkish soldiers who were assisted by a militia of local Kurds. They were shot when they surrendered. Their heads were cut off and displayed to men and women of the surrounding Kurdish villages.⁴³⁷ The bravery of sons of Hüseyin Paşa, especially Nadir Bey and Mehmet (Memo), "redeemed their father's negative legacy."⁴³⁸ Sheikh Zahir who lived in Tuzluca and was continually harassed by Jandarma fought alongside five of his brothers. The only one to survive was Sheikh Abdurrahman. He was joined on Ararat by his wife Emine. After the uprising's suppression he was tried in Adana and

the Hasenan tribe. She told him stories about Ferzande and Seyithan throughout his childhood. He turned the story of Seyithan's life into a film. *Seyithan* (1970) is considered Turkey's first "Kurdish" film.

⁴³² Halis Öztürk (1889-1977). Sipkî (Sipkan) leader Abdülmecid had been a commander in the Hamidiye. Halis Beg (Bey in Kurdish) escaped to Iran after the uprising's suppression. He returned to Turkey during an amnesty and became a member of parliament for the Democrat Party (DP). He served as Ağrı's member of parliament from 1950–1960. His third term was cut short by the 1960 coup after which he was imprisoned for ten years for violating the Turkish constitution. His cellmate was Abdülmelik Fırat, the son of Sheikh Said, who had also been a member of parliament. Kahraman describes Öztürk as Turkey's "most colourful" politician, telling jokes in his unique mixture of Kurdish and Turkish (he never learned to speak Turkish fluently); *İsyancıları Tedip ve Tenkil*, 215.

⁴³³ Seyit/Seyîd chief or lord (descendant of the prophet).

⁴³⁴ Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyani*, 31. The Sheikh al-Islam (Şeyhülislam), was the highest religious authority in Ottoman Empire. It was abolished in 1925.

⁴³⁵ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 284.

⁴³⁶ Nuri, 30-31.

⁴³⁷ For the story of Zeyno and Reşo see Chapter III. Nuri begins the uprising with Biro's flight to Ararat in the winter of 1926 and ends it with the death of Reşo. Nuri describes his murder as the beginning of "Turkey's politics of death" (*Ağrı Dağı İsyani*, 24).

⁴³⁸ Nuri, 104.

sentenced to nine years. Both lived into their nineties. They are buried side by side on the mountain.⁴³⁹

In the first year of the uprising, a Turkish commander visited Biro in order to convince him to return to his former life as a shop keeper. “We are all Muslims” he told Biro. “But you and your men retreat to the mountain to live like bandits and rob your fellow Muslims.” He advised Biro and the Ararat rebels to “submit to the state” and “live a happy life in their villages” at the sides of their “women and children.” Biro told the commander that they had taken “shelter in the mountains in order to escape the state’s injustice and oppression.” He admitted that they occasionally stole a “sheep or goat” in order to “prevent our women and children dying from hunger.” However, he challenged the commander’s claim that the state wanted them to be happy. On behalf of the state “you sit down at the table and with your pen and papers and off of the backs of the poor practice the biggest thievery and brigandage.” Which one of us is “the bigger thief,” he asked. Whose “sin is greater?”⁴⁴⁰

In Ottoman Turkish *ağrı* means heavy. In modern Turkish *ağrı* means pain.⁴⁴¹ However, in his memoirs of the Mount Ararat Uprising, Nuri translates the mountain’s name as fire. According to the commander of the Ararat rebels, “a long time ago Kurds once called fire *azer*.” At that time, “Ararat was an active volcano and the mountain’s Kurdish name was therefore Azer.” Azer became Agir and afterwards the mountain was known as Agirî.⁴⁴² The first verse of the anthem of the Kurdish government on Ararat invokes this:

Ararat, Ararat you are [the] fire;
The highest of the surrounding mountains;
The kindling of Kurdistan;
Sublime Ararat, sublime Ararat.⁴⁴³

⁴³⁹ Alakom, *Xoybûn Örgütü ve Ağrı Ayaklanması*, 151-152. See Chapter III for Emine’s story.

⁴⁴⁰ Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*, 25.

⁴⁴¹ Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert*, 32.

⁴⁴² Nuri, 19-20. Tendürek mountain, 52 kilometres southwest of Ararat and a centre of resistance during the uprising, is also a dormant volcano. According to Nuri, because the summit resembles a tenûr (a traditional oven in which bread is baked) it took the name Tendürek.

⁴⁴³ Kurdish: “Agirî, agirî tu agir bûyî; Li nav te serbilind bûyî; Li ser Kurdistan çira buyî; Hilbe Agrî, hilbe Agrî.” “*Ağrı Kürt cumhuriyetinin resmi marşı*,” (The Official Anthem of the Kurdish Republic of Ararat), Bajarê Agirî [blog], July 7, 2010, retrieved on November 14, 2014; <http://ararat-welat.blogspot.ca/2010/07/agr-kurt-cumhuriyetinin-resmi-mars.html>. The lyrics also appear throughout Nuri’s memoirs.

The lyrics were printed in the government of Agirî's newspaper that, like the anthem, was named for the mountain.⁴⁴⁴ The uniforms of uprising's young fighters included an image of the mountain, their brimless caps pinned with a metal badge showing both Great and Little Ararat. Xoybûn's coat of arms took the mountain's place on the officers' headgear, a *hançer* (curved-dagger) crisscrossed by a quill and a shaft of wheat that were illuminated by rays of sunlight.⁴⁴⁵ Ararat, however, was etched into stars on Nuri's uniform. This sartorial detail was noticed by a group of Turkish soldiers who had been prisoners of the rebels. They told the state news agency that the "jerk" (*herif*) Nuri had the audacity to wear the "red braided pants of a *paşa*." An image of "Ararat appeared on his general's stars," they added.⁴⁴⁶ Kurds from Hakkari, Maku, Syria and Iraq joined the rebellion.⁴⁴⁷ The uprising lit the fire of independence throughout Kurdistan, wrote Nuri.⁴⁴⁸

3.4.3 Kurds from Iran, Iraq, and Syria

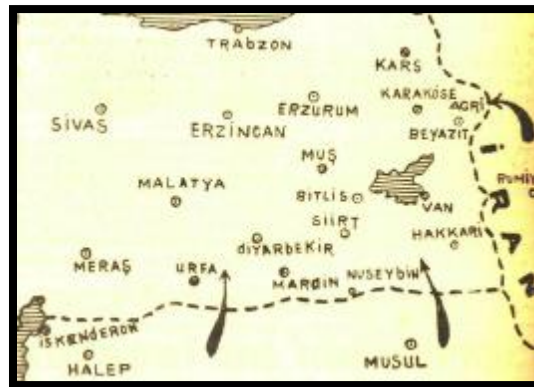


Fig. 2.18: "A map that shows the attacks of Kurds from Iran, Iraq, and Syria," (*Cumhuriyet*, August 7, 1930)

On August 9, 1930 next to an article celebrating "National Sovereignty Day" (*Hakimiyeti Milliye Bayramı*), *Cumhuriyet* published a map that showed "the attacks of Kurds from Iran, Iraq, and Syria" (fig. 2.18).⁴⁴⁹ The "attacks of Kurds from Iran, Iraq, and Syria" were represented

⁴⁴⁴ Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*, 73. According to Alakom, in the last few decades the term Kürt Hükümeti (Kurdish government), the term used by Nuri) has been replaced by the term Kürt Cumhuriyet (Kurdish Republic), see Alakom *Bir Türk Subayının Ağrı İsyanı Anıları*, pg. 15, footnote 10.

⁴⁴⁵ Nuri, 53.

⁴⁴⁶ "Eşkiyanın elinden kaçan dört askerimizin anlattıkları" (Our four soldiers explain how they escaped from the rebels), *Cumhuriyet*, July 19, 1930.

⁴⁴⁷ Nuri, 17-18.

⁴⁴⁸ Nuri, 55.

⁴⁴⁹ National Sovereignty Day or Republic Day is celebrated on October 30, anniversary of the declaration of the Republic in 1923. In 1923, Kandil (the birthday of the prophet Muhammad) was on October 30, coinciding with the

by three large black arrows. One arrow crossed the Syrian border near Urfa, the Syrian city of Halep (Aleppo) the “headquarters” of Xoybûn, to its left. In the map’s right-hand corner another arrow projected itself over the Turkish border from Mosul. In 1926 the former Ottoman province became a province of Iraq. The arrow from Iran did not make it over the border, stopped by Mount Ararat. The arrows on *Cumhuriyet*’s map highlighted where the Republic’s homogeneity was “precarious” and needed to be “reclaimed.”⁴⁵⁰ İsmet Paşa summarized the meaning of the “attacks” on Turkey’s eastern borders after the uprising’s suppression. “Foreign opportunists,” explained the prime minister had “mistakenly” believed that they could destroy Turkey’s “national unity.” Gangs (*çeteler*) of Kurds from Iran, Syria, and Iraq had “attacked each of our borders.” According to the Prime Minister they had sought but not found “ungoverned spaces.”

In July, “Kurdish bandits from Iran,” crossed the border and fomented unrest in Zilan. These attackers and “the unfortunate people who heedlessly joined them,” however, were swiftly “punished and repressed.”⁴⁵¹ After the army’s ‘pacification’ of Zilan, Sheikh Ahmed Barzan sent 200 Kurdish troops from Northern Iraq to assist the Ararat rebels.⁴⁵² The purpose of the attacks, explained *Vakit*, was to pull Turkish forces further south. But “these attacks will have no effect on Ararat Operation,” *Vakit* promised its readers on July 26, 1930.⁴⁵³ A few days later, another “gang” of “Mosul Kurds” were “repelled again.” Hüseyin Paşa had found shelter with Sheikh Ahmed after fleeing Turkey in 1927, informed the latest communication of General Salih Paşa published by *Cumhuriyet*. He had been killed before he could cross the Turkish border and join the uprising. Salih Paşa told *Cumhuriyet*’s readers that they could also expect the destruction of

birth of the Turkish Republic. During the uprising’s suppression in 1930 Kandil fell on August 7. The Turkish press celebrated Kandil that year by connecting it with the Republic’s secular history (celebrating it as National Sovereignty Day). For a history of the making of Republican holidays see Hale Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish: nationalist reforms and cultural negotiations in early republican Turkey, 1923-1945* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press).

⁴⁵⁰ Yosmaoğlu, “Constructing National Identity in Ottoman Macedonia,” 169.

⁴⁵¹ “Şark hadisatı, nasıl başladı, nasıl bitti?”

⁴⁵² Sheikh Ahmed Barzani was the leader of the Barzani tribe. Barzani offered refuge to Turkish Kurds before and after the revolt. He is the brother of Mullah Mustafa Barzani, the leader of Kurdish Resistance to the Iraqi state in the 1960s and 1970s. David McDowall describes him as the head of a “religious cult” who was not interested in “wider Kurdish picture”; *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 3rd ed. (New York and London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 178. However, Chris Kutschera argues that historians, by relying on British documents that attempted to conceal his relationship with Ararat Kurds and the role it played a role in their bombing of Barzani Kurds in 1931-1932, miss his involvement in Kurdish resistance; *The Kurdish National Movement* (electronic edition).

⁴⁵³ “Ağrıdağın bütün geçitleri, Süngümüz altındadır” (All the passages to Ararat are blocked by our bayonets), *Vakit*, July 26, 1930.

“this camel brained tribal chief” from Iraq.⁴⁵⁴ The next day, the paper reassured the nation that “the bandits behind the border attacks on Mosul border, like those in Zilan Valley, will be encircled and crushed.”⁴⁵⁵ When Kurds from Iraq entered Turkey in July, summarized İsmet Paşa at the end of September, “they were annihilated along with their hopes.”⁴⁵⁶

Within a few weeks of attacks on Turkey’s Iraqi border, the Kurdish leader, Haco “an old enemy of the Turks,” cut telegraph wires on the Syrian frontier and distributed pamphlets to the villagers around Nusaybin “calling on the Kurds to avenge the massacre of their brothers by the Turks.”⁴⁵⁷ On August 7, alongside a story about Haco’s attacks on Turkey’s Syrian border, *Akşam* published a photo of “a tribal leader.” It was both the incorrect tribal leader (not Haco) and a picture of the wrong Iraqi Kurdish leader involved in the uprising (not Ahmed Barzani). On *Akşam*’s front page was a picture of Mahmud Barzanji, ‘the King of Kurdistan.’ While Sheikh Ahmed and his younger brother, Mullah Mustafa Barzani, the future leader of Kurdish resistance to the Iraqi state, did join Sheikh Barzanji in his rebellion against the British ruled Iraq (1922-1924), Sheikh Barzanji did not join the Mount Ararat Uprising.⁴⁵⁸ “Barzan was defeated,” explained *Cumhuriyet*. “Haco rose up and met the same fate.”⁴⁵⁹ The “hopes” of Kurds from Syria “were also broken” confirmed İsmet Paşa in September.⁴⁶⁰ In the end, the Ararat bandits “fell into a wretched state,” explained Salih Paşa, the commander of the uprising’s suppression. “They were trapped within our “vice-grip” that slowly tightened around Mount Ararat. “Within five days the hearth (*ocak*) of an uprising that had corrupted a corner of our beautiful homeland was extinguished.” The Kurdish ‘bandits’ have “seen the predestined fate of committing crimes

⁴⁵⁴ “*Salih Paşanın beyanatı-Hakâri ye akın yapan Musul Kürtleri geriye püskürtüldü*” (From a report of Salih Paşa: The Mosul Kurds have been pushed back) *Cumhuriyet*, July 27, 1930.

⁴⁵⁵ “*Harekât başlıyor*,” (Operation begins), *Cumhuriyet*, July 28, 1930.

⁴⁵⁶ “*Şark hadisatı, nasıl başladı, nasıl bitti?*”

⁴⁵⁷ FO 424/273, no. 75 [E4322/1511/44], Mr. Helm to Mr. A. Henderson, Constantinople, August 6, 1930. Haco Ağa was the head of Hevêkan tribal confederacy whose members were Muslim and Yezidi. He was a member of Xoybûn. See Alakom *Xoybûn Örgütü*, pg. 47 and Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, State*, pgs. 101-115 for his role in Kurdish nationalism and resistance.

⁴⁵⁸ “*Haso ve avenesi Suriyeden hududumuza taarruz ettiler*” (Haco and his gang attacked our border from Syria), *Akşam*, August 7, 1930. Mahmud Barzanji of Sulaymaniyah was exiled by British after his defeat in 1924. He returned to Northern Iraq in September 1930 during the protests over the failure of the 1930 Anglo-Iraq Treaty to provide protections for the Kurdish language. He was arrested by British and Iraqi forces in 1932 and exiled to Southern Kurdistan. The picture of Barzanji in *Akşam* hangs in the entrance to the market in Sulaymaniyah.

⁴⁵⁹ “*Suriye’den tecavüz*” (Attack from Syria), *Cumhuriyet*, August 7, 1930; pgs. 1 & 2.

⁴⁶⁰ “*Şark hadisatı, nasıl başladı, nasıl bitti?*”

and sins against our innocent citizens,” he concluded a week before the Prime Minister addressed parliament.⁴⁶¹ “In the end,” repeated İsmet Paşa, the mountain was surrounded and the “hearth that had nurtured the hope” (*ümit veren bu yuva*) of the Ararat rebels “was crushed.”⁴⁶²

3.4.4 Kurd Ava “the Capital of Kurdish Resistance”

In 1928, Xoybûn (Independence) produced a map of “Kurd Ava,” the “headquarters of the Kurdish government” (fig. 2.19).⁴⁶³ There were no borders on Xoybûn’s map. Instead its space was divided by mountains and rivers. Next to the Euphrates, in the map’s right-hand corner, the map-maker placed Syria. In the opposite corner was Persia, separated from Syria and “Misopotamia” (which took the place of Iraq) by the Tigris River. The Aras River seemed to flow over Ararat, connecting the two peaks as it divided the mountain evenly between Kurdistan and Armenia. It gave the summit of Great Ararat to Armenia but left its southern plateaus to Kurdistan. According to Nuri, he chose Kurd Ava because it was “closest to the enemy.”⁴⁶⁴ After the defeat of the Sheikh Said Uprising, explains the *Memorandum on the Situation of the Kurds and Their Claims*, Kurdish “patriots” fled to Iran, Iraq, Syria, others finding “refuge” in



Fig. 2.19: “Kurd Ava-The Capital of Kurdish Resistance”

the mountains. In October of 1927, Kurdish intellectuals, “delegates of patriotic organisations,” tribal leaders, sheikhs, and sympathetic Armenian nationalists gathered in Syria and formed

⁴⁶¹ “*Ağrı dağı şakilere nasıl mezar yaptık?*”

⁴⁶² “*Şark hadisatı, nasıl başladı, nasıl bitti?*”

⁴⁶³ “Süreya Bedirhan [Prince Sureya Bedr Khan], *The Case of Kurdistan Against Turkey* (Philadelphia: The Kurdish League, 1928), reprinted in the *International Journal of Kurdish Studies* 18, no. 1.2 (2004), 122.

⁴⁶⁴ Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*, 44. It had been a Türkmen village. According to Nuri he expelled the Türkmen and “changed the name to Kurdava.”

Xoybûn.⁴⁶⁵ In order to rally support for a Kurdish state, the organization opened offices throughout the Middle East, Europe and the United States. However, the “most important region” of resistance was Mount Ararat.⁴⁶⁶ Xoybûn selected the leader of the Bayt al-Shabab (Beytüşşebap) Revolt,⁴⁶⁷ İhsan Nuri, to go to Ararat and help organize the resistance begun the previous year by Celali leader, Biroyê Heskê Têllî (Biro).⁴⁶⁸

According to Xoybûn, their first task had been to end Turkey’s “nefarious...policy” of causing discord between Kurds and Armenians.⁴⁶⁹ In 1927, Dashnak leader Vahan Papazyan, travelled to Syria and Iraq and met with Kurdish leaders. Members of Dashnak, including Papazyan, were at Xoybûn’s founding congress in Lebanon in 1927. At the meeting, Armenians and Kurds agreed to recognize “the right to establish an independent Kurdistan and united Armenia” and “support each other to defend these rights.” As well, they agreed to continue to cooperate in order to “liberate their two countries” from the Turks. The border of the future Kurdish and Armenia states would be based on pre-war populations. Article 89 of the Treaty of Sèvres (1920) would be voided and “each side would undertake[] to respect” the other’s claims in Erzurum, Van, and Bitlis.⁴⁷⁰ On July 6, 1930 a *New York Times* editorial co-authored by Armenian lawyer and political activist, Vahan Cardashian, argued that the Treaty of Sèvres had provided for creation of an autonomous Kurdish State. However, after the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) the Turkish Regime had started upon a reign of “assimilation and extermination.” Kurds had retreated to

⁴⁶⁵ Kurdish League, *Memorandum on the Situation of the Kurds and Their Claims* (Paris: Imprimerie Louis-Kean-Gap, 1949), 13. As Chris Kutschera points out, the *Memorandum* symbolically placed the formation of Xoybûn on Mount Ararat (“in 1927 a secret congress met at Aghri-Dagh”); *The Kurdish National Movement* (electronic edition). Xoybûn’s first congress met in Bhamdum, Lebanon on October 5, 1927. See Alakom, *Xoybûn Örgütü ve Ağrı Ayaklanması* for a history of Xoybûn and its role in the Mount Ararat Uprising and Kurdish nationalism.

⁴⁶⁶ “Kürt isyanı nasıl tertip olunmuş” (How the Kurdish uprising was planned), *Vakit*, August 26, 1930. Unlike other Turkish newspapers like *Cumhuriyet* and *Akşam*, *Vakit* reprinted some of the “manifestos” (*beyanname*) that Xoybûn published in the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* during the Mount Ararat Uprising.

⁴⁶⁷ Nuri, an officer in the Ottoman and Turkish armies, was one of the leaders of the failed mutiny of Turkish soldiers at the garrison of Bayt al-Shabab (located on Turkey’s border with Iraq) on September 3-4, 1924. While Nuri and his fellow mutineers escaped, the leaders of the Kurdish nationalist organization *Azadî* were arrested and the army was purged of “sympathetic” Kurdish officers; McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 192-194.

⁴⁶⁸ *Memorandum on the Situation of the Kurds and Their Claims*.

⁴⁶⁹ *The Case of Kurdistan Against Turkey*, 139.

⁴⁷⁰ The Treaty of Sèvres gave the three provinces to Armenia. The translation of the congress’ articles is taken from Christopher Houston, *Kurdistan: Crafting of National Selves* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008), 62-63. According to Hamit Bozarslan, Papaytan worked closely with Xoybûn in drafting the resolutions, qtd. in Jordi Gorgas Telej, *Syria’s Kurds: History, Politics and Society*, trans. Emily Welle and Jane Welle (Routledge: Abingdon, England and New York, 2009), 18.

Kurd Ava “at the foot of Ararat” and had “set up a government.” In October, 1927 they proclaimed their independence and “have been fighting the Turks ever since.” He advised Turkey to “abandon Kurdistan and Armenia,” stressing that they were fighting in “enemy country.”⁴⁷¹ Three months later, N. M. Bekir of Xoybûn’s Philadelphia office, expressed his gratitude for Cardashian’s support: “I feel...fully justified in confirming Kurdish claims, as embodied in the statement issued by Mr. Cardashian, to whom we Kurds are most deeply grateful and in dismissing as untrue the opposing assertions by the Turks.”⁴⁷²

Armenian-Kurdish cooperation was also achieved through the efforts of Zilan Bey (Artashes Muradian). According to Garo Sasuni, he was one of the “scores of Armenian freedom fighters in the Ararat Rebellion.”⁴⁷³ In his memoirs Nuri called Zilan Bey a patriot. However, Nuri stressed that Armenians supported rather than participated in the rebellion, carrying messages back and forth between the Kurdish rebels and Xoybûn. According to Nuri, Muradian crossed the Russian border in the summer of 1930 and “we never saw him again.” Nuri heard later that he had been captured by Russian soldiers and sent to Siberia.⁴⁷⁴ British officials in Iran were visited by Armenians working on the behalf of Xoybûn. However, they declared Reuben Pasha’s requested for ammunition “ridiculous.”⁴⁷⁵ Christopher Houston dismisses the cooperation of Xoybûn and Dashnak during the uprising, arguing that neither “imagined Kurdistan or Armenia as a multicultural entity.” What united the members of Xoybûn and Dashnak during the uprising, argues Houston, was their mutual “hatred of Turks.”⁴⁷⁶ Houston’s criticism, however, is

⁴⁷¹ Vahan Cardashian, Robertson Matthews, and John A. Eiesland, “Kurds Fight for Freedom” [editorial], *New York Times*, July 6, 1930; 42. Cardashian wrote a similar editorial during Sheikh Said Rebellion, “The Kurdish Rebellion,” April 12, 1925. Born in Caesarea in 1880, Cardashian emigrated to the United States in 1902. In 1919 he founded the American Committee for the Independence of Armenia (ACIA) and became the “staunchest advocate of Armenian statehood in the American political arena”; Mark Malkasian, “The Disintegration of the Armenian Cause in the United States, 1918-1927,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16, no. 3 (1984), 365.

⁴⁷² N.M. Bekir, “The Turco-Kurdish Campaign,” [editorial], *New York Times*, October 22, 1930; 23.

⁴⁷³ Garo Sasuni, *Kürt Ulusal Hareketleri ve 15. Yüzyıldan Günümüze Ermeni Kürt İlişkileri*, trans. Bedros Zartaryan and Memo Yetkin (İstanbul: Med Yayınevi, 1992/1969), 217-218. According to Sasuni, he was sent to Ararat by Dashnak to strengthen Armenian-Kurdish relations and assist the Kurdish rebels.

⁴⁷⁴ Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*, 34 & 61-63. According to Sasuni, Zilan Bey was killed by communist spies who had infiltrated the ranks of the rebels on Mount Ararat; *Kürt Ulusal Hareketleri ve 15. Yüzyıldan Günümüze Ermeni Kürt İlişkileri*, 217-218.

⁴⁷⁵ FO 424/268, No. 54 inclosure in Doc. 53 [E 3687/1511/44], Lieutenant-Colonel Dodd to Clive, Gulhek, June 28, 1930.

⁴⁷⁶ Christopher Houston, *Kurdistan: Crafting of National Selves* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008), 62-63.

anachronist. As a policy developed by the Canadian government in the 1960s, multiculturalism was not available to the members of Xoybûn and Dashnak in 1930. More importantly, “exploring historical trajectories reminds us” that people “will create other forms” of political belonging. Houston’s assessment of the cooperation of Armenians and Kurds during the Mount Ararat Uprising does not even consider the “paths not taken.”⁴⁷⁷

3.5 Serhat: The Frontier of the Nation-State

3.5.1 “The Boundary Fortress of the Kurds”

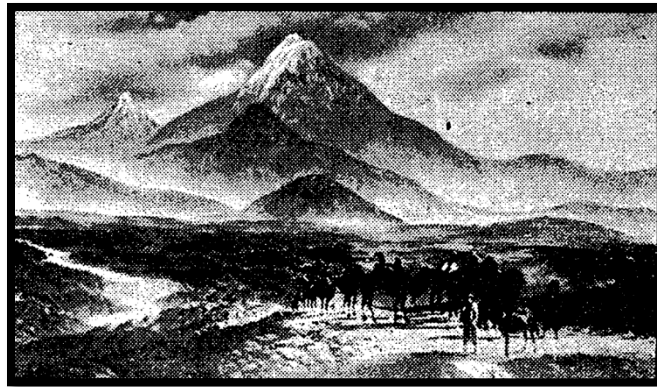


Fig. 2.20: “Boundary Fortress of the Kurds” (*New York Times*, July 13, 1930)

During the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising, a *New York Times* article about the “stormy petrels” of Northeastern Kurdistan used a Near East Relief photo of Ararat to describe the mountain as the “boundary fortress” of the Kurds (fig. 2.20). The Near East Relief had been formed in response to the Armenian genocide; raising money; feeding and looking after Armenian and Assyrian refugees; organizing schools; caring for orphans.⁴⁷⁸ When Soldier-of-fortune Rafael de Nogales, serving with Ottoman Third Army during First World War, rested on a cliff near Tatvan on Lake Van he looked north and saw Ararat “flar[ing] in the “distance like a smudge of brimstone.” The “mournful beauty” of the landscape assured de Nogales that he was sitting in “heart of ancient Armenia.” As he made his way to Van, “stumbling upon mutilated Armenian corpses strewing the length of the road” he knew that the Armenian Genocide had

⁴⁷⁷ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 18-19. When “one looks backward, one risks anachronism,” warns Cooper.

⁴⁷⁸ For a history of the organization and its work during and after the Armenian Genocide see: Keith David Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015).

started.⁴⁷⁹ After the end of World War One, Leon Pashalian, Secretary of the Armenian National Committee in Geneva, tried to attract American capital to Ararat, soliciting funds to build a tourist resort on the mountain. “Although Ararat, strictly speaking, no longer is within Armenian territory, having been awarded to Turkey, Armenians are anxious to make it an active centre of interest for American tourists and other visitors” explained the *New York Times*.⁴⁸⁰ But the proposal to build a a funicular railway to Ararat’s summit was thought “too fantastic.” Others believed that there were better uses for the project’s funds. The “strip around” Ararat, suggested Captain E.A. Yarrow of the Near East Relief, could be used to settle Armenian refugees. “It is not a funicular railway that Armenians need to draw visitors to the top of Ararat,” he argued. “It is the funds to find homes in the plains below.”⁴⁸¹

In March 1930, British officials in Turkey noticed a new exodus of about 10,000 to 12,000 Armenians from Kayseri, Sivas and Amasya. They concluded that it was due to a “general circumstances” rather than “any particular pressure exercised by Turkish” authorities:

These people seem to have realized that life is impossible for them now in Turkey. They are not allowed to move about the country and trade as heretofore. They are confined to towns. They cannot have their own schools to bring their children up in. They often have no church, and, more often, no priest. They cannot recover the property which they lost in the past.

It was also possible, suggested Sir George Clerk, that “the fear of Armenian-Kurdish intrigues” on Ararat had lead Armenians to conclude that “they would be well-advised to leave” Turkey.⁴⁸² Three years earlier, Clerk wrote to the Foreign Minister to inform London that the deportations of Kurds were “taking place on a scale which to some extent recalls the mass deportations of Armenians in 1915.” The British Consul at Trebizond had seen “sixty male Kurds, handcuffed and chained together in couples” marched through the city’s streets and “placed on board a Turkish steamer bound for Constantinople.” They had arrived from Erzurum “on foot.” While on a train in Central Anatolia a passenger pointed out “three men and 150 women and children with their goods and chattels piled on bullock wagons being escorted by 10 gendarmes” to the British

⁴⁷⁹ Rafael de Nogales y Mendez, *Four Years Beneath the Crescent* (New York: Scriber, 1926), 57-59.

⁴⁸⁰ “Plan Tourist Resort on Mount Ararat: Armenians Seek American Capital for It,” *New York Times*, September 8, 192; pg 17.

⁴⁸¹ “Mount Ararat in the News” *New York Times*, September, 9, 1924; pg 18.

⁴⁸² FO 424/272, No. 13 [E 1244/203/44] Clerk to Mr. A Henderson, Constantinople, March 6, 1930.

Military Attaché Major Harenc. In a station near Konya, Major Harenc commented to a worker that there were “a lot of gipses about.” They are “transported Kurds” the worker corrected. Although he has told to move along by the gendarme when he attempted to talk to one of the detained men, Major Harenc felt that they were being treated better than “Armenian deportees.” Sir Clerk concluded that if the “destination of these Kurds is the fertile Konia plain” they would eventually “resign themselves to a peaceful agricultural life” and “cease to worry” the Turkish Government.⁴⁸³ Clerk had compared the June 1927 deportation of the Hayderan and other families from Bayezid to the policy that “disposed of the Armenian Minority in 1915.” However, he called it a “curious trick of fate” as Kurds had been “the principal agents employed for the deportation of the Armenians.”⁴⁸⁴ Robert Olson also describes the Turkish state’s treatment of Kurds in the 1920s and 1930s as “ironic,” claiming that Kurds “eagerly” participated in the Armenian Genocide.⁴⁸⁵

At the end of October, British Pro-Consul J Falanga informed Clerk that “400 families of the Halikanli [Xelikan] tribe” and “40,000 head of cattle and other livestock” from the Persian side of Ararat occupied by Turkish troops during the uprising had arrived in Trabzon. “[O]nly a few [of]...them could speak Turkish.” After being registered and “given Turkish passports” the Persian Kurds were sent to Bursa. Their leader Halid (Xalid) Ağa and their cattle had been sent ahead of them, travelling to Istanbul on a steamship called “*Cumhuriyet*” (Republic).⁴⁸⁶ According to Turkish Officer Züftü Güven who served in a mobile gendarme unit north of Ararat, Xalid Ağa had arrived in Bucak and begged the Turkish government for food and medicine. He told Güven: “I am originally Turkish. Protect me. I have never had relationship with Kurdish resistance.” According to Güven, they were disarmed and, after spending the winter in Tuzluca on the land of the Şemkan, settled in Thrace.⁴⁸⁷ Nuri tells a different version of

⁴⁸³ FO 424/267, No. 49 [E3532/74/65] Sir G. Clerk to Sir Austen Chamberlain, Therapia, August 9, 1927.

⁴⁸⁴ FO 424/266, No.16 [E2835/74/65] Sir Clerk to Chamberlain, Therapia, June 22 1927.

⁴⁸⁵ Robert Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880-1925* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), 156-157. As Kemal Süphandağ explains, Kurds view this as tragedy not irony. They use the phrase: *Em taştêne, hun ji dê bibin firavîn* (we were breakfast, you will be dinner) to describe this history; *Hamidiye Alayları, Ağrı Direnişi ve Zilan Katliamı*, 13.

⁴⁸⁶ FO 424/275, No. 226, inclosure in No. 225 [E 5687/68/44], Pro-Consul Falanga to Sir G. Clerk, Trebizond, October 29, 1931.

⁴⁸⁷ Rohat Alakom, *Bir Türk Subayının Ağrı İsyanı Anıları* (Istanbul: Avesta, 2011), 84. Güven uses the word “Kürtlük,” I have translated this as Kurdish resistance rather than the awkward sounding “Kurdishness.”

Xalid Ağa's deportation. According to Nuri, about 400 families of the Xelikan took refuge on the Turkish side of Ararat after Turkish authorities convinced them that Iranian officials in Maku would punish them for assisting the rebels. When they left their tents and 800 armed men, explains Nuri, Ararat's northern slopes fell into the hands of the Turkish army.⁴⁸⁸ In May of the following year, the Celali were fighting Persian troops around Maku, inflicting heavy losses on the Iranian army. Iran closed the border, started to deport Kurds from Ararat, and declared the mountain a military zone.⁴⁸⁹ A correspondent with the *London Times* came across a "column of Kurds, with their cattle, horses, camels and tents, moving southward under the urge of Persian bayonets" on the road between Khoy and Maku:

They were remnants of a tribe of the Jalali [Celali] who, after the recent fighting near Maku, had attempted to seek refuge across the Turkish border. Turned back by the Turks, the Persian Government were now deporting them to strange lands south of Tabriz... The column seemed composed entirely of women and children; the few men that marched with them were a terrible commentary upon the ravages of long warfare.⁴⁹⁰

The removal of Kurds from Ararat's Persian side was "carried out with much thoroughness and much incidental loss of life—through disease, privations, and exposure—to those evacuated."⁴⁹¹ Reza Shah exiled the entire Celali tribe of Maku to central Persia. However, they returned after his abdication in September 1941. According to American diplomat, William Eagleton, 400 Jelali lent their support to the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad in 1946.⁴⁹²

Over the spring and summer of 1932, a court in Adana sentenced many of the Ararat rebels. Among them was a group of Kurds who had arrived in Turkey with Sheikh Ahmed Barzani when he had crossed the Iraqi border to escape the bombing of British planes. Ararat Kurds had taken refuge with Barzani after the uprising's suppression in September. They accompanied Sheikh Barzani when he sought refuge in Turkey in 1931. Turkish authorities sent Sheikh Barzani to Thrace and the Ararat Kurds to Adana to be tried for their involvement in the

⁴⁸⁸ Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*, 109.

⁴⁸⁹ Kutschera, *The Kurdish National Movement*, electronic edition.

⁴⁹⁰ "On the Slopes of Ararat," *The Times*, May 23, 1931; pg. 13.

⁴⁹¹ FO 424/113, no. 277 [E3355/3354/34] "Persia, Annual Report, 1931," Mr Hoare to Sir John Simon, June 12, 1932.

⁴⁹² "Jalâli," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* [online], <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/jalali>, last updated April 12, 2012.

uprising.⁴⁹³ After reporting on the sentencing of the Ararat rebels, the *London Times* summed up the situation of Kurds. “There are about 1,500,000 Kurds in all, and as a result of the remaking of maps through the centuries they are now living in Turkish, Persian and Iraq territory, probably more than half of them in Eastern Turkey.”⁴⁹⁴

3.5.2 Go East, Esat Mahmut Bey!

“How can you negotiate with men who live under rocks, ripping out of the throats [of their victims] like wolves?” wrote Esat Mahmut Bey in *Akşam* during the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising. *Akşam*’s “Eastern correspondent” dismissed the appeals of “aged



Fig. 2.21: “X” marks *Akşam*’s Eastern Correspondent, Esat Mahmut Bey (July 18, 1930)

diplomats” who had suggested that the Ararat rebels should be “forgiven.”⁴⁹⁵ Within a few weeks of the publication of his wires about the progress of the army’s “suppression and punishment operation” (*tedip ve tenkil hareketi*) and the arrival of his first letter from the “Eastern provinces,” Esat Mahmut Bey arrived on Ararat to describe “how the rebels lived and survived” on the mountain.⁴⁹⁶ When he set out for the ‘East’ in July, he invoked the American

⁴⁹³ Doc. 298 [E529/529/44] “1932 Annual Report Turkey,” Clerk to John Simon, Angora, January 17, 1933 [*B DFA*: Turkey 32].

⁴⁹⁴ “The Kurdish Rebels,” *The Times*, Jun 20, 1932; pg. 13.

⁴⁹⁵ “*Ağrı dağında yaşayanlar nasıl insanlardır*” *Akşam*, September 1, 1930. The Turkish government declared a partial amnesty in 1928, allowing some Kurdish leaders to return to their villages. Authorities also opened negotiations with the Ararat rebels. In May, Nuri and sixty horsemen met with a large delegation of Turkish politicians and generals. They were told if they gave up their weapons they would be rewarded with gold and government positions. They refused and returned to Ararat.

⁴⁹⁶ July 28 (frontpage): “*Şakiler Ağrıdağda nasıl yaşarlar ve ne yaparlar*” (How the rebels live and survive on Ararat); July 30 (frontpage) “*Ağrı Dağı nasıl yaşarlar*” (The type of people on Ararat); September 1 (last installment of his “*Akşam in the Eastern Provinces*” which appeared on page 5): “*Ağrı dağında yaşayanlar nasıl insanlardır*” (The type of people who live on Mount Ararat).

frontier to describe “the type of people who lived” on the “savage and frightening” (“*vahşi ve korkunç*”) mountain.⁴⁹⁷

They mix a handful of bulgar and meat in their hands and eat it raw, chewing it like camels. According to those who have witnessed this, they resemble the savage American Indians we see in the cinema.⁴⁹⁸

Over the summer his ‘observations’ of life on Ararat mixed images of the American West—vengeful nature (“avalanches tearing bodies to pieces on Ararat’s precipices”) and merciless “natives” (“men whose hands kill 15 year old girls and cut men into pieces without shaking”)⁴⁹⁹—with Orientalist tropes of lawless Kurdish bandits (“waiting on Ararat’s black rocks with martini rifles slung over their shoulders”).⁵⁰⁰ On the same day he compared the Ararat rebels to “the American Indians we see in the movies,” a story in the *New York Times* described the uprising as a “fight against modernism.” The sub-headline for Esat Mahmut Bey’s July 13 update on the progress of the army’s suppression operation: “Wearing sheepskin vests and baggy trousers, a rifle in their hands, typical savages...” appeared in the *New York Times* story about the rebels’ “fight against modernism”:

Although dressed like savages in white trousers and sheepskins the Kurdish rebels are armed with the latest model machine guns...Witnesses...say the Kurds are cutting the rims

⁴⁹⁷ “*Ağrı dağında yaşayanlar nasıl insanlardır*” *Akşam*, September 1, 1930

⁴⁹⁸ “*Tenkil harekti ileriyor*” (Encirclement operation is proceeding), *Akşam*, July 13, 1930.

⁴⁹⁹ “*Ağrı dağında yaşayanlar nasıl insanlardır*.” American historian David Wrobel calls the American west a “myth-maker’s dream.” It was “a land of ferocious, untamed Indians, rugged frontiersmen (and later cowboys), strange animals, and spectacular landscapes; a place so incredible that even a mildly imaginative mind could render it truly astonishing”; *Global West, American Frontier: Travel, Empire, and Exceptionalism from Manifest Destiny to the Great Depression* (University of New Mexico Press: Albuquerque, 2013), 3.

⁵⁰⁰ “*Şarktaki hareket başladı*” (The operation in the East has begun), *Akşam*, July 27, 1930. According to Vera Beaudin Saeedpour it was “the spoken and written words” of nineteenth century western missionaries, military officials, scholars and travellers from which the image of Kurds as bandits and predators “took hold.” The image of Kurds as “warlike,” she argues, has played a fundamental role in the “international acquiescence” to Turkey’s treatment of Kurds and continues to obscure the reasons for Kurdish resistance; “The Darkness in Light Impression: Kurdish Character Sketches,” *The International Journal of Kurdish Studies* 16, no. 1-2 (2002), 157. Paul Sant Cassia, disagreeing with Eric Hobsbawm’s characterization of banditry as merely “a form of lawlessness in the countryside which can be harnessed by political forces,” describes banditry as a legal and social category, a social representation, and a “series of stories and myths.” According to Sant Cassia, banditry is a “statist definition of certain types of violent behaviour” which is often viewed differently by ordinary people; “Better Occasional Murders than Frequent Adulteries: Discourses on Banditry, Violence, and Sacrifice in the Mediterranean,” in *States of Violence*, eds. Fernando Coronil and Julie Skurski (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2006), 66-67. For a discussion of the role the late Ottoman and the early Turkish states played in perpetuating ‘Kurdish tribal banditry’ (“consistently instrumentaliz[ing] structures of violence outside of the formal state system by enlisting tribes selectively and opportunistically”) see Uğur Ümit Üngör, “Rethinking the Violence of Pacification: State Formation and Bandits in Turkey, 1914–1937,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 4 (2012), 746–769.

from their captive's hats to make them resemble fezzes. The rebels killed a teacher because he held classes in a school instead of a mosque.⁵⁰¹

Esat Mahmut Bey's stories of Ararat's "disorder" served to, like the "powerful topos" of the cinematic American frontier, "orientate national fables about the virtues of order and integration."⁵⁰² But while the mythic American West was both "a land of savagery" and a "land of [democratic] promise,"⁵⁰³ Ararat had no 'Indians' to be civilized or 'civilizing' white settlers. According to Esat Mahmut, the people on Ararat had "no value for the nation."⁵⁰⁴

Esat Mahmut Bey was not the first western traveler to compare Kurds to 'Indians.' An editorial in the *London Times*, published after the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-1878, stated that "like the Indians" Kurds were "fond of roving about from one part of the country to another." They were also, "like them," reluctant "to adapt themselves to the restraints and discipline of a regularly organized government." Kurds "plundered caravans"; 'Indians' attacked wagons. Both were difficult to subdue as they retreated to "where the cavalry and artillery" could not "reach them." Hiding "behind rocks and on lofty peaks" the Kurdish tribes of the Ottoman Empire were a "full match for any trained soldiers who dare follow them."⁵⁰⁵ Kurds were most often compared to the Great Plains nations like the Comanche and Sioux, "regional powers" who offered "lasting resistance" to European colonialism.⁵⁰⁶ According to a *Daily News* correspondent covering the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-1878, Kurdish tribal irregulars "with their barbarous horse

⁵⁰¹ "Kurdish Rebels use New Machine Guns," *New York Times*, July 13, 1930; pg. 13. According to Esat Mahmut Bey the rebels attacked a truck driver and told him "ridiculous things": "You shave your beards, you wear hats, you let your women walk the streets." Turkey's state news agency, *Anadolu Ajansi*, was perhaps the source for both stories.

⁵⁰² Samuel Truett, "The Ghosts of Frontiers Past: Making and Unmaking Space in the Borderlands," *Journal of the Southwest* 46, no. 2 (2004), 309-310.

⁵⁰³ Wrobel, *Global West*, 3. Despite ideas of American exceptionalism, Wrobel argues that the nineteenth century American West was considered part of a "global enterprise of colonialism," European travellers left the East and travelled West, offering their advice to Americans on how to pacify 'the natives.' Both Richard Burton and Alex de Tocqueville travelled to the American frontier in the nineteenth century and shared their personal experiences of European colonialism in Africa and India (Burton) and Algeria (de Tocqueville "the great champion of American democracy") with Americans, 16.

⁵⁰⁴ "Şakiler Ağrıdağda nasıl yaşarlar ve ne yaparlar," *Akşam*, July 28, 1930.

⁵⁰⁵ "The Kurds," *The Times*, December 18, 1879; pg. 3. The editorial, which was reprinted in *The Missionary Herald*, went on to suggest that Kurds were 'Indians,' encouraging "students of ethnology" to study their 'racial' connections.

⁵⁰⁶ "The Indians of the Great Plains were probably the best light cavalry in the world." However, "they were ultimately powerless against the dreaded mountain howitzer"; Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Patrick Camille (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), 340-341.

trappings, hair-tufted lances, and wild gestures” could “easily be mistaken for a detachment of Comanche or Sioux Indians.” However, the “chivalry which naturally belongs to most savage races” was “totally absent in the hordes which dwell beyond the Araxes.”⁵⁰⁷ In volume nine of Jacques Élisée Reclus’ seventeen volume *Universal Geography*, Kurds are compared to the Baluch, Bedouin and the Apache, however, the famous geographer concluded that none of them had “developed the marauding instinct to a higher degree than have the warlike Kurd tribes.” From their “inaccessible den[s]” they plunder the “the surrounding highways.”⁵⁰⁸

At times, Esat Mahmut Bey seemed to actually reuse nineteenth century descriptions of ‘robber’ Kurds. Malek Yonan, reporting on the Armenian massacres of 1894-1896 by the Hamidiye, called robbery a Kurdish “profession.” Everyone has “some occupation,” he wrote, “one is a judge, one a merchant, one a farmer.” Kurds were “robbers.” In Esat Mahmut Bey’s ‘observations’ on life on Ararat, “killing and robbing [was] a profession” on the mountain. “For example,” he explained, “you are a doctor, your friend is a lawyer, and perhaps another friend is a journalist.” The Ararat Kurds were “bandits.”⁵⁰⁹ Unlike Esat Mahmut Bey, Yonan admired the Kurdish shepherd’s devotion to his sheep, noting that they gave “them names” and summoned their favorites so they could “pet” them.⁵¹⁰ Esat Mahmut Bey reserved his admiration for the Turkish shepherds he met in the bucolic countryside of central Anatolia. After leaving Bayburt, he stopped to talk to a young Turkish shepherd with “huge eyes, sun-bleached hair, and broad shoulders.” He was happily married at eighteen and living contentedly on the 10 *kuruş* (penny)

⁵⁰⁷ *War Correspondence of the Daily News 1877* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1878), 331-335. Probably the most infamous incident of the war was the massacre of a small garrison of Russian soldiers left to hold the city of Bayezid as Russian General Tergukasoff continued his advance to Erzurum. According to the *Daily News*, a group of “22,000 Kurdish horseman” guided by “Sheikh Jelaledin” (perhaps the reporter was referring to one of the leaders of the Celali tribe), “swept down from the Ararat chain of mountains, and surrounded” the Russians who had barricaded themselves in the city’s famous castle. Running out of food and water they surrendered after they were given assurances that they would not be harmed. However, the “Kurd horsemen fell on the disarmed and surrendered prisoners, massacring every one without exception.” The story of the massacre was widely reported on in both the British and American press. General Tergukasoff returned to Bayezid and retook the city. The Berlin Treaty returned Bayezid to the Ottoman Empire (however Kars remained under Russian rule until after World War One).

⁵⁰⁸ Jacques Élisée Reclus, *South-western Asia, Volume IX: The Universal Geography-The Earth and its Inhabitants*, ed. A.H. Keane (London: J.S. Virtue & Co Ltd. 1876), 176.

⁵⁰⁹ “Şakiler Ağrıdağda nasıl yaşarlar ve ne yaparlar,” *Akşam*, July 28, 1930.

⁵¹⁰ Jesse Malek Yonan, “The Kurds,” in *The Story of Turkey and Armenia with a Full and Accurate Account of the Recent Massacres by Eyewitnesses*, ed. Rev. James Wilson Pierce (Baltimore: R.H. Woodward Company, 1896), 304.

he earned tending his sheep, Esat Mehmet Bey informed his readers.⁵¹¹ When he stopped to barter for gasoline with an old Kurdish shepherd (his face “blackened by the sun”) outside of Bayezid, Esat Mahmut Bey was appalled to learn that the Kurdish shepherd’s “oldest wife was about to give birth” and his “youngest wife already had six” children (“all of the them shepherds like their father”).⁵¹²

As his wires informed *Akşam*’s readers about the progress of army operation on Ararat, his page five series reported on the advance of secular progress in the “Eastern provinces.” The Black Sea village of İnebolu was “like paradise.”⁵¹³ Ayancık, with its “churches” that had been transformed into “cinemas and theatres,” was a symbol of the Republic revolution.⁵¹⁴ Erzurum, not even left a water fountain by the Ottoman Empire, had a little public square with “orderly buildings.” The square was “the work of the Republic.” And despite its “narrow streets, dilapidated cow dung houses...ramshackle bazaar, donkey’s with bells, [and] historic beggars” it had cesspools. “God forbid it could be like Bayezid where they still throw filth into the street from the roofs of their houses.”⁵¹⁵ During his 250-kilometre journey from Erzurum to Bayezid he saw “only grassy plains and mountains.” There were “no people, no animals” along the road, the “silence unnerving.” Occasionally, he caught the “shimmer” of a Turkish “bayonet” from underneath a rock. The “eagles” of the gendarme were the only protectors of the East’s “continuous chain of mountains.” Villagers lived a “poor and wretched” life in the surrounding plains.⁵¹⁶ However, this “misery” increased as Esat Mahmut Bey approached Mount Ararat and the Iranian border. “Here the people are completely primitive” (*burada halk büsbütün iptidaidir*), he wrote. During his journey Esat Mahmut Bey’s car broke down and he was “condemned to spend the night” in one of Ararat’s villages:

⁵¹¹ Esat Mahmut Bey, “*On sekiz yaşına basan her kızın evlendiği memleketler*” (A nation in which every man is married by the age of 18) *Akşam*, August 15; pg. 5.

⁵¹² Esat Mahmut Bey, “*Parayı bilmeyen hâlâ mübadele devri yaşıyorlar*” (They live without knowing money, still using barter), *Akşam*, August 26, 1930; pg 5.

⁵¹³ Esat Mahmut Bey, “*Karadeniz sahilinde cennet gibi bir şehir*” (A city like paradise on the Black Sea), *Akşam*, July 26; pg. 5.

⁵¹⁴ Esat Mahmut Bey, “*Sakin Ayancıkta içtimaî nasıl uyandı*” (How did quiet Ayancık awaken), *Akşam*, July 30, 1930; pg. 5.

⁵¹⁵ Esat Mahmut Bey, “*Saltanat idaresinin hiç bakmadığı şehir*” (A city neglected by the Sultan), *Akşam*, August 22, 1930; pg. 5.

⁵¹⁶ Esat Mahmut Bey, “*Parayı bilmeyen hâlâ mübadele devri yaşıyorlar*,” *Akşam*, August 26, 1930; pg 5.

We went to find the village, asking one another: ‘Where is it?’ We looked, we searched, but nothing resembled a village. From underneath the ground came smoke, the man leading us explaining: ‘Here, people ensure their need for shelter by digging [their homes]... We stopped in front of a heap of earth and our guide shouted: ‘Haso, you have guests!’ An old man with a beard suddenly emerged from a hole in the ground. He had huge eyes, wide shoulders and a long beard. ‘*Ehlen ve sehlen,*’ he said to us. He was the village *hoca*. We entered the underground dwelling; it was dark like the mouth of a mine shaft. Our noses were hit by a strong odor. The old man turned to me and apologized for the smell, explaining that their horse died the day before and they still had not disposed of it.

Esat Mahmut Bey’s ridicule of his host’s offer of a warm bed and food was a rejection of a shared culture of Eastern hospitality. His translation of his host’s welcome from the more likely Islamic greeting of “*salaam alekum*” into the unlikely use of colloquial Arabic by a Kurdish villager was both a rejection of a shared “Eastern” culture and a refusal to acknowledge Kurdish ethnicity. The villagers living around Mount Ararat did not “even have candles” he told his readers. They “go to bed in the dark and get up in the dark.” They live “lives without imagination.”⁵¹⁷

It is perhaps the image of the ‘vanishing Indian’ that inspired Esat Mahmut Bey’s comparison of Ararat Kurds to the “American Indians we see at the cinema.” Before the American cyclist, Thomas Stevens, wheeled his way across “Ararat and the Himalayas”⁵¹⁸ in 1885, he travelled backwards over the ‘conquered’ American frontier, dismounting occasionally to observe “the great agricultural empire” that had “crowd[ed] out the autocratic cattle-kings” who had “crowded out the Indians and the Buffalo.”⁵¹⁹ Outside of Reno he stopped to chat with a member of the Washoe nation who was “riding a...scraggy-looking mustang.” Noticing that the man had wrapped his wounded leg in “a red blanket,” Stevens advised him to soak it in a warm bath. While feeling his advice would do him “some good,” he doubted he would act on it.⁵²⁰ When Stevens cycled past Mount Ararat a year later, he stopped to spend a “disagreeable night” in a

⁵¹⁷ Esat Mahmut Bey, “*Buralarda halk tamamile ipidaîdir*” (The people here are completely primitive), *Akşam*, August 24, 1930; pg. 5. He does, however, give his host a “Kurdish” name, the Kurdish diminutive of Hasan, “Haso.”

⁵¹⁸ “Thomas Steven’s Bicycle Journey,” *New York Times*, October 3, 1885; pg. 3.

⁵¹⁹ Thomas Stevens, *Around the World on a Bicycle: From San Francisco to Tehran* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1887), 71-72.

⁵²⁰ Stevens, *Around the World on a Bicycle*, 22-23. At first he decided to play a “prank” and pretended to cure the Washoe man’s leg by waving his bike wrench over it and “squirting it” with his “oil-can.”

“Koordish village, where the hovels are more excavations than buildings” and “buffaloes, horses, goats, chickens, and human beings” all found shelter under the same roof (“the effect upon one's olfactory nerves upon entering is anything but reassuring”). The Sheikh, thinking Stevens was a doctor begged the cyclist to “perform a cure” and fix an “ugly wound on his knee.” Stevens offered the same advice he had given the Washoe man, telling the Sheikh to bathe his wound in salt water. “I felt pretty certain,” he wrote that he would be “too lazy and trifling to follow the advice.”⁵²¹ In his novels about the Apache chief Winnetou, German author Karl May, whose previous series about the adventures of the Ottoman detective Kara Ben Nesmi Effendi included an installment about the pursuit of a killer through the “the wilds of Kurdistan,” compared the “sick man of Europe” to the “dying” Indian:

Whenever I think of the American Indian, I am reminded of the Turk. This may seem strange, yet the comparison can be justified. However different the two peoples may be, in the opinion of the world at large they both belong to a past age. The Turk is often called “the sick man of Europe,” and anyone who knows the Indian is forced to think of him as the “dying man.”⁵²²

Like the “Hindoos of America,” Kurds in modern Turkey were “doomed to disappear.”⁵²³ The Kurds on Ararat were a “nation of bandits” (*şakilerin vatanı*), concluded Esat Mahmut Bey. They had “never been a member of a state or country or paid taxes or enlisted in the army.”⁵²⁴ Esat Mahmut Bey's letters and wires from the Eastern provinces invoked the American frontier to warn Kurds of the violent consequences for those who resisted the nation-state's “offer of assimilation.”⁵²⁵ For Esat Mahmut Bey, Ararat was the frontier of the Turkish nation-state. The uprising's suppression a reminder of what “remains to be achieved.”⁵²⁶

3.5.3 Overlapping Armenia and Kurdistan

“Kurdistan” (like “Armenia”) is one of those names which you find scored large across the map without any dotted lines or other marks to define their boundaries” wrote G.E. Hubbard.⁵²⁷ When

⁵²¹ Stevens, 426-428. When another man showed him an ugly cut on his arm, Stevens began to wonder “what sort of company” he had “gotten into.”

⁵²² Karl May, “Preface to *Winnetou*,” trans. Michael Shaw, in *The Collected Works of Karl May*, vls. I & II, ed. Erwin J Haeberle (New York: Seabury Press, 1885; 1977). The “Orient Cycle” was published 1892.

⁵²³ FO 424/266, No. 4 [E 256/74/65], Sir G. Clerk to Sir Austen Chamberlin, Angora, January 4, 1927.

⁵²⁴ “*Şakiler Ağrıdağda nasıl yaşarlar ve ne yaparlar*,” July 28, 1930.

⁵²⁵ Ceren, “State Building and the Limits of Legibility,” 96.

⁵²⁶ John Agnew, “Borders on the mind: re-framing border thinking,” *Ethics & Global Politics* 1 (2008), 182.

⁵²⁷ Hubbard, *From the Gulf to Ararat*, 210.

James Bryce climbed Ararat in 1876 he concluded that Armenia had; “no political limits” (it was “mainly in the dominions of Turkey, but partly also in those of Russia and Persia); no ethnographical limits” (“inhabited by Tatars, Persians, Kurds, and the mixed race whom we call Turks or Ottomans, as well as by the Armenians proper”); and “no natural boundaries in rivers or mountain chains, lying, as it does, in the upper valleys of the Euphrates, Tigris, Aras, and Kur). However, Bryce felt that the area around Ararat could not be “called Kurdistan” either as Kurds were not its “sole inhabitants.” While Ottoman Turks, Persians, and Armenians lived in the valleys and towns, Kurds clung “to the heights.”⁵²⁸ Captain Francis Maunsell, noting that Turkish Armenia (the “high plateau” that enclosed “Erzerum, Muş, Başkale, and Bayezid”) had once been a part of “Greater Armenia” agreed that the area could no longer be called Armenia because Armenians were not its sole inhabitants. However, he could “scarcely” call the area Kurdistan because Kurdistan was “the great mountain districts” that “overlook the wide plains watered by the middle Tigris and Euphrates.”⁵²⁹ Even the nineteenth century “displacements of Armenians” that occurred during the Russia Wars of 1828, 1853-1856, and 1877-78 (“accompanied by a frightful mortality caused by famine, fever, homesickness, and hardships of every sort”) had “not produced an ethnological grouping coincident with the conventional political frontier” noted geographer Jacques Élisée Reclus.⁵³⁰

In the sixteenth century, Armenia became a “subjugated buffer zone” between the Ottoman and Persian Empires.”⁵³¹ Ararat no longer sat in Armenia but divided the eastern and western

⁵²⁸ Bryce, *Transcaucasia and Ararat*, 317 & 328. Bryce was an outspoken critic of the Ottoman Empire’s treatment of Armenians, one of the founders of the Anglo-Armenian Association, a group of Liberal politicians, High Church and Nonconformist clergymen, and Armenians who sought reform in the Ottoman Empire. However, he was not supportive of Armenian revolutionaries. When accepting an award for his work on behalf of the empire’s suffering Armenians, he warned Armenians revolutionaries that they had “no chance of success,” as Armenians did not form a homogenous majority in any of the six vilayets. “Cruelty of the Turks: Prof. Bryce Describes the Condition of Armenia,” *New York Times*, November 6, 1890: pg. 3.

⁵²⁹ Captain F.R Maunsell. “Eastern Turkey in Asia and Armenia,” *Scottish Geographical Magazine* 12, no. 5 (1896), 225-230. Maunsell covertly mapped Eastern Turkey for the British.

⁵³⁰ Reclus, *The Universal Geography*, 171-173 & 162.

⁵³¹ Panossian, *Armenian Kings*, 67. The “Great Flight” (*Büyük Kaçgün*) was triggered by the Celali Uprising (not the tribal confederacy involved in the Ararat Uprising) in eastern Anatolia (1596-c.1620) and “Great Deportations” (*Büyük Sürgün*) caused by Shah ‘Abbas I’s wars with the Ottomans (1603-1618). These events birthed the Western Armenian and Eastern Armenian diasporas; Sebouh Aslanian on the *Ottoman History Podcast*, “Ports and Printers Across the Armenian Diaspora,” July 18, 2017 (discussion of his forthcoming manuscript *Global Early Modernity and Mobility: Port Cities and Printers in the Armenian Diaspora 1512-1800*). Aslanian argues that by confining Armenian history to a story of national survival obscures the “the skill and expertise with which some Armenians have historically navigated between multiple cultural, religious, and regional divides;” “The Marble of Armenian

Armenian diasporas. The Kurds on Ararat were also divided between the Sultan and Shah. However, as nomadic pastoralists, they had “more ways of resisting” their authority.⁵³²

In modern Turkish *serhat* means frontier, the Turkish “t” replacing the Ottoman “d” of *serhad*. In İbrahim S. Işık’s *A to Z of Kurdish History, Personalities, and Organizations*, Serhat is defined geographically as an area that includes the present day Turkish provinces of “Bingöl, Erzurum, Muş, Ağrı, Kars.” Işık then defines Serhat by its ethnic diversity. “A region where Kurds live with Turks, Azeris, Karapapak, and Arabs” (but no longer Armenians). Unlike Botan (Cizre), Soran (Rawanduz), Baban (Sulaymaniyah), Serhat was never a Kurdish emirate.⁵³³ In Kurdish-Swedish rapper Serhado’s “I am Kurdistan” (*Ez Kurdistan im*), Kurdistan is divided into four directions; North-Bakûr (Turkey), South-Basûr (Iraq) West-Rojava (Syria), and East-Rojhilat (Iran). The rapper also divides Bakûr, Turkish Kurdistan, into regions; Serhat; Botan; Dersim; Behdînan. Like Serhat, Behdînan spills over Turkey’s borders. The former emirate roughly corresponds to Southern Kurdistan’s Duhok province, where, like most of the Kurds in Turkey and unlike most of the Kurds in Northern Iraq, they speak Kermanji.⁵³⁴ Serhat (Serhed in Kurdish) is not marked on most maps of Kurdistan. However, it is marked in the accent of the Kurmanji spoken along Turkey’s eastern border. *Denjbej* (Kurdish bards) are either from Serhed or Botan. The melodies of Serhed *kilam* (oral epics) are said to be like the *zozan* (high mountain plateaus) of Serhat/Serhed, whereas the plains and rolling hills of Diyarbakır mark the harmonies of the *denjbej* from Botan.⁵³⁵ The *dengbej* of Serhat/Serhed travelled through the “high-range mountains and plateaus” north of Diyarbakır and the “Kurdish-inhabited” areas of “Western Armenia and North-Western Iran.”⁵³⁶ According to Wendelmoet Hamelink, Armenia is still “present” in the voices of *dengbej*. One of the most renowned *denjbej* was Karapetê Xaco (Karapet Khatchadourian) who was from a village near Batman. He was ‘adopted’ by a Kurdish

History: Or Armenian History as World History,” *Études arméniennes contemporaines* [Online], 4 (2014), <http://eac.revues.org/707>.

⁵³² Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire*, 90. “For most of its history, mountainous Kurdistan was in fact a buffer between two or more neighbouring states, which gave the Kurdish tribesmen more leverage, since they could in theory choose between several sovereigns”; Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 135.

⁵³³ İbrahim S. Işık, *A’dan Z’ye Kürtler: Kişiler, Kavramlar, Kurumlar* (İstanbul: Nûhibar, 2013), 400.

⁵³⁴ Serhado, “*Ez Kurdistan im*,” (with Zozan Zudem), in *Xeyala Evin*, Kom Muzik, 2009, <http://itunes.com>.

⁵³⁵ Correspondence with Christina Hough.

⁵³⁶ Marlene Schäfers, “Being sick of politics: The production of *dengbêj* as Kurdish cultural heritage in contemporary Turkey,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* [online], 20 (2015), footnote 10 page 17, <http://journals.openedition.org/ejts/5200>.

Ağa after his family in Bitlis was killed during the Armenian Genocide. He learned to sing in Kurdish and when he moved to Armenia, his voice was broadcast by Radio Yerevan to Kurds all over Kurdistan. Radio Yerevan was the only access many Kurds had to Kurdish music and Karapetê Xaco became a symbol of Kurdish resistance. However, his story also reflects Serhat/Serhed's history of violence and assimilation. Many Armenians would read what Hamelink describes as the story of his "adoption" and "cultural exchange" as kidnapping and assimilation.⁵³⁷ In the invitation to the commemoration of the defeat of the Mount Ararat Uprising in Doğubayazıt in September of 2014, Kurds are described as "one of Mesopotamia's ancient peoples, without a state and exposed to the domination of others."⁵³⁸ The invitation echoes Armenian tales of "righteous rebellion against tyranny and oppression" on Mount Ararat.⁵³⁹

3.6 Conclusion: Rethinking the History of States and Statelessness

This chapter has argued that the "symbiotic antagonism" of Kurdish and Turkish nationalism needs to be understood as conflicting imaginations of belonging rather than reduced to competing territorial claims by placing the story of Mount Ararat's incorporation into the Turkish nation-state during the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising in the summer of 1930 alongside its re-imagination as the direction of Kurdish resistance from 1926 to 1931.⁵⁴⁰ Rather than casting the uprising's suppression as a twentieth century epilogue to the multiple sovereignties of the nineteenth century frontier, this chapter has argued that nation-state's have frontiers. As Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett, argue, "heterogeneous spaces persisted." The Ottoman frontier did not end in the Middle East nation-state; it was transformed into its "territorialized edges of nations—spaces that simultaneously embodied and undermined state power."⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁷ Wendelmoet Hamelink, *The sung home: narrative, morality, and the Kurdish nation* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), 23, 241-242. Probably the most famous *dengbej* was Aram Tigran, who was born in northern Syria family to an Armenian from Diyarbakır. Tigran sang in Kurdish, Arabic, Syriac and Armenian. He moved to Armenia 1960s and also worked for Radio Yerevan

⁵³⁸ See Chapter I, fig. 1.32.

⁵³⁹ Panossian, *The Armenians from Kings and Priests*, 52-53.

⁵⁴⁰ The term is Kadioğlu and Keyman's (*Symbiotic Antagonisms; Competing Nationalisms in Turkey*).

⁵⁴¹ Hämäläinen and Truett, "On Borderlands," 348.



Fig. 2.22: Railways tracks laid and to be laid (*Vakit*, August 29, 1930)

As the General Salih Paşa prepared for the final assault on Mount Ararat, the Turkish Republic celebrated the opening of railway line between Ankara and Sivas. On August 29, 1930 two days before the opening ceremonies, *Vakit* published a map of “tracks that have been laid” and “tracks to be laid” (fig. 2.22). Mount Ararat is not on the map, unconnected to railway tracks that had been laid and the tracks to be laid. Speaking after the murder of Kurdish lawyer Tahir Elçi, now jailed Kurdish leader Selahattin Demirtaş told *Vice News* that Elçi had been killed by “statelessness.”⁵⁴² Demirtaş explained to the reporter that statelessness has two meanings. “The state is not the Kurds' state, and also the Kurds do not have a state in the Middle East.”⁵⁴³ This chapter has also tried to keep Demirtaş’ statement in mind while imagining Serhat/Serhed, a place where the people on the periphery demand to be included in the nation-state while also dreaming of its “alternative.”⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴² Elçi, the chairperson of the Diyarbakır Bar Association, was shot and killed during a press conference on November 28, 2015. The following year, Demirtaş, the elected co-leader of the People’s Democracy Party (HDP), was arrested by the Turkish police along with a number of other HDP members of parliament. He was sentenced to four years and eight months in September 2018 for a speech he had made during Newroz (Kurdish New Year) celebrations in March 2013. According to Turkish prosecutors the speech was propaganda for the PKK. He is in a high-security prison in Edirne.

⁵⁴³ John Beck, “Caught Between the Islamic State and Erdogan: Turkey’s Most Important Opposition Politician Talks to VICE,” *Vice* [online], December 18, 2015, https://news.vice.com/en_us/article/ney4yz/caught-between-the-islamic-state-and-erdogan-turkeys-most-important-opposition-politician-talks-to-vice-news8 November 2015.

⁵⁴⁴ Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, 6.

“The marginality of her story is what maintains the other’s centrality; there is no kind of narrative that can hold the two together (though perhaps history can)...” Carolyn Steadman, *Landscape for a Good Woman*

Chapter 3

“Fighting Side by Side” their Men: The Women of the Mount Ararat Uprising and the Feminist Erasures of (Some) Histories of Women’s Resistance



Fig. 3.1: Front page of *Cumhuriyet*, July 28, 1930
The Suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising, the “type” of Kurdish Women on Ararat, and Miss Universe Contestants

4 “Fighting Side by Side” Their Men

When British travel writer Rosita Forbes visited the Mount Ararat rebels in June of 1930, she seemed unsurprised to find Kurdish women “fighting side by side with their men.” In many ways, her description of Ararat women “pick[ing] up the rifles of the wounded and join[ing]”⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴⁵ Rosita Forbes, *Conflict: Angora to Afghanistan* (London, Toronto, Melbourne and Sydney: Cassell and Company Limited, 1931), 264.

the fray echoed nineteenth century European depictions of “combative Kurdish woman.”⁵⁴⁶ The most celebrated Kurdish female fighter in the nineteenth century was Kara Fatima Khanum.⁵⁴⁷ *The Ladies Treasury* described Kara Fatima as having the “air and gesture of a chieftain” as she rode into Constantinople with 300 men in order to lend her support to the Sultan during the Crimean War.⁵⁴⁸ “As evidenced” by Kara Fatima’s “pledge,” stated the *Ladies Treasury*, Kurdish women “are said to have traditions of former bravery.” While her famous portrait in the *London Illustrated News* ended her story in the Ottoman capital, leaving Kara Fatima and her men under review by the Minister of War at Serasker, *The Ladies Treasury* continued it.⁵⁴⁹ According to the popular British periodical devoted to “literature, domestic advice, and women’s education,” Kara Fatima found “no encouragement” from the Sultan. She “quickly returned to her home in the Koord mountains” and was “lost sight of.”⁵⁵⁰

The story of the Kurdish women who fought “side by side” with their men during the Mount Ararat Uprising did not appear in the pages of the Turkish press during the uprising’s suppression in the summer of 1930. The uprising, however, did dominate their front pages. Headlines of the Kurdish rebels’ “annihilation” (*imha*) and “complete repression” (*kâmiltenkil*) were like second mastheads, stretching across the front page and dictating the content below.⁵⁵¹ At the same time, stories of the Republic’s emancipation of women saturated Turkish papers, news of the “first woman” surgeon, manager, pilot, and record breaking swimmer published on their front and inside pages.⁵⁵² Meanwhile, domestic advice on raising healthy

⁵⁴⁶ Martin Van Bruinessen, “From Adela Khanum to Leyla Zana: Women as Political Leaders in Kurdish History,” in *Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds*, ed. Shahrzad Mojab (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2001), 98-99.

⁵⁴⁷ For Kara Fatima’s story see Bruinessen, “From Adela Khanum to Leyla Zana: Women as Political Leaders in Kurdish History,” in *Women of a Non-State Nation* and in the same volume, Rohat Alakom, “Kurdish Women in Constantinople at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century,” 54-56.

⁵⁴⁸ “Fatima, the Koord Amazon,” *Ladies Treasury*, May 1, 1882; pg 265.

⁵⁴⁹ Published in the *London Illustrated News* on April 22, 1854.

⁵⁵⁰ “Fatima, the Koord Amazon.” The description of the *Ladies Treasury* is from Stephan Pigeon, “Steal it, Change it, Print it: Transatlantic Scissors-and-Paste Journalism in the Ladies’ Treasury, 1857–1895,” *Journal of Victorian Culture* 22, no. 1 (2017), 24.

⁵⁵¹ For example: “*Asiler 5 Günde Imha Edildi*” (The rebels were annihilated in five days), *Cumhuriyet*, July 13, 1930 and “*Eşkiya kâmiltenkil olundu*” (The bandits have been completely suppressed), *Vakit*, July 13, 1930.

⁵⁵² *İlk operatör hanım*” (First Female Surgeon), *Akşam*, September 25, 1930; “*Kadınlarınız hayatta muvaffak oluyorlar*” (Our women are successful in life), *Cumhuriyet*, August 9, 1930; “*İngiliz kızı-Dün Çanakkale boğazını yüzererek geçti*” (The English Girl who Swam Across the Bosphorus Yesterday), *Vakit*, August 17, 1930; *Kadın tayyareci şerefine birlikte dün bir ziyafet verildi* (A banquet was held in honor of the female pilot [Marie Marvingt] yesterday), *Vakit*, August 5, 1930.

children and furnishing a nursery shared the “Woman” page with updates on the latest fashions and most effective morning exercise routine.⁵⁵³ Both the uprising and liberated women were fodder for Republican cartoonists, the latter “worthy of a guffaw,” the former a source of “mockery.”⁵⁵⁴ The publisher of *Cumhuriyet*, Yunus Nadi (described by Turkish feminist Halide Edib as “a fanatical believer” in secularism), did place a photo of “the typical woman on Mount Ararat” on his paper’s front page (fig. 3.1).⁵⁵⁵ More ethnographic than journalistic, *Cumhuriyet*’s image of Ararat women appeared above “a map that illustrated where Kurds attacking from Iraq have been suppressed” and next to six headshots of beauty contestants who would be joining Miss Turkey at the Miss Universe Pageant in the United States. The photo of “typical” Kurdish women seemed to “resist incorporation” into the paper’s narrative of secular progress. For a brief moment, the participation of women in the Mount Ararat Uprising interrupted the Republican regime’s intertwined stories of the repression of Kurdish ‘banditry’ and the emancipation of Turkish women.⁵⁵⁶

4.1.1 Feminist Erasures of (Some) Women’s Histories

While the preceding chapters have endeavoured to “rescue” the history of Kurdish resistance from the nation-state, the first re-reading the tragedy of Kurdistan as critique of its redemptive potential, the second exposing other imaginations of national sovereignty that endured and emerged alongside the making of the territorial nation-state in the Middle East after World War I, this chapter examines the feminist erasures of some histories of women’s resistance.⁵⁵⁷

Feminist scholars have challenged the Turkish nation-state’s celebration of its emancipation of

⁵⁵³ These are the stories that appeared on *Cumhuriyet*’s “*Kadin*” page on August 18, 1930. *Akşam*’s “*Kadin-Ev-Moda*” (Women-House-Style) included bawdy poems, erotic fiction, and suggestive cartoons that made it less educational (and more entertaining).

⁵⁵⁴ L. Perry Curtis Jr., *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*, revised ed. (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 146-147. See Chapter I for an in-depth discussion of the cartoons published during the uprising’s suppression.

⁵⁵⁵ Halide Edip Avidar, *The Memoirs of Halidé Edib* (New York: The Century Co., 1926), 265. I use Edib throughout (the spelling of her name during the uprising).

⁵⁵⁶ Max Pensky, “Method and time: Benjamin’s dialectical images,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, ed. David Ferris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 187. What Walter Benjamin describes as the trash of history, formerly “insignificant fragments” that “resist incorporation” into triumphal narratives.

⁵⁵⁷ Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995). While not exploring the relationship between feminism and nationalism, Duara did wonder whether or not “feminist movements all over the world will reshape the gendered representations of the nation,” 13.

women in order to challenge its triumphal (and paternalistic) narrative.⁵⁵⁸ But whether or not scholars conclude that the Turkish Republic's gender reforms "coexist[ed] with changes that aimed to further control women's lives"⁵⁵⁹ or were "one of the most important success stories of women's empowerment in the early twentieth century," they agree that they did not reach the women living in the "isolated, mountainous and poorer areas of the east" (i.e. Kurdish women).⁵⁶⁰ The assumption that secular reforms did not "reach" Kurdish women has confined the history of (some) Kurdish women in Turkey to "the margins" of feminist scholarship.⁵⁶¹ Despite the recent incorporation of Kurdish women's resistance into the chronology of Turkish feminism, its placement in its third wave elides the earlier struggles of the women who lived in the "Republic's far corners."⁵⁶² Kurdish historians blame this erasure on the failure of feminist scholars to connect the Republican regime's emancipation of Turkish women to its

⁵⁵⁸ For example: Yesim Arat, "From Emancipation to Liberation: The Changing role of Women in Turkey's Public Realm," *Journal of International Affairs* 54, no. 1 (2000), 107-123 and Deniz Kandiyoti, "Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case," *Feminist Studies*, 13, no. 2 (Summer, 1987), 317-338. For a concise summary of the literature and its debates see D. Fatma Türe, *Facts and Fantasies: Images of Istanbul Women in the 1920s* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 3-8.

⁵⁵⁹ Nazan Maksuydan, "Control over Life, Control over Body: Female suicide in early republican Turkey," *Women's History Review* 24, no. 6 (2015), 866. The emancipation of Turkish women included: equal access to education, the replacement of Muslim family law with a civil code that established women as legal persons, the "banning" of religious clothing (veil) and women's suffrage (in 1935). Deniz Kandiyoti argues that the Republican regime "circumscribed and defined" the parameters of feminism, concluding that its "authoritarian nature...and its attempt to harness the 'new woman'" to the creation and reproduction of a uniform citizenry prevented the development of an autonomous women's movement;" Deniz Kandiyoti, "End of Empire: Islam, Nationalism and Women in Turkey," in *Women, Islam and the State* (London: MacMillan, 1991), 42-43.

⁵⁶⁰ Jenny White, "State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman," *NWSA Journal* 15, no. 3 (2003), 147 & 156. Despite the regime's rigid ideal of a "modern" Turkish woman (urban, middle-class, secular), White argues that Kemalist reforms allowed woman "to participate in society at all levels to an extent unheard of in Europe or the United States." As well, secular reforms eventually impacted "religiously conservative women" as well. However, White concludes that the women living "at Turkey's borders with Iran, Iraq, and Syria" (i.e. Kurdish women) are still waiting to be liberated. Not only does White fail to consider the role that "official identity and language policies" play in the "marginalization of Kurdish women" in Turkey, her use of "Eastern" (read Kurdish) women as a foil to the already liberated "Western" (read Turkish) women silences the violence and sexism that many women in Turkey continue to experience and organize against. For a critique of the feminist scholarship on "Eastern" women see Handan Çağlayan, "Voices from the Periphery of the Periphery," Paper presented at The 17th Annual Conference on Feminist Economics, Torino, Italy, June 19-21 2008).

⁵⁶¹ The phrase is Shahrzad Mojab's from "The Solitude of the Stateless: Kurdish Women at the Margins of Feminist Knowledge," in *Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds*, ed. Shahrzad Mojab (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2001), 1.

⁵⁶² White, "State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman," 147. For discussions of Kurdish women's activism in Turkey as "third wave" feminism see Ömer Çaha, "The Kurdish Women's Movement," in *Women and Civil Society in Turkey: Women's Movements in a Muslim Society* (Surrey, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate), 151-178 and Çağla Diner and Şule Toktaş, "Waves of Feminism in Turkey: Kemalist, Islamist and Kurdish Women's Movements in an Era of Globalization," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 12, no. 1 (2010), 41-57.

“concomitant” destruction of Kurdish identity and culture.⁵⁶³ They point out that images of ‘modern’ Turkish women and ‘backwards’ (religious and tribal) Kurdish men were used to justify the destruction of Kurdish identity and culture.⁵⁶⁴ As Özlem Altan-Olcay argues, “gender was inscribed into notions of...[Turkish] modernity through complex negotiations with multiple threats and aspirations.”⁵⁶⁵ But while exposing how some women were “doubly marginalized”⁵⁶⁶ by Turkish modernization as Kurds and as women unreached by its gender reforms, Kurdish scholars also erase earlier histories of women’s resistance by confining it to a story of how Kurdish patriarchy and the “identity politics” of the Turkish state “reinforce one another.”⁵⁶⁷ Kurdish scholars narrate the regime’s “dirty work of repression;”⁵⁶⁸ feminist academics examine the gender reforms of its “bureaucratic civilizing arm.”⁵⁶⁹ It is not just that the emancipation of Turkish women coincided with the ‘pacification’ of Kurds, the history of female liberation in Republican Turkey relies on the erasure of the women who fought “side by side their men” during the Mount Ararat Uprising. As quickly as the “typical women on Ararat” appeared on *Cumhuriyet*’s front page they disappeared, the story of their resistance to Turkish modernization

⁵⁶³ Metin Yüksel, “The Encounter of Kurdish Women with Nationalism in Turkey,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 42 no. 5 (2006), 777. Yüksel’s “On the borders of the Turkish and Iranian nation states: The story of Ferzende and Besra.” *Middle Eastern Studies* (2016), doi: 10.1080/00263206.2016.1147436 is the only article that focuses on the women who participated in the Mount Ararat Uprising. For a discussion of the gendered nationalism of Kurdish intellectuals and Xoybûn leaders, Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan, see: Ahmet Serdar Aktürk, “Female Cousins and Wounded Masculinity: Kurdish Nationalist Discourse in the Post-Ottoman Middle East,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 52 no. 1 (2016), 46-59, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2015.1078793>.

⁵⁶⁴ According to Christopher Houston, “strict control over the production of representation of Kurds by the state has resulted in the historical *enunciation* of Kurdish identity in very limited and gendered ways.” Kurdish men were “simultaneously” marked as “rural and uncivilized” and as the “victims” of tribal and religious leaders and “oppressors of women.” Women were similarly marked, argues Houston, and then further marked as “victims of male domination”; “An anti-history of a non-people: Kurds, colonialism, and nationalism in the history of anthropology,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15 (2009), 22.

⁵⁶⁵ Altan-Olcay, Özlem. “Gendered Projects of National Identity Formation: The Case of Turkey,” *National Identities* 11, no. 2 (2009), 167.

⁵⁶⁶ Yüksel, “The Encounter of Kurdish Women with Nationalism in Turkey,” 777.

⁵⁶⁷ Çağlayan, “Voices from the Periphery,” 11.

⁵⁶⁸ FO 424/273, Doc.36 [E2678/1279/44] Mr. Edmonds to Mr. A Henderson, Constantinople, May 21, 1930.

⁵⁶⁹ White, “State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman,” 147. White argues that although the East was “inaccessible” to the “bureaucratic civilizing arm” of the Turkish state, the government at least “sent newly trained teachers into [some] rural areas.” Zeynep Turkyilmaz’s examination of this program in Dersim after its ‘pacification’ in 1937-1939, however, points out that female Turkish teachers were essential to the state’s “cultural extinction” of Dersim’s Alevi Kurds; Zeynep Turkyilmaz, “Maternal Colonialism and Turkish Woman’s Burden in Dersim: Educating the “Mountain Flowers” of Dersim,” *Journal of Women's History* 28, no. 3 (2016), 166. Turkyilmaz’s examination of “maternal colonialism” challenges the separation of “cultural” and “physical” mechanisms of genocide and expands the history of Turkish “modernization,” placing it in conversation with what Keith Watenpaugh describes as “historically contemporaneous programs for enculturation of indigenous children in North America;” see Keith David Watenpaugh. *Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015), 144-147.

“determined insignificant” by its intertwined narratives of the emancipation of women and the ‘pacification’ of Kurdistan.⁵⁷⁰

The following chapter is both an examination of how erasure works and how erasures can be read to restore histories of women that “get in the way.”⁵⁷¹ It begins by following Forbe’s citation of Kurdish women joining the fray during the Mount Ararat Uprising backwards and forwards in time in order to reclaim (some) nineteenth century “traditions of female bravery” in Kurdistan. It then uses the side by side stories of the emancipation of Turkish women and the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising that appeared in the pages of *Cumhuriyet*, *Akşam*, and *Vakit* over the summer of 1930 to rethink the separation of the Turkish nation-state’s history of gender reform and ‘tribal pacification.’ While the resistance of Kurdish women was elided on the front pages of the Turkish press during the uprising, it was inverted in the writings of Esat Mahmut Karakurt and Halide Edib.⁵⁷² Esat Mahmut Bey’s journalism during the uprising and his novel based on the uprising as well as the fiction and memories of Turkey’s most famous feminist, Halide Edib, are used to discuss how Republican writers used narratives of assimilation to erase and transpose the resistance of Kurdish women. The final section of the chapter attempts to restore some of the stories of the women who fought side by side their men on Mount Ararat by reading together the memoirs of Turkish officer, Zühtü Güven, and İhsan Nuri, the commander of the Ararat rebels. The spoken and “sung” stories of the women who fought side by side their men on Ararat are woven into this section as well in order to fill in their silences and expose their erasures.

4.2 Citation

4.2.1 “Traditions of Former Bravery”

Forbes, perhaps the only journalist to meet the Ararat rebels, visited the mountain during an 8000-mile tour of the Middle East in 1930 that took her from Palestine to the Persian-Afghani frontier and then back again to Azerbaijan and Kurdistan. Her eleven day stay on Ararat in June

⁵⁷⁰ Pensky, “Method and time,” 187.

⁵⁷¹ Carolyn Steadman, *Landscape for a Good Woman* (London: Virago, 2005), 139.

⁵⁷² I borrow this term from Keith Watenpaugh’s description of Edib’s writings on Armenians (*Bread from Stones*, 144-147).

of 1930 was unplanned. The chaos of Iran's borders—Heratis escaping the reinstatement of Sharia law on the “the ruins of Amanullah's reforms,” Armenians dodging Soviet bullets as they swam across the Aras River, earthquakes decimating Azerbaijan, and “some eight hundred [Kurdish] families” fleeing “the Kemalist advance”—prevented her from visiting the Soviet Union.⁵⁷³ She decided that the “tribal uprising” on the Turkish-Iranian border would also satisfy her desire to examine the impact of “a decade of intensive modernization, imposed largely by force, on peoples traditionally conservative.”⁵⁷⁴ Forbes was impressed with the Kurdish fighters on Ararat, describing them as “neither giving nor asking quarter” against an enemy larger in numbers and “backed by every device of modern warfare.” However, her writer's imagination was captivated by the “instigator” of the “most daring raids,” Celali leader Biroyê Heskî Tellî (Biro), and the Kurdish women who, “encouraged by his shouted name,” resisted the “successive attacks” of the Turkish Army:

Fighting side by side with their men, they seemed to enjoy the sport, for they returned to their villages blood-stained and smiling with the boast, “We are not afraid of our enemies. When we see them coming, we laugh, for how can an army reach us here?”

Despite her admiration for the Ararat rebels, she believed that, like all “tribal peoples,” they “would eventually succumb to the forces of civilization.”⁵⁷⁵

Forbes description of the women fighting “side by side their men” on Mount Ararat echoed nineteenth century European representations of “bold and manly” Kurdish women.⁵⁷⁶ While explorer and writer Isabelle Bird abhorred the predatory masculinity of the Ottoman Empire's Kurdish tribes, she admired the “firm masculine stride” of the Kurdish women she met in western Persia.⁵⁷⁷ George Fowler, who like Bird, travelled in Persian Kurdistan, concluded that the “unfeminine” beauty of the “muscular strength” of Kurdish women was a result of their “management of arms” from a young age.⁵⁷⁸ Because European travellers viewed masculinity as

⁵⁷³ Forbes, *Angora to Afghanistan*, xviii. Forbes compared the appearance of the Persian Plateau in the summer of 1930 to “the Salient at Ypres after a year's bombardment” (pg. 266). The story of the resignation of the modernizing Afghani King Amanuallah is told further on in the chapter.

⁵⁷⁴ Forbes, xvii.

⁵⁷⁵ Forbes, 262-266.

⁵⁷⁶ Mark Sykes, *The caliphs' last heritage; a short history of the Turkish empire* (London: Macmillan, 1915), 560.

⁵⁷⁷ Isabella, Bird, *Travels in Persia and Kurdistan*, v. II (London: John Murray, 1891), 206.

⁵⁷⁸ George Fowler, *Three Years in Persia; With Travelling Adventures in Koordistan*, v. II (London: Henry Colburn Publisher, 1841), 18 & 23-24.

both “exemplary” and “dominant,” images of ‘manly’ Kurdish women fluctuated between “virtuous” and “threatening.”⁵⁷⁹ Unlike Bird, British officer James Creagh did not admire the “loud and boisterous” Kurdish women he met in the Ottoman frontier. But like Fowler, he connected their ‘unfeminine’ behaviour to their knowledge of weapons. “In all the hordes which I passed, the ladies were armed almost as copiously as the men,” he wrote. According to Fowler, one Kurdish “damsel” he encountered in an encampment near Ararat “wield[ed] her spear with all the ease and dexterity of a well-drilled lancer.”⁵⁸⁰ But whether admiring or deriding the masculine traits of Kurdish women, European travellers used images of Kurdish women to highlight the superiority of ‘western civilization.’ Travellers arrived in Kurdistan through somewhere else—Persia, Armenia, or the Ottoman Empire. The “large liberty” of Kurdish women became a foil for the ‘oppression’ of ‘Eastern women.’⁵⁸¹ The first thing Bird noticed when she arrived in Persian Kurdistan was the unveiled face of a Kurdish girl who confidently pushed passed her in a crowd of strange men. According to Bird, the girl’s “erect carriage, and firm, elastic walk” was “refreshing” compared to “the tottering gait of the shrouded...bundles which pass for Persian women.”⁵⁸² It was particularly the unveiled tribal women in the mountains of Kurdistan that fascinated male travellers. When American cyclists Thomas Allen and William Sachtleben interrupted their around-the-world journey to climb Mount Ararat in 1892, they seemed more impressed with the “extremely free” Kurdish women living on its slopes than the 17,000-foot summit:

[T]he Kurdish women come and go among the men, and talk and laugh as they please. The thinness and lowness of the partition walls did not disturb their astonishing equanimity. In their relations with the men the women are extremely free. During the evening we frequently found ourselves surrounded by a concourse of these mountain beauties, who would sit and stare at us with their black eyes, call attention to our personal

⁵⁷⁹ Sarah Colvin, “Ulrike Marie Meinhof as Woman and Terrorist: Cultural Discourses of Violence and Virtue,” *German Monitor* 70, no. 1 (2008), 97.

⁵⁸⁰ James Creagh, *Armenians, Koords, Turks*, v. II (London: Samuel Tinsley & Co., 1880), 168-169.

⁵⁸¹ Frederick Davis Greene, *The Armenian Crisis in Turkey: The Massacre of 1894, Its Antecedents and Significance* (New York: G/P. Putnam’s Sons, 1895), 51-52.

⁵⁸² Bird, *Travels in Persia and Kurdistan*, 192-193. It was not just the ‘oppression’ of Muslim women that European travellers commented on. They often wrote about the ‘subjugation’ of Armenian women. Lady Shiel, the wife of the British consul in Persia, argued that their “seclusion” was stricter than Persian women. She cited their ‘custom’ of “covering the mouth” while talking to men or strangers as proof of their greater ‘oppression’; Lady Shiel, *A Glimpse at Life and Manners in Persia* (London: John Murray, 1856), 267-268.

oddities, and laugh among themselves. Now and then their jokes at our expense would produce hilarious laughter among the men.⁵⁸³

James Bryce, who climbed Ararat in 1876, was surprised to find that unlike “their Mohammedan sisters” living in the plains, the women on Ararat expressed no “timidity” in the presence of his Cossack guides.”⁵⁸⁴

Scholars have dismissed the images of “manly and bold” Kurdish women as Orientalist. Not simply because the tropes of unveiled Kurdish women and ‘oppressed Eastern women’ reaffirmed the superiority of ‘western civilization’ (and justified European colonialism), but because the celebration of the “astonishing equanimity” of Kurdish tribal life obscured patriarchal oppression within Kurdish society.⁵⁸⁵ As Bryce noted, the “free and independent” Kurdish women he met during his climb of Mount Ararat “did most of the work.”⁵⁸⁶ Mirella Galletti argues that Kurdish (male) nationalists have embraced Orientalist images of “independent Kurdish women” in order to make their case for a nation-state.⁵⁸⁷ The Kurdish League’s *Memorandum of the Situation of the Kurds and Their Claims* cited E.B. Soane’s observation of the “very dignified attitudes towards women” in Kurdish society to argue that Kurds possessed the traits of a European nation.⁵⁸⁸ Forbes cited Soane as well, her portrayal of “blood-stained and smiling” Ararat women joining the battle echoed his description of women of the “more warlike [Kurdish] tribes” who “themselves join the fray.” Like Forbes, Soane used the impressions of the men and women who travelled to Kurdistan before him. Soane’s *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise* repeated Frederick Millingen’s tale of Kurdish female

⁵⁸³ Thomas Gaskell Allen Jr. and William Lewis Sachtleben, *Across Asia on a Bicycle: The Journey of Two American Students from Constantinople to Peking* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1895), 61. Sachtleben returned to Ararat four years later to track down the ‘Kurdish bandits’ who killed American cyclist Frank Lenz when he cycled through the region during his around-the-world journey. Sachtelben witnessed the 1896 massacre of Armenians in Erzurum while a guest at the British Consulate. He told a reporter that “while in Turkey” he did not “smile for over six months.” His return to Turkey “added about ten years” to his life. ‘When I left New York I felt young; now I feel like an old man, all my boyishness his gone’; “How Lenz Was Killed,” *The Penny Press*, May 28, 1896; pg. 4.

⁵⁸⁴ James Bryce, *Transcaucasia and Ararat: Notes of a Vacation Tour in the Autumn of 1876*, 3rd ed. (London: MacMillan and Co., 1878), 255.

⁵⁸⁵ Allen and Sachtleben, 61.

⁵⁸⁶ Bryce, 328.

⁵⁸⁷ Mirella Galletti, “Western Images of Women’s Role in Kurdish Society,” in *Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds*, ed. Shahrzad Mojab (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2001), 213.

⁵⁸⁸ Kurdish League, *Memorandum on the Situation of the Kurds and Their Claims* (Paris: Imprimerie Louis-Kean-Gap, 1949), 4.

brigands who seduced and robbed “unfortunate” male travellers around Kirkuk. But alongside his “fantastic story” of Kurdish female “decoys,”⁵⁸⁹ Millingen, an officer in the Ottoman army, also discussed the resistance of Kurdish women to Ottoman reforms.⁵⁹⁰ Stationed around Kotur during the 1860s, Millingen witnessed the impact of the empire’s modernization and centralization (*Tanzimat*) on the livelihood and lifestyle of the Kurdish tribal pastoralists who lived the empire’s eastern frontier. His *Wild Life among the Koords* captures the role Kurdish women played in the economic and political survival of their communities during the implementation of the *Tanzimat* reforms. After a skirmish with a group of Shikak Kurds which left “twenty-four of their warriors” dead, Millingen waited for “a deputation from Van” to arrive. The intervention of Van’s sympathetic *paşa* had been sought by the Shikak men, worried that Millingen and his soldiers “would attack...the following day.” But it was the women of the Shikak who greeted the delegation when they approached their tents:

At a distance of several miles from the Koordish camp the commission was met on the way by a crowd of women, the pretty ones at the head, wearing black veils, shouting and shrieking as loudly and woefully as it was in their power to do. Of courses this solemn display of grief...was powerful enough to bring about a solution favourable to the tribe, which was thus permitted to get free from any further punishment through the mediation of the women.⁵⁹¹

Millingen was particularly impressed by the tactics employed by tribal women against the empire’s tax-gatherers. As Millingen explains, the “principal wealth” of the Kurdish tribes of the Ottoman-Persian frontier was their flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, estimating that there were over “40,000,000 sheep and cattle between Ararat and the Persian Gulf.”⁵⁹² Part of Ottoman modernization and centralization was the introduction of a flat tax. The change from taxing capital to taxing income impacted Kurdish pastoralists particularly harshly.⁵⁹³ When an Ottoman tax official arrived at the tents of Hayderan, the chief told him to consult the women:

⁵⁸⁹ E.B. Soane, *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise* (Boston: Small, Maynard and Company, 1914), 397.

⁵⁹⁰ Frederick Millingen, *Wild Life among the Koords* (London: Hurst and Blackett Publishers, 1870). Millingen was born in Constantinople, the son of the short marriage between a British surgeon in the employment of the Ottoman palace and a half-Greek mother.

⁵⁹¹ Millingen, 253.

⁵⁹² Millingen, 154-159. According to Millingen, Kurdish flocks supplied the empire “with meat, wool, butter, and cheese” and provided “the large markets of Asia Minor, Syria, and Constantinople with [their] means of subsistence.”

⁵⁹³ Where the price of sheep had been high, the flat tax reduced taxes. Where the price of sheep had been low (Kurdistan) it increased taxes; Stanford J. Shaw, “The Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Tax Reforms and Revenue System,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6, no. 4 (1975), 422.

“Once in the texts, the tax-gatherer soon perceived that, while he was striving to get hold of everything he could detect, what the women had in view was to conceal from him all they could. Out of interests so utterly opposed, a collision soon ensued. After some altercation a show of vituperation fell on the head of the tax-gatherer, whose back also was visited with a pelting of sticks and stones.”

According to Millingen, the Hayderan chief eventually rescued the “unfortunate” tax-gatherer, advising him to take what he could and “be off.” Feigning male solidarity, the chief asked: “What can you do with women?”⁵⁹⁴ Despite his employment of Orientalist tropes of “manly and bold” Kurdish women, Millingen’s observations of the role tribal women played in the economic and political survival of their communities during Ottoman modernization reveals histories of women’s resistance that some feminist scholars have reduced to a “patriarchal bargain.”⁵⁹⁵

4.2.2 Mrs. McGrath’s Visit to Mount Ararat

Forbes did not write about the Mount Ararat Uprising at the time, worried that publishing details about her visit would compromise the safety of her Iranian guides. Her observation of Kurdish women “fighting side by side with their men,” however, made its way into newspapers in the summer of 1930. On her way home to London, Forbes visited the British Embassy in Istanbul and shared her impressions of the Kurdish rebels with the British ambassador, Sir George Clerk. Despite the value of an eye-witness account of the fighting—British officials relied on the Turkish press (which “interpret facts in a light favourable to the Turkish forces”) for most of their news on the uprising, information they needed in order to assuage Persian anxieties over Kurdish and Armenian nationalism and update Iraqi colleagues who were dealing with their own ‘unruly’ Kurdish tribes—Clerk downplayed “Mrs. McGrath’s” (Forbes’ married name) visit. When the ambassador passed on Forbes’ observations of the Kurdish uprising on Mount Ararat to London he reassured the British Foreign Secretary that “Mrs. McGrath” had been kept “well clear” of any fighting. She had only heard “intermittent rifle fire.” Relieved that the risk to her personal safety in that “wild country” had not caused a diplomatic “incident,” Clerk informed

⁵⁹⁴ Millingen, *Wild Life among the Koords*, 253-254.

⁵⁹⁵ The term was originally coined by Deniz Kandiyoti to describe how some women uphold patriarchal norms in order maintain economic security and status. The “submissiveness and obedience,” of “rural” women in Turkey, explains Jenny White “is rewarded with security, stability, and respect.” On the other hand, African women, because they have their own income are able to “negotiate” and “threaten” (their resistance is “active”), “State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman,” 156. By confining Kurdish women’s resistance to patriarchy (and the Turkish state), White precludes connections between the resistance of some Kurdish women and some women in Africa. For example, as the women on Mount Ararat were resisting the economic and political policies of Turkish modernization, Igbo women in Nigeria were protesting against the economic policies of British colonialism.

Arthur Henderson that Kurdish women were also involved in the uprising. But as he passed this fact on to London he made sure to re-establish the gender roles that their participation, and Forbes' visit, upset. He told Henderson that the Kurdish women appeared "to carry babies on their backs and rifles in their hands." They seemed "to regard the fighting more as an amusement," he concluded.⁵⁹⁶ A few days after Forbes' conversation with Clerk a story in *The London Times* informed readers that Kurdish women were "fighting alongside their menfolk" on Mount Ararat.⁵⁹⁷ On July 22, 1930 the Turkish newspaper, *Vakit*, published parts of the British paper's report on the fighting around Ararat. *Vakit* reprinted *The Times*' statistics of 3000 Kurdish dead and 200 destroyed villages ("said to have been burnt to the ground") alongside the fact that women were involved in the fighting.⁵⁹⁸ The editors of *Vakit*, however, did not include *The Times*' assertion that the Turkish army had employed "severe methods of repression."⁵⁹⁹ More than the news of women being involved in the uprising, *The Times*' report of the bombing of civilians in the Zilan Valley upset the gendered division of war. Images of 'manly' Kurdish women fighting alongside their men were more palatable than the blurring of the distinction between the (male) battlefield and (female) home front. The *New York Times* also reported that women were fighting on Mount Ararat, adding that they were said to be "expert shots."⁶⁰⁰ The editor overlooked the fact that their story of women fighting alongside their men on Ararat contradicted an earlier article that described the motives of the Kurdish rebels as revenge on "modernized Turks" who allowed "women [to] run about freely."⁶⁰¹ Michel de Certeau argues that citation is "a strategy of law." But while citation is "not a hole in the ethnographic text through which another landscape" is revealed, its placement "in another text" can "bring[] forth the...altering power of the oppressed."⁶⁰²

⁵⁹⁶ FO 424/272, Doc. 62 [E 3895/1511/44], Clerk to Henderson, Constantinople, July 16, 1930.

⁵⁹⁷ "The Kurdish Rising," *The Times*, July 17, 1930; pg. 13.

⁵⁹⁸ *The Times* took these statistics from the "semi-official" Republican newspaper, *Milliyet*.

⁵⁹⁹ "Taymıstaki haber" (News in the *Times*), *Vakit*, July 22; pg. 2.

⁶⁰⁰ J.W. Collins, "Turks Still Fight on Around Mount Ararat to Subdue Kurds, While Wild Rumors Surge" *New York Times*, July 27, 1930; pg 47. Collins, the correspondent with the *London Times*, contributed to the *New York Times* over the summer of 1930 after their reporter was kicked out of Turkey for shooting at a thief.

⁶⁰¹ "Revolt Aimed Against Modernism," *New York Times*, July 13, 1930; pg. 13.

⁶⁰² Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 251.

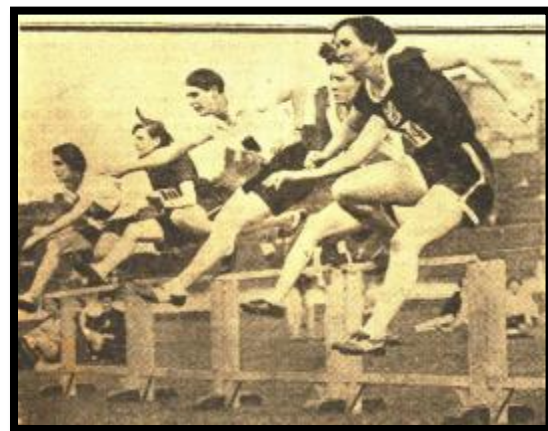
4.3 Elision

4.3.1 Turkish Beauty Queens and Kurdish 'Bandits'



The “typical women and children” on Mount Ararat in *Cumhuriyet*
Fig. 3.2 (Left): July 28, 1930; Fig. 3.3 (Right): August 4, 1930

Only a few images of Kurdish women appeared in the Turkish press during the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising over the summer of 1930. The nation’s largest paper, *Cumhuriyet*, published two photos of the “the type of women” involved in the uprising. On July 28, the paper placed a grainy photograph of the “typical women and children on Mount Ararat” on its front page (fig. 3.2).⁶⁰³ The following week “nomadic Kurdish women and children of the men engaging in brigandage” held still as the photographer composed them in a scene of ‘vanishing’ tribal life (fig. 3.3).⁶⁰⁴ The July photo shared the front page with the announcement that Miss Turkey was on her way to compete in a beauty pageant in the United States. The stacked photos of the Danish, Greek, Spanish, Italian, Czech, and English beauty queens reinforced Turkey’s a



‘Modem’ Women in *Cumhuriyet*
Fig. 3.4 (Left): July 28, 1930; Fig. 3.5 (Right): August 4, 1930

⁶⁰³ Caption: “Ağrı’daki eşkiyanın kadın ve çocuklarından tipler.”

⁶⁰⁴ Caption: “İran’da yaşayan göçebe Kürt’lerden erkekleri şekavet yapmağa gitmiş kadınlar.”

place amongst modern, secular nation-states (fig. 3.4). The placement of their smiles and bobbed hairdos next to the expressionless faces of the “typical” Kurdish women highlighted Republican regime’s commitment to the emancipation of women.⁶⁰⁵ *Cumhuriyet*’s second image of “nomadic” Kurdish women sat opposite a photo of British women soaring effortlessly over a set of hurdles, the photographer capturing them in mid-flight (fig. 3.5). The caption underneath asked why “our men can’t do that.”⁶⁰⁶ *Vakit*, not to be outdone by *Cumhuriyet*’s Miss Turkey



Fig. 3.6: “The 1930 Typing Champion,” *Vakit*, July 12, 1930
Left: The Bandits are Surrounded on Three Sides; Right: How did the contest turn out?

pageant, came up with their own contest to showcase the success of Turkey’s gender reforms. Their “typing queen” (*daktilo kıraliçesi*), however, demonstrated the skills of the “new Turkish women” rather than her modern beauty. On July 12, *Vakit* announced that Ms. Mediha Haşim had won their typing contest by typing “4197 words in 15 minutes.”⁶⁰⁷ Underneath the huge headline: “1930 Typing Champion,” was a photo of the winner, her face turned away from the camera and towards her typewriter (fig. 3.6). Sharing the front page was a “detailed map” of the area where the Turkish Army was suppressing Kurdish “bandits.” While one headline asked: “How did the competition go?” the other side confirmed that the Ararat “bandits [were] surrounded on four sides.” The next day, the newsworthiness of the stories was reversed.

⁶⁰⁵ “Güzellik müsabakası: Güzeller 1 ağustosta Amerikaya gidiyorlar” (Beauty Pageant: Contestants going to America for August 1), *Cumhuriyet*, July 28, 1930.

⁶⁰⁶ “Paşam, Türk Sporunun elinden!” (Minister, take Turkish Sport in hand!), *Cumhuriyet*, August 4, 1930.

⁶⁰⁷ “Müsabaka nasıl oldu?” (How was the competition), *Vakit*, July 12, 1930.



Fig. 3.7: *Vakit*, July 13, 1930

Headline: The Bandits have Been Completely Suppressed; Underneath (Right): Winners of the Typing Championship

The headline stretching across *Vakit*'s front page now announced that: “The bandits have been completely suppressed” (fig. 3.7).⁶⁰⁸ Underneath a report explained how the bandits on Mount Ararat “were trapped inbetween two terrible lines of fire.” On the other side of the front page, *Vakit* announced the second and third place winners of their typing championship. Whether sharing *Cumhuriyet*'s front page with stories of the emancipation of Turkish women or left out of *Vakit*'s celebration of the progress of Turkish women and the Mount Ararat Operation, the participation of Kurdish women in the Mount Ararat Uprising did not appear in the headlines of the Republican press. The women who fought side by side their men on Mount Ararat could not be incorporated into their celebrations of Turkish modernization.

In her examination of *Cumhuriyet*'s Miss Turkey pageants, Holly Shissler argues that they need to be read as a “radical repositioning” of Turkish women. In a society where gender segregation had been the norm and “family honor” was tied to the seclusion of women, the “ability to show one’s physical self in a public forum without the fear...of dishonor was deeply radical.”⁶⁰⁹ Recently a number of scholars like Shissler have begun to reconsider the history of the emancipation of women in Turkey, turning to the pages of Turkish newspapers in order to

⁶⁰⁸ “Eşkiya kâmilten tenkil olundu” and “Daktilo müsabakamızda kazananlar” (Winners of the Typing Contest), *Vakit*, July 13, 1930.

⁶⁰⁹ A. Holly Shissler, “Beauty is Nothing to be Ashamed of: Beauty Contests as Tools of Women’s Liberation in Early Republican Turkey,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 1 (2004), 107-108. *Cumhuriyet*'s Miss Turkey contest “did not get rid of notions of good and bad women, gender roles, or family honor.” However, their expansion of the ideas of female respectability “changed the parameters of where women could go and what they could do.”

recover the early Republic's feminist histories.⁶¹⁰ Shissler concedes that *Cumhuriyet*'s beauty pageants were "exercises in nationalism," noting that Miss Turkey reinforced the image of Turkey as a modern, secular nation-state.⁶¹¹ When Miss Turkey, Keriman Halis, won Miss Universe in 1932, the British Ambassador, Sir George Clerk, cited her win as evidence that Turkey's "oriental head" had been adjusted to fit its "European hat." In his summary of the year, he listed Turkey's first Miss Universe as another step in its "emancipation of women," placing Halis' victory alongside the appointment of "the first Turkish women" to the "diplomatic service." After point seventy-seven, "further steps in the emancipation of women," in Section III: "Internal Affairs," Sir Clerk updated London on the Kurdish situation. Point seventy-eight stated that while "Kurdish provinces" were quiet they "required...constant policing." The Ararat rebels were "still being rounded up."⁶¹² Shissler argues that the emancipation of Turkish women indirectly benefited from the army's suppression of Kurdish resistance, noting that the "repressive" measures (press censorship, one-party rule, imprisonment of political opponents) introduced after the defeat of the "religious-national rebellion" of Sheikh Said in 1925 enabled the regime to push through radical gender reforms.⁶¹³ However, it is the separation of Turkish modernization into gender reforms and political repression that enables Shissler to reclaim its feminist histories.

⁶¹⁰ A. Holly Shissler, "'If You Ask Me': Sabiha Sertel's Advice Column, Gender Equity, and Social Engineering in the Early Turkish Republic," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 3, no. 2 (2007), 1-30 and "Womanhood Is Not for Sale: Sabiha Zekeriya Sertel Against Prostitution and for Women's Employment," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 4, no. 3 (2008), 12-30; Yasemin Gencer, "Pushing Out Islam: Cartoons of the Reform Period in Turkey [1923-1928]," in *Visual culture in the modern Middle East: rhetoric of the image*, eds. Christiane Gruber and Sune Haugbolle (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 2013), 188-213; Kathryn Libal, "Staging Turkish Women's Emancipation: Istanbul, 1935," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 4, 1 (2008), 31-52; Nazan Maksudyan, "Control over Life, Control over Body: Female suicide in early republican Turkey," *Women's History Review* 24, no. 6 (2015), 861-880; D. Fatma Türe, *Facts and Fantasies: Images of Istanbul Women in the 1920s*. For discussions of the Miss Turkey contests see Alev Cinar, "Clothing the National Body: Islamic Veiling and Secular Unveiling" in *Modernity, Islam and secularism in Turkey: bodies, places, and time* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2005), pgs. 70-73 and Nora Lafi, "Early Republican Turkish Orientalism? The Erotic Picture of an Algerian Woman and the Notion of Beauty between the "West" and the "Orient," in *Women and the City, Women in the City: A Gendered Perspective on Ottoman Urban History*, ed. Nazan Maksudyan (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2014), 139-148.

⁶¹¹ Shissler, "Beauty is Nothing to be Ashamed of," 116.

⁶¹² FO 424/277, Doc. 298 [E529/529/44] "Annual Report Turkey 1932," Clerk to John Simon, Angora, January 17, 1933.

⁶¹³ Shissler, "If You Ask Me": Sabiha Sertel's Advice Column, Gender Equity, and Social Engineering in the Early Turkish Republic," 3-4. The repression of the rebellion allowed the Kemalist regime to implement "radical policies aimed at weakening the power of religion, promoting modernization, and fostering Turkish national identity. Reforming the position of women in Turkish society was an important part of this program, and the regime undertook many measures that gave women new rights and facilitated their entry into the public sphere."

Shissler uses the Republican press' sympathetic coverage of Queen Soraya of Afghanistan to highlight how the celebration of the 'liberated' Turkish woman was animated by "a desire to give women a new and different freedom of the streets."⁶¹⁴ After British papers blamed Soraya's western habits and dress for the resignation of her husband, King Amanuallah of Afghanistan, *Cumhuriyet* came to her defense. "Why was the Afghan King forced to resign?" asked a headline on January 18, 1929. The accompanying article responded, stating that Amanuallah's abdication was not caused by what the British press foolishly contended was the behaviour of his westernized wife but because of tribal resistance to modernization.⁶¹⁵ On the next page the Republican paper explained why the reform-minded Amanuallah was disposed. It is "well known" it began, that Afghanistan is one of the "world's most ethnically mixed, religiously complex, and socially diverse countries." In the past, King Amanuallah's grandfather "accommodated" the regions inhabited by warring, "hostile" nomadic tribes. The young King, however, knew that he could not maintain "order and security" if he continued to accommodate these traditional forces as he modernized the country.⁶¹⁶ Like Turkey, the "liberation of women from tribal cultural norms" was part of Amanuallah's "attempts to modernize."⁶¹⁷ However, as Maliha Zulfacar point outs, scholars often fail to examine how Amanuallah's gender reforms did not take into account "the different realities" of urban, rural, and tribal Afghani women and to acknowledge that 'tribal' resistance was often "related governmental injustices practiced in rural parts of the country."⁶¹⁸ In other words, there were other reasons for 'tribal resistance' and some Afghani women participated in the resistance to Afghani modernization. For some women, King Amanuallah's gender reforms did not reflect their needs or lives. For others, 'tribal reform' meant the destruction of their way of life and their family's livelihood. While flipping through the pages of the early Turkish press allows scholars to reclaim some of the feminist desires that animated the emancipation of women in Turkey, their separation of Republic's gender reforms and its 'reform' of the Kurdish provinces elides the resistance of Kurdish women. It is not just

⁶¹⁴ Shissler, "Beauty is Nothing to be Ashamed of," 114.

⁶¹⁵ "Efgan krali istifaya niçin mecbur kaldı?" (Why was the Afghani King force to resign), *Cumhuriyet*, January 18, 1929.

⁶¹⁶ "Efgan Kralının istifası," (The resignation of the Afghani King), *Cumhuriyet*, January 18, 1929; pg. 2.

⁶¹⁷ Huma Ahmed-Ghosh, "A History of Women in Afghanistan: Lessons Learnt for the Future Yesterdays and Tomorrow: Women in Afghanistan," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 4, no. 3 (2003), 4.

⁶¹⁸ Maliha Zulfacar, "The pendulum of gender politics in Afghanistan," *Central Asian Survey* 25, nos. 1 & 2 (March–June 2006), 31.

that the Republican press' side by side stories of "emancipated women" and the "lingering forces" of reaction "indirectly" commented on one another during the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising in the summer of 1930.⁶¹⁹ These side by side stories of secular reform erased the women who fought side by side their men on Mount Ararat. While feminist scholars connect the state's suppression of Kurdish resistance to its "emancipation" of Turkish women, they, like Sir Clerk's "Report on Turkey for 1932," hold these histories separate.

4.3.2 Gendering Republican Violence

When *Akşam* announced that "the microbes have been cleaned from the border" in the middle of July it published a picture of the brave pilot "Captain Salahettin Bey who was shot down and killed" by "bandits" (fig. 3.8). In front of the martyred pilot and his Turkish bomber was squadron commander Zeki Bey, another pilot, and a nurse.⁶²⁰ The nurse's inclusion connected



Fig. 3.8: Squadron commander Zeki Bey, pilot, and nurse with martyred pilot Salahettin Bey
Akşam, July 19, 1930

the emancipation of Turkish women to the 'pacification' of Kurdistan, the "modern Turkish women" seemingly liberated by the violence of the Turkish state. Women pilots, like beauty queens, typing champions and hurdlers, filled the pages of the Turkish press over the summer of 1930. The day before, *Akşam* published a story about the "Victorious Mrs. Brown," a female pilot who had won a race around England. The article noted that "another woman, Mrs. Butler, had come in fourth."⁶²¹ When Mari Marven (Marie Marvingt), the first female combat pilot

⁶¹⁹ Shissler, "Beauty is Nothing to be Ashamed of," 117.

⁶²⁰ "Şark hududu miktroplardan kâmilten temizlendi," *Akşam*, July 19, 1930.

⁶²¹ "Kadınların bir Zaferi" (Victorious Women) *Akşam*, July 21, 1930; pg. 5. For a discussion of the celebration of the participation of Turkey's first female combat pilot, Sabiha Gökçen, (the adopted daughter of Atatürk) in the bombing of Dersim (1937-1938) see Ayşe Gül Altınay, "Women and the Myth: The World's First Woman Combat Pilot," in *The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender, and Education* (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan,

toured Turkey a few weeks later, *Vakit* published a story about her visit with a group of Turkish women, informing its readers that at the luncheon held in her honor the guests had discussed the position of women in the new Republic.⁶²²

As the Turkish air force bombed Mount Ararat, *Akşam*, *Cumhuriyet*, and *Vakit* also published stories of violent ‘unmodern’ men and violent ‘overly’ modern European women. On July 2, 1930 a *Vakit* headline asked the Fisherman Hikmet “why” he attacked his wife with a knife. Answering in the same headline he told the paper: “Because I loved her.”⁶²³ Later that



‘Unmodern’ Violent Turkish Men and ‘Overly Modern’ Violent European Women in *Akşam*
Fig. 3.9 (Left): September 25, 1930; Fig. 3.10 (Right): September 13, 1930

Summer *Akşam* shared the story of a women who was stabbed by her husband “twenty times” in a neighborhood bar for merely “offering a man a glass of water” (fig. 3.9).⁶²⁴ Placed amongst reports on the ‘pacification’ of Mount Ararat, these stories reaffirmed acceptable (state) and unacceptable (‘unmodern’) forms of male violence. And while the juxtaposition condemned the violence of individual men like Fisherman Hikmet, it suggested that male violence was regrettably “natural.” Images of violent women also reconfirmed Republican gender ideals. A story in *Akşam* in September 1930 claimed that in six months thirty-eight men had been killed by their wives in France (fig. 3.10). Everyone is concerned over this “increase in numbers,” it

2004). For the “forgotten history” of the Turkey’s (and the Muslim World’s) first female pilot, Belkis Şevket, see Serpil Atamaz, “The Sky is the Limit: Nationalism, Feminism, Modernity, and Turkish History,” *International Journal of Turkish Studies New Perspectives on Turkey* 20, nos. 1 & 2 (2014), 85-102.

⁶²² “Kadın tayyareci şerefine birlikte dün bir ziyafet verildi” (A Luncheon was held yesterday in honor of the female pilot), *Vakit*, August 5, 1930.

⁶²³ “Karısını bıçaklıyan” (Man who stabbed his wife), *Vakit*, July 2, 1930.

⁶²⁴ “Bir bardak su için bir cinayet” (A Murder because of one glass of water), *Akşam*, September 25, 1930.

explained.⁶²⁵ Whereas the stories of working-class Turkish husbands framed their violence as ‘un-modern’ and ‘natural,’ *Akşam*’s sketch of a scantily-clad ‘overly-emancipated’ European women shooting her husband as he slept reinforced her gender deviance. Over the summer stories in the Turkish press reconfirmed that men “commit” violence and women “experience it.”⁶²⁶

4.3.3 The “Brave and Manly” Turkish Women

After declaring the end of the Mount Ararat Uprising on September 15, 1930, *Cumhuriyet* published a story about a “brave and manly” (*mert*) Turkish women from the Eastern Anatolian province of Erzican. In photo of “the heroic wife” (*kahraman bir hanım*) of Şerafettin Bey, a mathematics teacher at a local military academy, Sıdıka Hanım held a rifle against her shoulder, ready to shoot the “fifty Kurdish bandits” who had attacked her village (fig. 3.11). “Like a lioness protecting her den,” declared *Cumhuriyet*, she had “defended herself and the nation’s



Fig. 3.11: “The “brave and manly” Sıdıka Hanım defending her home from Kurdish “bandits” (*Cumhuriyet*, September 30, 1930)

honour” (*şerefî milliyi*). Warned by a “barking dog,” Sıdıka Hanım hid her children and grabbed her husband’s rifle. She wounded one of her attackers when he tried to climb over her

⁶²⁵ “*Paris Mektupları: Altı ay zarfında 38 kadın kocasını öldürmüş,*” (Letters from Paris: 38 women kill their husbands in six months), *Akşam*, September 13, 1930.

⁶²⁶ Patricia Melzer, *Death in the shape of a young girl: women's political violence in the Red Army Faction* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 16.

garden wall, her weapon driving him and his companions away. The “fifty used rifle cartridges” in her garden testified to both the “savagery” of the “bandits” and “bravery” of Sıdıka Hanım.⁶²⁷ While the story of the “brave and manly” Sıdıka Hanım troubled secular representations of natural (male) and acceptable (state) violence, it reinforced the erasure of participation of Kurdish women in the Mount Ararat Uprising.

4.4 Assimilation

4.4.1 Esat Mahmut Bey and the Woman from Bayezid

In the summer of 1930, *Akşam* sent writer Esat Mahmut Bey to the “Eastern provinces” to report on the progress of the army’s “suppression and punishment” of the Ararat rebels and to familiarize their readers with “an unknown but important” corner of the Turkish nation-state.⁶²⁸ Like the travellers that preceded him, Esat Mahmut Bey used images of ‘Eastern women’ to highlight the superiority of “western” civilization—its Turkish version. *Akşam* began Esat Mahmut Bey’s eastern journey on July 13, 1930, setting aside half of its front page for his description of the boat that would take him and *Akşam*’s readers from Istanbul to Trabzon. After July 13, his “*Akşam* in the Eastern Provinces” series appeared on page five, his letters published amongst news of film stars, helpful tips for housewives, updates on the season’s fashions, and short stories about the sexual escapades of Byzantine emperors and Ottoman sultans. Like his car journey from Trabzon to Mount Ararat, his tour of the ship’s second- and third-class compartments used images of women to highlight the perils of ‘improper’ westernization. Walking through the corridors of second class, Esat Mahmut Bey stopped to chat with a couple returning to their village on the Bosphorus. They had been to Istanbul to check out the latest fashions for their small tailor’s shop. As the wife sliced cucumbers, “discarding their peels carelessly on the cabin’s floor,” she argued with her husband over the ingredients for the salad she was making. From a nearby cabin came the chatter of female passengers. As two older women gossiped and sipped coffee, a young girl sat quietly in the corner. Esat Mahmut Bey guessed that the woman guarding the cabin’s door “like a prison warden” was the poor girl’s mother. The third-class cabins crowded with men playing cards and dancing around tables smelt

⁶²⁷ “*Kahraman bir Hanım*” (A Brave Women), *Cumhuriyet*, September 30, 1930; pg. 2.

⁶²⁸ This description is taken from the advertisements for his “reports” and “observations” published on the front page of *Akşam* on July 10, 11, and 12, 1930.

like “*rakı* and sweat.” But when Esat Mahmut Bey stepped into the fresh air of the deck, he was greeted by a scene of feminine chaos. “Women!” (*Kadınlar!*) had made themselves at home in every empty cupboard and storage space. Young passengers sang and danced like they were at a “cabaret” while old women “performed ablutions behind makeshift tents of blankets.” Mothers made “meatballs [*köfte*] in the lifeboats” and “fried fish underneath the captain’s bridge.” Occasionally a few of them would abandon their cooking and scoop up wailing children to nurse them. “Under this type of law [*şeriat*] how can you expect the boat to be orderly?” he asked *Akşam*’s readers.⁶²⁹

The Black Sea village of İnebolu, however, was “paradise.” Its “pine groves stretched as far as the eye could see.” Along İnebolu’s seashore, Esat Mahmut Bey informed *Akşam*’s readers, yogurt vendors will let you pay “next time” when you realize that your pockets are empty. However, “if you even so much as touch an egg in Bayezid without paying for it beforehand,” he warned, “a moustached Kurdish woman as big as a mountain” will “attack you.” And so, “there you have it” he wrote leaving the picturesque village behind, “a Kurdish woman in Bayezid and the Turkish village of İnebolu.”⁶³⁰ In Bayburt, one penny brought “happiness to a beggar.” The inhabitants of Istanbul would be too “embarrassed to give such a small amount” he noted. However, in Bayezid, “Kurdish women will kill you if you don’t hand over at least two quarters.”⁶³¹ Underneath a headline that asked: “How did the revolution happen?” Esat Mahmut Bey applauded the transformation of Ayancık’s “segregated churches” into cinemas. In Ayancık men and women socialized together.⁶³² But while Ayancık was a gender utopia, the Anatolian countryside around Bayburt was a male paradise:

There is one sole pleasure in the East and that is having a woman. The most extravagant wedding costs no more than 10 lira. In former times heaps of money were spent on a wedding. Now official [secular] weddings cost no more than the money for a stamp. Don’t think of marrying a girl from Istanbul, they need too much for procreation:

⁶²⁹ Esat Mahmut Bey, “*Şark vilâyetlerine giderken... Her kamarası ayri bir apartıman olan vapurlar*” (Heading to the Eastern Provinces...A Ship on which each cabin is a different apartment), *Akşam*, July 13, 1930. *Şeriat*=Sharia (Islamic Law).

⁶³⁰ Esat Mahmut Bey, “*Karadeniz sahilinde cennet gibi bir şehir*” (A city like paradise on the Black Sea), *Akşam*, July 27, 1930.

⁶³¹ Esat Mahmut Bey, “*Büyük bir şehir olmağa namizet küçük bir kasaba*” (A small town candidate for a big city), *Akşam*, July 29, 1930.

⁶³² Esat Mahmut Bey, “*Sakın Ayancıkta içtimâî hayat nasıl uyandı?*” (How was social life revolutionized in quiet Ayancık?), *Akşam*, July 30, 1930.

midwife, bed, doctor, amusement...Marry a village girl from Anatolia. They don't need a doctor or forceps. They have children while working in the fields, rest for a few days and quickly get back to. And now you are asking yourself, are there any of these women left?⁶³³

Bayezid, on the other hand, was a gender dystopia. At the end of August, Esat Mahmut Bey arrived in the foothills of Mount Ararat, *Akşam*'s Eastern correspondent finally encountering the Bayezid woman he had been using to describe the dangers of female liberation. Underneath the headline: "The Eastern women is free and does not run away from men," Esat Mahmut Bey described the type of women who lived in the villages around Bayezid. According to Esat Mahmut Bey, Bayezid women "open their doors to strangers even when home alone." He then shared a tale told to him by a local mayor (*muhtar*) in order to highlight the 'manly' disposition of Kurdish women in the Republic's most eastern province:

One rainy night a stranger arrived at a shepherd's house in Zıdıkın village. The shepherd's wife, around twenty-five, with black eyes and wide hips, was alone. According to local customs....she welcomed the stranger into her home, offered him soup, feed his horse, and even sung local folk songs (so that her guest would not be bored) until bedtime....As women and men [in the 'East'] sleep in the same room, she placed a mattress for her male guest in one corner and unrolled her bed in the opposite corner. She turned to the stranger and said: "My husband will not return until the early morning. You are tired so you can sleep in his bed." She got into her bed and fell asleep. However, the guest did not sleep. Misinterpreting her hospitality, he got up and laid down next to her...The women got up calmly and said: "All right mister, this evening you have made me and yourself uncomfortable." She found a piece of rope and tied the guest to a millstone and went back to sleep. In the early morning her husband returned. When he saw the tied-up stranger, he demanded that his wife explain what was going on. The tie-up male guest went pale. However, the man was angry at his wife not the stranger. "Why are you treating our guest this way?" he asked. The women explained that the man had attempted to attack her modestly. The shepherd untied the guest explaining: "Fato is the kind of women that if she doesn't want you, you can't share her bed. She has proven this to me many times.

This is the "character of women in Bayezid," concluded Esat Mahmut Bey. Her "jerk (*herif*) of a husband leaves his side of the bed empty and never doubts her [honor]."⁶³⁴

⁶³³ Esat Mahmut Bey, "On sekiz yaşına basan her kızın evlendiği memleketler," (A nation in which every man is married by the age of 18), *Akşam*, August 15, 1930.

⁶³⁴ Esat Mahmut Bey, "Şarkta kadın serbesttir, erketen kaçmaz," (Women in the East are free, they don't run away from men), *Akşam*, August 27, 1930.

The final installment of “*Akşam* in the East” appeared on the paper’s “House-Women-Style” page. Reminding his readers that “women are where they come from,” Esat Mahmut Bey described the torture of a “bandit” on Mount Ararat. The man had attempted to “surrender to the army,” explained Esat Mahmut Bey, but had been caught and dragged back to the mountain. In Esat Mahmut Bey’s description of his punishment, the whole community is implicated in its brutality: the victim, who neither flinched nor cried out in pain as “his nose was cut off, his eyes poked out, and his fingernails pulled out one by one”; the men who held the victim down; the torturer; and the women and children who passively stood by and watched. However, in order to reinforce the ‘savagery’ of life on Mount Ararat, Esat Mahmut Bey told the story of Turkish pilot’s harrowing encounter with a “Kurdish wife” (*kürt karısı*) after his plane crashed on one of the mountain’s dangerous cliffs:

The woman grabbed him by the teeth. There was a horrible struggle. This wild woman, possessing the strength of an ox, dragged the poor pilot by his arms to the edge of a steep cliff...He managed to save himself by grabbing a rock and bashing in the side of her head. But somehow still alive, she staggered away.....The women [on Ararat] are like that!⁶³⁵

Republican writers often used stories of Istanbul women to highlight the dangers of superficial westernization. There was the “overly-European” rich woman of Şişli who left her children in the care of her maid as she they went out to the theatre. Her “Oriental” sisters lived in: Kadıkoy (more prostitute than wife); Edirnekapı (a poor factory worker who worked all day while her husband drank her paycheque away); and amongst the mosques and covered markets of Sultanahmet (longing to be like her Europeanized sister in Şişli).⁶³⁶ Esat Mahmut Bey’s “Kurdish wife” from Bayezid, however, warned of ‘over’ emancipation. At the same time, his omission of the reason for the Kurdish women’s violent attack on the Turkish pilot, shot down after bombing her village on Ararat, elided the violence that accompanied Turkish modernization. The struggle between the pilot and the Kurdish woman not only inverted this violence (transforming victim into perpetrator, and perpetrator into victim), Esat Mahmut Bey’s image of the ‘overly’ liberated Bayezid women erased the resistance of the women who fought “side by side their men” during the Mount Ararat Uprising.

⁶³⁵ “*Ağrı dağında yaşayanlar nasıl insanlardır?*” (How do they live on Mount Ararat?) *Akşam*, September 1, 1930.

⁶³⁶ “*Bugünkü Türk Kadınları*” published by *Resimli Ay* in 1924, qtd. in Türe, *Facts and Fantasies*, pgs. 104-107. As Türe explains, when the article caused offense the magazine advised its readers not to take it literally, explaining that the women in the article were meant to be instructional metaphors not explanations of social phenomena.

4.4.2 Zeyno: The Girl Waiting in the Mountains

Esat Mahmut Bey worked for *Akşam* for ten years, and like many of the events he covered for the paper, the Mount Ararat Uprising became the backdrop for one of his novels.⁶³⁷ As Esat Mahmut Karakurt he transformed his story of the downed Turkish pilot and Kurdish women “with the strength of an ox” into a romance suitable for Republican ideology. Esat Mahmut Bey’s tales of the ‘manly and bold’ Bayezid women never appeared on the front page of *Akşam*. However, the story of Zeyno, the Kurdish heroine of his 1937 novel, *The Girl Waiting in the Mountain (Dağları Bekliyen Kız)*, made it onto a fictionalized frontpage of *Akşam*. In *The Girl Waiting in the Mountain*, the heroine’s trial for taking up arms against the Turkish state appeared alongside a headline that confirmed the defeat of the Mount Ararat Uprising.⁶³⁸ Zeyno is introduced to the reader through the curiosity of the novel’s only other female character, Nerime. Nerime is the fiancé of Lieutenant Sermet, who like the hero of the novel, Captain Adnan, is a Turkish pilot stationed at Karaköse (Ağrı) during the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising. In the novel’s first pages, Adnan and Sermet struggle to dissuade Nerime from fulfilling her desire to fly over Ararat and see where Zeyno lives. “Flying over Mount Ararat is a dangerous sport for a woman,” warns Adnan. Nerime responds:

Ah, Adnan Bey, you do not understand how fascinated I am with this woman, I am losing sleep thinking about her. Educated in America, growing up in Istanbul, young, beautiful, half savage, taking up arms against her nation. I don’t understand her savagery...If what Sermet has told me is true, she has even ordered the deaths of men by poking out their eyes.....⁶³⁹

Sermet, who had promised to take his fiancé on a mission, interrupts to describe the “notorious” (*mahut*) woman on Mount Ararat:

I have battled with this savage harlot [*vahşi kahpe*] many times. This damned women [*melun karı*] knows how to hide amongst [Ararat’s] rocks....I have perhaps wasted 1000 tonnes of bombs trying to destroy her! I shot her machine gun. I have moved mountains, rocks, but no matter what I could not kill this woman.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁷ Esat Mahmut Karakurt (1902-1977) was the son of an Ottoman official. He studied at Galatasaray Lisesi and worked as a journalist during the War of Independence before being invited by *Akşam*’s founder, Ali Naci Karacan, to join the paper. Saban Sağlık describes his twenty-two novels as sentimental romances featuring Republican themes and values. They revolve around the story of a brave and handsome *esmer* (dark) Turkish hero who rescues a beautiful *sarı* (blond) girl (Christain, poor, Kurdish) from her ‘savage’ surroundings. All of Karakurt’s novels were made into films; *Bir Popüler Romancı: Esat Mahmut Karakurt*, *Bir Estetik Romancı: Ahmed Hamdı Tanpınar* (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 2010), 31-32.

⁶³⁸ Esat Mahmut Karakurt, *Dağları Bekliyen Kız* (İstanbul: İnkılap ve Aka Kitabevleri, 1937).

⁶³⁹ *Dağları Bekliyen Kız*, 21-22. Later on we learn that she studied sociology at Columbia University.

⁶⁴⁰ *Dağları Bekliyen Kız*, 22.

Nerime, however, is undeterred. Adnan and Sermet take her safely over Ararat. But she begs them to fly a second time over the mountain and is shot, killed by her “fascination over that woman.”⁶⁴¹

Adnan volunteers for a dangerous mission to discover the location of the ‘den of thieves’ under the authority of Zeyno’s father, Sheikh Fuat. After parachuting into Ararat during the night he stumbles upon Zeyno. He exclaims in surprise: “A woman!” her pants, at first, concealing her gender. Her English army jacket and her sheepskin vest, however, immediately identify her as a rebel, the former a sartorial marker of the uprising’s foreign influence, the later reaffirming the ‘backwardness’ of Sheikh Fuat’s political ambitions. When Zeyno notices Adnan, assuming that he is one of her father’s men, she orders him to fetch ammunition. Like Zeyno, Adnan is in disguise, wearing a sheepskin vest and pajama in order to blend into the mountain’s ‘savage’ surroundings.⁶⁴² Zeyno yells at Adnan to help her load a large machine gun. His hesitation reveals his Turkish identity. They struggle over the gun. Zeyno slips, hits her head on a rock, and falls to the ground unconscious.⁶⁴³ When she awakens, Adnan is nursing the wound on her head. Touched by his humanity, she regains her national consciousness and tells him how her abandonment by her fiancé drove her to a life of banditry on Mount Ararat:

I wanted to take revenge on all men!....But these mountains, falling in with these people, how quickly I turned savage, I have changed so much that sometimes I am even afraid of myself, disgusted with myself. Everything good and valuable has been wiped from my eyes. I wanted to see blood, I wanted to become savage....I am like the animals that pass through the mountains’ trees and forests.....Adnan Bey, this wasn’t to be my life, I too was civilized, but now I am without a nation.⁶⁴⁴

Adnan is moved but reminds himself, and Zeyno, that her machine gun has killed Turkish pilots. She protests, explaining that until that day she had never even touched a gun.⁶⁴⁵ She gives Adnan the location of her father’s camp and they fall asleep in each other arms.⁶⁴⁶ In the morning Zeyno

⁶⁴¹ *Dağları Bekliyen Kız*, 25.

⁶⁴² This is the sartorial description of the bandits that accompanied Esat Mahmut Bey’s July 13, 1930 story on the uprising’s suppression.

⁶⁴³ *Dağları Bekliyen Kız*, 70-73.

⁶⁴⁴ *Dağları Bekliyen Kız*, 82-83.

⁶⁴⁵ *Dağları Bekliyen Kız*, 86-87.

⁶⁴⁶ *Dağları Bekliyen Kız*, 90-92.

helps Adnan escape. Her father learns of her treachery and drags her back to his camp. Sheikh Fuat accuses his daughter of staining his honor (*namus*). She responds defiantly:

In these mountains you tried to form a state, saying look I formed a state. Where is your organization, where are your people, where is your power? Aren't you ashamed, your mouth full of English pounds...All of us are plunderers, traitors, thieves. I am the daughter of the leader of a group of bandits.....Father, it is you that have stolen my honor!⁶⁴⁷

The camp is bombed; Zeyno is rescued. As the fictional front page of *Akşam* explains, the bombing of Ararat prevented the lynching of the “girl waiting in the mountains.”⁶⁴⁸ Zeyno, however, is charged with “deceiving ignorant people, taking up arms against the nation, and killing Turkish citizens and soldiers in order to form a Kurdish state.”⁶⁴⁹ The Turkish judge is merciful and Zeyno death sentence is commuted. Adnan and Zeyno marry and return to Istanbul, their union reaffirming Ararat’s ‘pacification’ and the territorial integrity of Turkey. In the end, the Kurdish wife of Esat Mahmut Bey’s “*Akşam* in the Eastern Provinces” series is tamed, transformed into a ‘properly emancipated’ Turkish women. Like the tale of the downed pilot and the Kurdish woman “with the strength of an ox,” the story of the *Girl Waiting in the Mountains* erases the resistance of Kurdish women. But unlike the men they fought beside (who had “no value for the nation”) they are re-embraced by the Turkish nation-state.⁶⁵⁰

4.4.3 Zeyno’s Son: Kurdish Women in the Novels of Turkish Feminist Halide Edib

When Anne Hard of the American League of Women Voters visited Turkey in 1927 in order to meet the Turkish suffragists working to elect a sympathetic male deputy to the Turkish parliament, she concluded that it was the work and character of feminists like Nezihe Mouheddin (Muhittin) and Halide Edib (Edip Avidar) rather than the “laws and statues” of its “benevolent

⁶⁴⁷ *Dağları Bekleyen Kız*, 113-115.

⁶⁴⁸ *Dağları Bekleyen Kız*, 121-122.

⁶⁴⁹ *Dağları Bekleyen Kız*, 149-150. The charge is similar to the verdict in the trial of the Ararat rebels in Adana in 1932. For example, when thirty-one rebels received the death penalty in May, the verdict read: “taking up weapons” and killing Turkish soldiers and citizens (“spilling the blood of our recruits”) in order to form an “autonomous Kurdish government on Turkish territory”; “Ağrı Dağı maznunları hüküm giydiler” (Sentencing of Mount Ararat Defendants), *Cumhuriyet*, May 23, 1932.

⁶⁵⁰ Esat Mahmut Bey, “*Şakiler Ağrıdağda nasıl yaşarlar ve ne yaparlar*” (How do the bandits live and survive on Mount Ararat), *Akşam*, July 28, 1930.

despot,” Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, that augured a better life for Turkish women.⁶⁵¹ American reporter Lucille Saunders, whose “most important” and most lucrative assignment was covering the Mount Ararat Uprising for the *New York Times* in 1930, was also impressed by the emancipation of Turkish women.⁶⁵² Saunders reinforced the “breathtaking” speed of gender reform in some parts of Turkey by contrasting the women “in the Anatolian mountains” who still went “to market with the charsaf drawn timidly about their faces” to the liberated women “with bobbed hair, bold eyes, and aspirations for a career.” The uncovered women of Istanbul and Ankara walked confidently through the streets..⁶⁵³ Hard’s celebration of the achievements of the ‘new Turkish women’ included women living in “the quaint old villages of Anatolia.” But like Saunders, she excluded the “wild Kurdish ladies on the Mosul boundary.”⁶⁵⁴

The celebration of the achievements of the ‘new Turkish woman’ did not go unchallenged. When the *New York Times* praised Edib’s role in the Turkish national struggle, describing her as its “soul and moving spirit,”⁶⁵⁵ an Armenian reader pointed out that during what the American paper had vaguely described as the “two years she spent in and around Damascus,” Edib was gathering Armenian orphans from the Syrian Desert and “turning them into Turks” for the

⁶⁵¹ Anne Hard, “Nezihe Mouheddin Hanoum: Friendly Foreign Impressions,” *Woman’s Journal* 12, no. 5 (1927), 12. Hard did not meet Turkey’s “leading feminist” as Edib had been “politely exiled” in 1926. She returned to Turkey in 1939 (after Atatürk’s death). Muhittin was the founder of *Kadınlar Halk Fırkası* (the Women’s People Party). It was closed by the Kemalist regime in 1923. Muhittin then helped form the *Türk Kadınlar Birliği* (Turkish Women’s Union) in 1927 (one of its goals being the election of a pro-suffrage deputy to the all male parliament). Their campaign was not successful. However, by 1930 women were allowed to vote in and run for municipal elections. In the year women won full suffrage, 1935, Turkey hosted the congress for the International Alliance of Women. The Women’s Union was closed down by the regime shortly afterwards. Kathryn Libal argues that its closure exposes the “contradiction between the Turkish state’s public support of women’s emancipation as a key aspect of Turkish modernity...and the social and political pressure that entailed the demise of independent women’s organizing”; Libal, “Staging Turkish Women’s Emancipation: Istanbul, 1935,” 35. For a discussion of Edib and Muhittin’s discontent with the regime’s “promises for women” see Hülya Adak, “Suffragettes of the empire, daughters of the republic: women auto/biographers narrate national history (1918-1935),” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 36 (2007), 27-51.

⁶⁵² Lucille MacDonald (Saunders), *A Foot in the Door: The Reminiscences of Lucile McDonald* (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 1995), 145. Saunders travelled to Turkey with her husband in 1929 and worked there as a freelance reporter. When the *New York Times* correspondent was kicked out of Turkey she was hired to cover the “border raids around Mount Ararat.” Initially many of her “mailings” were returned to her unopened. She learned later that the paper had also made “arrangements with Mr Collins” of the *London Times*. “Apparently hiring a woman was not regarded...as adequate coverage.” She never travelled to “Kurd country,” her filings based on the Turkish press which she translated with the help of her Armenian assistant” (x-xii).

⁶⁵³ Lucille Saunders, “Turkish women, now free, carve out a new life,” *New York Times*, June 22, 1930; SM7.

⁶⁵⁴ Hard, “Nezihe Mouheddin Hanoum,” 38. In 1926 the League of Nations awarded the predominantly Kurdish Mosul to Iraq (at the time a British mandate).

⁶⁵⁵ “The Turkish Jeanne D’Arc,” *The New York Times*, September 10, 1922; E6.

“murderer” Cemal Paşa.⁶⁵⁶ Scholars have interrogated the two years Edib “spent in and around Damascus,” reading her memoirs in order to understand her role in the Armenian Genocide. Some scholars conclude that Edib was an “accessory” to genocide while others argue that she is better understood as an apologist for the destruction of Turkey’s Armenian community.⁶⁵⁷ Feminist scholars have turned to her novels in order to understand the role that the ‘new woman’ played in the consolidation of Turkey’s “ethnic, linguistic and religious fault lines.”⁶⁵⁸ But as Günil Cebe points out in her discussion of Edib’s novel *Zeyno’s Son* (*Zeyno’nun Oğlu*), the “ideal Turkish women” of *Heartache* (*Kalp Ağrısı*) reappearing at the side of her Turkish officer husband during a Kurdish rebellion, Edib’s engagement with “the Kurdish question” has attracted little feminist curiosity.⁶⁵⁹ Like Karakurt, Edib names her heroine Zeyno, the Kurdish diminutive of Zeyneb. The first few pages of *Heartache* (published in 1924) explain the meaning of her heroine’s name, Zeyneb’s father affectionately calling his daughter Zeyno because his dead wife’s father had been Kurdish. There are actually two Zeynos in *Heartache*’s sequel, *Zeyno’s Son*, Istanbul Zeyno (the heroine of *Heartache*, hereafter Zeyneb/Zeyno) and Diyarbakır Zeyno, the Kurdish woman Zeyneb’s former lover, Hasan, impregnated and abandoned in Diyarbakır during the First World War and the Armenian Genocide.⁶⁶⁰ While the novel’s heroine Zeyneb/Zeyno is the ‘ideal Turkish women,’ Zeyno is the ‘oppressed Eastern’ (Kurdish) woman. After Hasan leaves her, Zeyno, pregnant, marries her Kurdish cousin, Ramazan. She understands that marriage would make her cousin’s property. “Like the owner of a

⁶⁵⁶ Aghavnie Tegheniann, J. Cassavetes and Samuel B. Woods “The Turkish Jeanne D’Arc: An Armenian Picture of Remarkable Halide Edib Hanoum,” *New York Times*, September, 17, 1922; pg. 97. Cemal Paşa was one of the three military dictators that ruled the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, serving as the military governor of Syria during and after the Armenian Genocide (he is considered one of the Genocide’s architects). He hired Edib in 1916 to oversee the educational system in Damascus, Beirut, and Mount Lebanon (which included a number of orphanages that housed Armenian, as well as Kurdish and Turkish, children).

⁶⁵⁷ Elizabeth Thompson argues that Edib’s “writings, and Turkey’s politics today, remain haunted by...the Darwinian deal made to exclude, deport, and murder fellow citizens in the pursuit of national survival”; “Halide Edip, Turkey’s Joan of Arc: The Fate of Liberalism after World War I,” in *Justice Interrupted* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013), 96. Keith Watenpaugh contends that Edib’s writing after the First World War had “a texture similar to contemporary anti-Semitic writings in the way that it casts Armenians as a mythical and existential enemy”; Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones*, 144-147.

⁶⁵⁸ Altan-Olcay, “Gendered Projects of National Identity Formation,” 180.

⁶⁵⁹ Günil Özlem Ayaydın Cebe, “Halide Edip’in *Zeyno’nun Oğlu* Romanında Analar, Oğul ve Kutsal Vatan” *Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 33, s. 2 (2016), 80-81. Zeyno’s son was first published as a series in *Vakit* in 1926, the year after the Sheikh Said rebellion (in the novel Şeyh M). It is the sequel to *Heartache*, its heroine Zeyneb, torn between two men, the handsome soldier, Hasan, and the doctor Sermet. At the end of the novel she chooses neither and marries the older Colonel Mühsin.

⁶⁶⁰ The Armenian Genocide is not noted by Edib. The majority of Diyarbakır’s Assyrian and Armenian inhabitants were either murdered or deported during the Genocide.

sheep or cow he could do whatever he wanted with her, he could love her or kill her, he would control her life.”⁶⁶¹ While living in Diyarbakır, travelling to the Kurdish city to be at her officer husband’s side during the rebellion of the Kurdish Sheikh M., Zeyneb/Zeyno meets Zeyno’s son, Haso (the Kurdish diminutive of Hasan). Haso is living in the mansion of the Sheikh M., sent away by his mother in order to protect him from the jealousy of his Kurdish stepfather. Although the Sheikh treats his young ward kindly, he teaches him to hate Turks. Under the guidance and instruction of Zeyneb, who wants to adopt him, Haso unlearns this ‘racial’ hatred. By the end of the novel, Ramazan is dead, killed by Hasan. Haso learns that Hasan is his father, his biological parents reunite, and everyone returns to Istanbul. Cebe argues that *Zeyno’s Son* offers an alternative ending to the army’s violent ‘pacification’ of Kurdistan. For Cebe, Zeyneb/Zeyno’s care and education of Haso is a recognition of the Turkish state’s duty to “develop a neglected region of the country.”⁶⁶² However, like Karakurt’s *The Girl Waiting in the Mountains*, Edib’s *Zeyno’s Son* is also a story of assimilation. Like pacification, assimilation is a story of erasure. By “neutralizing a set of consciousness” argues Partrick Wolfe, assimilation “eliminates a competing sovereignty.” While “conquered” peoples “remember their dispossession,” the “assimilated....do not even exist.”⁶⁶³ The resistance of Karakurt’s half-Kurdish Zeyno is erased by her reincorporation into the patriarchal Turkish nation-state. The hatred of Edib’s half-Kurdish Haso is erased by the maternal love and guidance of one of the Republic’s newly emancipated women.

4.4.4 Mahmouré and Jale: Kurdish Women in the Memoirs of Halide Edib

In her memoirs, Edib confided that her partly Kurdish heroine of *Heartache* was based partly on the Kurdish midwife who attended her sister Nielüfer’s birth. It was the midwife’s “picturesque Kurdish” dress that made an impression on Edib, its colourful pieces floating in the “air as she walked with the particular pretty swing of Kurdish girls.”⁶⁶⁴ Unsaid, however, was the

⁶⁶¹ Halide Edip Avidar, *Zeyno’nun Oğlu* (İstanbul: Özgür Yayınları, 2001/1926), 199.

⁶⁶² Cebe argues that Edib’s depiction of Zeynep/Zeyno as Haso’s social and ideological mother offered an “alternative” model of Turkish nationalism to the celebration of the Turkish military as the maker of the nation and male citizen, While her novel’s fusion of gender and ethnicity “reproduced some nationalist ideas,” Cebe contends that it also recognized the rights of Kurds as Turkish citizens (89-92). For a critique of what Zeynep Turkyilmaz calls “maternal colonialism” see “Maternal Colonialism and Turkish Woman’s Burden in Dersim: Educating the “Mountain Flowers” of Dersim.”

⁶⁶³ Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London and New York: Verso, 2016), 188.

⁶⁶⁴ Halide Edip Avidar, *The Memoirs of Halidé Edib* (New York: The Century Co., 1926), 103-104.

inspiration for her heroine's "forceful personality."⁶⁶⁵ But Edib's description of the "racial fire" of her Kurdish half-sister, Mahmoudé, suggests that Zeyneb/Zeyno was also inspired by the forceful character of her Kurdish half-sister.⁶⁶⁶ Before Edib's mother married her father, a first secretary to the Sultan's Privy Purse, she had been the wife of Ali Şamil Bedirhan, "one of the younger, and perhaps the handsomest" of the twenty-one sons of Kurdish Emir, Bedirhan Paşa:

Ali Şamil, at the time a young lieutenant, married my mother, then a girl of fifteen. In my mother's case it was arranged that her husband should make his home with his parents-in-law...Love was not lacking between the youthful couple, and Ali Şamil with his countless brothers, who were constantly visiting him, introduced a gay but very wild tone into the sober quiet house, completely disturbing its traditional routine. Very often there was music, dancing, drinking, singing, and sometimes shooting for the mere fun of it in the garden...After three or four years of this sort of thing the quiet Anatolian Turk in grandfather could bear it no longer, and he obtained my mother's divorce.⁶⁶⁷

Edib's father met Ali Şamil in Mecca. He nursed his wife's first husband back to health during a bout of cholera. Not aware that the man caring for him was the husband of his former wife, Ali Şamil shared stories of his deep love for Edib's mother. Eventually Edib's father revealed his identity and promised Ali Şamil that he would look after the daughter he had abandoned.⁶⁶⁸ While Halide admired Ali Şamil's "burning beautiful eyes"⁶⁶⁹ and the "burning-eyes" of his daughter, it was Mahmoudé's "forceful personality" that dominated her childhood:

She was the very scourge of Allah in the house, as the uncle expressed it. She broke the little girl's toys, climbed tress like a little boy; she showed shocking disrespect to the palace lady and even made the poor quiet granny weep sometimes.⁶⁷⁰

⁶⁶⁵ *The Memoirs of Halidé Edib*, 62.

⁶⁶⁶ The description of the Zeyno/Zeynep's "passionate temperament" (which her father connected to her quarter Kurdish blood) in *Heartache*: "Kızın adı Zeynep'ti, annesinin babası Kürt olduğu için ve aynı büyükbabasının ırkı ateşinden genç kıza, yalnız babasının aladığı, kaynayan bir mizaç ve ihtiras geçtiği için babsai ona "Zeyno" derdi," (pg. 14).

⁶⁶⁷ *The Memoirs of Halidé Edib*, 127-128. Bedirhan Paşa, the Emir of the Kurdish Emirate of Botan, was deposed and exiled during the Tanzimat reforms of the 19th century. His grandsons, Surreya, Jeladet, and Kamran Bedirhan were members of the Kurdish nationalist organization, Xoybûn, and as such played roles in the Mount Ararat Uprising. Edib describes the Bedirhans (many, like Ali Şamil, became important Ottoman officials after the destruction of Botan in 1840) as "divided into" personal and political "factions." While some "had chivalrous and noble manners and have been patriotic and loyal" others had "unfortunately embrace[d] foreign causes in Turkey," (pg. 187). In 1906, after a quarrel between one of Ali Şamil's nephews and the prefect of Istanbul lead to the official's murder (arousing Sultan Abdülhamid's fears of rebellion and political intrigue), all the Bedirhan men (including "boys of twelve" and Mahmoudé's quiet pharmacist husband) "were arrested, packed into a boat, and sent off to Tripoli in chains." Ali Şamil died in Tripoli in 1907 (pg. 223).

⁶⁶⁸ According to Edib, her father gradually forgot his bitterness over discovering Ali Şamil's portrait in his wife's hands on her deathbed. She died of tuberculosis when Edib was four (pg. 131).

⁶⁶⁹ *The Memoirs of Halidé Edib*, 130. She also admired his "eagle nose."

⁶⁷⁰ *The Memoirs of Halidé Edib*, 62 & 18. But "in generosity and open-handedness she was unsurpassed" (pg. 72).

At eleven Mahmouré was forced to veil. However, she refused to wear the veil when playing in the garden of their grandmother's house in Beşkitaş even though "it was exposed to the view of the passers-by." According to Edib, her sister played in the garden like a "tomboy...perched on a high branch." One day Mahmouré was summoned into the salon to meet the local matchmaker, hired by a neighbour to assess her suitability for marriage. When Mahmouré refused to abandon her tree branch, the entire family gathered in the garden and pleaded with her to come down. While still too young to marry, explained Edib, their grandmother worried that her sister's obstinate behaviour would harm her future marriage prospects. Eventually Mahmouré joined the guests, making the "proper graceful salutation," when she entered the salon. She sat quietly as the women sipped coffee and "smiled their forced smiles."⁶⁷¹ Edib describes Mahmouré as "unusually subdued" during her wedding ceremony four years later. Her Kurdish half-sister was "uncommonly sweet" in "her genuinely Turkish bridal dress," with the long silver threads of her "diadem of brilliants" woven into her dark, wavy hair.⁶⁷² It was in Mahmouré's house that Edib sought refuge in when she fled British occupied Constantinople in 1919 to join the Turkish national forces in Anatolia. Once again, Edib commented on the "forceful" character of her Kurdish half-sister:

I shall never forget Mahmouré Ablâ's [older sister] face that morning. She was sitting on my bed, her knees under her as if she was going to pray. Her thin pale face, the austere lines of the black veil surrounding it, looked strong and courageous. With her black eyes burning, her hooked nose, she looked like a great Kurdish chief going to battle.⁶⁷³

According to Rohat Alakom, sentences were inserted into the Turkish version of Edib's memoirs. Mahmouré's refusal of her uncle's request to join them and become the "Queen of Kurdistan" was added when Edib's memoirs were translated from English into Turkish: "I am a Turkish woman, and I was born under this flag. I was born here and I shall die here also."⁶⁷⁴

When "Corporal Halide" travelled from Konya to Angora in 1922, called to front by Kemal Paşa (Atatürk), she was unnerved by the "tall, primeval" Kurdish women who came out of their

⁶⁷¹ *The Memoirs of Halidé Edib*, 120-122.

⁶⁷² *The Memoirs of Halidé Edib*, 166.

⁶⁷³ Halide Edip Avidar, *The Turkish Ordeal: being further memoirs of Halidé Edib* (New York: The Century Co., 1928), 67 & 71. Edib escaped the city wearing her sister's "loose old fashioned charsaf."

⁶⁷⁴ Rohat Alakom, "Kurdish Women in Constantinople at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century," 56.

Anatolian homes to stare at her “with resentful eyes.”⁶⁷⁵ Edib does not explore the reasons for their quiet resentment. Like the Kurdish Zeyno of her novel *Zeyno’s Son* who voices no recrimination when the man who abandoned her and her unborn child during the Armenian Genocide returns to rescue her ten years later, Edib does not explore their resentment.

The story of the Kurdish orphan who Edib took a “painful interest” during her “educational work in Syria” offers a partial explanation for why Edib did not reflect on the “resentful eyes” of the Kurdish women she met in Anatolia during the Turkish War of Independence.⁶⁷⁶ When Edib first met Jale at the orphanage in Antoura in 1916, she was one of the institution’s most “sickly” children, wearing only a “dirty shirt” and jabbering away in a “mixture of Turkish and Kurdish, putting in Armenian and Arabic words now and then.”⁶⁷⁷ A year later (like Antoura which had acquired electricity and clean drinking water), Jale’s condition had improved, healthier and happier due to the motherly care of Sister İsmet.⁶⁷⁸ When Sister İsmet left Antoura to recover from malaria, Jale focused the “rebelliously determined look in her eyes” on Edib, informing Edib that she was now her mother. Jale accompanied Edib when she left Lebanon and travelled to Der-Nassira in Syria:

She took possession of me, of Der-Nassira, of the sisters in no time. She used to have her little bed laid out in the room where I worked from which my bedroom was separated by a thin partition of boards. “Are you there, mother?” cried a shrill voice at night several times, and she only left me in peace after I had assured her of my presence.⁶⁷⁹

A local musician, who often came to the orphanage in the evenings to entertain the staff and children, inquired about Jale’s nationality, telling Edib that Jale “had Eastern Anatolia written all over her person; the hooked nose, the dominating will, the passion all denot[ing] it.” What or whom “had thrown her into the very heart of Arab lands?” he wondered. Later that evening, his passionate rendition of a song “about the revolution of 1839” revealed Jale’s identity to them, the chorus “let us kill them” bringing up the memory of her parents’ murder by Armenians:

⁶⁷⁵ *The Turkish Ordeal*, 350.

⁶⁷⁶ *The Memoirs of Halidé Edib*, 454.

⁶⁷⁷ *The Memoirs of Halidé Edib*, 454. As Edib explains, Jale, meaning dewdrop in Ottoman Turkish, was probably a name given to her by someone at the orphanage.

⁶⁷⁸ *The Memoirs of Halidé Edib*, 453-454. For a description of the orphanage see the memoir of Karnig Panian, *Goodbye, Antoura: A Memoir of the Armenian Genocide*, trans. Vartan Gregorian (Stanford: Stanford, University Press, 2015).

⁶⁷⁹ *The Memoirs of Halidé Edib*, 465.

We run, we run...The Armenians are coming out, they take Said, they cut his throat...they put the knife through Hadije. They turn and turn the knife; all her bowels are out.

Edib and the musician conclude that Jale's outburst proved she was "a Kurdish girl who had seen...her parents, who were trying to run away, murdered by the Armenians coming out of a church."⁶⁸⁰

Deciding to adopt Jale, Edib brought her to Istanbul after the Ottoman defeat and the end of the war. But as forcefully as Jale entered Edib's life and the pages of her memoirs, she disappears, the reader left to learn of her fate in a footnote. Worried that Jale's trachoma could infect her sons, Edib's physician husband advised her to place Jale in one of the city's orphanages. According to Edib, when the Commission for the Separation of Children in Istanbul pronounced her Armenian with a number of other Turkish children, Jale cried out: "Ask mother Halide...she will tell you I am not Armenian."⁶⁸¹ No longer able to weave Jale into her memoir, Edib abandons her story in a footnote, the marginalization of her resistance necessary to maintain the "centrality" of Edib's narratives of the emancipation of Turkish women and the liberation of the Turkish nation.⁶⁸²

⁶⁸⁰ *The Memoirs of Halidé Edib*, 466-467.

⁶⁸¹ *The Memoirs of Halidé Edib*, 464-467. The *Vorpahavak*, meaning the "the gathering of orphans" in Armenian, began after the signing of the Treaty of Mudros. Efforts to return Islamized Armenian women and children to their families were further "bolstered" by the Treaty of Sevres which annulled all conversions to Islam between 1914 and 1918 and required the Ottoman authorities to assist in their rescue and return. In 1922 the League of Nations set up the Commission of Inquiry for the Protection of Women and Children in the Near East which opened shelters and carried out rescue operations in Istanbul and Aleppo. Lerna Ekmekçioğlu describes the Ottoman government as initially "supportive" of the rescue and return of Armenian children and women to their families and communities. However, as the Turkish nationalist forces gained strength they became less supportive, concerned that "Armenians were retrieving and Armenianizing Muslim orphans." The British occupying authorities stepped in and set up "Neutral Houses" to help "determine which children or women belonged to which group." Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, "A Climate for Abduction, a Climate for Redemption: The Politics of Inclusion during and after the Armenian Genocide," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55, no. 3 (2013), 534-536. For a discussion of Edib's role in the debates over Neutral Houses' 'Armenianizing' of Turkish orphans (as "inversion") see Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones*, 146.

⁶⁸² Steadman, *Landscape of a Good Woman*, 139.

4.5 Gender, Violence and Resistance

4.5.1 Fighters, Emissaries, Spies and Hostages: The Women of Mount Ararat in the Memoirs of a Turkish Officer

In the spring of 1929, Turkish officer Zühtü Güven travelled to Iğdır, north of Mount Ararat, to take up his commission with the Second Mobile Gendarme Unit of the Turkish Army.⁶⁸³ He arrived wearing civilian clothing, the driver he had hired in Erzurum worried that Güven's captain's bars would draw the fire of the mountain's "bandits."⁶⁸⁴ As Rohat Alakom points out in his introduction to Güven's memoirs of the Mount Ararat Uprising, originally published as a series of articles in the Turkish newspaper *Dünya* in 1953, Güven's tales of bandits, blood feuds, and ruthless tribal chiefs reiterated the "official history" of Kurdish resistance. However, alongside the state's story of the Ararat rebels' defeat, the former Turkish officer revealed the presence of armed women (*silah tutan kadınlar*) at their sides.⁶⁸⁵ Warned that İhsan Nuri and a group of Kurdish rebels were about to attack Taşburun in August of 1930, Güven left some of his men with the border guard at Aralık and, with a small force, headed towards Iğdır. Güven was unable to communicate with Taşburun as the rebels had cut the telegraph lines. When they arrived in Taşburun two days later the "bits of brain and blood on the surrounding white rocks" informed them that they had arrived too late. Güven learned that "female pillagers" (*talancı women*) had joined the attack on Taşburun. Kurdish women had also "gathered behind the enemy's lines," encouraging the rebels with cries of: "*Lu lu lu!*" until morning.⁶⁸⁶ While Güven's memories of the participation of Kurdish women in the Mount Ararat Uprising, like the men they fought beside, are woven into a history of brigandage, his depictions of the women on Ararat—vocal as fighters and emissaries, silent as spies and hostages—"discreetly perturb" the narratives that have erased their resistance.⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸³ The provinces of Iğdır and Aralık are located northeast of Ararat along the Armenian border (at the time of the revolt Turkey's border with the Soviet Armenia).

⁶⁸⁴ Rohat Alakom, *Bir Türk Subayının Ağrı İsyanı Anıları* (Istanbul: Avesta, 2011), 24.

⁶⁸⁵ "Preface," *Bir Türk Subayının Ağrı İsyanı Anıları*, 14. Güven uses the phrase *silah tutan kadınlar* throughout his memoir. Alakom describes Güven as noting the "active role" of Kurdish women in the uprising.

⁶⁸⁶ *Bir Türk Subayının Ağrı İsyanı Anıları*, 75-78. For the story of the "famous Kurdish bandit," Altındış Osman, see Rohat Alakom, *Xoybûn Örgütü ve Ağrı Ayaklanması* (Istanbul: Avesta, 1998), 146-149.

⁶⁸⁷ de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 4.

At the end of his first summer patrolling the Turkish-Russian border northeast of Ararat, Güven found himself pinned down by the rifles of a group of ‘bandits,’ tormented by the afternoon sun, his canteen empty. In the morning two villagers had approached Güven and, “half in Kurdish, half in Turkish,” told him that Altındış (gold-toothed) Osman and his gang (*çete*) had stolen sixty head of their oxen. Güven jumped on his horse in order to track down Altındış Osman and the stolen oxen. He is cheered when he arrives in the village of Kamışlı:

May god favour the Republican government. We have been living like prisoners in the hands of these bandits. Just a month ago they slaughtered 15 of us like sheep. These murderers are now shooting at us from the surrounding hills.⁶⁸⁸

The villagers told Güven that “four brave men” had pursued the “bandits.” He ordered the villagers to take themselves and their animals to safety in Tuzluca and remounted his horse. He quickly found the “four brave men.” But while Güven was only 200 metres behind them, he spotted the rifles of a group of ‘bandits’ only fifty metres ahead of them. Güven quickly realized the danger of their situation and his, alone in the lowlands of the Şemkan tribe, armed bandits in the hills above, and took cover.⁶⁸⁹ He waved to the four men to turn back. However, their “courage had left them.” While only a “few leaps” from safety they were frozen in place by their fear of the “bandits’ bullets.” Güven prayed that the sound of gunfire, echoing off of Ararat’s cliffs, would bring reinforcements from Iğdır before it attracted “all of the armed men and women (*eli silah tutan bütün erkek ve kadınlar*) of the Şemkan. He feared that the “tribal tradition” of joining a fight when hearing gunfire would quickly turn the intermittent bullets into a huge battle. Shouts of “*havara*” (help in Kurdish) would not only attract more Şemkan fighters, it would bring armed men on horseback. Güven took out his binoculars to survey the area and assess the situation. He watched as the male and female shepherds of the Şemkan fetched water for the ‘bandits’ and their horses. When a villager from Pırsak attempted to bring Güven water he was shot dead. The smell of his corpse rotting under the hot sun quickly made Güven forget his thirst. His need for water was replaced by the “desire for a machine-gun.” When the sun set, Güven slowly made his way to Pırsak, the darkness concealing his retreat and

⁶⁸⁸ *Bir Türk Subayının Ağrı İsyanı Anıları*, 35.

⁶⁸⁹ Şemkan/Şemika/Şemiki (Şemekanlı in Güven) are a large Kurdish tribe found in Kars, Iğdır, Ağrı, and around Lake Van. Many Şemkan participated in the revolt, Nuri describing their leader, Timur, as intelligent, brave, and patriotic. He was Ararat’s “Jandarma Kumandanı” (commander of the gendarme); *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı* (İstanbul: Med Yayıncılık, 1992), pgs. 27 & 31.

silencing the rifles of the ‘bandits.’ The bodies of the four men, “full of bullets,” were brought to the village, washed, and buried the next day.⁶⁹⁰

Güven visited the tents of the Şemkan to ask the women (all the men had escaped to Ararat) where he could find Altındış Osman and his gang. “*Turki nuzanım*” the women answered, telling him in Kurdish that they did not understand Turkish. He asked a Kurdish-speaking soldier to translate. The soldier’s questions were answered with silence.⁶⁹¹ A few weeks later, while tying up a group of fifteen Şemkan fighters, Güven felt the binoculars of the tribe’s “women spies” (*kadın casuslar*) on him and his men. Uneasy, he ordered that the prisoners be taken immediately to Karaköse (Ağrı), deciding not to wait for an escort. Two hours later “fourteen of the fifteen prisoners” were dead, killed, according to Güven, when they got caught between the army’s machine gun and the rifles of rebels. During a 150 kilometre walk from the grassy plateaus (*yaylalar*) of Muş to Diyadin, Güven’s squadron stopped for tea in a Kurdish encampment. Knowing that inside the black tents were large samovars, Güven turned to the squadron’s leader and, “half-joking, half-serious,” urged him to “go see if they will invite us in for tea.” They were welcomed by the tribe, cups of hot tea, freshly baked bread, clotted cream, fresh yogurt, and cheese placed silently in front of them by the women.⁶⁹²

Kurdish women occupy a liminal position in Güven’s memoirs, appearing as armed women (shooting at him, spying on him), reappearing afterwards as ‘women and children,’ abandoned by their men to answer his questions or to serve him tea. After the uprising’s suppression in September 1930, Güven’s gendarme unit helped ‘cleanse’ Ararat. They hunted down the mountain’s remaining ‘bandits’ in order to complete Little Ararat’s transformation into a “corner” of Turkish nation-state.⁶⁹³ During the army’s combing operations, Kurdish women

⁶⁹⁰ Bir Türk Subayının Ağrı İsyanı Anıları, 36-40.

⁶⁹¹ Bir Türk Subayının Ağrı İsyanı Anıları, 41.

⁶⁹² Bir Türk Subayının Ağrı İsyanı Anıları, 51-52.

⁶⁹³ Prior to the uprising, Little Ararat was partly in Turkey and partly in Iran, their borders meeting on Little Ararat’s summit. In the Turkish-Iranian border agreement that followed the Mount Ararat Uprising (ratified in January of 1932) Iran ceded its portion of Little Ararat to Turkey. Güven describes the work of his unit after the uprising’s official suppression in September, 1930 as transforming the mountain into Turkey’s border with Iran. The description of Ararat as a “corner” of Turkey is General Salih Paşa’s, the commander of the uprising’s suppression; “*Ağrı dağına şakilere nasıl mezar yaptık?* (How did we dig a grave on Mount Ararat), *Cumhuriyet*, September 17, 1930.

threw themselves between the bayonets of the gendarme and the men they were hunting. While searching village by village for Sheikh Zahir (the Şemkan leader who had escaped with a number of men from imprisonment in Karaköse), wearing socks over his boots in order not to slip in the ice and snow, Güven's inquiries were once again answered with "*Turki nizanım.*"⁶⁹⁴ After being warned that their homes would be burned if they did not cooperate (informed that resisters inside would get a bullet in the head), villagers told Güven that they had not seen the Sheikh. Noticing one woman glance repeatedly at a mudbrick wall, Güven shouted: "We will see, tear down that wall!" The woman ran towards the soldiers as the man hidden in the wall screamed: "I surrender." Yelling at him to put his hands on his head, the woman grabbed the gun aimed at the terrified man. She turned to the soldiers to reveal a small child in her arms. "[A]t least he is not tied to the Sheikh," she pleaded.⁶⁹⁵ Güven both restored and elided the resistance of Kurdish women during the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising. They were "women and children" when he encountered them in Ararat's villages and encampments. They were "*talancı kadınlar*" (female pillagers) and "*sılah tutan kadınlar*" (armed women) when he came across them on the battlefield.

After Güven's skirmish with Altındış Osman and his gang in the summer of 1929, a Şemkan woman arrived at his unit's headquarters in Tuzluca, northeast of Ararat. "Many greetings from Timur Aga," she said and handed Güven a message:

Beyefendi [sir], what do you want from my tribe? It is Altındış Osman that is at war with you...Altındış Osman was wounded and killed in Şiştepeler with his three men...If you want their heads, I will send them. It is unjust of you to attack my tribe.

Güven gave the Şemkan woman a note that said: "Send only the head of Altındış Osman."⁶⁹⁶

Early one morning Güven spotted two women in the distance, one of them with a package in her hands. As they got closer a horrible smell filled his nostrils. "Greetings from Timur Ağa" said

⁶⁹⁴ Güven calls him Sheikh Tahir but in Kurdish sources he is Sheikh (Şêx) Zahir.

⁶⁹⁵ *Bir Türk Subayının Ağrı İsyanı Anıları*, 124-126. These search methods are described by the General Staff of the Turkish Army in *Doğu bölgesindeki geçmiş isyanlar ve alınan dersler* (Ankara; Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1946), pgs. 14-15. Officers like Güven were instructed to first surround the village with machine guns and to block off all nearby roads and streams. Villagers were then to be "gathered" and grenades thrown into the houses in which "bandits" were hiding. Any house that returned fire was burned. Soldiers were told not to remain in the villages and engage in "corruption" (*yolsuz işler*). Soldiers were also advised to use women and children as hostages in order to force bandits to come out of hiding and give themselves and their weapons up.

⁶⁹⁶ *Bir Türk Subayının Ağrı İsyanı Anıları*, 43.

the woman holding the package, dropping it casually at his feet. “He has sent you the head of Altındış Osman.” Güven summoned the district governor, the commander of the gendarme, and the mayor. He then opened the package. Inside was a severed head, its “two gold teeth” and “thin, black moustache” confirming that it was the head of Altındış Osman. Güven instructed the soldier charged with transporting Altındış Osman’s severed head (*kelle*) to Kars to display it to Kurdish villagers during the 136 kilometre journey.⁶⁹⁷ The 1,000 lira reward promised by governor of Kars to the soldiers who sent him the head of the ‘bandit’ who had been terrorizing the citizens of Republic from Kars to Erzurum never reached Güven’s platoon.⁶⁹⁸ While the story of Altındış Osman’s severed head reconfirmed the justice and authority of the Turkish Republic, the indifference of the Kurdish woman who dropped it with a thump at Güven’s feet erased its violence. Nuri Dersimi, who had participated in the Dersim Uprising (escaping the massacres that accompanied its suppression), told a different version of the army’s practice of decapitating the corpses of Kurdish rebels in *Dersim in the History of Kurdistan*.⁶⁹⁹ According to Dersimi, in 1927 the Kurdish woman Gulnaz Xanim, whose brother and nephew had joined the uprising, was arrested and imprisoned in Muş.⁷⁰⁰ When her brother İzzet Bey and his son, Sıddık Bey, were killed by the Turkish army later that year their heads were cut off and sent to Muş for identification. Officials in Muş, unsure of whose head was whose, sent for Gulnaz Hanım. “My brave brother,” she said when he saw the head of İzzet. She then stretched out her hands and stroked the eyes of her dead nephew:

This is my brave young man; I gave him my milk for this day. If I had not known that he [one day] would die for the cause of Kurdistan I would have made my milk *haram* [forbidden] for him.⁷⁰¹

During the Turkish Army’s destruction of the villages of the Zilan Valley in July of 1930, Zeyno, the wife of “the hero of the Bekıran,” Reşoyê Silo (Reşo), joined her husband fighting in the

⁶⁹⁷ *Kelle* (Ottoman Turkish) is the severed head of someone who had been executed.

⁶⁹⁸ *Bir Türk Subayının Ağrı İsyanı Anıları*, 43-44.

⁶⁹⁹ Nuri Dersimi, *Kürdistan Tarihinde Dersim* (Halep: Ani Matbaası, 1952).

⁷⁰⁰ Dersimi states that Gülnaz was put in prison because her male relatives had joined the Ararat rebels. However, in the version of her story told on the blog, *Herêma Agirî*, Gülnaz joins the uprising alongside her brother; “*Ağrı Savaşçılarının bir Kısmı* (1926-1932),” November 14, 2010, accessed October 10, <http://ararat-welat.blogspot.com/2010/11/agri-savascilarinin-bir-kismi-1926-1932.html>.

⁷⁰¹ Dersimi, 283. Literally, the verb *haram etmek* means to proscribe something (for example alcohol) under Islamic law. The full sentence is: “*Eğer Kürdistan davası uğrunda bu suretle ölümünü görmeseydim, kendisine sütümü kendisine haram ederdim.*”

mountains.⁷⁰² Like Zarife and Alişer during the Koçgırı Rebellion (1921) and Dersim (1937-1939), Zeyno and Reşo fought side by side.⁷⁰³ Joined by her brothers, Zeyno and Reşo resisted the army until 1931. In the end, running out of food, water, and ammunition, trapped in a cave on Tendürek Mountain by the *milis*, Reşo's gun went silent.⁷⁰⁴ Zeyno urged him to keep fighting, demanding to know why he was giving up: "Zeyno, I am not surrendering, by gun has betrayed me, otherwise I would not surrender. Will you fight without me?"⁷⁰⁵

They are killed when they surrender, Reşo shot in front of Zeyno. Afterwards their heads were severed from their bodies and displayed to the Kurds in the surrounding villages. Reşo's corpse was photographed as well. A picture of his corpse appears on the cover of Sedat Ulugana's 2010 history of the uprising and the massacre in Zilan.⁷⁰⁶ Dersimi included a photo of Alişer's severed head in his history of Kurdish resistance, placing it underneath a picture of the "traitor who shot Alişer's lioness, Zarife."⁷⁰⁷ There are no photos of Zeyno's or Zarife's severed heads.

4.5.2 "The Turks Killed Every Kurd they thought was tied to Ararat:" The Woman of Mount Ararat in the Memoirs of İhsan Nuri

Nuri, the defeated commander of the Ararat rebels, used Reşo's execution in 1931 to mark the end of the "independent districts of Ararat" and the beginning of the "Turkish state's political murder of Kurds."⁷⁰⁸ However, it was his stories of the women of Ararat that reinforced the

⁷⁰² Nuri's description of Reşo, *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*, pg. 108.

⁷⁰³ Described by Dersimi as *heval* (comrades). See *Kürdistan Tarihinde Dersim* for a history of both revolts and the story of Alişer and Zarife.

⁷⁰⁴ The *milis* was an armed civilian militia of local Kurds formed to provide the army with intelligence and assist them during searches. Janet Klein connects the *milis* and the *Hamidiye* regiments (irregular militia composed of mostly Kurdish tribes formed by Abdülhamid, instrumental in the Armenian massacres of 1894-1896) to the Turkish State's current village guard system (*Korucular*), formed in the 1980s to help the army fight the guerrillas of the PKK. Klein describes the *Hamidiye* and *milis* as the *Korucular*'s "historical legacy"; *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 6.

⁷⁰⁵ Sedat Ulugana, *Ağrı Kürt Direnişi ve Zilan Katliamı, 1926-1931* (İstanbul: Pêri Yayınları, 2010), 160-161. The story of Reşo and Zilan has been preserved in Kurdish *kilam* (oral epics). While many "Kurdish" histories of the uprising use these and other *kilam* (for example the work of Alakom, Kahraman, Süphandağ, and the blogs *Bajarê Agirî* and *Herêma Agirî*) Ulugana also uses oral history interviews with survivors of the Zilan Massacre and members of the *milis*. The above version of the surrender and murder of Zilan and Reşo was told to Ulugana by a member of the *milis*. For a biography of Reşo, the *dengbej* (bard) who participated in the rebellion and recorded much of its history (including the story of Zeyno and Reşo) see Ulugana's, "*Dengbêjlar şahi: Reşo*" *Kürt Tarihi* 26 (September 2016), 39-43.

⁷⁰⁶ Ulugana, *Ağrı Kürt Direnişi ve Zilan Katliamı*, 161. The photo was mailed to relatives of Reşo by a former Iranian soldier, attached to note, that because it was written in Farsi, they were unable to read.

⁷⁰⁷ Dersimi, *Kürdistan Tarihinde Dersim*, 278.

⁷⁰⁸ Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*, 108.

violence of the uprising's suppression. Nuri's memoirs responded to Güven's, both correcting his "facts" and challenging the meaning he gave to the uprising's violence. For example, Nuri disputed Güven's description of the deaths of the fourteen Şemkan prisoners. According to Nuri, they had not been "caught inbetween" the army's machine gun and their rifles. "Truthfully, [the army] executed 15 Kurdish prisoners in the mountains."⁷⁰⁹ However, his exposure of the army's violence often erased the participation of Kurdish women in the uprising, their wounds and deaths used as temporal markers of its violence rather than as examples of its resistance. Nuri began the revolt with Biro's escape to the Ararat in 1926. The rebels' first defeat was their failure to capture Bayezid during the rescue of Biro's second wife, Rabia.⁷¹⁰ The injury of Nuri's wife, Yaşar, during the bombing of the rebels' tents on Ararat in June of 1930 was "the beginning of the army's big attack" (*büyük saldırısı*).⁷¹¹ The death of Biro's mother later that summer, her shoulder and arm destroyed by a Turkish bomb, foreshadowed the uprising's suppression in September. Wounded, unaware that two of her grandsons were dead, she greeted visitors:

"I am old. I understand that I wounded. I will die. I thank God sacrificed people like me for the freedom of Kurdistan. Allah do not sacrifice anymore of Ağrı's brave fighters."⁷¹²

Yaşar's injury in 1930 was the only time Nuri referred to her in his memoir of the uprising.⁷¹³ Unlike the other women involved in the uprising, however, Yaşar was mentioned by name in the Turkish press that summer, appearing in a story about the escape of four Turkish soldiers.⁷¹⁴ After describing the wretched state of the Ararat rebels and their families, "huddled together in tents" with "nothing to eat," the soldiers illustrated the panic brought about by the sound of Turkish planes. "It is not only the bandits and their families that are afraid of the planes, even the

⁷⁰⁹ Nuri, Ağrı Dağı İsyanı, 57. "Gerçekte ise bu onbeş esir Kürt dağda kurşuna dizilmişlerdi." Throughout his memoir, Nuri challenged the state's portrayal of themselves as "civilizers" and Kurds as "bandits," using examples of the army's massacre and destruction to make clear "who was civilized and who were the savages" ("*Bunlardan hangisinin acaba daha medeniyetli ve hangisinin daha vahşi olduğu belirtildi*"), pgs. 52-53.

⁷¹⁰ Nuri, 27.

⁷¹¹ Nuri, 77.

⁷¹² Nuri, 91-92.

⁷¹³ For a short description of Yaşar's struggle to join her husband during the amnesty of 1927 see the interview with her great niece, the academic Kumru Toktamış, in Susan Meiselas' *Kurdistan: in the shadow of history*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), pg. 142.

⁷¹⁴ The story of "the four escaped soldiers" appeared on July 17, 1930 in *Cumhuriyet* as "Eşkiyanın elinden kaçan dört askerimizin anlattıkları" (Four of our soldiers describe their escape from the bandits) and in *Akşam* as "Ağrı dağındaki eşkiya-Kaçmağa muvaffak olan dört neferimiz oradaki vaziyete dair neler anlatıyorlar" (The Bandit's on Ararat-Four soldiers explain how they escaped).

dogs and sheep wail while trying to hide themselves.”⁷¹⁵ When Nuri promised them “sheep, money and women” if they joined the uprising, Yaşar intervened. “Darling İhsan, leave these poor wretches alone.”⁷¹⁶ In Nuri’s memoir, Yaşar’s suffering highlighted the brutality of the Republic’s ‘pacification’ of Kurdistan. She appeared on page two of *Cumhuriyet* and *Akşam* as a Turkish woman, her gentle reminder to her husband that he “too was Turkish,” reaffirming the gender and ethnic boundaries of the Turkish nation-state.⁷¹⁷

4.5.3 Reading Güven and Nuri Together

While the liminal position of women in Güven’s memoirs erased the violence of ‘reform’ in the Republic’s “far corners,” their role as witnesses in Nuri’s memoir reasserted the humanity of its Kurdish victims. After describing an old woman taking off her socks in order to give them to a captured Turkish soldier being lead through Ararat’s deep snow, Nuri told his readers that: “Turks killed every Kurd they thought was tied to Ağrı.”⁷¹⁸ Nuri, unlike Güven and the men who decapitated Zeyno’s corpse, recorded the army’s killing of women during the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising. When Turkish cavalry attacked the loyal villagers of the Kanikork (Topçatan), Nuri and his men watched, bewildered.⁷¹⁹ Later on they learned that a few Ararat fighters had sought refuge in the Keskoç village. “Such are the rules of Kurdish hospitality,” explained Nuri, that Hamdi İsmail welcomed them into his home for the evening.⁷²⁰ When Hamdi İsmail went to fetch water for his ablutions in the morning, he spotted cavalry in the distance. He yelled at his wife to grab his rifle and wake their guests. As the Ararat fighters grabbed their weapons Turkish soldiers opened fire on the village. The wife and sister of Hamdi İsmail, who had a few days ago served tea to the soldiers who were attacking Kanikork, were wounded. As the army withdrew they killed a child and three women, one of them the pregnant wife of Hamdi İsmail’s son. She was grabbed by soldiers as she left her house. She resisted and they shot her, left to die in a pool of her own blood. Biro and a group of fighters returned to

⁷¹⁵ “Eşkiyanın elinden kaçan dört askerimizin anlattıkları.” Nuri described the air raids as “every day, planes flew over Ararat and dropped bombs on women and children” (*Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*, pg. 78).

⁷¹⁶ “Eşkiyanın elinden kaçan dört askerimizin anlattıkları.”

⁷¹⁷ Yaşar was Turkish. However, Nuri was Kurdish.

⁷¹⁸ Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*, 76. Nuri also frequently commented on the state’s use of women and children as hostages, for example its attempt to get Shiekh Abdülkadir to pledge his loyalty to the state by promising to return his wife and children to Ararat (pg. 33).

⁷¹⁹ For a full description of the attack on Taşburun see Nuri, pgs. 44-49.

⁷²⁰ “Kürtler misafirlerin güvenliği ellerinden geleni esirgemezler,” Nuri, 45.

Kanikork to retrieve her corpse.⁷²¹ Perhaps because Nuri's memoir focused on the final months of the uprising, described by him, the Turkish press, and in *kilam* (oral epics) as a "vice-grip" (*çember*) around Ararat, the resistance of the women on Ararat was simply overwhelmed by the scale and intensity of the army's violence. While Nuri compared the final days on Ararat in September to the seventh century battle between the armies of the Prophet's grandson, Hüseyin and the Umayyad Caliph, Yazd, he explained that "woman and children were not killed at Kerbela."⁷²² After describing how Turkish soldiers had sunk their bayonets into the bellies of pregnant women, Nuri wrote that, "Şeker, the wife of Biro's nephew Diwan, was killed this way when she was captured by the Turks."⁷²³ According to Nuri, the old were used as "target practice" (*deneme tahtaları*). The wife of Eliko Hesên (Elikoyê Hesenan), Heval, "beautiful, healthy, devoted to her husband," died at his side, as did the oldest daughter of Ferzende who had grabbed their young daughter in order to bring her to her parents. "All four were killed together."⁷²⁴ The family of Ahede Heci Brove (Ehmedê Hacı Bero), "siblings, women, children—27 people"—fell into hands of Turks near the Iranian border. "All of them, young, old, innocent and vulnerable were shot [by the Turks], their bodies left there for days."⁷²⁵

In the spring of 1930, British political officer Cecil Edmonds had toured Diyarbakır, Bitlis, and Muş in order to observe the arrival of "civilization" (*medeniyet*) in Turkey's eastern provinces.⁷²⁶ He concluded that Kurdish children, sent to Turkish schools, would be easily assimilated. Kurdish women, however, would be harder "to influence." His itinerary did not include Bayezid, warned by the Inspector General of the East, İbrahim Tali Bey, that there were still "bands" of

⁷²¹ Nuri, 47-48. Güven noted how Kurds rode into battle to retrieve their dead, observing how, during the attack on Taşburun on August 7-8, 1930 the dead were "thrown over the bandits' shoulders and carried quickly away," *Bir Türk Subayının Ağrı İsyanı Anıları* Güven, pg. 76.

⁷²² Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*, 107. "We were without hope...fighting against 66,000 Turkish soldiers and more than 100 airplanes attacking us" (on page 105 he gives the number of soldiers as 33,000).

⁷²³ Nuri, 107. According to Nuri, women "begged husbands to kill them rather than fall into the hands of the enemy."

⁷²⁴ Nuri, 108. Ferzende of the Hesenan was Ararat's "most legendary fighter"; Alakom, *Xoybûn Örgütü*, 123.

⁷²⁵ Nuri, 108.

⁷²⁶ FO424/272, Doc. 36 [E2678/1279/44] Edmonds to A. Henderson, Constantinople, May 21, 1930. Edmonds described this as "hats for both sexes, alcohol, dancing, collars and ties, high heels, evening clothes for the well-to-do, little mosque-going, little fasting and subscriptions to the Aviation League rather than almsgiving, football, [and] the new letters."

Kurds “about.”⁷²⁷ While Prime Minister İsmet Paşa announced the end of the uprising in parliament on September 23, 1930 its suppression continued. According to scholar Metin Yüksel, this was captured in the reports of the Iranian officials of the new Turkish-Iranian border commission. Iranian commissioner, R. Motamadi, observed that on December 20, 1930, “thirty women were executed” by the army in Bayezid.⁷²⁸ R. Motamadi’s note can be read as a document of the Turkish state’s continuing ‘pacification’ of Kurdistan and the ongoing resistance of Kurds. But it also suggests that during the Mount Ararat Uprising women fought side by side their men. The “thirty women” shot in Bayezid were, like the fifteen Şemkan fighters, not killed by being caught inbetween the rifles of ‘rebels’ and Turkish soldiers. The Iranian official’s use of the word “executed” suggests that the women were taken prisoner after a battle, tied up, taken to army headquarters in Bayezid, lined up, and shot by firing squad.

4.5.4 Restoration

While the stories of the women who resisted the coming of Turkish ‘civilization’ to Ararat—including women like Zeyno, the wife of Reşo; Bese (Besra), the wife of Ferzande; and Hedê (Emîne), the wife Sheikh Adburrahman (Şêx Evdirrehman)—appeared in Güven and Nuri’s histories of the uprising’s suppression, the resistance of Kurdish women during the 1920s and 1930s has been spoken and “sung for ninety years.”⁷²⁹ Zeyno’s dramatic story is perhaps the most “sung.”⁷³⁰ Unlike Zeyno, many of the Ararat women survived, escaping the “*duşman çemberi*” (enemy’s vice-grip) around Ararat.⁷³¹ Hedê, described by the blog *Bajarê Agirî* as a “well-known warrior who survived [the rebellion’s suppression],” died in 1998 and was buried next to her husband northeast of Ararat. In the *kilam* (oral epic), “*lê Hedê*,” Hede’s husband

⁷²⁷ FO424/272, Doc. 36 [E2678/1279/44]. “The whole region has been stricken by war with the Russians, the deportation of the Christians, the severing of the Iraqi and Syrian territories, and, lastly the Sheikh Said Rebellion.”

⁷²⁸ R. Motamadi, *Marzha-ye Iran va Torkiya: Sharh-e Gozarashat va Vaghaye-e Yowmiya-e Komisyonha-ye Tahdid-e Hodoode-ye Iran va Torkiya dar Salha-ye 1309 va 1312* (Tehran: Pardis Danesh, 1389), qtd. in Yüksel, “On the Borders of the Turkish and Iranian Nation-states,” pg. 11. While Yüksel’s use of *kilam* and Iranian archives exposes the numerous unexplored sources of Kurdish history (particularly Kurdish women), his conclusion that the Mount Ararat Uprising remains a “unknown chapter in the social history of the Middle East” ignores the work of Kurdish scholars like Sedat Ulugana and Kemal Suphandağ (as well as local knowledge of the uprising’s history).

⁷²⁹ “*Kürtlerin ilk kadın gerillası: Zarife*” (Zarife: The First Kurdish Female Guerrilla), *Özgür Politika*, March 15, 2015.

⁷³⁰ Zeyno and Reşo’s resistance and murder is told by the *kilam*, “*Ax li min ê lê wayê*” (an expression of lamentation). For the words see “*Komara Agirî*,” *Bajarê Agirî* [blog], March 6, 2010, accessed December 12, 2018, <https://ararat-welat.blogspot.com/2011/03/komara-agiri.html>.

⁷³¹ Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyani*, 105.

Sheikh Abdulrahman (Şêx Evdirrehman) is dying, wounded in a battle with Iranian soldiers who had joined the Turkish Army's assault on the mountain in September.⁷³² "Give me a cigarette, my wound is cold," he asks Hedê as they witness the destruction of Ararat:

I am abandoned, war is upon us...The morning is strange. I saw Sheikh Zahir looking around with binoculars. They have taken the four sides of Serhed [Serhat]. The roads of our nation are lost under the snow. Sheikh Zahir is continually shouting: "Evdirehman!"...Bombs, rifles, machine guns....three battalions of soldiers wrapped around us...They have wounded Sheikh Zahir. My brother is hurt, in despair.⁷³³

Prime Minister İsmet Paşa gave the story of the uprising's suppression three conclusions. According to İsmet Paşa some of the rebels "had been destroyed" (*imha edildi*), others had "surrendered" (*fırar*), and a "portion had found asylum" (*iltica ettiler*) in Iran.⁷³⁴ It is women of Ararat who narrate the stories of exile and return. The memories of Zerife, the wife of Nadir Bey of the Heyderan, were recorded by their son, Kemal Süphandağ in his book *The Hamidiye Regiments, the Ararat Uprising, and the Zilan Massacre*. Zarife and Nadir, with his brother Mehmet (Memo) and Mehmet's wife Vahide, escaped to Tabriz and then moved to Tehran. Yaşar and Nuri were also in Tehran, their home "filled with beautiful Kermanshah rugs" according to Zarife.⁷³⁵ Ferzende Bey was captured by Iranian forces in 1931 and died in an Iranian prison. His wife Besra (Bese) "a brave women who fought in the Ararat Resistance" lived with Zarife and her family in Tehran. "Bese, suffered psychological problems, every day grabbing her towel and going to the haman" (bathhouse), explained Zarife. Zayide, the wife of Emin Paşa's son Burhan, prayed every day, "begging God to return her to homeland" (*memleket*).⁷³⁶ She died shortly after her return to Erçis. Her daughter Hicret ("emigration"), who had studied in Tehran, returned to Turkey with her mother, knowing neither Turkish nor Kurdish. She was married to a man in a village in Patnos and lived a "miserable life." Gülçin, the

⁷³² *Kilam* is an oral epic sung by a *dengbej* (oral poet). According to Ramazan Aras, "dengbêj performances and songs of grief have created a medium for communication and resistance through which stories of pain, suffering, rebels, heroes, heroism, resistance, martyrs, guerrillas, innocence and Kurdishness have gained a voice"; *The formation of Kurdishness in Turkey: political violence, fear and pain* (London; New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 134.

⁷³³ "Ağrı Savaşçılarının bir Kısmı (1926 - 1932)," November 14, 2010. For a discussion of their story see Yüksel's "On the borders of the Turkish and Iranian nation states: The story of Ferzende and Besra."

⁷³⁴ "Şark hadısatı, nasıl başladı, nasıl bitti?" (Eastern events, how did they begin, how did they end?), *Akşam*, September 24, 1930.

⁷³⁵ Süphandağ, *Hamidiye Alayları Ağrı Direnişi ve Zilan Katliamı*, 475.

⁷³⁶ Süphandağ, 475-476. Emin Paşa was the brother of Kör Hüseyin Paşa (the leader of the Hayderan and the father of Nadir and Memo). *Memleket* (lit. nation): the area of your birth (where "your people" are from).

wife of the “brave warrior” Edo’yê Azizi also lived “a very miserable life in Patnos.” According to Süphandağ, Edo’yê Azizi, an important man before and during the uprising, killed himself and his son on Ararat after a dispute with Ferzende Bey.⁷³⁷ During the amnesty of 1939, Zarife, Nadir, Memo, Vahide and their children returned to Turkey. They spent one night with the district governor (*kaymakam*) in Bayezid (Bayazıt) before being escorted by soldiers to Kayseri. They were not allowed to return to their homes in Patnos. In Kayseri, Zarife and Vahide were introduced to their husbands’ first wives and families, living in the city since the deportation of the Hayderan in 1927. Nadir and his first wife, Mürşide, lost their six-month-old child during their 650-kilometre journey from Patnoş to Kayseri in 1927. Zarife described the reunion twelve years later as “unpleasant.”⁷³⁸ For Mürşide, the return of her husband with a second wife and family was “difficult and painful.” Nadir and Memo were arrested soon after their return and were moved from prison and prison. According to Mürşide, the families returned to Patnos as “strangers” after the release of Nadir and Memo from prison in 1947. “Neighbors kept their distance” and “no one spoke Kurdish.” Describing her husband as “a living witness to Kurdish history” Mürşide regretted that after the September 12 military coup “all this memories and books disappeared.”⁷³⁹

4.6 Conclusion: “Stories that Get in the Way”

In his memoir of the Mount Ararat Uprising, Nuri celebrated the “joy” of the rebels on Ararat, everyday “mounting horses and taking aim at Turkish soldiers.” However, at the same time he reminded his readers that the Turkish army had “machine guns.”⁷⁴⁰ Rosita Forbes placement of Kurdish women “enjoying the sport” of warfare next to the Turkish state’s use of every “device of modern warfare” against the rebels inserted the women of Ararat into this history.⁷⁴¹ This chapter has aspired to add the stories of the women who fought “side by side” their men during the Mount Ararat Uprising to the history of women’s resistance in Turkey, arguing that history of female liberation in Turkey (whether celebratory or critique) hinges on the erasure of the resistance of (some) Kurdish women. Without incorporating these stories into the history of the

⁷³⁷ Süphandağ, 476.

⁷³⁸ Süphandağ, *Hamidiye Alayları Ağrı Direnişi ve Zilan Katliamı*, 481.

⁷³⁹ Süphandağ, 482-484. After his release from prison, Nadir Süphandağ helped form the Kurdish Democratic Party in Turkey.

⁷⁴⁰ Nuri, *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*, 55.

⁷⁴¹ Forbes, *Angora to Afghanistan*, 262.

Republic's 'emancipation' of women, the history of women and feminism in Turkey is what American writer Ta-Nehisi Coates calls an "incomplete" history. Visiting an American Civil War tourist site in which the stories of African Americans were absent, Coates concluded that some forms of "incompletion" were not due to "thoughtlessness." Rather, they were "essential" to the telling of certain narratives.⁷⁴² The chapter began by "pulling apart" the narratives that have cited, elided, and transposed the resistance of Kurdish women, using the stories of the women who fought side by side by their men on Mount Ararat to both interrupt the narratives that have erased them and to tell a more complete history of Turkish modernization.

There are some women's stories, argues Carolyn Steadman, "for which the central interpretive devices of the culture don't quite work." Describing her memoir of her working-class mother's "sense of the unfairness of things" as an attempt to understand the "difficulties" of writing some women's histories, Steadman suggests that a "different" narrative form is required to tell "the other stories that get in the way."⁷⁴³ The next chapter, inspired by the narrative form of the banner that decorated the stage of Doğubayazıt's 2014 Commemoration of the Mount Ararat Rebellion, again challenges feminist erasures of some women's resistance. Now that some of the "other stories" of women's resistance in Turkey have been reclaimed, the dissertation's final chapter uses the ongoing histories of women's resistance in Kurdistan to rethink the narrative of the tensions between feminism and nationalism. Instead it offers a history of women's resistance written by its Kurdish female martyrs and their descendants.

⁷⁴² Ta-Nehisi Coates, *We were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy* (New York: One World Publishing, 2017), 66-67.

⁷⁴³ Steadman, *Landscape for a Good Woman*, 139 & 5.

“In the struggle to shape the future the dead do not necessarily have the last word, but they always have a voice.”
 Vincent Brown, *The Reaper’s Garden*

Chapter 4

Bequeathal and Inheritance: The History of Women’s Resistance as Written by its Kurdish Female Martyrs and their Descendants



Fig. 4.1: Banner draping the stage of the 2014 Commemoration of the Mount Ararat Rebellion, Doğubayazıt, Turkey, September 2014⁷⁴⁴
 From Left to Right: PKK Martyr Sema Yüce, Jailed PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, and the commander of the Mount Ararat Revolt, İhsan Nuri

5 The Banner

The organizers of Doğubayazıt’s 2014 commemoration of the Mount Ararat Uprising, describing themselves as its “descendants” on the photocopied flyer, decorated the stage they had set up for the day’s speeches and musical performances with the photographs of three icons of Kurdish resistance in Turkey. On the right was its “tactical genius,” İhsan Nuri, the organizer of Beytüşşebap Revolt and the *generalissimo* of the Ararat rebels.⁷⁴⁵ Standing in front of the Kurdish tricolour, Mount Ararat’s silhouette filling the yellow disk placed inbetween horizontal stripes of green and red, Nuri’s black and white image surveyed the crowd. Sharing the same

⁷⁴⁴ “Ağrı Dağı’nda bir mezar: Hayali sömürgecilik burada meftundur!” (A Grave on Mount Ararat: The dream of colonialism in buried here!), *Herêma Agirî* [blog], posted on September 4, 2014, accessed September 30, 2014, <https://herema-ararat.blogspot.com/2014/09/agr-dagnda-bir-mezar-hayali.html>.

⁷⁴⁵ Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1992), 284. The description of Nuri as the military commander of the Mount Ararat Uprising is taken from the Kurdish League’s *Memorandum on the Situation of the Kurds and Their Claims* (Paris: Imprimerie Louis-Kean-Gap, 1949), 13.

banner, but occupying centre stage, was Abdullah Öcalan—smiling, wearing army fatigues, no grey in his moustache or hair. It was like the organizers had released the leader of the Kurdistan Workers` Party (PKK) from his island prison in the Sea of Marmara and returned him to the mountains of Kurdistan.⁷⁴⁶ As the caption behind Nuri warned that after his death “thousands” would continue “to fight until all Kurds were freed from colonialism,”⁷⁴⁷ the words underneath Öcalan, stretching across the stage to end underneath the commander of the Mount Ararat Uprising, responded by acknowledging “the determination of Serhed’s nameless heroes.” Like the geography of Serhed (Serhat), the temporality of Öcalan’s quote was unbounded, embracing both the Ararat rebels and the martyrs of the PKK.⁷⁴⁸

Sharing the stage with Öcalan and Nuri, but placed on her own banner, was PKK martyr Sema Yüce. Born in a village 140 kilometres west of Mount Ararat, Yüce was arrested by Turkish police in 1992 and, after a lengthy trial, “exiled” to Western Turkey to serve a twenty-two year prison sentence.⁷⁴⁹ Six years later, during Newroz (Kurdish New Year), Yüce immolated herself in her jail cell.⁷⁵⁰ In her farewell message Yüce described her body as a “bridge of fire” between Newroz and International Women’s Day,⁷⁵¹ her protest not only connecting the struggle for Kurdish self-determination to the cause of female liberation but reaffirming Öcalan’s March 8th message that the women of the PKK were the “main weapon” in both.⁷⁵² While Öcalan’s photo separated Yüce and Nuri, the images of Yüce and Nuri mirrored each other. Both wore a Kurdish headscarf; both were placed in front of an image of Mount Ararat. Behind Nuri was Little Ararat-Big Ararat, the order of mountain’s peaks when viewed from Armenia. A snow-covered

⁷⁴⁶ Öcalan is the only prisoner held on Imralı Island. The film, *Midnight Express*, is an adaption of the autobiography of the island’s other famous prisoner, American drug smuggler Billy Hayes, who escaped from Imralı by rowboat in 1975.

⁷⁴⁷ The full quote, found on page 51 of Nuri’s memoir of the revolt, is: “*Ben ölürsem bile Kürtler içerisinde benim gibi, hatta benden üstün binlerce ihsan, Kürt Halkını sömürgecilerden alana kadar savaşmaya hazır bulunacaklar*”; *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı* (İstanbul: Med Yayıncılık, 1992).

⁷⁴⁸ *Serhed* (Kurdish) means border or frontier (in Ottoman Turkish *serhad*, in modern Turkish *serhat*). Serhed/Serhat runs along the mountainous Turkish-Iranian border and encompasses the Turkish provinces of Bingöl, Erzurum, Müş, Ağrı, Kars (and sometimes Van). See Chapter III.

⁷⁴⁹ She was first sent to prison Neveşehir and then to Çannakale (both in western Turkey). Her obituary on *sehid.com* describes this as *sürgün* (exile)

⁷⁵⁰ Kurds in Turkey celebrate Newroz (March 21st, the first day of spring) by lighting bonfires.

⁷⁵¹ Yüce’s letter can be found on many PKK websites, for example at: <http://www.yja-star.com/tr/sehitlerimiz/341-sema-yuece-yoldasn-mektuplar>.

⁷⁵² “The Kurdistan Woman’s Liberation Movement,” *HPG* [online], accessed November 15, 2018, <http://www.hezenparastin.org/eng/index.php/guencel-yazlar/1443-the-kurdistan-womans-liberation-movement>.

Big Ararat, Little Ararat (their iciness at odds with the commemoration’s late summer setting) loomed over Yüce, the summits reversed when viewed from Doğubayazıt. Unlike Yüce’s portrait, Nuri’s had actually been torn in two. The commemoration’s organizers had removed Nuri’s wife, Yaşar—at her husband’s side in the original photo and during the uprising (fig. 4.2)



The “Removal” of Yaşar from the Banner at the 2014 Commemoration of the Mount Ararat Uprising in Doğubayazıt

Fig. 4.2 (Left): Yaşar Hanım and İhsan Nuri on Mount Ararat (1927)⁷⁵³

Fig 4.3 (Right): Nuri, alone, on the banner at the 2014 Mount Ararat Commemoration

—before they incorporated the commander of the Ararat rebels into the banner (fig. 4.3). There appeared to be no room inbetween “the tactical genius of Kurdish resistance” after World War One and the leader of the armed struggle in the “mountains of Turkish Kurdish”⁷⁵⁴ since August 15, 1984 for the women who fought “side by side their men” during the Mount Ararat Uprising.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵³ *Saradistribution.com* (the website of the Kurdish Library in Sweden) gives the date of 1927 for the photo, the year Xoybûn sent Nuri to Ararat to “organize” the resistance begun the year before by local Celali leader, Biroyê Heskî Tellî (Biro) and the year Yaşar left Turkey to join Nuri.

⁷⁵⁴ The description of Nuri as the “tactical genius of Kurdish resistance” in the 1920s is Kurdish scholar Martin van Bruinessen’s; *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1992), 284.

In his memoir of the Mount Ararat Uprising, Nuri argues that the sounds of Kurdish resistance (perhaps referring to the armed struggle of Kurds in Northern Iraq) were once again being heard in the “mountains of Turkish Kurdistan;” *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*, 111.

⁷⁵⁵ August 15, 1984 is the anniversary of the beginning of the PKK’s armed struggle. The description of the women of Mount Ararat fighting next to their men during the 1926-1931 uprising is British writer Rosita Forbe’s; *Conflict: Angora to Afghanistan* (London, Toronto, Melbourne and Sydney: Cassell and Company Limited, 1931), 264.

5.1.1 Removing the women of Mount Ararat/Incorporating the women of the PKK

Many feminist scholars would read Yaşar's removal as an example of how the resistance of (some) women is often "subsumed by nationalism,"⁷⁵⁶ their desire for emancipation "side-lined" during the struggle for national liberation.⁷⁵⁷ Others might consider the banner's inclusion of Yüce. For a few of these scholars, Yüce's placement opposite of Nuri signals a "fusion" of the struggle against Kurdish patriarchy and the fight against the Turkish state.⁷⁵⁸ But most of them would place Yaşar's disappearance alongside Yüce's appearance in order to expose how "ethnonationalist" narratives "written by men" invoke images of women that reinforce male national desires.⁷⁵⁹ A few might notice that the male and female organizers of the commemoration of the 1926-1931 uprising had given Yüce her own banner, the mountain breeze rustling its edges suggesting that there are also particular histories of female liberation in Kurdistan.⁷⁶⁰ "The presences of the past are multi-vocal," argues Doreen Massey. "[W]hen

⁷⁵⁶ Mirella Galletti, "Western Images of Women's Role in Kurdish Society," in *Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds*, ed. Shahrzad Mojab (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2001), 213.

⁷⁵⁷ N. Al-Ali and L. Tas, "War Is like a Blanket" Feminist Convergences in Kurdish and Turkish Women's Rights Activism for Peace," *Journal of Middle East Womens Studies* 13, no. 3 (2017), 453-454. As Al-Ali and Tas explain, "[w]estern feminists...tend to view nationalism as a vehicle to further patriarchy."

⁷⁵⁸ Necla Açıık, "Re-defining the role of women within the Kurdish national movement in Turkey in the 1990s," in *The Kurdish Question in Turkey*, 114-136, ed. Cengiz Gunes and Welat Zeydanlioglu (London: Routledge, 2014), 117.

⁷⁵⁹ Deniz Gökalp, "A gendered analysis of violence, justice and citizenship: Kurdish women facing war and displacement in Turkey," *Women's Studies International Forum* 33 (2010), 562-563. See also Nerina Weiss. "Falling from grace: Gender norms and gender strategies in Eastern Turkey," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 42 (2010), 55-76.

⁷⁶⁰ While Handan Çağlayan concedes that early Kurdish nationalists used women as "symbols and boundary markers," she argues that the "mutual interaction between the Kurdish movement's ideological discourse" and the reality of women fighters and politicians has transformed gender relations and roles in Kurdish society; "From Kawa the Blacksmith to Ishtar the Goddess: Gender Constructions in Ideological-Political Discourses of the Kurdish Movement in post-1980 Turkey," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* [online] 14 (2012), 2, <http://journals.openedition.org/ejts/4657>. Mehmet Gurses points out that women's participation in armed struggle did not start with the PKK but argues that the PKK's impact has been more profound do to its "successful mass mobilization of women and the subsequent break with traditional gender roles"; Mehmet Gurses, "War and Women," in *Anatomy of a Civil War: Sociopolitical Impacts of the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 50. For a discussion of the "impressive feminist critique" of the Kurdish women's movement in Turkey see: Al-Ali and L. Tas, "War Is like a Blanket" (pg. 471); Zeynep Sahin-Mencutek, "Strong in Movement, Strong in the Party: Women's Representation in the Kurdish Party in Turkey," *Political Studies* 2016, 64 (2), 470-487; and Ömer Çaha, "The Kurdish Women's Movement," in *Women and Civil Society in Turkey: Women's Movements in a Muslim Society* (Surrey, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate), 151-178. For a description of the philosophy and organizations of the Kurdish women's movement 'attached' to the PKK see: TATORT Kurdistan and Janet Biehl, *Democratic Autonomy in North Kurdistan: The Council Movement, Gender Liberation, and Ecology* (Norway: New Compass Press, 2013).

embedded in different histories” they “can evoke different meanings and can be used to different effect.”⁷⁶¹

The dissertation’s final chapter attempts to “rescue” the history of the resistance of Kurdish women from the same old story of the tensions between feminism and nationalism and set it in a history of violence in Kurdistan.⁷⁶² While the previous chapter argued that the history of the women who fought “side by side their men” on Mount Ararat need to be included in the history of women’s resistance in Turkey, this chapter uses the histories of violence told by the female martyrs of the PKK and their ‘descendants’ to rewrite the history women’s resistance. This chapter does not restore Kurdish women to feminist history but challenges some of its assumptions of political violence by telling particular histories of female martyrdom in Kurdistan and a universal history of feminism from its Kurdish margins. Following the photograph of PKK martyr Fatma Sağın as it flashes up over the summer of 2012 in Doğubayazıt, this chapter also argues that “ordinary” Kurds use stories of martyrdom to make sense of what Kurdish scholar Hamit calls the “confused ensemble of tragic events” of Kurdish history in Turkey.⁷⁶³ The following pages weaves together two histories of women’s resistance, one told by its Kurdish female martyrs, the other by their descendants. It offers a history told through stories of bequeathal and inheritance, arguing that stories of martyrdom are used by ordinary Kurds to making meaning out of the violence of ongoing histories of resistance.

The first section of the chapter uses the writing of the female martyrs and guerrillas of the PKK to re-write the history of women’s resistance in Kurdistan. The second section of the chapter, based on ethnographic fieldwork in Doğubayazıt in 2012, shows how these histories are bequeathed and inherited, arguing that they are taken up by ordinary Kurds and woven into a history of the ‘normalcy’ of state violence and its ongoing resistance. The final section, following the feminist icons, events, organizations, and stories in the pages of an agenda left on

⁷⁶¹ Doreen Massey, “Places and Their Pasts,” *History Workshop Journal* (1995), 187.

⁷⁶² Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

⁷⁶³ Hamit Bozarslan, *Violence in the Middle East: From Political Struggle to Self-Sacrifice* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004), 41.

the shelves of the closed Political Academy in Diyarbakir, offers an inclusive and expansive history of women's resistance from its Kurdish margins.

5.1.2 Resituating the History of Kurdish Women

In a 2018 issue of *Kurdish Studies* devoted to theorizing “women and war in different parts of Kurdistan,” Nazand Begikhani, Wendelmoet Hamelink and Nerina Weiss argue that the experiences and struggles of Kurdish women need to be “embedded in the wider feminist literature on women and war and gender and war.” Begikhani, Hamelink, and Weiss describe women's activism in Kurdistan as taking place under “shadow” of war, both its material effects and its gendered representations. They are particularly wary of the image of the Kurdish “armed heroine,” arguing that it is a “double-edged sword.” While the participation of Kurdish women in armed struggle may be an example of female liberation, they point out that the corresponding militarisation of Kurdish society has not been good for most Kurdish women. Reminding us that gender emancipation within the Kurdish movement may not reflect the “lived reality” of Kurds, Begikhani, Hamelink and Weiss demand that we rethink simplistic celebrations of armed Kurdish women (both by ‘western’ feminists and the Kurdish movement).⁷⁶⁴ But the ongoing debates over whether or not armed struggle is good for women also suggest that feminist scholars continue to resist “incorporat[ing] an analysis of some women's commitment to violence into critiques of the gender politics of political violence.”⁷⁶⁵ Most feminists still refuse to go beyond structural explanations of violence (reducing it to patriarchy or the state),⁷⁶⁶ erasing earlier feminist debates over the use of political violence while simultaneously silencing histories of militant women.⁷⁶⁷ Like men, argues Marnia Lazreg in her seminal study of the participation of women in Algerian decolonization, Algerian women found “themselves part of a struggle that transcended their everyday lives and concerns.” But unlike men, they “risked more” when they

⁷⁶⁴ Nazand Begikhani, Wendelmoet Hamelink and Nerina Weiss, “Theorising women and war in Kurdistan: A feminist and critical perspective,” *Kurdish Studies* 1 (2018), 7-10.

⁷⁶⁵ Carrie Hamilton, *Women and ETA: The Gender Politics of Radical Basque Nationalism* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007), 124.

⁷⁶⁶ Therese O’Keefe, “A Woman’s Place is in the Armed Struggle,” in *Feminism Identity and Development and Activism in Revolutionary Movements* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 54.

⁷⁶⁷ Patricia Melzer, “Death in the shape of a young girl”: Feminist Responses to Media Representations of Women Terrorists During the ‘German Autumn’ of 1977,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 11 no.1 (March 2009), 38 & 54. Melzer argues that feminists need to rephrase and ask new questions about the participation of women in political violence. Instead of asking: “Can violence be feminist,” Melzer asks: “How do women arrive at their feminist politics” and “How and why do feminist practices differ from one another.” As well, scholars need to ask themselves, “why revolutionary spaces seem to allow women greater participation than most other social arenas.”

stepped “into the world of urban and rural guerrilla warfare.” Their “rational” choice to resist the brutality and violence of French colonialism was a “momentous decision” that required them to step out of gender roles that both confined them and provided them with status and security.⁷⁶⁸ To demand that feminists forget these histories, argues Ranjoo Sedou Herr, is ask some women to abandon their legacies of resistance.⁷⁶⁹ Abandoning the feminist legacies of political violence reinforces the patriarchal nation-state’s monopoly over the meaning of political violence. The following pages do not celebrate violence, rather, by reading histories of Kurdish female martyrs with their descendants, attempts to understand the meaning its feminist legacies.

The study of political violence in Kurdistan, however, is dominated by debates over the ways to lessen its geo-strategic consequences or questions about when the Kurdish movement will “renounce” its use.⁷⁷⁰ Kurdish scholars have been more interested in studying violence as “a practical tool used by opposing social actors in pursuit of conflicting ends” than examining the “meanings that inform its deployment and interpretation.”⁷⁷¹ However, studies of less “understood” political actions like self-immolations and death fasts and the roles of fear and

⁷⁶⁸ Marnia Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 118-119. The “prevailing feminist view” that Algerian women were “duped” by male revolutionaries, argues Lazreg, “must be rejected” as “derogatory” and for its misunderstanding of the “dynamics of Algerian nationalism” at the time (better understood as anti-colonial resistance). “[T]hat Algerian women did not benefit same way as men” afterwards is a “separate empirical question.”

⁷⁶⁹ Ranjoo Sedou Herr, “The Possibility of Nationalist Feminism,” *Hypatia* 18, no. 3 (2003), 151. For discussions of the feminist legacies of revolution see Florence Babb, *After revolution: mapping gender and cultural politics in neoliberal Nicaragua* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001) and Karen Kampwirth, *Feminism and the Legacy of Revolution: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chiapas* (Athens, OH: University of Ohio Press, 2004).

⁷⁷⁰ For example, Soner Cagaptay, “Can the PKK Renounce Violence? Terrorism Resurgent,” *Middle East Quarterly* (2007), 45-52. What Jordi Tejel describes as too much politics and too little history; “New Perspectives on Writing the History of the Kurds in Iraq, Syria and Turkey: A History and State of the Art Assessment,” in *The Kurdish question revisited*, eds. Gareth Stanfield and Mohammed Shareef (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2017), 3. Comparing the scholarship on Palestine to Kurdistan reveals this gap, for example the work on Palestinian funerals and rituals of martyrdom: Frances S Hasso, “Discursive and Political Deployments by/of the 2002 Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers/Martyrs,” *Feminist Review* 81 (2005), 23-51; Lori A. Allen, “The Polyvalent Politics of Martyr Commemorations in the Palestinian Intifada,” *History & Memory* 18, no. 2 (2006), 107-138; Laleh Khalili, “Places of Memory and Mourning: Palestinian Commemoration in the Refugee Camps of Lebanon,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 25, no. 1 (2005), 30-45; Ted Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt: The 1936-1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2003). The disinterest of Kurdish scholars studying the PKK is particularly puzzling as Hisyar Ozsoy point outs many of the PKK’s martyrdom rituals were developed during their training in Lebanon with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Ozsoy’s thesis is an exception to this; “Between Gift and Taboo: Death and the Negotiation of National Identity and Sovereignty in the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey” (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2010).

⁷⁷¹ Fernando Coronil and Julie Skurski, “Dismembering and Remembering the Nation: The Semantics of Political Violence in Venezuela,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 2 (1991), 289.

suffering play in the making of Kurdish subjectivities suggests that a new generation of scholars are beginning to study violence not only as a political instrument but as a “form of political expression.”⁷⁷² The following chapter inserts itself into these conversations over the meaning of violence while employing the voices of PKK women to challenges its division of “self-destructive violence” and armed struggle.⁷⁷³

5.2 Histories of Female Martyrdom in Kurdistan

5.2.1 The PKK’s ‘First’ Female Martyr



Fig. 4.4: PKK martyr Zilan (Left) placed next to Sema Yüce (Right) on the cover of *Serxwebûn* (June 1998)

⁷⁷² Banu Bargu, *Starve and Immolate: The Politics of Human Weapons* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 16. Bargu argues that the “weaponization of life” marks “radical struggles of our present” (pg. 20). See also Olivier Grojean, “Self-immolations by Kurdish Activists in Turkey and Europe,” *Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines* 25 (2012), 159; Ramazan Aras, *The formation of Kurdishness in Turkey: political violence, fear and pain* (London; New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2014); Nerina. Weiss, “The Power of Dead Bodies,” in *Histories of Victimhood*, eds. S. Jensen and H. Rønso (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 161-178; and Mehmet Orhan, *Political Violence and Kurds in Turkey: Fragmentations, mobilizations, participations and repertoires* (Routledge: London and New York, 2016).

⁷⁷³ The exception to this is Aras’ *The formation of Kurdishness in Turkey*. Recent studies on Kurdish female guerrillas (mainly about Syria) include: Meral Düzgün, “Jineology: The Kurdish Women’s Movement,” *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies*, 12, no. 2 (July 2016), 284-287; Ofra Bengio, “Game Changers: Kurdish Women in Peace and War,” *The Middle East Journal* 70, no. 1 (2016), 30-46.; Bruna Ferreira and Vinicius Santiago, “The Core of Resistance: Recognising Intersectional Struggle in the Kurdish Women’s Movement,” *Contexto Internacional* 40, no. 3 (2018), 479-500, DOI: 10.1590/S0102-8529.2018400300004; Nazan Üstündağ, “Self-Defense as a Revolutionary Practice in Rojava, or How to Unmake the State,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 115, no 1 (January 2016), DOI: 10.1215/00382876-3425024; D. Dirik, “The Women’s Revolution in Rojava: Defeating Fascism by Constructing an Alternative Society,” in *A Small Key Can Open A Large Door: The Rojava Revolution*, eds. Strangers in a Tangled Wilderness (Combustion Books, 2015), 55-64; Meredith Tax, *A Road Unforeseen: Women Fight the Islamic State* (New York: Bellevue Literary Press, 2015). There a few studies in Turkish, Necati Alkan’s study of PKK ‘terrorists’ *PKK’da Semboller, Aktörler Kadınlar* (İstanbul: Karakutu Yayınları, 2012) and Nejdet Buldan’s life story interviews with women who left the party, *PKK’de Kadın Olmak* (İstanbul: Doz Yayınları, 2004). There is also the literature (diaries and memoirs) written by women of the PKK, including the recently translated autobiography of Sakine Cansız, *Sara: my whole life was a struggle*, trans. Janet Biehl (London: Pluto Press, 2018). For a discussion of this literature see Esin Duzel, “Fragile goddesses: moral subjectivity and militarized agencies in female guerrilla diaries and memoirs,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 20, no. 2 (2018), 137-152.

The PKK's official journal, *Serxwebûn*, published Yüce's story in its June edition—after her self-immolation on Newroz but before her death on the 17th of the month. Yüce's portrait was placed next to a photo of the PKK's "first martyr" Zilan, Zeynep Kınacı (fig. 4.4). Their side by side placement reinforced Yüce's description of being "bound to the will of Zilan," her immolation a reanimation of Zilan's decision to explode a bomb against herself in a group of Turkish soldiers during a flag raising ceremony in Dersim (Tunceli) on June 30, 1996.⁷⁷⁴ Yet despite the insertion of Yüce into a history of PKK martyrdom, her code names Serhildan, uprising in Kurdish, and Leyla, a childhood nickname, recalled other histories of resistance. Her forceful character had reminded Yüce's grandfather of Leyla Qasim, an Iraqi Kurdish woman hung by the Baathist regime in 1974, and Leila Khaled, the Palestinian guerrilla who grabbed the attention of the world in 1969 by hijacking TWA flight 840.⁷⁷⁵ Like the words behind and underneath Nuri, Yüce's uncaptioned portrait re-affirmed an ongoing history of Kurdish resistance, the organizers of the commemoration "removing" Zilan from her side in order to place past rebellions (the Mount Ararat Uprising) alongside present struggles (Rojava/Northern Syria). While the PKK has avoided borrowing "the battle slogans" of the Kurdish uprisings of the 1920s and 1930s, its founders declining to "conjure up the spirits" of a Kurdish Augusto Sandino or Emiliano Zapata when they founded the party in the village of Fis in 1978, the banner told the descendants of the Mount Ararat Uprising that even if "men [and women] make their own history" they do so "under...circumstances directly encountered and inherited from the past."⁷⁷⁶

Yüce's description of her body as a "bridge of fire" between March 21 and March 8 did not merely connect the struggle for Kurdish self-determination to the cause of female liberation it reanimated it. In the letter she wrote before setting fire to herself on March 21, 1998, she called

⁷⁷⁴ From Yüce's letter: "*Zafer tanrıcamız Zilan yoldaşın vasiyetine bağlılığımla, onun görkemli eylemine sadece özüyle değil, biçim itibariyle de cevap olmak isterdim.*"

⁷⁷⁵ "Ararat'ın Serhildanı" (Ararat's Uprising), *Serxwebûn*, June 1998; pg. 17. Leyla Qasim, an Iraqi-Kurdish student activist, was arrested along with four male companions by the Ba'athist Regime in 1974. After a televised show trial (charged with plotting against the Iraqi state) they were hanged together on the morning of May 12. *Serxwebûn* quotes Yüce as explaining how her grandfather's stories about Leyla Qasim and Palestinian fighter Leila Khaled impacted her: "He often told me [stories] about Leyla Qasim and Leila Khaled. I wanted to be like them."

⁷⁷⁶ Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, second edition, ed. by Robert C. Tucker (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 595.

her death “an act of allegiance to Zilan,” her immolation an reanimation of the resistance of party’s first female martyr.⁷⁷⁷ It was Zilan’s “attack on the enemy in Dersim” that had broken “the chains of all women in Kurdistan.”⁷⁷⁸ In Zilan’s letter, printed in *Serxwebûn*’s inside pages in July 1996, she explained that the “explosion of a bomb against [her body]” was a protest against “the policies of imperialism which enslaves woman.” Her act was both an expression of “rage” and “a symbol of the resistance of Kurdish women.”⁷⁷⁹

Zilan was placed next to the deathfast martyrs Kemal Pir, M. Hayri Durmuş, Ali Çiçek and Akif Yılmaz on *Serxwebûn*’s cover after her death (fig. 4.5). Pir provided the caption-like epitaph, his words: “We will die! Others will follow.....how beautiful is resistance,” placed over himself and his comrades. Zilan responded, the caption underneath describing their deaths as “act of loyalty to the people, our nation, the comrades fighting for freedom in the mountains, the resistance of our martyrs, our leader Apo, and our party, the PKK.”⁷⁸⁰ Zilan also placed herself in the history of the Diyarbakır prison resistance. However, she began with the party’s first martyr,



Fig. 4.5 (Left to Right): PKK Martyrs-M. Hayri Durmuş, Kemal Pir, Akif Yılmaz, Ali Çiçek, Zeynep Kınacı (Zilan)
Front Cover of *Serxwebûn* July 1996

Mazlum Doğan. After lighting a match for Newroz, Doğan hung himself in his Diyarbakır prison cell on March 21, 1982. She listed two of the four death-fast martyrs placed next to her on *Serxwebûn*’s July 1996 cover, Hayri (Durmuş) and Kemal (Pir), who were also founding members of the PKK. Next was Ferhat (Kurtay), who, along with Mahmut Zengin, Eşref Anyık

⁷⁷⁷ The phrase is: “Zafer tanrıçamız Zilan yoldaşın vasiyetine bağlılığım.”

⁷⁷⁸ “Ateşten bir koşucu Zilan” (Zilan: The vanguard of the struggle), *Serxwebûn*, June 1997; pg. 11.

⁷⁷⁹ *Zilan Yoldaş Eylemi*,” (Comrade Zilan’s Protest), *Serxwebûn*, July 1996; pg.12.

⁷⁸⁰ She used the word suicide, *intihar*, but put it in quotes. Apo is Öcalan.

and Necmi Öner, rolled up a newspaper, sprayed it with paint, held his friends hands and burned himself alive on May 18, 1982. They died before Pir (September 7), Durmuş (September 12), Yılmaz (September 15), Çiçek (September 17). Zilan then connected her martyrdom to the ‘first’ women of the PKK. Her history of PKK female martyrdom began with the party’s ‘first’ female guerrilla, Besê (Anus), killed by the Turkish army in 1981, three years before Commander Mazlum Korkmaz (Agit) fired the ‘first’ bullet on August 15, 1984 and began the armed struggle. Next was one of the party’s first female commander, Beritan (Gulnaz Karataş). Beritan was killed in 1992 during the Southern War, a battle in the mountains of Northern Iraq between the guerrilla fighters of the PKK guerrilla and the *peşmerga* of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) backed up by Turkish Army. It was after Beritan’s death that the party’s male leadership began to confront the party’s sexism.⁷⁸¹ Besê and Beritan were followed by Rohanî (Bedriye Taş) and Berivan (Nilgün Yıldırım) who immolated themselves on March 21, 1994 in Mannheim, Germany. The letter they left behind protested Germany’s selling of weapons to Turkey and its banning of PKK activities.

Mesut Yeğen describes the PKK as “burst[ing]” into the crowded scene of Turkish and Kurdish leftist politics in the 1970s, singling themselves out by their perception and use of “armed struggle as the main instrument” of political liberation.⁷⁸² Leaving to train in Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley before the 1980 military coup in Turkey, escaping its destruction of the Turkish left, the PKK transformed itself into a guerrilla organization. This transformation, explains Yeğen, changed the “social composition” of the PKK from a group of university students to an organization whose ranks were “filled by the male and female Kurdish youth of the villages

⁷⁸¹ The full-length feature film, *Beritan*, shot, directed, and performed by PKK guerrillas, depicts Karataş’ role in the war as well as her battle with the male attitudes of the PKK’s male leadership; *Beritan*, dir. Halil Uysal, 2006. The film’s director, Halil Uysal was killed by the Turkish Army in April 2006.

⁷⁸² Mesut Yeğen, “Armed Struggle to Peace Negotiations: Independent Kurdistan to Democratic Autonomy, or The PKK in Context,” *Middle East Critique* 25, no. 4 (2016), 371. For the relationship between the Kurdish left and the Turkish left in the 1970s see Joost Jongerden and Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya, “The Kurdistan Workers Party and a New Left in Turkey: Analysis of the revolutionary movement in Turkey through the PKK’s memorial text on Haki Karer,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* [online], 14 (2012), 4, <http://ejts.revues.org/4613>. While the Kurdish left was formed in and by the Turkish left in the 1960s, by the 1970s Kurdish leftists were creating their own organizations. For the Turkish left, Turkey was a semi-colony of “Western capitalist imperialism.” For Kurds, it was also a colonizer of Kurdistan. According to Jongerden and Akkaya, the Turkish left’s blindness to “Turkey’s own role” as a colonizer produced Turkish left-wing nationalism and Kurdish left-wing nationalism “instead of” one “revolutionary left in Turkey.”

oppressed by” Turkey’s military regime.⁷⁸³ In 1987, women in the ranks of the PKK established Union of Patriotic Women of Kurdistan (YJWK) “the first revolutionary and liberationist movement of the women of Kurdistan.” Later the Women's Kurdistan Liberation Union (YAJK) was formed “in the mountains of Kurdistan.” YAJK was a women’s party within the PKK that allowed women “to carry out military actions...defend themselves and...establish free thought.” Women in the PKK recognized the “need for an independent path of resistance for the women of Kurdistan” due to “feudal characteristics of Kurdish Society at the time.” The formation of a woman’s army, was “not only a requirement for the war against the patriarchal system” but a “requirement” to fight sexism within the Kurdish movement.⁷⁸⁴ According to Öcalan:

The one who has an army oppresses. There is no concept such as an army of equality. Where there is equality, there are no armies. Armies appear where there is inequality; one is the oppressor’s army, the other is the army of the oppressed. If, somewhere, there are only men’s armies, this means that the reality of oppressed women is in question. Life vindicates us. As such we should see and know that women army-fication expresses a fundamental value for equality.⁷⁸⁵

As Zilan’s martyr history shows, Kurdish women were part of the beginning of the PKK’s armed resistance. However, it was the 1990s that women joined the Kurdish movement in large numbers. Some left for the mountains and joined the armed struggle. Others participated in the uprisings (*serhildan*) in the streets and towns of Eastern Turkey.⁷⁸⁶ And when Kurdish parties

⁷⁸³ Mesut Yeğen, “Armed Struggle to Peace Negotiations: Independent Kurdistan to Democratic Autonomy,” 371-372. Seevan Saeed argues that the move to Lebanon had two “positive effects” on the party. It consolidated Öcalan’s leadership which prevented “partition” and gave the party “some military, diplomatic and financial support...from the Palestinian liberation movement and Syrian government”; *Kurdish Politics in Turkey: From the PKK to the KCK* (Routledge: London and New York, 2017), 54.

⁷⁸⁴ “The Kurdistan Woman’s Liberation Movement,” *HPG* [online], accessed November 15, 2018, <http://www.hezenparastin.org/eng/index.php/guencel-yazlar/1443-the-kurdistan-womans-liberation-movement>. For the Kurdish women’s movement theory of female liberation (*jineoloji*) see “*Koma Jinên Bilind*,” KJK [online], <http://www.kjk-online.org/hakkimizda/?lang=en>. The PKK was not the first Kurdish guerrilla group to form female fighting units. Komalah (the Komala Communist Party of Iranian Kurdistan) formed female units during the Kurdish Rebellion in 1979 (broke out in Iranian Kurdistan against the Islamic regime after the Iranian Revolution). Komalah, like the PKK, is in exile in Northern Iraq.

⁷⁸⁵ Qtd. in Çağlayan, “From Kawa the Blacksmith to Ishtar the Goddess,” 20. According to Çağlayan, in the 1980s Öcalan “spoke to militant men about how they should treat women.” In the 1990s he “spoke with women militants about men.”

⁷⁸⁶ The beginning of the ‘low intensity conflict’ between the Turkish Army and the PKK. In the early 1990s, the Turkish state burned and evacuated Kurdish villages (destroy the PKK’s logistical support) as well as targeting Kurdish journalists, activists, politicians and intellectuals (assassinations, arrests, torture, censorship, closing down of newspapers).

entered legal politics Kurdish women were “elected as mayors and deputies.”⁷⁸⁷ On March 8, 1998, Öcalan announced the “Women’s Liberation Ideology,” integrating the struggle of the women of Kurdistan with the struggle of the women of the world. On March 21, Yüce set fire to herself.⁷⁸⁸

5.2.2 The Daughter of Mount Ararat

Like the editors of *Serxwebûn*, Yüce wove herself into the history of PKK martyrdom. She placed herself amongst its Newroz martyrs—after Mazlum Doğan and at the deathbed of Zekiye Alkan⁷⁸⁹—and in the mountains, with YAJK commander Berivan during the Southern War and Ronahi (Andrea Wolfe), the German internationalist who was fighting with the women of YAJK, executed after being captured by Turkish soldiers five months after Yüce’s death by self-immolation.⁷⁹⁰ However, Yüce and Zilan were the “pioneers of feminist struggle,” their deaths in June transforming it into the month in which “the tradition of resistance gained...concreteness.”⁷⁹¹

⁷⁸⁷ Çağlayan, “From Kawa the Blacksmith to Ishtar the Goddess,” 2. The Kurdish women’s movement includes a wide variety of actors and organizations. Although the PKK and the elected Kurdish opposition are separate organizations, they shared political constituencies and many of the same goals, policies, and philosophies of women’s liberation. See Çağlayan’s *Analar, Yoldaşlar, Tanrıçalar: Kürt Hareketinde Kadınlar ve Kadın Kimliğinin Oluşumu* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007).

⁷⁸⁸ Eventually YAJK this transformed into the Free Women’s Party of Kurdistan (PAJK) which if one of the “components” of the women’s movement in Bakur (Northern Kurdistan, Turkey). PAJK (the counterpart to the PKK) is the “ideological component,” the Free Women’s Union (YJA) is the “social component,” and the Free Women’s Units (YJA-Star) are the “self-defence force” (like the People’s Defence Force-HPG, of the PKK). The women’s organizations fall under the direction of Koma Jinên Bilind (KJB), the High Women’s Council that operates alongside the Koma Civakên Kurdistan (KCK), an umbrella organization that encompasses the various committees, parties, forces, and organizations within the various parts of Kurdistan. Women fight with the mixed units of the HPG and in the women only units of YJA-Star

⁷⁸⁹ Alkan immolated herself on March 21, 1990 in Diyarbakır. When her body was taken to Ankara for examination, Yüce, a sociology student at Middle East Technical University, served as one of her *nöbetçi* (lit. guard). “Ararat’ın Serhıldanı” (Ararat’s Uprising), *Serwebûn*, June 1998; pg. 17.

⁷⁹⁰ Some biographies of Andrea Wolf describe her as a member of the Red Army Faction (RAF) who joined the PKK in 1996 and fought with YAJK while other sources describe her as a human rights activist who was writing a book about the organization when she was killed by the Turkish army. In 2011, her body was found in a mass grave in Çatak (southeast of Van) along with a number of PKK fighters. A number of witnesses came forward to testify that Wolf had been tortured and executed (whereas the army said she had been shot during battle). Before her body was found, Wolf’s mother took her case to the European Court of Human Rights and Turkey was convicted of extra-judicial murder (violating of Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights).

⁷⁹¹ “Şehitler Gerçeği Anlam Gücüne Ulaşmayı ve Ciddi Olmayı Şart Koşar” (The conditions and meaning of the Martyr’s truth), *Serxwebûn*, June 2008; pg. 70.

In November of 1998, Yüce was placed again on *Serxwebûn*'s frontpage to commemorate the founding of the PKK on November 27, 1978 (fig. 4.6). Sema sat next to Korkmaz, placed in the image to link the party's foundation with the beginning of armed struggle. In the middle is Zilan.



Fig. 4.6: 'Founders' of the PKK (Left to Right): Sema Yüce, Mazlum Korkmaz, Zilan, Haki Karer, Abdullah Öcalan (*Serxwebûn*, November 1998)

Between Zilan and Öcalan is Haki Karer, one of founders of the PKK, the Turkish leftist from the Black Sea who is considered the party's "first militant." Karer was assassinated on 18 March, 1977.⁷⁹² In the far-right corner, at the top, was Öcalan. "The dead body coming from the mountains" argues Hisyar Ozsoy, "created...an air of Revolution" in Kurdistan in the 1990s.⁷⁹³ The Turkish state prohibited the families of PKK guerrilla from burying their bodies, dumping their corpses in unmarked graves. This was both a form of punishment and form of political suppression, the state trying to prevent funerals from becoming huge protests and graves turning into sites of resistance and commemoration. Many bodies remained unclaimed, their family members afraid that they too would end up mutilated and dead in the town square.⁷⁹⁴ At their second party conference in 1990, the PKK announced that martyrs should not be left unclaimed "under any circumstances," deciding that they had to be "buried in a way worthy of them."

⁷⁹² Jongerden and Akkaya describe Karer as one of the "architects" of the PKK and an "example of international solidarity"; "The Kurdistan Workers Party and a New Left in Turkey," 8. In an interview with *Internationalist Commune*, Mustafa Karasu, the co-chair person of the PPK, spoke about how in 1975 Karer and Abdurrahman Ayhan took a bunch of "books about national liberation movements and Marxist classics" and left for "Agirî with great enthusiasm" to fight for the liberation of Kurdistan; "The first militant, the first comrade, the first martyr," *Internationalist Commune* [online], accessed June 30, 2019, <https://internationalistcommune.com/the-first-militant-the-first-comrade-the-first-martyr/>.

⁷⁹³ Hisyar Ozsoy, "Between Gift and Taboo," 48.

⁷⁹⁴ Aras, "The formation of Kurdishness in Turkey," 139. For a discussion of perpetrator graffiti circled on social media during 2015 (urban warfare between Kurdish youth and Turkish army in towns in Eastern Turkey) see Beja Protne, "Reading and feeling gender in perpetrator graffiti and photography in Turkey," *Kurdish Studies* 1 (2018), 59-83.

Kurds, however, were already reclaiming their dead. Ozsoy cites the struggle over the body of Binevş Agal (Berivan), a female Yezidi member of the PKK, as the beginning of the reclaiming and burying of PKK martyrs in a “way worthy of them.” Dead bodies became the “symbolic glue” of Kurdish subjectivity, massive and ritualized funerals in the 1990s transforming them into martyrs who had “witnessed” the suffering and resistance of the Kurdish nation.⁷⁹⁵ With the party’s shift away from the goal of a Kurdish nation-state after kidnapping and imprisonment of Öcalan in 1999, the dead became a site of struggle within the Kurdish community. But the renewal of armed struggle after failures of peace always puts “the dead back at the center stage of the conflict between Kurds and the state.”⁷⁹⁶

During the Mount Ararat Uprising, Turkish gendarme officer, Zühtü Güven, noted how the Kurdish rebels rode into battle in order to retrieve their dead. During a two-day battle in Taşburun, north of Ararat, Güven saw the dead “thrown over the bandits’ shoulders and carried quickly away.” When he handed the severed head of the Kurdish ‘bandit’ who had been ‘terrorizing’ the citizens of the Republic from Erzurum to Kars to a young soldier, he told him to display it to the Kurdish villagers while delivering it to the governor in Kars.⁷⁹⁷ As Güven’s memoir of the Mount Ararat Uprising suggests, struggles over dead bodies have been at the centre of Kurdish resistance in Turkey for a long time. While the meaning of dead bodies had changed in Kurdistan, the act of bequeathal—the dead leaving “legacies to their descendants” in order to continue their “struggle for mastery and dignity”—and the inheritance of these legacies—the living reaching “over the threshold to draw from [their] potency” has remained.⁷⁹⁸

For fellow PKK *şehit*, the musician Hozan Serhat, Yüce was “Ararat’s revolutionary girl,” his song “*Ağrı’nın İsyân Kızı*” beginning by describing the “ember of fire” that “engulfed” her body as an “oath of revenge.” Her eyes were “focused on the rising sun” as she placed “her finger on

⁷⁹⁵ Ozsoy, “Between Gift and Taboo,” 60. Martyrs are not only “symbolic glue,” explains Ozsoy. “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.”

⁷⁹⁶ Ozsoy, 2.

⁷⁹⁷ Rohat Alakom, *Bir Türk Subayının Ağrı İsyânı Anıları* (Istanbul: Avesta, 2011), 76 & 43-44.

⁷⁹⁸ Vincent Brown, *The Reaper’s Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2008), 310.

the trigger” of her weapon.⁷⁹⁹ Yüce is “witness to history,” sings Serhat, the “the bloody hands of the Turkish executioner” (*eli kanlı rom celladı*) “recoiling” when he took her “young body.”⁸⁰⁰ In the chorus Serhat, who like Yüce was born in Ağrı, celebrated her as both the “storm” of Ararat and the “star of freedom,” the yellow star the symbol of the PKK:

Hey Ağrı’s revolutionary girl,
Hey freedom’s star,
Ararat’s revolutionary daughter,
Hey the star of freedom,
Hey storm of the mountains,
Sema, the goddess of peace.⁸⁰¹

For the “descendants” of the Ararat rebels, Yüce was both the PKK’s *Ararat’ın isyan kızı*, Ağrı’s revolutionary girl, and *Ağrı İsyanı’nın kızı*, the daughter of the Mount Ararat Uprising, her incorporation into the banner reanimating earlier histories of resistance in Kurdistan. The PKK’s journal, *Serxwebûn*, also inserted Yüce into the history of the Mount Ararat Uprising. While the June 1998 cover called her *Ararat’ın Serhıldanı* (Ararat’s Uprising), the inside pages described her as growing up in Ağrı hearing the stories of Mem û Zin and the Mount Ararat Uprising.⁸⁰² The Mount Ararat Uprising is often written in PKK literature as a “primitive” (tribal) resistance.⁸⁰³ However, Öcalan also argued that the tradition of ‘primitive’ resistance was “even more pronounced among [Kurdish] women.”⁸⁰⁴ Kurdish women’s “strength and courage”

⁷⁹⁹ “*Kor ateşten gelin diye, sardı bütün bedenini. Gözler şafak el tetikte, etti intikam yemini.*” Hozan Serhat (Süleyman Alpdoğan) joined the PKK a year before Yüce and was martyred a year after her. Like Yüce he was from Ağrı, born in Patnos in 1971. Serhat was martyred/killed by the Turkish army in Hakkari after he crossed the Iraqi-Turkish border in order to make a music video in Botan (one of the regions, like Serhed/Serhat, of Bakur or Northern Kurdistan). For his biography see: <http://www.sosyalistforum.net/olumsuzler/3566-suleyman-alpdogan-ozan-serhad.html>.

⁸⁰⁰ “*Tarih şahit sema yoldaş, ölüm utandı kendinden. Eli kanlı rom celladı, ürktü o genç bedeninden.*” *Rom* (the Roman Empire) was the term Kurds used to describe attackers from the West. Nuri uses it throughout his memoirs to refer to the Turkish state (see the editor’s footnote, number 2, on page 23 of his memoir, *Ağrı Dağı İsyani*).

⁸⁰¹ “*Hey ağrının isyan kızı, hey özgürlüğün yıldızı, araratın isyan kızı, hey özgürlüğün yıldızı, hey dağların fırtınası, sema barış tanrıçası.*”

⁸⁰² Mem û Zin is a classic Kurdish love story that was written down in the 17th century by the Kurdish poet and philosopher, Ahmedê Xani. Ahmedê Xani is buried in Doğubayazıt, his türbe (masoleum) a place of pilgrimage and a popular spot for picnics. When people in Doğubayazıt want to reaffirm that something they have said is the truth they invoke `Xani Baba.`

⁸⁰³ Abdullah Öcalan, *Prison Writings: The PKK and the Kurdish Question in the 21st Century*, trans. & ed. Klaus Happel (London: Transmedia, 2011), 44. Öcalan describes the rebellions of the 19th and 20th century as taking place under the “shadow of capitalist colonialism” and summarizes the “Kurdish Dilemma” of the 19th and 20th centuries as “defeat.” If Kurds revolted they were defeated. If they accepted their fate they were at the “mercy of regional and external powers,” (pg. 41).

⁸⁰⁴ Öcalan, *The PKK and the Kurdish Question*, 49.

wrote the leader of the PKK “originate from this very old historical tradition.”⁸⁰⁵ The banner’s placement of Yüce in front of Ararat reanimated this “very old” tradition of women’s resistance in Kurdistan. At the same time, it put the uprising in the PKK’s history of female liberation, Yüce kneeling in front of Ararat highlighting the immensity of a struggle that Öcalan’s described as being as “big as Mount Ararat.”⁸⁰⁶

5.2.3 Early Histories of Women’s Resistance (Written by the Woman of the PKK)

The women of Mount Ararat do not surface in the literature of the PKK. However, in a publication of the Free Women’s Academy, *Dağlarında Özgür Yaşam Deneyimleri*, room is left for them inbetween the stories of Zarife and Besê of Dersim.⁸⁰⁷ “Despite the feudal structure of Kurdish society women fought beside men during uprisings of 1920s and 1930s.” While Zarife and Besê are the “most striking examples” of the resistance of the Kurdish women in the first decades of the Turkish Republic “thousands of women participated in these rebellions.”⁸⁰⁸ *The Experiences of Liberation in the Mountains of Kurdistan* describes Besê’s struggle as both a commitment to Kurdish liberation and resistance to domination, arguing that the latter was

⁸⁰⁵ Abdullah Öcalan, *Liberating Life: Woman’s Revolution* (Cologne: International Initiative “Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan-Peace in Kurdistan,” 2013), 39. “Because a premature statehood would have caused their [Kurds] elimination, they seemed to have preferred a semi-nomadic, semiguerrilla life style. As more and more states were established around them, they felt an increasing need to strengthen their tribal structures. Kurdish tribalism resembled the lifestyle of a guerrilla group. When we take a closer look at the family within the tribal organisation, we see the prominence of matriarchy and freedom. Women were quite influential and free...However, a negative aspect of tribal life is that opportunities to make the transition to a more advanced society are restricted...The situation of women throughout the world is bad, but that of Kurdish women is nothing but terrible slavery...and unique in many respects. In fact, the [present] situations of both women and children are appalling....In its freedom struggle for the Kurdish people, the PKK did not only fight against the crippling effects of colonialism; above all, it struggled against internal feudalism in order to change the status of women and end the enslavement of society in general.”

⁸⁰⁶ Abdullah Öcalan, *Kürdistan’da kadın ve aile* (Weşanên Serxwebûn, 1993), 50. The full phrase is: “*Ulusal kurtuluş sürecimizde aile engelini her yönüyle görmek gerekir. Bunun önünde sivriltelen, Ağrı Dağı gibi yükseltilmek istenen bir engeldir.*”

⁸⁰⁷ “The Experiences of Liberation in the Mountains of Kurdistan,” *Kürdistan Dağlarında Özgür Yaşam Deneyimleri-1* (*Özgür Kadın Akademisi Yayınları*), published online. In many ways, “The Experiences of the Liberation in the Mountains of Kurdistan,” is similar to the party’s readings of the Kurdish rebellions of the 1920s and 1930s. The Sheikh Said Rebellion lacked “organization and discipline.” It was the “lack of weapons and ammunition,” the “failure” to employ guerilla tactics, and “betrayal” that led to the defeat of the Ararat rebels five years later. However, in Dersim guerrilla methods were used, Seyit Riza killed when he tried to “negotiate with state,” 159-160. Zarife participated in both the Koçgırı Rebellion (1921), an Alevi uprising in Dersim before Ararat, and afterwards in Dersim (1937-1939). Seyit Rize was the leader of the Dersim Rebellion, hung and buried in an unmarked grave like Sheikh Said. While the authors call Besê the wife of Seyit Riza it states that her decision to join the rebellion came from her “own strength, confidence, patriotism and determination, (pgs. 150 & 175).

⁸⁰⁸ “*Kürdistan Dağlarında Özgür Yaşam Deneyimleri-1*,” 150.

particularly important for women. When Besê “ran out of bullets she threw rocks at the planes” that were bombing Dersim.”⁸⁰⁹ Like Besê, anonymous female PKK authors of the document call Zarife a “female warrior” (*savaşkan bir kadındır*) who always had a weapon at her side. For the authors, Besê and Zarife’s legacy for Kurdish women is “the resistance to oppression, colonialism, and patriarchy.” They fought despite the fact that “women experience most of the violence of war.”⁸¹⁰ In a 2015 article in the ‘pro-Kurdish’ newspaper, *Yeni Özgür Politika*, Zarife is the “first Kurdish female guerrilla.” The paper removes Zarife from the “tradition” of women’s resistance in Kurdistan that included Kara Fatma, the celebrated Ottoman heroine of Crimean War, arguing that, unlike Kara Fatma, Zarife fought against rather than for the state.⁸¹¹ Two years later, Zeyno, who fought in the Mount Ararat Uprising and was murdered alongside her husband when they surrendered in 1931, appeared in another article by *Yeni Özgür Politika* about the tradition of female resistance in Kurdistan. According to the newspaper, her final words were a reminder that “you die, you don’t surrender.”⁸¹² The article’s title, “*Dağların Piri*” (the saint of the mountains), re-appropriates Grup Yorum’s celebration of the resistance of Zeyno’s husband, Reşo, as the “*dağların piri*,” reusing it in their description of the important place women have in the “sung history” of Kurdistan. At the same time, they removed the story of Zeyno from Grup Yorum’s placement of it within Şivan Perwer’s song “*Keçe Kurdan*,” (Kurdish girls). On the Grup Yorum 1992 album *Cesaret* (courage) “*Keçe Kurdan*” and “*Dağların piri*” were sung as one song.⁸¹³

The women of Rojava are the background to the reanimations of the resistance of Kurdish women from the 1920s and 1930s. The western press’s celebration of the female fighters of the YPG (Peoples’ Protection Units), reminiscent of nineteenth century images of ‘manly and bold’

⁸⁰⁹ “*Kürdistan Dağlarında Özgür Yaşam Deneyimleri-1*,” 175.

⁸¹⁰ “*Kürdistan Dağlarında Özgür Yaşam Deneyimleri-1*,” 175-176.

⁸¹¹ “*Kürtlerin ilk kadın gerillası: Zarife*,” *Yeni Özgür Politika* [online], March 11, 2015, accessed November 1, 2018, <http://yeniozgurpolitika.net/kurtlerin-ilk-kadyn-gerillasy-zarife/>.

⁸¹² “*Dağların Piri*,” *Yeni Özgür Politika* [online], December 20, 2017, accessed November 1, 2018 www.yeniozgurpolitika.com/index.php?rupel=nuce&id=80751.

⁸¹³ The two songs, Grup Yorum’s “Reşo” and Şivan Perwer’s “Kurdish Girl” are listed together as “Reşo & Keçe Kurdan.” The opening lines of Reşo are: “*Reşo dağların piri, düze inmez kederi, yol yokuş yolcu çıplak, bilinmez mi nedeni*.” Grup Yorum was formed after the 1980 Turkish Coup. Their music is a “commentary” (*yorum* means commentary in Turkish) on Turkish and Kurdish history, politics, and culture.

Kurdish women, has been dismissed by both Kurdish and Muslim feminists as Orientalist.⁸¹⁴ The Kurdish female guerilla, Zilan Diyar, however, welcomes this celebration. The problem with the “western” narratives of the resistance of Kurdish women, she argues, is that they have “no past or future.” After asking if their “calendar did not run parallel to the world's calendar,” Diyar offers a history of woman’s resistance in Kurdistan:

In the cry of Zilan...who detonated herself in 1996 is the breath of Besê, who threw herself off the cliffs in the Dersîm uprising in the 1930s, saying "You cannot catch me alive" and that of Berîtan, who surrendered neither her body, nor her weapon to the enemy, when she threw herself off the mountain cliffs in 1992.⁸¹⁵

Zilan Diyar’s history of the tradition of female resistance of Kurdistan is what Carrie Hamilton calls a “history still happening.”⁸¹⁶ Like the banner at the commemoration of the Mount Ararat Rebellion, Yüce flashes up to claim her place in this history, a “flash” that faintly illuminates the women of Mount Ararat:

I will die in my homeland," is hidden the odin of the rebellious Zarife, who fought in the Dersim uprising...Sema Yüce (Serhildan), who set herself on fire in protest in a Turkish prison in 1998, whispered the secrets of the fire to Leyla Wali Hussein (Viyan Soran), who self-immolated in 2006 to draw attention to the situation of Abdullah Öcalan...Those who today wonder about why the "Girl with the Red Scarf", a Turkish girl, who was disillusioned from the state after the Gezi-Park protests, would join the mountains, would have known the answer if they had known Ekin Ceren Dogruak (Amara), a Turkish revolutionary woman in the PKK whose grave stone says "The girl of the sea who fell in love with the mountains"...Those surprised at the US Americans, Canadians joining the YPG are those who do not know Andrea Wolf, a German internationalist in the PKK, who was murdered in 1998 and whose bones were thrown into a mass grave, and whose memorial could not be tolerated by the state.

⁸¹⁴ Dilar Dirik, “Western fascination with 'badass' Kurdish women” *Aljazeera.com*, October 29, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/10/western-fascination-with-badass-2014102112410527736.html>. Dirik’s invocation of the long history of armed Kurdish women includes Kara Fatma “who led a battalion of almost 700” which was “very unusual for the period” and Leyla Qasim (first woman to be executed by the Iraqi Baath party). In Aisha Tasbeeh Herwees’, “How Not to Talk About the Women Soldiers Fighting ISIS,” October 10, 2014, <https://www.good.is/articles/kurdish-women-soldier-controversy>, argues that the “Western press celebrates the Kurdish women fighters because they reinforce commonly held views about religious extremism and sexism in the region.” She offers a history of brave Muslim women going back to the Prophet’s wife Aisha in their place. For a summary of the debates over images of Kurdish women fighters in Syria see Susan Benson-Sokmen, “The Limits of “Western” Feminist Engagement with Kurdish Female Militancy,” *muftah* [online], March 20, 2017, <http://muftah.org/limits-western-feminist-engagement-kurdish-female-fighters/#.WNUlojsrI2w>

⁸¹⁵ Zilan Diyar, “The Whole World is Talking About Us,” *Kurdish Question* [online], December 23, 2014, accessed March 15, 2015, <http://kurdishquestion.com/oldarticle.php?aid=the-whole-world-is-talking-about-us-kurdish-women> (originally published in Turkish in *Yeni Özgür Politika* as “*Vakit Geldi*”, The Time has Come.)

⁸¹⁶ Hamilton, *Women of the ETA*, 10.

For Zilan Diyar, the women of the YPG have “picked up their rifles” and marched to “Shengal, Kobanê, Botan, and Serhat.”⁸¹⁷

5.2.4 Histories of Kurdish Women’s Resistance (not written by the Woman of the PKK)



Fig. 4.7: “Savagenes of the ‘Crazy Girl’” (Zilan as a cartoon on the front page of *Milliyet*, July 2, 1996)

Like the women of the Mount Ararat Uprising, Yüce did not appear in the pages of the Turkish press. Zilan, however, has. Two days after she exploded a bomb against herself in a group of Turkish soldiers during a flag raising ceremony in Dersim (Tunceli), *Milliyet* put her on their front page as “the PKK’s live bomb female militant.” The paper’s description of Zilan as a “live bomb” (*canlı bombası*) sat underneath a huge headline that described her attack as: “The Crazy Girl’s Savagery,” on July 2, 1996. The editors, however, placed quotation marks around ‘crazy girl’ (*deli kız*, *kız* also means daughter). Like the Republican press during the Mount Ararat Uprising, *Milliyet* used a cartoon to reaffirm the ‘backwardness’ of Kurdish resistance (fig. 4.7). Underneath the huge headline, Zilan appeared as a cartoon, her *şalvar* (traditional, baggy trousers) and slippers invoking *Cumhuriyet*, *Vakit* and *Akşam*’s cartoons of Kurdish male ‘bandits’ during the suppression of the Mount Ararat Uprising in the summer of 1930. Her sheepskin vest, now filled with explosives, transformed the ‘bandits’ of Mount Ararat into a

⁸¹⁷ Diyar, “The Whole World is Talking About Us.”

Kurdish female ‘terrorist.’⁸¹⁸ Drawn with her left foot in front of her right, Zilan walked past a picture of group of Turkish soldiers holding framed portraits of the eight men she killed. The next day *Milliyet* placed a photo of Zilan on its front page (fig. 4.8). The headline below informed its readers that Zeynep’s husband was also a “terrorist” who “accustomed her to terrorism.” The caption above described the photo as “the bomber Zeynep caught on camera taking an oath before the attack.”⁸¹⁹ The same photo of Zilan, uncaptioned, appeared in



Fig. 4.8 (Left): Zilan in *Milliyet*, July 3, 1996; Fig. 4.9 (Right): Zilan in *Serxwebûn* July, 1996

Serxwebûn in July (fig. 4.9). The cartoon of Zilan from July 2 front walked onto page twelve on July 3, the paper using it to frame their investigation of her psychological state before the ‘savage’ attack.⁸²⁰ On July 4, *Milliyet*’s front page asked: “Was the girl bomber Sakık’s secretary?” The picture of Zilan “taking an oath” was placed in the corner of a photo of PKK commander Şemdin Sakık.⁸²¹ Repeating the question on page twelve, *Milliyet* claimed that her

⁸¹⁸ “‘Deli kız’ vahşeti” (The Savagery of the ‘Crazy Girl’), *Milliyet*, July 2, 1996; pg. 1.

⁸¹⁹ “‘Teröre kocası alıştırdı,’” (Her husband accustomed her to terrorism), *Milliyet*, July 3, 1996; pg. 1. The paper referred to her by her given name, Zeynep Kınacı, rather than her ‘PKK’ name, Zilan.

⁸²⁰ “‘PKK’ dan deli kız bombası” (The crazy girl bomber from the PKK), *Milliyet*, July 3, 1996; pg. 12. *Deli kız bombası* was written in italics.

⁸²¹ “‘Bombacı kız Sakık’ın sekreteri mi?” *Milliyet*, July 4, 1996; 1. Sakık, known by the nickname Parmaksiz Zeki (“missing a finger” Zeki), ordered an ambush on group of unarmed Turkish military recruits on Elazığ-Bingöl highway on May 24, 1993 (they executed 33 soldiers and 5 civilians). The PKK claim that he undertook the attack on his own. Sakık was captured by Turkish forces in 1998 and gave information to state that led to capture of Öcalan. According to PKK sources, Sakık was involved in a coup against Öcalan and had fled to Northern Iraq when he was taken into Turkish custody. See Aliza Marcus, *The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007), 261-265. He is the brother of Kurdish politician Sırrı Sakık (Ağrı’s first Kurdish mayor, see Chapter I).

“written order” from PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan had been given to her by Sakık. She was part of Sakık’s “harem” of “twenty-five terrorist” women stated *Milliyet*, adding that “she never left his side.” The paper had also interviewed one of her former teachers at İnönü University in Malatya, one of eastern Turkey’s largest universities. According to the professor she had “family troubles” (she had been “neglected”) and “difficulties” at school (she was “unattractive” and never saw anyone”).⁸²² When the Kurdish festival in Cologne, Germany later that year renamed itself the “Zeynep Kinacı International Festival” *Milliyet* cited its use of the name of a “terrorist” as proof that the Kurdish movement was not interested in peace.⁸²³ In 2007, after Dersim mayor Songül Erol Abdil called Zilan and Yüce “pioneers of the Kurdish women’s struggle” during the commemoration of November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, *Milliyet* asked their readers how a women who blew herself up in “a group of soldiers and a women who set herself on fire” could be symbols of the “struggle” to eliminate violence against women.⁸²⁴ Turkish newspapers continue to cite the use of Zilan’s name to argue that Kurds are not interested in peace. But every time they invoke the violence of ‘women from the PKK’ they also reaffirm the continuing history of women’s resistance in Kurdistan.⁸²⁵

5.2.5 The History of Zilan’s Resistance as Written by ‘Terrorism Experts’

The women of the PKK are repeatedly cited in the literature on ‘female terrorism.’ Echoing the Zilan’s former professor, Erdogan Celebi, describing himself as “a doctrine officer at the Center of Excellence Defense against Terrorism in Ankara,” lists excitement, hormones, unattractiveness, and childhood maladjustment as some of reasons Kurdish women participate in ‘PKK terrorism.’ He then places the women of the PKK in a timeless and unbounded history of female violence, a history that includes (but is it not confined to): 19th century Russian

⁸²² “*Bombacı kız Sakık’ın sekreteri mi?*” *Milliyet*, July 4, 1996; 12.

⁸²³ “*PKK Şovuna barış maskesi*” (Mask of Peace on the PKK Show), *Milliyet*, September 22, 1996; pg. 19.

⁸²⁴ “*PKK’lı Kadınları övmüştü*” (PKK women praised), *Milliyet*, November 28, 2007; pg. 16.

⁸²⁵ For example, in a recent article in the online english version of *Daily Sabah* (controlled by the ruling Justice and Development Party), the paper claimed that Istanbul’s disputed mayor, Ekrem İmamoğlu of the opposition Republican People’s Party was supported by ‘terrorists’ (and therefore supported terrorism). The PKK command had given their support to the “anti-fascist forces” that were protesting the election board’s decision to invalidate İmamoğlu’s win in March 2019 (he won the re-election, with a higher percent of the vote, in June). The paper cited the “first suicide attack on Turkish security forces” during a “flag-raising ceremony” by the PKK’s “Zeynep Kinacı, code-named Zilan” in its long list of violence against the Turkish state in order to prove that İmamoğlu was ‘disloyal’ and unfit to govern Turkey’s largest city; “Senior PKK terrorist declares support for CHP’s İmamoğlu,” *Daily Sabah* [online], May 10, 2019, accessed June 4, 2019, <https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2019/05/10/senior-pkk-terrorist-declares-support-for-chps-imamoglu>.

anarchists; New Left Terrorism (Japanese Red Army, Red Army Faction, Italy's Red Brigades); the 'suicide bombers' of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade; and finally, the 'black widows' of Chechnya.⁸²⁶ Part of Zilan's letter is cited in and by this literature (although in Celebi's article on the "role of women in the PKK" she does not 'speak'). In political scientist Paige Eager Whaley's *From Freedom Fighters to Terrorists: Women and Political Violence* part of Zilan's letter is placed in a chapter about 'female suicide terrorism':

I shout to the whole world: Hear me open your eyes! We are children of a people that has had their country taken away and has been scattered to the four corners of the world....We long for peace....We do not want to cause war, to die or to kill. But there is no other way of gaining our freedom.⁸²⁷

Whaley uses part of Zilan's letter to answer the chapter's main question: Are "women doing this out of political conviction or personal shame"? She reads Zilan's letter and concludes that PKK are "fanatically committed." Her claims that the PKK's 'female bombers' were "school drop outs" and came from "crowded and poor families" is based on an article written by Turkish Sociologist Dogu Ergil.⁸²⁸ As Zilan was a university graduate, Whaley's reuse of Ergil negates the inclusion of her 'voice.' And while Whaley cites Ergil, Ergil fails to provide citations for most of his claims about PKK women. After Whaley's use of part of Zilan's letter, she again relies on Ergil to argue that Leyla Kaplan was "forced to become a bomb."⁸²⁹ A footnote at the bottom of the page, however, admits that Ergil "did not provide a citation for this allegation."⁸³⁰ The same part of Zilan's letter is quoted in V.G. Julie Rajan's *Women Suicide Bombers: Narratives of Violence*.⁸³¹ Unlike Whaley, Rajan criticizes both Ergil's explanations of the 'unexplainable' violence of 'women bombers' (coercion, dishonor, the result of joining a 'men's

⁸²⁶ Erdogan Celebi, "Female Separatism: The Role of Women in PKK/KONGRA-GEL Terrorist Organization, in *Terrorism and the Internet: Threats-Target Groups-Deradicalisation strategies*, ed. Hans-Liudger Dienel et al. (Amsterdam; Berlin; Tokyo; Washington, 2010), 106.

⁸²⁷ Paige Eager Whaley. "Female Suicide Bombers: Analyzing the Aberrant Woman's Paradox," in *From Freedom Fighters to Terrorists: Women and Political Violence* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 176. Her source for Zilan's letter is Ali Kemal Özcan's *Turkey's Kurds: a theoretical analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006). Özcan analyzes Zilan's letter to show the organization's reliance on the talks of Öcalan rather than Marxist texts.

⁸²⁸ The article is Ergil's "Suicide Terrorism in Turkey," *Civil Wars* 3, no. 1 (2000), 37-54.

⁸²⁹ On October 25, 1996 seventeen-year-old Leyla Kaplan (Rewşen) exploded a bomb against herself at the headquarters of Adana's riot police killing herself and three police officers. Like Zilan, she left a letter that explained her action.

⁸³⁰ Whaley, "Female Suicide Bombers." 176.

⁸³¹ V.G. Julie Rajan, *Women Suicide Bombers: Narratives of Violence* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

world’) and his methods, noting that not only does Ergil fail to back up his claims with evidence he relies on “biased sources.” Rajan provides counterarguments for the claims and gendered assumptions of security experts. For example, to refute Ergil’s conclusion that women were exploited in and by the PKK’s ‘suicide missions,’ she points out the “according to PKK laws” women hold forty percent of the organization’s leadership positions. Like Whaley, she repeats the number of PKK women who have participated in ‘suicide missions.’ Her statement that Zilan was one of eleven ‘women bombers’ out of a total twenty operations reinforces her argument about the party’s gender makeup.⁸³² Whaley, on the other hand, cites Mia Bloom’s statistic that eleven women participated in a total of fifteen PKK ‘suicide’ operations. Bloom statistic that the PPK’s “overwhelming” use of ‘women bombers’ highlights her view that the party’s gender policies had perhaps gone too far. Bloom, like Ergil, does not provide a citation for the statistic.⁸³³ The introduction to Bloom’s *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror*, asks: “How bad does your life have to be to blow yourself up?” Her chapter on the PKK (“Halting Terror from within: The PKK in Turkey”) answers, arguing that the PKK’s ‘female suicide bombers’ were “overwhelmingly” poor, uneducated, and unmarried. Bloom’s statistic is also used by Ophir Falk and Hadas Kroitoru to highlight their argument about the “internationalization” of ‘female suicide terrorism.’ They cite Bloom to claim that as “many of the PKK attackers were women” and the party has “generally relied on guerrilla methods” they had “very much reject[ed] the precedent set by the LTTE.”⁸³⁴ Margaret Gonzalez-Perez rejects this gendering of the violence of the PKK, arguing that the women of the PKK are not “expendable measures of last resort” but women “extremely active in combat” who engage in “in terrorist activity at all levels with hope of transforming their society into one that embraces gender equality.”⁸³⁵

⁸³² Rajan, *Women Suicide Bombers*, 176. Rajan repeats many of Margaret Gonzalez-Perez’s criticisms of the literature: *Female Activity in Domestic and International Terror Groups* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2008). Gonzalez-Perez is the source for her statistic. However, she misquotes it. Gonzalez-Perez gives the statistic of 11 out of 15 which is from Ergil “Suicide Terrorism in Turkey: The Workers’ Party of Kurdistan” in *Countering Suicide Terrorism: An International Conference* (Herzliya: The International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism 2001), 119.

⁸³³ Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 102. Bloom is also the author of *Bombshell: Women and Terrorism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

⁸³⁴ Ophir Falk and Hadas Kroitoru, “The Internationalization of Suicide Terrorism” in *Understanding and Confronting the Threat*, eds. Ophir Falk and Henry Morgenstern (Hoboken, NJ: Hoboken, 2009), 254.

⁸³⁵ Gonzalez-Perez, *Female Activity in Domestic and International Terror Groups*, 88.

In the end, the placement of Zilan in “frameworks” that seek to understand “generally the position of women in geographies deploying women bombers” (both the work of male ‘security experts’ and feminist political scientists) severs the women of the PKK from each other (Zilan no longer bound to Yüce) and to the history of women’s resistance in Kurdistan (both disconnected from the Kurdish women’s movement and earlier histories of women’s resistance). Whether confined temporally to the ‘present’ of ‘suicide terrorism’ or placed in the unbounded geographies of ‘women bombers,’ Zilan’s letter remains untranslated.⁸³⁶ As Bloom admits, her stories of ‘female suicide bombers’ have no space to “recount the complex history of Kurds.”⁸³⁷ It is not that Kurdish women lack “the epistemic privilege that would qualify their experiences as a source of knowledge.”⁸³⁸ Rather, as the next section of the chapter argues, they are disconnected from the audience that makes meaning out of their resistance. “Violence is wielded and resisted in the idiom of a society’s distinctive history,” contend Fernando Coronil and Julia Skurski.⁸³⁹ In other words, in order to understand the ongoing histories of female martyrdom you need to read them from Kurdistan.

5.3 Bequeathal and Inheritance

5.3.1 Ömer



Fig. 4.10: Grave of Ömer Köç, Doğubayazıt, Spring 2012

⁸³⁶ Rajan, *Women Suicide Bombers*, 201.

⁸³⁷ Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 106.

⁸³⁸ Banu Bargu, “Theorizing Self-Destructive Violence.” *IJMES* 45 (2013), 805.

⁸³⁹ Coronil and Skurski, “Dismembering and Remembering the Nation,” 289.

On February 15, 2012, twenty-two-year-old Ömer Koç drank gasoline and set himself on fire in Doğubayazıt, Turkey. In the letter he left behind, Ömer described the “unrelenting suffering” of Kurds living on the land they had “lived on for centuries.” But while Kurds are divided and denied by the four states they live in; they were united by struggle. Öcalan’s leadership, wrote Ömer, had given new life to Kurdish resistance.⁸⁴⁰ Like Newroz, February 15, the anniversary of Öcalan’s kidnapping and imprisonment by the Turkish state in 1999, has been marked by the self-immolation of a number of Kurdish men and women.⁸⁴¹ The party does not condone the practice, Öcalan has repeatedly condemned it since his imprisonment. As a local city official stated after Ömer’s death, he could have gone to the mountain (become a guerrilla). However, like Yüce, those who ‘sacrifice’ themselves for Kurdistan on February 15 are recognized as martyrs. Ömer was taken by ambulance to Van, a two-hour drive from Doğubayazıt, and then flown to burn unit in Kocaeli. He died nineteen days later, on March 8, International Women’s Day. Ömer’s letter connected Öcalan’s imprisonment to the massacre of thirty-four Kurdish civilians in Roboski (Uludere). On December 28, 2011, acting on images of the Turkish-Iraqi border provided by an American drone, the Turkish air force repeatedly bombed what it later claimed ‘intelligence’ had identified as thirty-eight PKK ‘terrorists.’ The thirty-eight villagers, many of them children, were crossing the border to buy cigarettes and gasoline. A journey they made almost daily, something well-known by Turkish forces stationed in the area. However, Ömer’s “action” (*eylem*) was for “all the bones buried in the sacred soil of Kurdistan” not only for “solitary Apo” (Öcalan is held in solitary confinement) and the “the thirty-four people massacred in Roboski.” He “screamed” for “the acid wells, the burned forests, the plundered villages...Dersim, Zilan, Koçgiri and Ağrı, the tortured dead bodies, and Uğur and Ceylan.”⁸⁴² Twelve-year old Uğur Kaymar had been killed by thirteen police bullets, his father, Ahmet, dying alongside him in front of their home in Kızıltepe in 2004. Ceylan Önkol was killed by an

⁸⁴⁰ For Ömer’s full letter see: “*Ömer Koç defnedildi*,” (Ömer’s burial) *Herêma Agirî* [online], March 9, 2012, accessed March 15, 2012, <http://herema-ararat.blogspot.ca/2012/03/bedenini-atese-veren-omer-kocun.html>.

⁸⁴¹ Kurds refer to Öcalan’s kidnapping as the “February Plot” (*Şubat Complosu*). The Turkish intelligence services (MİT) were assisted by the CIA and Mossad in their ‘capture’ of Öcalan in Kenya. According to Oliver Grojean, there have been over 200 self-immolations and ‘suicide attacks’ since 1982 by party members and sympathizers (as of 2011/12). The ‘practice’ of self-immolation began in Turkish prisons and then ‘spread’ to areas under martial law and then Turkey and Europe. Grojean argues that the majority of self-immolations follow military defeat (such as the capture of Öcalan); “Self-immolations by Kurdish Activists in Turkey and Europe.”

⁸⁴² The acid wells refer to the barrels of acid in Batman that were used to dispose of Kurds executed by extra-judicial forces in the 1990s (particularly the Kurdish Hizbollah who were supported by the state).

army mortar while tending her family's sheep in the Diyarbakır village of Şenlik. She was fourteen. Ömer's *mewlid* (ritual of remembrance that takes place forty days after a death) was on April 23, Children's Day (*Çocuklar Bayramı*). The national holiday marks the foundation of the Turkish parliament in 1920 and reaffirms that children are the future of the Turkish nation.⁸⁴³

The Kurdish run municipality cancelled its celebration of March 8. International Women's Day became the first day of Ömer's funeral. Spectators became mourners and protestors chanting "Long live our Leader Apo" behind a large banner proclaiming that: "Kurdish women want freedom and negotiation in order to solve the Kurdish question." Appearing alongside the placards originally meant for March 8 were newly created signs promising not to forget Ömer's "sacrifice." A story about Ömer's funeral appeared on *Özgür Gündem's* Woman's page the following day. A headline describing "the screams of women around the world against male domination" appeared over the story about Ömer's death in Bazîd (Doğubayazıt). Quoting a local official, the Kurdish paper reminded its readers that "we hear of deaths everyday yet the government produces no political solutions" (*çözüm politikaları*).⁸⁴⁴ After the protest, the banner Ömer shared with Öcalan was placed on the wall of the Peace and Democracy (BDP) office, the pro-Kurdish party that also ran the municipal government (fig. 4.11).⁸⁴⁵ The town of about 120,000 people has had a Kurdish mayor since Kurdish parties began to enter candidates in municipal elections in Turkey in the 1990s. In 1999, Doğubayazıt's Mukkades Kubilay was one



Fig. 4.11: "We promise Comrade Ömer, the youth started (the revolution), the youth will finish it (signed the Youth Initiative)."

⁸⁴³ For a history of Children's Day see Hale Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish: nationalist reforms and cultural negotiations in early republican Turkey, 1923-1945* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2013).

⁸⁴⁴ "Bazîd'de 8 Mart Ömer Koç'a adandı" (March 8 in Bazîd Ömer Koç is remembered), *Özgür Gündem*, March 9, 2012; pg. 2.

⁸⁴⁵ As of 2014 the People's Democracy Party (HDP).

Öcalan and Ömer Koç on the wall of the BDP office in Doğubayazıt, March 2012

of three female candidates from the ‘pro-Kurdish’ party to be elected as a mayor.⁸⁴⁶ Ömer’s banner was taken down on March 21 and placed in front of city hall (*belediye*) in order to commemorate his “sacrifice” during the city’s Newroz celebrations. Alev Cinar argues that “[t]here is not one city in Turkey that does not have at least one square with a Mustafa Kemal Atatürk statue at its centre of the city.”⁸⁴⁷ There is no statue of Atatürk in Doğubayazıt. At one end of town, in front of city hall, is a statue that commemorates human rights. At the other end of town, a few blocks from the BDP building, is a statue of Ehmedê Xanî, the 17th century Kurdish poet and philosopher.

According to an International Crisis Group report, 2012 saw “the highest [number of] casualties” in over thirteen years of the thirty year war between the Turkish state and the PKK.⁸⁴⁸ A few weeks after Ömer’s death, fifteen female guerrillas were killed in a fight with Turkish police, gendarme and village guard.⁸⁴⁹ Tens of thousands of Kurds attended their funerals at the end of the month.⁸⁵⁰ Photos of women carrying the coffins of the female guerrillas filled *Özgür Gündem*’s Politics page on March 30, 2012. Gültan Kışanak (now in jail), the co-leader of the BDP, spoke at the funeral of cousins Welat Arğış and Şehriban Arğış who had joined the PKK together in 2011:

They died for the freedom of Kurdish women, the Kurdish people, and their own freedom. From Berivan to Beritan from Mizgin to Nuda [their code names] thousands of Kurdish women set off on this journey. The duty falls on all of us to...continue their resistance in order to ensure victory.⁸⁵¹

⁸⁴⁶ The Democratic People’s Party (DEHAP). After its closure by the state, the Kurdish opposition formed Democratic Society Party (DTP) in 2005. When it was closed by the state, the DTP became the BDP (running Doğubayazıt’s municipality in 2012). In 2014, the party reformed as the People’s Democracy Party (HDP), closing itself before the state did (avoiding state confiscation of party property and funds).

⁸⁴⁷ Alev Cinar, *Modernity, Islam and secularism in Turkey: bodies, places, and time* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2005), 99-100.

⁸⁴⁸ International Crisis Group, “Turkey: The PKK and a Kurdish Settlement,” September 11, 2012, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/turkey-pkk-and-kurdish-settlement>. Approximately 40,000 people (mostly Kurdish guerrillas) have been killed in the conflict.

⁸⁴⁹ *Korucular-A* pro-state militia made up of mostly Kurdish villagers. Established by the state in the 1980s to fight the PKK.

⁸⁵⁰ “*Bölge’nin acısı da öfkesi de büyük*,” *Özgür Gündem*, March 31, 2012; 8.

⁸⁵¹ “*Kürt kadını en ön safta*” (Kurdish women in the forefront), *Özgür Gündem*, April 1, 2012; 7.

Throughout 2012, these legacies were used by Kurds to help them make meaning out of the continuing violence of an ongoing history of resistance. Following these bequeathals helps expose how the “sense of the past descend[s] in time as inheritance, legacy, pathology, encumbrance, and ideology.”⁸⁵²

Welat and Şehriban Argış grew up in Batman. One of their uncles had been killed by a member of the village guard in front of them. Police harassment and the Turkish Hizbullah forced them and their families to move from village to village.⁸⁵³ When they left Batman to join the PKK, Welat left a note: “I refuse this life, I am going to the mountains to resist the oppression of Kurdish people.”⁸⁵⁴ If the stories of Welat and Şehriban and Ömer are confined to a story of either feminist or national liberation the connections between these struggles is reduced to the same old story of the tensions between feminist desires and national salvation. Kışınak celebrated the feminist resistance of Welat and Şehriban. Welat’s note spoke of the struggles of being Kurdish in Eastern Turkey. The cancellation of International Women’s Day in Doğubayazıt made room Ömer’s “sacrifice.” The ‘low-intensity’ violence of 2012 has been perhaps overshadowed by the ‘return’ of authoritarian rule to Turkey in 2015. In 2012, there was neither “recurring danger” nor “political possibilities” on the horizon.⁸⁵⁵ Rather, Ömer’s “cry” was woven into the long history of women’s resistance in Kurdistan.

5.3.2 The Year of Cancellations

The cancellation of the celebrations for International Women’s Day was not the only cancellation that year in Doğubayazıt. It was a year in which events were either cancelled by the city or banned by the state. For example, the May 2nd *dengbej* (traditional Kurdish bard) concert organized by the manager of the city’s *Çamışır Evi* (Laundry House) was cancelled after three guerrillas were killed on Mount Ararat. The *Çamışır Evi* was set up with the funding by a

⁸⁵² David William Cohen, *The Combing of History* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 247

⁸⁵³ Hizbullah is a predominantly Kurdish Sunni Islamist militant organization. It was employed by the state in the 1990s against the PKK (at that time the Hizbollah were “headquartered” in Batman). See: Mehmet Kurt, “Historical Overview of Hizbullah,” in *Kurdish Hizbullah in Turkey: Islamism, Violence and the State* (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 9-56.

⁸⁵⁴ “2 hayat, aynı hikaye ve yan yana son yolculuk” (Two lives, same story and last journey side by side), *Özgür Gündem*, March 31, 2012; 8.

⁸⁵⁵ Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 304.

Japanese NGO. While its intention was to provide poor families with free laundry facilities, its large machines were only used when someone needed to wash bedding too big for a home washing machine. However, the city used its office space to hold meetings on issues like domestic violence and to run a small pre-school. People wandered around *Çamişır Evi*'s playground talking about the *dengbej* performances at the city's Cultural Arts Festival in July of 2010. The Culture and Arts Festival was also cancelled in 2012. On May 13, the group of women heading to Diyarbakır for the celebration of Mother's Day, a bus hired at the last minute as the women and all the trip's supplies—sunflower seeds, 2 huge bags of bread, cucumbers, a plastic crate of tomatoes, napkins, 2 boxes of pain killers, bottles of cola and water, and feta cheese—could not fit into the two borrowed vans, was stopped by fifty police in front of the state hospital. A plain cloths officer climbed onto the bus and informed the women that they did not have permission to go to Diyarbakır.⁸⁵⁶ He wished them a happy Mother's Day as he got off the bus.

A few weeks after Ömer's funeral, I travelled with a group of BDP members and officials to Amara to celebrate Öcalan's birthday on April 4, 2012. The government had announced that the 'unofficial' yearly celebration was officially forbidden (*yasak*) this year and set up roadblocks throughout the southeast to prevent people from travelling to Öcalan's village outside of Riha (Urfa). Undeterred, we packed ourselves into two vans and began our 660-kilometre journey to Amara. We got passed a check point outside of Siverek. Our driver told the four police men who waved our van to the side of the road that he was taking us to a wedding. He pointed to me and told the officer pointing a flashlight at him that I was a tourist. The mood in the van was jubilant afterwards, all of us congratulating each other for outwitting the agents of the Turkish state. But we were turned back at Amara. As we left one of the women in the very back seat sighed, "we had so much fun last year." The driver did not join us when we travelled to Diyarbakır on July 13, arriving in the Kurdish capital to once again learn that the state had forbidden another meeting planned by its Kurdish opposition. The driver was arrested at the end of May along with the BDP's district chairperson. The arrests were part of the government's 'KCK Operation.' The arrests of 'pro-Kurdish' politicians, activists, intellectuals, artists and activists suspected of being members of the Union of Communities in Kurdistan (KCK), an umbrella organization that

⁸⁵⁶ The excuse he used was that they did not have official bus tickets.

includes the PKK, began in 2009. By 2012, over 8,000 people had been arrested.⁸⁵⁷ A friend of mine was doing research on women *dengbej* in Van and she was on her way to meet a well-known *dengbej* in Doğubayazıt. I phoned her and told her not to come. The singer was one of the people arrested on June 12. While I waited with a group of people outside Doğubayazıt’s ironically named “Palace of Justice” (the state court) on June 13 two men imprisoned in the 1990s debated which was worse—twenty days of torture (justice in 1990s Turkey) or twenty years in prison (justice in Erdoğan’s Turkey). While the former broke you mentally and physically one of them explained, the later broke you and your family mentally and financially the other answered. I got a ride back to town. The old man we picked up on the way told us that he had just been released from prison. We drove past the closed Women’s Cooperative Restaurant (celebrated by *Lonely Planet* as an example of Kurdish feminism). It was now the office of Doğubayazıt’s Drinking Water Project that was being funded by the European Union. The Kurdish Academy, set up to help local students prepare for the university entrance exam, was also closed. Some people said the state closed it. But a local Kurdish teacher, who had four unclaimed boxes of Kurdish books in his office, said it was closed by “indifference.”

5.3.3 Ezda Ararat



Fig. 4.12: A photo of PKK martyr Ezda Ararat (Fatma Sağın) that was pinned to the lapel of one of her mourners

⁸⁵⁷ See Saeed, *Kurdish Politics in Turkey: From the PKK to the KCK*, for a description of the arrests and background to the PKK’s transformation (structurally and philosophically) into the KCK (*Koma Civakên Kurdistan*) after Öcalan’s arrest. Although the PKK is only one of the many organizations that make up the KCK, people still use PKK to mean the whole organization.

On June 19, 1930, the first day of a two-day battle between the Turkish Army backed by Cobra and Sikorsky Helicopters and large cannon, HPG guerilla Ezda Ararat was killed.⁸⁵⁸ According to her mother the medical examiner in Trabzon had tried to dissuade her from viewing her daughter's dead body. Although her face was unrecognizable (some people suggested she was killed by chemical weapons), her mother said she recognized her daughter. At the end of the battle fourteen HPG guerrilla were dead, ten men and four women. The three women who died alongside Ezda Ararat were: Beritan Zınar (Halime Kuzen) from Batman who joined the PKK in 2003; Faraşın Sozdar, (Saynur Turşu) from Bitlis (2007); and Xemlin Başkale (Aysel Dik) from Van (2006). Ezda Ararat (Fatma Sağın) joined the HPG in 2005 alongside her brother. She was eighteen, her brother two years older. Fatma's brother was wounded in the same battle. Their parents travelled to Northern Iraq in 2005 to convince them to return to Doğubayazıt. Their father, Halit Sağın, then tried to reach a compromise with them, telling his son to stay and Fatma to come home. He later apologized to Fatma and told her to stay. During Fatma's burial in Doğubayazıt on June 26, her father told the mourners that he was proud of his children. "I have given two children to the struggle for Kurdish freedom" he stated before warning Prime Minister Erdoğan "to abandon the killing of Kurdish children" otherwise he would "choke on [their] blood." *Özgür Gündem* placed a photo of Halit Sağın above Ezda Ararat's official PKK portrait on their Politics page on June 27. A large photo of the mother of Ramazan Aytar, who died in the same battle, appeared in the centre of front page, the photographer capturing Aytar's mother as she threw herself, overwhelmed by grief, against a large photograph of her dead son. Ağrı member of parliament, Halil Aksoy, also spoke at Fatma's funeral. "No one can afford to ignore these deaths," he told the crowd. "If today we are participating politically, choosing our elected officials, developing our municipalities, we owe this debt to our children in the mountains."⁸⁵⁹

⁸⁵⁸ The Hêzên Parastina Gel (People's Defense Forces) is the armed wing of the PKK. Women fight in both the mixed units of the HPG and the women only units of YJA-Star (Yekîneyên Jinên Azadên Star-Free Women's Units). The description of the battle is from "*Şemdinli Eylemine İlişkin Ayrıntılar*" (Details on the Şemdinli Action), HPG [online], June 23, 2012, accessed June 30, 2012, <http://www.hezenparastin.com/tr/index.php/anakarargah-alamalarinmenu-300/2039-emdinli-eylemine-likin-ayrntlar>.

⁸⁵⁹ "*Erdoğan çocuklarımızı öldürme*" (Erdoğan don't kill our children), *Özgür Gündem*, June 27, 2012. The information about Fatma I learned from her parents during the *taziye* (condolences) and a subsequent visit to their home.

It was Fatma’s father, tall, watery blue eyes, who greeted the mourners at the family’s home in Doğubayazıt’s Sanayı neighbourhood. He took people’s outreached hands and gently shook them as they told him: “*başınız sağolsun*” (an expression of condolence). On his lapel was a small black and white photocopied image of Fatma’s official HPG portrait (fig. 4.12). During the three days of condolences (*taziye*) it stayed firmly pinned in place. When I arrived to pay my condolences on June 27, one of the city councillors asked to me to hand out the photocopied portraits of Fatma. I entered the two tents set up for mourners and looked for empty lapels. Fatma’s official portrait hung in the back of the male mourner’s tent, the grainy black and white photos in my hand contrasting with the vibrant green, red, and yellow (the colours of the Kurdish flag) of the original image. There was no portrait of Fatma in the female mourners’ tent. The friend I had arrived with, a close friend of the family’s, noticed this and mentioned its absence to one of the *taziye*’s organizers, an official with the local BDP. Within an hour a second framed picture of Fatma appeared in back of the women’s tent (fig. 4.13). Two of the female mourners found a scarf, like the colours of Fatma’s official portrait green, red, yellow, and hung it behind the ‘unofficial’ portrait. In the photo the women’s tent, Fatma was smiling, her curly hair tied



Fig. 4.13: Fatma’s ‘unofficial’ portrait

loosely around her neck. She was dressed in army fatigues but she seemed at ease, her rifle held causally in her hands. When I returned the following day, I noticed that the photographs had been switched. The official portrait was in the women’s tent, the ‘unofficial’ portrait next door in the male mourner’s tent. I asked one of the party officials why the photos had been switched and he informed me that the family’s ‘conservative’ village relatives had been offended by it. “Offended how?” I asked. “By the gun,” he replied. Another mourner rolled her eyes, explaining to me that they had been offended by the presence of a picture at a Muslim funeral. I reminded her that the picture had not been removed but switched, suggesting that perhaps their gender

sensibilities rather than their religious beliefs had indeed been offended by the photo of Fatma holding a gun. Later that day I asked Fatma's mother, Telli, why the pictures had been switched. She informed me that she had wanted all the mourners, male and female, to see the picture of Fatma smiling, her curly hair tied loosely at her neck, causally holding her gun. It was the 'unofficial' portrait that Fatma's sister brought to her grave to say goodbye at the end of the day (fig. 4.14).

On June 28, mourners crammed themselves into the cars of friends and relatives and returned to Fatma's grave in Doğubayazıt's municipal cemetery. Some people stayed behind to help clean up, others, perhaps put off by the rain and worried that their shoes would not survive the long muddy walk through the cemetery, said goodbye and headed home. Doğubayazıt's dusty streets



Fig. 4.14: Fatma's 'unofficial' portrait at her grave

can quickly turn into thick unforgiving *cağmur*, mud. A few weeks previous to Fatma's funeral, a five-year-old girl died when heavy rain turned the stagnant water in one of the city's many garbage filled canals into a torrent of rushing water. She fell when trying to cross the canal and drown. The rain also damaged a number of homes in a neighbourhood on the outskirts of town, the resulting flood knocking down garden walls and uprooting trees. When city officials returned from Patnos' Xecê and Siyabend Suphan Cultural Arts Festival later that day, they were met by angry residents.⁸⁶⁰ When the same thing happened the year before, the city had promised to fix

⁸⁶⁰ Xecê and Siyabend is a Kurdish love story.

the neighbourhood's inadequate drainage system. "Always slogans" (*hep sloganlar*) someone complained to a few days later in one of the town's many internet cafes. I was not sure if he meant that politicians make promises they never keep or that they were so occupied by the Kurdish struggle that they forget that their local constituents had also elected them to fix potholes.

5.3.4 Şeyma's Poem

By the time we got to the cemetery the rain had stopped, however it still hung in the air, the paper portraits of Fatma curling up at their edges. I glanced around and noticed that it was mostly female mourners gathering wild flowers to place on Fatma's grave. The men hung back, leaning against muddy cars and smoking. The green, red, and yellow flowers embroidered around the



Fig. 4.15: "I would rather be a thorn in the mountains of freedom than a rose in the mountains of slavery." The Grave of PKK martyr Sarina Awesta (Şeyma Yıldız), Doğubayazıt

edges of the older women's white headscarves matched the flowers etched into the headstones of the men and women buried in the 'unofficial' martyrs section of the cemetery. The women mourners walked amongst the headstones, many of them placing flowers on the graves of sons and daughters, nieces and nephews, friends and relatives buried alongside Fatma. I stopped to read the words of Kurdish filmmaker Yılmaz Güney that were carved into the headstone of Sarina Awesta's (Şeyma Yıldız) grave: "*Esaret dağlarında gül olmaksansa, özgürlük dağlarında diken olurum.*" Roughly translated into English, Şeyma's headstone reads: "I would rather be a thorn in the mountains of freedom than a rose in the mountains of slavery." Güney's words, however, had been slightly altered before being carved into headstone's white limestone. Actually, only one letter differed between the two. In the original, the first part of the saying read: "Rather than be a rose in slavery's vineyards..." On Şeyma's headstone, the "b" of *bağlar* (vineyards) had been changed to "d" to make it *dağlar* (mountains) instead of *bağlar*

(vineyards). Like the character of Ömer in Güney's award winning film *Yol*, Şeyma and Fatma's journey to the mountain can be interpreted as a refusal to live under a regime that denied their existence as Kurds. But when *bağlar*, vineyards, is read to mean the Turkish state and the second *dağlar* in Seyma's poem interpreted as patriarchy, then unlike Ömer, and the silent women of Güney's film, Şeyma and Fatma's going to the mountain can also be read as desire for female liberation.⁸⁶¹ Like Ömer's funeral on International Women's Day, Şeyma's poem wove together the histories of women's resistance in Kurdistan. When I returned to the cemetery for the burial of HPG guerrilla Rojdi Bazîd (Hüseyin İldizdir) on September 25, 2012 I noticed that the Kurdish "w" of Şeyma's code name, Sarina Awesta, was actually two Turkish "v"s placed side by side. This small resistance to a long history of denial reflects the struggles of a 'low intensity' conflict that has lasted for over thirty years.

The anniversary of Zilan's martyrdom came two days after Fatma's *taziye*. About forty people gathered in the BDP office to commemorate Zilan. The sign in front of the speaker system set up for speeches read: "Comrade [*yoldaş*] Zilan, Comrade Fatma." As we waited for Fatma's family to arrive, the woman beside me grabbed my pen. On the front cover of my notebook she wrote: "Women who were once [afraid] to oppose their fathers are now defying the state."⁸⁶² I asked her where the woman who ran the office was, not hearing her usual chatter and laughter in the background, and she told me that she had been arrested and "exiled" to prison in the Black Sea city of Giresun. While Kurdish women defied patriarchy at home to protest oppression in the streets, the government continually reminded them of the greater authority of the Turkish state.

5.3.5 The Colour Photograph of Rojdi Bazîd (Hüseyin İldizdir)

On September 11, the people of Doğubayazıt buried Brûsk Bazid (Ali Adlın) and Şahin Serhat (Mehmet Emin Erten). The HPG fighters died in a battle with the Turkish army on the Turkish-Iraqi border (Hakkari province) on August 4, 2012. Two weeks later, mourners gathered at the BDP office and waited for cars to arrive to take them to meet the ambulance bringing the body of Rojdi Bazîd (Hüseyin İldizdir) from Trabzon to be buried in Doğubayazıt's municipal cemetery (fig. 4.16). I am assigned the duty of cutting up the three by five-inch photocopied photos of

⁸⁶¹ Going to the mountain is a euphemism for joining the PKK.

⁸⁶² "Babalarım karşı çıkamayan kadın artık devlete kafa tutuyor."

Hüseyin. The scissors given to me to complete this task are dull and stiff and the edges of many of the photos came out crooked. When I finished I gave them to someone else to hand out. As I waited I talked to one of the women who worked at the *Çamışır Evi*. She complained that no one from the *belediye* had shown up. As a worker at the *Çamışır Evi* she worked for the BDP-run *belediye*, they ran it as well as the children's art studio at the Ayşe Zarakolu Maternity Hospital that had also been built by a foreign NGO (this one based in Italy). While the PKK and BDP (now HDP) share a constituency, they are separate parties, the later rooted in armed struggle, the former in legal parliamentary politics. When people talk about the party they were talking about both or one and not the other. The context clarifies which party the speakers is referring to. In Doğubayzıt, the BDP run *belediye* was at one end of the main street, İsmail Beşikci Avenue, named for the Turkish sociologist who has spent most of his academic career writing about



Fig. 4.16: The burial of HPG guerrilla Rojdi Bazîd (Hüseyin İldizdir), Doğubayzıt, 2012

Kurdish people. Beşikci has spent much of adult life in jail as a result. The building that contains the provincial BDP office (the party) is at the opposite end of İsmail Beşikçi Avenue. The funeral of PKK martyr Rojdi Bazîd (Hüseyin), like all martyrs' funerals, was organized by 'the party' (BDP officials, PKK rituals and symbolism). That day the worker's use of *belediye* singled out those who were not committed 'party' members (PKK). When one of the city councillors finished her term sitting in the *belediye* everyday to deal with complaints about garbage pickup, water shortages, domestic abuse, health problems and the price of coal (needed to heat homes in the winter) she told me: "Now I am PKK." Noticing my confusion (did she mean she was 'going to the mountain?') she rephrased her statement. "Now I am PKK-ish" (*pkk'liyim ben*). Hamit Bozarslan describes members of the PKK as being "PKK'cised" by the

“specific hermeneutic semantic construction” of the party’s literature and rituals (funerals, martyr letters, songs, writings). He argues that the popularity of the party amongst ordinary Kurds is a result of the “the Turkish state’s coercion.” However, being “PKK-ish” offers a different understanding of the party’s “popularity.”⁸⁶³ Rather, its “cultural resources” are used by ordinary Kurds not only to make meaning of out of the coercion of the Turkish state but its normalcy, when resistance means coping with the daily violence of low intensity conflict and the daily struggles of being Kurdish in a Kurdish town in Eastern Turkey run by a Kurdish municipality in Turkey.

On the ride to meet Hüseyin’s body, I sit beside Fatma’s mother. During the journey she poked her husband in the front seat and told him to show me the photo of Fatma. From the pocket of his suit jacket he pulled out a rolled-up piece of paper. It was a photocopy of the portrait that had been hung up in the woman’s tent on the second day of Fatma’s *taziye*. In her father’s hands, Fatma was smiling, her hair tied loosely around her neck, in her hands her gun. Fatma’s mother told me that they had asked for the photo to be put on the martyr’s wall in the BDP office but party officials had refused. They are afraid, explained Fatma’s father. While he seemed to be



Fig. 4.17: The shops of Doğubayazıt closed during the burial of Rojdi Bazîd (Hüseyin İldizdir)

criticizing the party (the BDP), his sigh acknowledged the reality of the KCK arrests, broken water mains, and the cancellation of events that had been “so much fun last year.” Fatma’s mother complained that the city’s shops had not been closed during her daughter’s burial. When

⁸⁶³ Bozarslan, *Violence in the Middle East*, 53-54.

I walked through the city that morning to attend Hüseyin's funeral all the shops on İsmail Beşikçi Avenue were closed and locked (fig. 4.17).

It was a warm and sunny when we got out of the car. As people pinned the photocopied black and white images of Hüseyin on their shirts and jackets, his family arrived. They had large coloured photos of Hüseyin on their chests. At the *taziye* an argument broke out between 'party' officials and Hüseyin's family. The family wanted to pay the cook making plates of rice and meat for the hundreds of mourners. However, they were reminded that it was the 'party's' obligation to pay for a martyr's funeral. Ozsoy argues that the funeral attendees know that the martyr belongs to his family. At the same time, the family acknowledges that their child "sacrificed themselves for their people, not for their families, and so they belong to the national community."⁸⁶⁴ A compromise was made and each group, the family and the national community, paid for half of Hüseyin's funeral.

During Fatma's *taziye* in June, one of Doğubayazıt's city councillors quietly complained that there had not been enough woman at the funeral to carry her coffin. While she told me this 'party' officials were scrambling to find enough chairs for the hundreds of female mourners streaming into the women's tent to offer their condolences to Fatma's mother and sisters. But for the female city councillor the symbolism of women meeting the ambulance from the state autopsy centre on the road to Çaldıran, transferring Fatma's coffin to one of the waiting cars, returning to the BDP office city waving scarves of Kurdish colours from their windows, and then helping to hoist Fatma's coffin onto the shoulders of six female mourners to carry it through Doğubayazıt's streets to the municipal cemetery was more important. For the city councillor, the women of Doğubayazıt had failed to claim Fatma's martyrdom, the weight of the coffin a reminder of the obligations of the long tradition of women's resistance in Kurdistan. The funeral of Şeyma in 2010 had turned into a huge protest. After her burial, mourners burst into the police station and smashed police computers while scattering papers and files. The violence of the "PKK funeral" in Doğubayazıt was reported by the national press.⁸⁶⁵ During the funeral, Canan

⁸⁶⁴ Ozsoy, "Between Gift and Taboo," 38.

⁸⁶⁵ "PKK cenazesinde olay çıkaran 6 kişi tutuklandı," (Six people arrested after PKK funeral incident) *Milliyet* [online], accessed June 17, 2018 September 4, 2010 <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/Yazdir.aspx?Type=HaberDetayPrint&ArticleID=1285125>

Korkmaz, the city's second female mayor, told the mourners that it was their duty to continue Şeyma's struggle against the state's "politics of denial (*inkar*) and destruction (*imha*)."⁸⁶⁶ People talked about Şeyma's funeral during the martyrs' funerals in 2012. The protest afterwards they said had been "so much fun."

5.4 Writing Feminist Histories in its Margins

5.4.1 The Agenda

After the police prevented us from celebrating Öcalan's birthday in Amara in April, we followed the cars of the other disappointed birthday guests to Diyarbakır, the 'Kurdish capital.' While people waited to see if alternative arrangements would be made, they wandered through the hallways of the Diyarbakır's large *belediye*.⁸⁶⁷ I picked up a 2010 datebook from one of the dusty shelves of the Political Academy that had been closed by the state.⁸⁶⁸ The cover announced the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day in Turkish and Kurdish, while the inside pages, most of them blank, offered an inclusive and expansive history of women's activism and resistance.⁸⁶⁹ I am ending this chapter about the histories of women's resistance in Kurdistan by using this agenda to write a history of women's resistance from its Kurdish margins.

⁸⁶⁶ "Doğubeyazıt'ta gerginlik," (Tension in Doğubeyazıt), *Yuksekoşa Haber* [online], September 4, 2010, accessed June 17, 2018, <http://www.yuksekovahaber.com/haber/dogubeyazitta-gerginlik-36415.htm>

⁸⁶⁷ Diyarbakır's Büyükşehir Belediye (regional municipality) building.

⁸⁶⁸ Marmara University professor, BÜSRA ERSANLI, who taught courses at the academy, was arrested in Istanbul a few weeks prior to my visit, one of the many academics arrested during the 2009-2011 KCK operations. She served eight months for being a member of an illegal organization (the PKK). The Turkish academic spent two years in jail after the 1971 coup. She was recently charged for signing the Academics for Peace declaration: "We will not be party to this crime." For a description of the political academies and the courses they taught see TATORT Kurdistan and Janet Biehl, *Democratic Autonomy in North Kurdistan*.

⁸⁶⁹ *Kongreya Jinên Azad*. KJA is an umbrella organization and is 'attached' to the PKK, they both advocate the implementation of Öcalan's concept of "Democratic Autonomy" in Turkey (grassroots self-determination based on democratic participation). After the capture/kidnapping of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999, the military-political organization underwent a number of institutional and philosophical changes. Over the 2000s, it transformed into the umbrella organization, the Union of Kurdistan Communities (KCK), and to a project of radical democracy (PKK, however, is still the term used by most people to describe the whole organization). Öcalan first sketched the idea of "Democratic Confederalism" in his death penalty appeal to the European Human Rights Court in 1999, laying the groundwork for the transformation of the party's goal of a Kurdish nation-state to the liberation of the peoples of the Middle East from the nation-state (in Turkey this is Democratic Autonomy). See Öcalan's *Democratic Confederalism* (London, Cologne: Transmedia Publishing Ltd, 2001), available at www.freedom-for-ocalan.com. For background to and discussions of the party's ideological and institutional changes see: Adem Uzun, "Living Freedom": The Evolution of the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey and the Efforts to Resolve It," *Berghof Transitions Series 11* (2014), <https://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications>; Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya and Joost Jongerden, "Reassembling the Political: The PKK and the Project of Radical Democracy," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* [online] 14 (2012), <http://ejts.revues.org/4615>; and Seevan Saeed, *Kurdish Politics in Turkey: From the PKK to the KCK* (Routledge: London and New York, 2017).

On September 17, 2003 the agenda announced that on this day that, “twenty organizations came together in Istanbul to form the Democratic and Free Women’s Movement” (DÖKH). The full-page blurb explained that DÖKH “rejects” a history of women’s resistance that confines the struggles of women to the “home” (*eve kapatılanların tarihi*), the agenda’s writers offering in its place a history of all kinds of “struggles against inequality based on the experiences of Kurdish women.” However, the agenda told its user that the inequality between the sexes was the “foundation” of all inequality. It explained that the grassroots organizations that fall under DÖKH’s umbrella, leaving no room for the user to write down appointments or reminders, opposed: “racism; nationalism; militarism; sexism; the destruction of nature; the exploitation of labor; and the domination of men over women.” The views of DÖKH’s collective reflected the “varying interests of different regions, classes, beliefs, nations, beliefs, sexualities and ethnicities.” The organization was also committed to democratic solution to the Kurdish problem. On November 9, 2005 the agenda informed its user that in 2005 the ‘pro-Kurdish’ Democratic Society Party (DTP), the predecessor to the BDP (now the HDP), announced their adoption of a co-leadership system (*eş başkanlık sistemi*). As of 2005 all leadership positions in the party were shared by a man and a woman. At the party’s congress that year, Aysel Tuğluk was chosen as the party’s first co-chairperson. In 2012 Tuğluk was a BDP member of parliament for Van. When Tuğluk and a group of fellow MPs had arrived to celebrate Öcalan’s birthday that morning, Tuğluk was kicked by a police officer as she demanded to be let through the roadblock.⁸⁷⁰ Next to a picture of the Dominican sisters Patria, Minerva, and Maria Teresa Mirabal (who were “highly visible symbols of resistance to Trujillo’s dictatorship”) that was placed on November 25 to celebrate the “International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women,” the agenda announced that on this day in 2005 DÖKH began their “We are no one’s honour, our honor is our freedom” campaign. The campaign’s slogan was written in Kurdish, “*Em ne nasmûsa kesî nê, namûsa me azadîya me ye*” and in Turkish, “*Biz Kadınız Kimsenin Namusu Değiliz, Namusumuz Özgürlüğümüzdür.*” DÖKH’s campaign for the elimination of violence against women, explained the agenda, was a campaign for the elimination for all types of violence against women—“physical, sexual, economic.” It then listed

⁸⁷⁰ “*Vekillere ‘doğum’ günü dayağı*” (MP’s birthday beating), *Taraf*, April 4, 2012. Tuğluk was arrested in 2016. In March of 2018 she was given a ten-year sentence for “being an executive member of the PKK.”

the forms of violence that impacted women: “militarism; state violence; domestic violence; honor crimes; sexual assault; rape; incest; sexism; labour exploitation; homophobia; forced marriage; and polygamy.”

The first page of the agenda explained the founding of International Woman’s Day. In 1910, during the 2nd Socialist International in Copenhagen, Clara Zektin introduced a motion to commemorate the working women who died in New York City’s 1857 Triangle Factory Fire and the strike of women workers after the tragedy. The agenda’s authors got the date wrong (correct date was 1907) but the socialist origins of International Women’s day ‘right,’ reminding its users that until 1977 the day was called the International Women Workers Day.⁸⁷¹ The next page explained the principles of the Kurdish movement’s ideology of female liberation (Women’s Liberation Ideology). The DÖKH agenda listed these as: “patriotism (*yurtseverlik*): free thought, free will, and the determination and ideas to create an alternative life outside of patriarchy; organizing together to become stronger; struggle (*mücadele*)-courage, resolve, dedication; and aesthetics-mental, physical, and moral.” The page for March 9 was set aside to commemorate the death of Russian revolutionary Alexandra Kollontai. Members of Diyarbakır’s Women’s Academy told a group of German activists from *Crime Scene Kurdistan* (TATORT) in 2011 that Kollontai and Rosa Luxemburg were the “forerunners” of the fight for women’s liberation. “[W]e try to do right by their legacy,” they explained.⁸⁷²

But it was Zetkin that opened and closed the journal. On its first page, Zetkin explained the socialist origins of International Day. In the agenda’s last pages, Zetkin was shown arm in arm with Rosa Luxemburg, Luxemburg’s last words before she was murdered by German fascists translated into Turkish: “*Vardım, varım. Var.*” I was, I am. I shall be. The journal offered non-socialist feminist histories. Its pages included the anarchist Emma Goldman alongside Olympe de Gouges, Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone de Beauvoir, and Kate Millet. The divergent histories of ‘western’ feminism appeared on its pages. The suffragist Sylvia Pankhurst was described as “an anti-fascist and anti-imperialist whose activism reflected the shared struggles of women and the working class.” Her mother, Emmeline, the founder of the Women’s Social and Political

⁸⁷¹ As the journal explained, the UN changed this to International Women’s Day in 1977.

⁸⁷² TATORT Kurdistan and Janet Biehl, *Democratic Autonomy in North Kurdistan*, [electronic edition].

Union (WSPU) was described as a “militant feminist.” Emmeline Pankhurst’s famous retort, “I would rather be a rebel than a slave” echoed the poem on the headstone of PKK martyr Şeyma Yılmaz.

The agenda also reclaimed a feminist history for the Middle East. Nezihe Muhiddin was described as an “Ottoman/Turkish feminist, writer, political activist” who founded the first women’s political party in Turkey and fought for women’s suffrage. It noted that Duygu Asena’s *Kadının Adı Yok* (A Woman Without a Name), “banned for being obscene,” has reached “fifty-three editions” and has been “published in a number of languages.” The 2006 publication of Lerna Ekmekçiöğlü and Melisa Bilal’s *Bir Adalet Feryadı* (A Cry for Justice) “introduced to the Turkish public the stories of five Armenian women who fought for both the emancipation of Armenian women and the survival of the Armenian nation.” The agenda mentioned the performance of the first Muslim actress in Turkey in 1919. It did not note that the appearance of Afife Jale on a Turkish state marked the disappearance of Armenian actress, Eliza Binemeciyan. Jale took over the role of Emel in Hüseyin Samat’s *Yamalar* from the Armenian actress when she left Turkey and moved to Paris.⁸⁷³ The founding of the Peace Mothers (*Barış Anneleri*) on September 1, 1991 (Barış Günü) “started the struggle to end the deaths of children killed on the battlefield and in prison.” The banning of the headscarf in Turkish universities in 1997 led to “a protest movement of Muslim students who were supported by various feminist and women’s organizations.” Leila Khaled, “who joined the PLO [sic] and hijacked a TWA plane in 1969” has continued the struggle for the liberation of Palestine in Lebanon.

5.4.2 Kurdish Histories of Feminist Resistance

The resistance of Kurdish women was woven into these histories. Doğubayazıt’s former mayor, Mükades Kubilay, was mentioned as one of the three Kurdish women elected to municipal office in 1999. In 2014, Kubilay became the co-mayor of Ağrı, serving alongside Sırrı Sakık

⁸⁷³ “Only years after the time when the theatre was regarded by most as an unsuitable space for a good Turkish Muslim woman... the actress was presented by the state as a female model for all Turkish women. In the same period, actresses belonging to the Armenian minority, who had earlier enjoyed great popularity, started disappearing from the stage, and their previously applauded achievements were for a large part forgotten”; Cora Skylstad, ‘Acting the Nation: Women on the Stage and in the Audience of Theatre in Late Ottoman Empire and Early Turkish Republic’ (Master’s Thesis University of Oslo, 2010), 2.

until they were replaced by a government appointed official in 2017.⁸⁷⁴ The agenda also honored the author, publisher, and human rights advocate, Ayşe Nuri Zarakolu. Doğubayazıt's maternity hospital is named for Zarakolu.⁸⁷⁵ According to the agenda, the women of Doğubayazıt have an important place in the history of women's resistance in Kurdistan. March 29 commemorated the election of eighteen female mayors in 2009, fourteen from the Democratic Society Party (the DTP, replaced by the BDP, which has been replaced by the HDP). April 14th's announcement of the beginning of KCK operation in 2009 reminded the user that the victories in the municipal elections were followed by the arrests of Kurdish politicians, activists, and intellectuals. The journal also celebrated Kurdish performers, singers Meryxem Xan and Ayşe Şan and the dancer Leyla Bedirhan appeared amongst mayors and the principles of Kurdish feminism. The resistance of Zarife and Besê during the Dersim Uprising was noted, the journal telling users that Besê Hanim "shot at the planes that bombed Dersim and threw rocks at Turkish soldiers." Mina Qazi, the wife of Mohammed Qazi, the leader of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad, had an "important role" in Kurdish politics and a place in the agenda's history of women's resistance. A quote of Leyla Qasim's recalled the promise of the commander of the Mount Ararat Uprising, İhsan Nuri: "Kill me, but my death will awaken thousands of Kurds."⁸⁷⁶ The murder of Ceylan Onkol was noted. September marked by the words: "the state killed me." It told users that Leyla Zana took her oath as a member of parliament in 1991 in Turkish and Kurdish. It then stated that she had been stripped of her parliamentary immunity soon afterwards and put in prison until 2004.

The journal did not forget the victims and survivors of domestic violence. The stories of Şemse Alak, stoned to death with her husband, and Güldünya, raped by a relative and then shot by her family after giving birth, were included in its history of women's resistance. Güldünya survived her shooting only to be killed while recovering in hospital. After her death on February 25, 2004 women's groups in Turkey came to together to campaign to change the laws around honour

⁸⁷⁴ The removal of elected Kurdish mayors accompanied the arrests of Kurdish politicians that began in 2016.

⁸⁷⁵ Zarakolu's husband, the publisher Racip Zarakolu, was arrested alongside Büşra Ersanlı in 2012. The Zarakolus founded the publishing house Belge which has published books about the Armenian Genocide and the rights of Kurds. Ayşe Zarakolu was jailed many times for her relentless support of press freedom and free speech. She died in 2002.

⁸⁷⁶ "*Beni öldürün ama, benim ölümümle binlerce Kürt uyanacaktır.*"

crimes. The journal shared the story of Asiye Güzel who was tortured and raped in prison in 1997, her declaration in a Turkish court that “they raped me under custody” leading to the formation of the Initiative Against Sexual Assault. Alongside the stories of Şemse Allak, Güldünya, and Asiye Güzel, were the stories of ‘first’ PKK women. Gürbet Aydın, the first regional female commander of the PKK and Gurbetelli Ersöz, Turkey’s first female newspaper editor who left for the mountains after her arrest in 1993 were noted. The story of PKK guerrillas Ekin Ceren Doğruk (Amara) and Uta Schneiderbanger (Nüdem) were placed on the same page, the Turkish sociology student from the Aegean region and the German “leftist lesbian” having died together in car crash in the mountains of Northern Iraq on May 31, 2005. The journal’s placement of victims of domestic violence in the same pages of PKK women, two that died in battle, two that died in a car crash, challenged “taxonomies of violence” that separate public and domestic violence and oppose “ordinary” violence to “extreme political violence.” Taxonomies that Arthur Kleinman argues are “inadequate to understand either the uses of violence in the social world or the multiplicity of its effects in experiences of suffering, collective and individual.”⁸⁷⁷

It was Sema Yüce who followed the agenda’s celebration of the revolutionary “forerunner” Alexandra Kollantai. March 21 was set aside to announce her death on June 17, 1998 alongside the Newroz martyrs Zekiye Alkan (March 21, 1990) and Raşan Demirel (March 21, 1991). Underneath a short description of Sema’s imprisonment and death, the agenda’s creators summed up her resistance: “The way to women’s liberation is through the burning down of the male-dominated mentality.”⁸⁷⁸ Elefteriya Fortulaki, a Greek woman who was married to a Kurd, also immolated herself on Newroz. She died the next day, the agenda announcing her death on March 24, 2006. The agenda did not mention the PKK’s “first martyr” Zilan. Perhaps there was no room for the agenda’s history of women’s resistance for her explosion of a bomb against herself in a group of soldiers. Or perhaps the agenda’s creators did not want to cut and paste her into a narrative that was not rooted in the “distinctive history” of violence in Kurdistan.⁸⁷⁹

⁸⁷⁷ Arthur Kleinman, qtd, in Fernando Coronil and Julie Skurski, “Introduction,” in *States of Violence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2006), 27.

⁸⁷⁸ In Turkish: “*Kadın kurtuluşunun yolu erkek egemen zihniyetin zerrelerine kadar yakılmasından geçer.*”

⁸⁷⁹ Coronil and Skurski, “Dismembering and Remembering the Nation,” 289.

5.5 Conclusion: The Martyr's Wall



Fig. 4.18: The Martyr's Wall in Doğubayazıt. From Left to Right: Mazlum Doğan, Ömer Koç and Sema Yüce

When people entered Doğubayazıt's BDP office, the familiar click of the door handling making everyone look up to see who had arrived, they would often stop to look at the martyr's wall. Öcalan was in the centre, surrounded by local martyrs, many of the images family photos instead of official portraits. Fatma's portrait, her official portrait and the photo of her smiling, with her hair tied loosely around her neck, her gun held casually in her hand, was not put on the martyrs wall after her burial and funeral. However, one of her mourners had removed the small black and white image of Fatma pinned to his shirt and placed it in the corner of Öcalan's photo after her funeral. It stayed there for most of the year. In 2014, the BDP (now the HDP) moved offices, taking the martyr's wall with them (fig. 4.18). Ömer was placed between Mazlum Doğan, the first 'suicide' martyr, and Sema. I did not find Fatma's picture when I visited the office again in 2014.

The martyr's wall, like the banner at the commemoration of the Mount Ararat Uprising and the agenda found on the dusty shelf of the closed Political Academy in Diyarbakır, do not only reveal the histories of Kurdistan's female martyrs, they suggest that other narrative forms are needed to read the histories of resistance—feminist, national, local, violent, non-violent, at home and in the street—in Kurdistan. Histories of martyrdom are bequeathed by the dead “to continue the struggle for mastery and dignity that had occupies their lives.”⁸⁸⁰ They are taken up in

⁸⁸⁰ Brown, *The Reaper's Garden*, 49.

various ways by their descendants in order to make sense of the daily struggles for dignity that continue to form and shape the lives of Kurds in Turkey. The bequeathal and inheritance of martyrdom in Kurdistan has its own temporality, one that is not confined to the time and space of the nation-state. While the Turkish state uses violence to reassert its sovereignty in one of its 'farthest corners,' the people in Doğubayazıt weave their resistance into an ongoing history of massacre and refusal.

“All this I have ended with a tale twice told but seldom written, and a chapter of song.”
W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

Epilogue Re-reading the Tragedy of Kurdistan



Fig. 5.0: “The Martyrs of the Revolution Never Die: Beritan Avenue,” Doğubayazıt, Turkey

“The Kurds awakened to a sense of nationhood rather belatedly,” writes Wadie Jwadih, “and in this lies their tragedy and that of the people among whom they live.”⁸⁸¹ The preceding chapters have challenged Jwadih’s assessment of Kurdish resistance, re-reading it from Doğubayazıt, “a frontier town of Turkey in Asia” that “sits close under Mount Ararat,” as a longing for a form of belonging untouched by the nationalism’s ‘deeds of violence.’⁸⁸² However, it is not perhaps Jwadih’s description of the “dream of Kurdistan” as an aspiration of Kurds “to be what other more fortunate peoples are—a nation-state” that therefore warrants challenge, but his characterization of the “surrounding nationalisms—Turkish, Persian, and Arab” as successes that raises objection.⁸⁸³ But in all fairness to the scholar, he wrote in a different time, his understanding of Turkish, Persian and Arab nationalism influenced by the dream of decolonization rather than the realities of the nation-state.

⁸⁸¹ Wadie Jwadih, *The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006), xv-xvi

⁸⁸² E.B. Soane, *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise* (Boston: Small, Maynard and Company, 1914), 388.

⁸⁸³ Jwadih, xv-xvi.

In the preface to Jwaideh's *The Kurdish National Movement*, Martin van Bruinessen describes how the book was banned in Turkey in 1999 while other more "political" works remained on shelves. He argues that it was Jwaideh's convincing demonstration of "how strong and deep the historical roots of contemporary Kurdish movements were and how old and deep their grievances and demands were" that angered the state prosecutor. Like the "grand old men" of Orientalism, Valdimir Minorsky and Cecil J. Edmonds, Jwaideh went to Kurdistan in order to serve his government. But unlike the Russian and British scholars, argues Bruinessen, Jwaideh was sympathetic to Kurdish nationalism. His "relationship" to Kurds "was a different one." Not only does his work reflect his "direct acquaintance" with the land and people of Iraqi Kurdistan, his experience of "being from a Christian minority contributed" to his book's "Kurdish viewpoint."⁸⁸⁴ Jwaideh's sister taught at the University of Toronto in the same department that I met my first 'Kurdish' scholar, Professor Amir Hassanpour. While he missed the mountains of Kurdistan, his heart was in Palestine. Like Jwaideh, Hassanpour understood the "grievances and demands" of minorities in the Middle East. For Hassanpour, Kurds and Palestinians were not only united by experiences of oppression but, more importantly, a world-wide history of anti-colonial struggle.⁸⁸⁵ An Iraqi Arab Christian sympathetic to Kurdish nationalism and an Marxist from Iranian Kurdistan dedicated to the liberation of Palestine bring to mind "different trajectories of possibility" and the "constraint" of present times.⁸⁸⁶ Hakan Yavuz argues that there is no room in the Middle East for a Kurdish nation-state.⁸⁸⁷ Jwaideh and Hassanpour reminded us of the need to make room for the imagination of other forms of political belonging. And so, these are my two stories "twice told but seldom written." And now for the chapter of song.⁸⁸⁸

⁸⁸⁴ Martin van Bruinessen, "Foreword," to Wadie Jwaideh's *The Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006), x-xi.

⁸⁸⁵ Amir Hassanpour, *Nationalism and language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992) was also published in Turkish: *Kürdistan'da milliyetçilik ve dil: 1918-1985* (Istanbul: Avesta, 2005).

⁸⁸⁶ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 236.

⁸⁸⁷ Hakan Yavuz, "Five Stages of the Construction of Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey," *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics* 7, no.3 (2001), 21.

⁸⁸⁸ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Kindle Edition, c.1903).

Perhaps Kurdistan's most famous musician is Şivan Perwer. He was certainly my mother-in-law's favourite performer. His music was banned in Turkey, but of course every Kurdish household had tapes of his music. In the 1980s and 1990s Turkish police often raided Kurdish homes in Eastern Turkey looking for illegal Kurdish 'contraband.' One morning local children warned my mother-in-law that the police were searching homes in the neighbourhood. She hid the family's collection of Kurdish music in the *tenûr* (Kurdish)/*tandır* (Turkish) oven. The police came into the house and walked over the carpets without removing their muddy shoes. As my father-in-law finished his prayers, my mother-in-law shouted at the policemen to take off their shoes. One of the officers asked my father-in-law to control his "rude" (*terbiyesiz*) wife. As they were about to leave, the tapes in the *tandır* undiscovered, one of the policeman pressed the play button on the tape deck. My mother-in-law had forgotten to check it. Perwer's voice blasted from the deck, shouting: Who am I? (*Kî ne em?*) over and over again in Kurdish. The officer grabbed the tape, threw it on the floor, and smashed it with his muddy boot. Known as the Kurdish anthem of freedom, "*Kî ne em?*" is based on a poem by the Kurdish nationalist poet Cegerxwîn (1903–1984).⁸⁸⁹ Over and over it asks and answers the question, "Who are we?" Kurds are: "farmer and worker; villager and labourer; from the proletariat." They are: "the enemy's enemy; friends of peace; good people; not bears and wolves." Who are the Kurds? "Kurdistan is a thousand years old; divided into four; the enemy's enemy!"⁸⁹⁰ Ramazan Aras argues popular music is the "new instrument" of Kurdish resistance in Turkey.⁸⁹¹ A younger generation of Kurdish rappers have responded to Perwer's question, answering: "We are Kurdistan." Like Perwer's anthem, younger musicians sing of oppression and resistance and figures from the Kurdish past. However, Marx and Lenin do not appear in the lyrics of Serhado's "I am Kurdistan" (*Ez Kurdistan im*), replaced by PKK martyrs and the leaders of the uprisings of the 1920s and 1930s:

I am Agit's mother, Hayri, Mazlum, Kemal Pir,
I am a hero, Beritan, Zilan and Berivan,
I am the mother of Mullah Barzani, Sheikh Said, Bedirkhan,
I am the 29th rebellion,
I am uprising, war, huge battle,
I am hope, goal, freedom's hope,

⁸⁸⁹ Ramazan Aras, *The formation of Kurdishness in Turkey: political violence, fear and pain* (London; New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 131.

⁸⁹⁰ Şivan Perwer, "*Kî ne em?*" in *Kî ne em?* Pelrecores, 2012, <http://itunes.com>.

⁸⁹¹ Aras, *The formation of Kurdishness in Turkey*, 136.

I am Kurdistan.⁸⁹²
 My mother-in-law liked Kurdish rap as well. Over the summer of 2010 we sang Koma Pel's anthem "*Êdî Bese*."⁸⁹³ Over and over again repeating "Enough!"

The year after the commemoration of the Mount Ararat Uprising in Doğubayazıt, Serhat Çarnewa, a well-known singer from the city, made a promotional video for the municipality that wove in the history of the uprising. It opened with images of sheep grazing on Ararat's green pastures and then faded into winter, the sheep trudging through the mountain's deep snow. Doğubayazıt's people and streets appeared in the video. But in the video fruit and vegetables were sold from wooden carts, not from Migros, the large Turkish supermarket across the road. Old men sat around a *soba* (coal stove) in the Hani Baba teahouse. There were no shots of kids playing video games and drinking Nescafe in the internet café next door. The story of the Ararat Uprising and its heroes, as well as the poetry of the city's most famous inhabitant, Ehmedê Xanî (Hani Baba), was recited between Çarnewa's chorus of "*Xweş Bazîdê*," beautiful Doğubayazıt. There was one brief shot of Çarnewa and the video's other actors placing flowers on what perhaps only locals would have known were the graves of PKK martyrs. The epitaphs on the graves, out of focus, seemed have been written for the Ararat rebels.⁸⁹⁴ The video's bypassing of the PKK and its reassertion of an older, nationalist history was a reclaiming of Doğubayazıt's role as the centre of the Mount Ararat Uprising. After Sakık's mayoral victory Ağrı was the "*kale*" (the seat of resistance, literally castle). The real *kale*, İshak Paşa Sarayı is, of course, outside of Doğubayazıt. In fact, you can not see it from Ağrı and tourists should be warned not to plan a trip based on the images of it on Ağrı's municipal website. The video for local rapper SeKa's celebration of Sakık's historical win was shot partly around the castle. However, the streets of his video featured young kids with American sneakers holding up two fingers to claim their own tradition of resistance.⁸⁹⁵ And so the story of the uprising continued, its local reappropriations only visible when reading Kurdish resistance in place.

⁸⁹² Serhado, "*Ez Kurdistan im*," (with Zozan Zudem), in *Xeyala Evin*, Kom Muzik, 2009, <http://itunes.com>.

⁸⁹³ Koma Pel, "*Êdî Bese*," in *Dengê Ciwanin Volume 1*, Aydın Müzik, 2008, <http://itunes.com>.

⁸⁹⁴ Serhat Çarnewa, "*Bazîd*," 2014, [music video], accessed October 13, 2014, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWTLwVKIGFk>

⁸⁹⁵ SeKA [Serhat Kaya], "*Mesopotamya III*," 2014 [music video], accessed November 1, 2014, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HyFfpJ-Gcz4>. The video has been taken down but a viewer has uploaded the song (last accessed on January 28, 2019), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxeEG8XKd_A.

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