

**ISTANBUL TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY ★ GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL  
SCIENCES**

**POLITICS, STRUGGLE, VIOLENCE, AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF  
EXPRESSIVE CULTURE:  
AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF KURDS' MUSICAL PRACTICES IN TURKEY**

**Ph.D. THESIS**

**Gönenç HONGUR**

**Department of Music**

**Music Programme**

**JUNE 2014**



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**JUNE 2014**



**İSTANBUL TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ ★ SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ**

**SİYASET, KAVGA, ŞİDDET VE İFADE KÜLTÜRÜNÜN DÖNÜŞÜMÜ:  
TÜRKİYE'DE KÜRTLERİN MÜZİKAL PRATİKLERİNİN BİR  
ETNOGRAFYASI**

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*To my sister Andaç Hongur,*



## FOREWORD

Just as many people from my generation, I have both mentally and sentimentally been involved in the violent conflict between Turkish Army and the “Kurdish separatist movement” in Turkey since my childhood. Having grown up as a Turk in northwestern Turkey, which is geographically, sociologically, and culturally far from militarily problematic area where Kurdish people live in Turkey, on the other hand, I have always been disturbed by the negative accounts of Kurds, Kurdish political and armed movement frequently encountered among Turkish media, public, and people as well as among nationalist and modernist views because my understanding of such movements has also been shaped by political ideas and conscience that have a fair degree of empathy with similar movements around the world.

In spite of long years of my musical training as a violinist starting first at Anatolian Fine Arts High School in Eskişehir, and then at Bilkent University in Ankara, both in Turkey, and lastly at the University of Memphis in the United States, I have never lost my deep interest in politics and its moral and ideological considerations; on the contrary, I have always had a dormant aspiration for incorporating them into a part of my life, particularly since the year I resumed my music studies in the United States, where I had a chance to acquaint myself with entirely different perspectives on music. As a product of the opportunity that arose after receiving my degree at the University of Memphis, this thesis, in which I have ethnographically striven to understand the role of music in Kurdish political and cultural life without being engaged in any system of ideological constraint, represents a combination of both my lifelong interest and occupation.

I could not have completed a project of this size without many people who contributed their support, encouragement, and expertise throughout the research and writing process of this work. First, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Prof. Ş. Şehvar Beşiroğlu and Assoc. Prof. Robert Reigle, my academic advisors, for their supportive approaches to my field of study. I am grateful to Prof. Ş. Şehvar Beşiroğlu for providing me with her immediate support for Istanbul Technical University’s Scientific Research Project that has greatly helped me during my fieldwork; and I am grateful to Assoc. Prof. Robert Reigle for his scholarly inputs and comforting approach during the research and writing processes of this thesis.

Many thanks to the respectable members of my dissertation committee, Prof. Ali Ergur, Assoc. Prof. Belma Kurtişoğlu, and Prof. Ceylan Tokluoğlu, who have all been very helpful and cooperative, providing me with critical suggestions to improve this thesis.

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Finally, I could not imagine myself as a doctoral student who is about to fulfill the last and the most challenging requirement of his studies without my beloved partner Ceren Demirdöđdü, whose warm-hearted friendship, patience, and generosity will be in my heart forever; without her incredible soul and companionship, and her material, spiritual, and academic support, this thesis would have never been existed in the first place.

May 2014

Gönenç HONGUR

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- AK PARTİ** : Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)  
**BDP** : Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi (Peace and Democracy Party)  
**DDKO** : Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları  
**DEV-GENÇ** : Türkiye Devrimci Gençlik Federasyonu (The Federation of Revolutionary Youth)  
**DİSK** : Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu (The Confederation of Revolutionary Workers Unions)  
**DTP** : Demokratik Toplum Partisi (Democratic Society Party)  
**HPG** : Hêzên Parastina Gel (People's Defence Forces)  
**İHD** : İnsan Hakları Derneği (Human Rights Association)  
**KESK** : Kamu Emekçileri Sendikaları Konfederasyonu (Confederation of Public Laborers' Unions)  
**MKM** : Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi (Mesopotamia Cultural Center)  
**PDK** : Partîya Demokrata Kurdistanê (Kurdistan Democratic Party)  
**PKK** : Partîya Karkerên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers' Party)  
**TİP** : Türkiye İşçi Partisi (The Labor Party of Turkey)  
**TKDP** : Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi (Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey)  
**TRT** : Türkiye Radyo Televizyonu Kurumu (Radio and Television Corporation of Turkey)



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# **POLITICS, STRUGGLE, VIOLENCE, AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF EXPRESSIVE CULTURE: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF KURDS' MUSICAL PRACTICES IN TURKEY**

## **SUMMARY**

The issue of how the relationship between music and resistance-based nationalist politics come into being has been systematically covered by ethnomusicologists lately. Music, as the current study attempts to discover a small part of it, is one of the main channels through which Kurdish resistance and nationalism in Turkey have been nurtured for nearly four decades. Many researchers imply the musical transformation of Kurdish resistance and nationalism when they employ the word “politicization” for the change of the characteristics of Kurdish music especially after the mid-1970s. However, this thesis contends that this term could hardly clarify the prevalent position of politicized music in Kurdish culture and society in Turkey.

A number of cultural, ideological, and artistic sources, on the face of it, have had a lot to carry presumably because of Kurds' lack of a nation-state institutionalization. Discursively speaking, because of the lack of institutionalization, in addition, there has not been a well-defined distinction between refined and popular culture in Kurdish society. Music, which could somehow be produced, distributed, and listened to, has featured many intertwined and multifaceted characters together such as entertaining, instructive, and source of sophisticated culture and taste. With this claim, resistance politics in Kurdish music overflow within the broad scope of nationalism. In addition to the investigation of a number of music-centered political events in relation to their musical-related contents, chapters of this thesis have also focused on *raison d'être* of these events. It attempts to discuss, therefore, the functionality of proclaimed themes of these events in Kurdish culture and political movement. Seeking to offer an ethnographic snapshot that ascertains the effects of the transformative power of warfare, violence, and contentious politics on Kurdish culture, music, and musicians in Turkey, this thesis explains the authoritative role that music and music-centered practices have played in the process of Kurdish cultural and political movement in Turkey. The study not only describes the impact of music on Kurdish national identity and culture; it also ethnographically analyses the impact of music on the transformation of Kurdish expressive culture.

Ultimately this thesis concludes that while music has established itself as a cultural force that affects Kurdish people in Turkey from many directions, it has, at the same time, had a particular role in the expansion of political and armed movement. I conclude that further research on the role of dance practices and popular culture in Kurdish political movement as well as in Kurdish culture and society should be undertaken.



# SİYASET, KAVGA, ŞİDDET VE İFADE KÜLTÜRÜNÜN DÖNÜŞÜMÜ: TÜRKİYE’DE KÜRTLERİN MÜZİKAL PRATİKLERİNİN BİR ETNOGRAFYASI

## ÖZET

Kişiler, sınıflar, toplumlar ve uluslar arası politik, ekonomik, kültürel ve tarihsel ilişkileri düzenlemede her zaman belirleyici rol oynayan baskı, direniş, şiddet ve çatışma, kötü şöhretlerine rağmen bireyler ve bireylerin oluşturduğu çeşitli toplulukların dünyayı anlamlandırmada sıklıkla faydalandığı önemli araçlardan olmaya devam etmektedir. Zira bireylerin bu görüngüleri kavramsallaştırma ve deneyimleme şekilleri, farklı kültürel ve toplumsal yapıların oluşmasında her zaman önemli bir etmendir. Kişiler ve topluluklar haklı, haksız, suçlu, mağdur, güçlü, zayıf gibi özneleri tanımlama eylemleri sırasında “ben, biz” ve “öteki, ötekiler” ile ilgili yapıları kurmakta ve sahip oldukları duygu ve fikirleri aktarmak için kendi anlatım tekniklerini geliştirmektedir. Çeşitli artistik faaliyetler ise bu anlatım tekniklerinin üretildiği en önemli mecraları sunmaktadır. Bu tür faaliyetler içinde en yoğun ve etkili kullanılan dallardan ikisi ise müzik ve danstır. Bu bakımdan müzik ve dans, katılımcıların baskı ve direnişe dair rol ve ilişkilerini sergiledikleri en temel iki sosyal etkileşim biçimi olarak görev yapmaktadır. Müzik ve dans bir yandan maruz kalınan şiddetin anlatımını güçlendirmek ve onu kınamak, diğer yandan da bu şiddeti uygulayan gücü geri püskürtmek için gereken direnişi ve şiddeti meşrulaştırmada etkin şekilde görev alabilmektedir. Özellikle 1970’lerin ikinci yarısından sonra ortaya çıkan ve Türkiye’deki radikal sol hareketlerle özdeşleşmiş olan protesto müziği geleneğinden koparak gelişen Kürt siyasal hareketini önceleyen popüler ve protest müzik üretiminde, bu ikileme çok sık rastlanmaktadır.

1980’li yılların ortasında başlayan ve günümüzde de devam eden siyasi ve askeri çatışma ortamı, sosyal ve kültürel hayatın önemli bir parçası olan müziğin Kürt toplumundaki rolünü ve konumlanışını değiştirmiş, Türkiye’de yaşayan Kürtlerin müzikle ilgili üretim ve tüketim alışkanlıklarını derinden etkilemiş ve savaş, direniş ve şiddet söyleminin hükmettiği yeni bir dağarcık meydana gelmiştir. Bugüne kadar ortaya çıkan repertuvarda şiddet, hem bir karşı koyma aracı hem de bir mağduriyet ifadesi olarak müzik ve dans aracılığıyla estetik bir unsura dönüşmektedir. Ayrıca çeşitli sebeplerle Kürt siyasal hareketinin Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nin siyasi yelpazesinde kendine kalıcı bir yer edinmeyi başaramaması, Kürt toplumsal yaşamında müziği bir siyasi faaliyet alanı olarak öne çıkarmıştır. Günümüzde asimilasyonun etkisiyle hızla biçim değiştiren bu kültürün yerini bir direniş kültürü ve bu kültürün ortaya çıkardığı yeni bir Kürt kimliği almakta ve bu durum tüm hızıyla sürmekte olan asimilasyon süreci içinde başlı başına toplumsal bir vakaya dönüşmektedir.

Müziğin kültürel, antropolojik, siyasi ve sosyal bağlamda incelenmesine vurgu yapan etnomüzikoloji, politik şiddet, savaş ve çatışmanın biçimlendirdiği artistik hayatı yorumlamada önemli bir konum almaktadır. Etnomüzikolojik açıdan bu çalışma Kürt

etnik ya da ulus kimliğini benimseyen ve önemseyen bireylerin savaş deneyimiyle zenginleşmiş müzik ve dans havuzunu tahlil ederek, çatışma ve savaş durumunda sahne sanatlarının işleviyle ilgili detaylı çalışmalar açısından önemli derecede eksikliğe sahip olan etnomüzikoloji literatürüne yeni bir bakış açısı sunmayı ve savaş ve şiddet saikiyle sergilenen performansın, müzik, dans, estetik, milliyetçilik ve direnişle olan ilişkisini sorgulamayı hedeflemektedir. Çatışma, savaş, şiddet ve direniş pratiklerinin hakim olduğu müzik kültürleri son dönem etnografik incelemelerin yakından ilgilendiği alanların önemli bir kısmını oluşturmaktadır. Bu incelemelerin ortaya çıkardığı yaklaşım ve kuramların temelinde gelişen bu tez, Türkiye’de genellikle üniter devlet ve ulusal selfdeterminasyon karşıtlığı ya da tarih, dil, kültür ve asimilasyon üzerinden tartışılan Kürt ulusal ve siyasal hareketinin özellikle müzik ve dans etrafında gelişen ifade kültürü ile ilişkisini tartışmaktadır. Oldukça net ideolojik temellere dayanan, muhalif ve fakat aynı zamanda kavgacı ve savaşçı siyasi söylemin önemli derecede etkili olduğu Kürt müzik kültürünün dönüşümünü ve günümüzdeki konumunu etnografik, sosyolojik ve antropolojik yöntemler ve kuramlar çerçevesinde ele alan bu tez, hem Türkiye’deki Kürt kültürü, siyaseti ve toplumuna dair yazına, hem de çatışma, savaş ve müzik ilişkisine odaklanan yeni etnomüzikolojik alana katkıda bulunmayı hedeflemektedir. Bugün müziğin Kürtlerin hayatındaki istisnai önemine vurgu yapan yaygın görüş, Kürt müziği konusundaki zayıf literatürün önemli argümanlarından biridir. Çatışma, savaş, zorunlu göç gibi Türkiye’deki Kürtlerin günlük hayatı ve kültürü üzerinde derin etki bırakan somut faktörlere rağmen sosyolojik ya da antropolojik çalışmaların sonucunda geliştirilmiş gibi görünmeyen ve birçok açıdan varsayıma dayanan bu argüman yine de özellikle Türkiye’de yaşayan Kürtlerin siyasal ve toplumsal merkezine yerleşen müzik repertuarı göz önüne alındığında hiç de önemsiz ve tutarsız değildir. Özellikle Kürt toplumunda müzik üreten ve tüketen arasındaki gözle görülür bağ bu hipotezi destekleyecek niteliktedir. Kayda değer bir savaş, çatışma ve saldırganlık halinin kolaylıkla gözlemlenebildiği Kürt siyasal hareketi açısından müzik ve dans pratikleri, bireylerin çeşitli şekillerde şiddeti dönüştürme eylemlerini gerçekleştirebildiği önemli bir geçit sağlamaktadır. Bu durum, Türkiye’de Kürtçe müzik üretimi ve yayımının yasak olduğu 1991 yılına kadar ve birtakım baskıların devam ettiği, daha sonraki dönemde karaborsa kaset üretimi ve dağıtımıyla başlayıp, politik söylem ve slogan içerikli şarkıların ve dansların, kesilmeyen çatışma halinin de etkisiyle geniş bir toplumsal ifade alanına dönüşmesiyle ortaya çıkmıştır.

Müzisyenlerin hem tek başına Kürt müzisyen hem de Kürt olarak karşılaştıkları zorluk sonucu ortaya çıkan üretim şekli ve ürünler, Kürt halkında önemli bir karşılık bulmuş ve gerek maruz kalınan gerekse niyet edilen acı ve öfke üzerinden bir beğeni ve ifade türü doğmuştur. Politik kadroların yönlendirmesinin yanında Kürt halkının önemli bir kısmı, bu yeni müzik türünü var olan ya da türetilen danslarla yine var olan kültürel politik etkinliklerle (geleneksel ve modern kutlama ve ritüellerin içine katarak) zenginleştirmiş, yeniden üretmiştir. Yaygın internet kültürünün günümüzdeki etkisini de hesaba katarak büyük ölçüde kamusal ifade pratiklerine odaklanan bu tez, alan araştırmasının etnografik kapsamını genişleterek Türkiye’de yaşayan Kürtlerin önemli bir kısmının müzik ve müzik merkezli faaliyet alanlarıyla nasıl siyasi mücadele oluşturduğunu ve aynı zamanda kültürel saiklerini yeniden yorumlayarak Kürt ulusal kimliğinin tekrar kurulma sürecinin gelişimini açıklamaktadır.

Türkiye’nin bugünkü sosyal ve politik koşullarında Kürt siyasal hareketiyle ilişkili Kürt müzisyenlerin kendilerini sabitlediği net tutum oldukça kayda değerdir. Türkiye

dışında ve Türkiye’de yaşamlarını sürdüren Türkiyeli Kürt müzisyenlerin çoğu özellikle Kürt siyasal hareketi bağlamında güncel politika ve insan haklarıyla ilişkili birçok konuyu üretimlerinin bir parçası haline getirmiştir. Politik duruşlarının hayatları üzerinde yarattığı sıkıntıya rağmen Kürt müzisyenler genellikle zaten oldukça politik mesleki üretimlerinin yanısıra devlet ve hükümet politikalarına muhalefet etme konusunda sorumluluk hissettiklerini sıklıkla belli eder. Kürt müzisyenler ve müzikleri ve müzik dışı siyasi faaliyetleriyle bu açıdan Türkiye’de Kürtlerin önemli bir kısmının hissettiği acı, öfke ve direnişin ifadesinde önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Bu çalışma ise Türkiye’de Kürt müzisyenlerin ve ürettikleri siyasi ve protest tarz müziklerin işlevi, otoritesi ve yaygınlığının bununla sınırlı kalmamış olabileceği hipotezi üzerinden gelişmiştir. Siyasal ve silahlı hareketin ortaya çıkardığı birçok sembol ve ideolojik imgenin müzik ve müzik çevresinde kurgulanan eylemlerle Kürt sosyal ve kültürel hayatının sürükleyicisi haline gelmesine ek olarak, Kürt müziği siyasi ve silahlı harekete yön verecek şekilde yetkilendirilmiş görünmektedir. Bu tez, bu öngörüğü çeşitli etnografik yöntemler yoluyla elde edilen verileri yakın dönem sosyolojik ve antropolojik paradigmlar üzerinden desteklemeye çalışmaktadır. Ayrıca incelemenin gerçekleştiği toplum ve kültürün karakteristik özellikleri göz önüne alındığında ulus, milliyet ve milliyetçilik gibi konuları tartışan diğer kuramlara da danışılmasının gerekli olduğu anlaşılmaktadır. Milliyetçilik ve/veya etnik farklılığın geç modernizmin şiddet imgelemine en yaygın ortaya çıkma şekli olduğu gerçeği göz önüne alındığında müziği bu kavramlar bağlamında yeniden ele alan çalışmalar bu araştırmanın önemli bir temelini oluşturmaktadır.

Alan araştırması bu araştırmanın yönteminin en önemli ayağını meydana getirmektedir. Türkiye’de Kürt nüfusun çoğunlukta olduğu ya da Kürt siyasi hareketinin güçlü görüldüğü Batman, Diyarbakır, Tunceli, Hakkâri gibi şehirlerde ve birçok Kürt müzisyenin aktif olarak çalıştığı ve müzik endüstrisinin yapılandığı İstanbul’da gerçekleşen bir dizi etkinlik, katılımcı gözlem yöntemiyle takip edilmiş, müziğin ve dansın kullanım şekli, müzikal davranış özellikleri, müziğe, şarkıya, konsere, enstrümana, sahneye, müzisyene, dansa ve dans edene atfedilen farklı anlamlar yerinde incelenerek tespit edilmeye çalışılmış ve ilgili sosyal kuramlar çerçevesinde işlenmek ve yorumlanmak üzere veri toplanmıştır. Ayrıca icra edilen şarkı ve dansların, sözler, melodik ve ritmik yapı, koreografi, karakter, biçim ve enstrüman kullanımı bakımlarından incelenmesi, müzikal algıyı belli bir hedef temelinde düzenlemeye yarayan temel ortak yapılar hakkında belli başlı fikirlere ulaşılmasını sağlayacaktır. Müzik ve müzisyen kadar dans, albüm, konser, afiş, slogan gibi müzik çevresindeki öğeler de egemene karşı oluşan siyasal pratiğin yayılmasında ve aynı zamanda Kürt siyasal hareketinin kendine ait egemen bir söylem oluşturmasında önemli hatta dönüştürücü bir rolde olduğundan, bu incelemenin konusu içinde yer alır. Sadece direniş, karşı koyuş değil aynı zamanda karşı gelmeye ikna edilen kitle üzerinde otorite yaratmada önemli olan tüm bu faktörlerin her birinin müzikle ilişkisi, bu tezin daimi konularındandır. Bunu kesin çizgilerle aynı bir anayasa gibi (lider, başkent, sınırlar, renkler, askeri güvenlik ve savunma, şehitlik) çizilen ulus ve devlet merkezli kavramlarla ilgili tanımlamaların iletilmesindeki rolünden anlamaktayız.

Çok sayıda kültürel ve siyasi etkinlik ve kutlamanın yanısıra Kürt siyasi müzik ve video repertuarının şekillenmesinde önemli rol oynayan internet, bu araştırmanın merkezinde yer almaktadır. Tarihi ve sosyolojik değerlendirmelere ek olarak araştırma süresince çok sayıda profesyonel Kürt müzisyen ve dansçı, dinleyici,

etkinlik katılımcısı ve fikir insanıyla yapılan mülakat ve ucu açık söyleşi de bu tezin oluşmasında önemli ölçüde etkili olmuştur. Son tahlilde müzikal ürün ve etkinliklerin bir kısmının siyasi ve askeri direniş ya da Kürt ulusal kimliği ve onun ebedi varlığı fikriyle, bir kısmının ulusal direnişin haklılığı ve onuru ya da Kürtlerin yaşadığı mağduriyet ve baskı temasıyla, bir kısmının da direniş sonrası ideal dünya imgesiyle örülmüş olduğu görülmektedir. Tüm bunların arasında insanlığın yüzyıllardır anlamlandırmaya çalıştığı güç, şiddet, baskı, direniş, özgürlük, liderlik, acı, zafer ve şenlik gibi çok sayıda sosyal olgu dolaşmaktadır. Bir başka deyişle Kürtlerin Ortadoğu'da uzun süredir devam eden özgürlük mücadelesi ve şu anki siyasi konumu artistik ve sosyopolitik bir değişimi açığa çıkarmış ve bu değişim müziği tüm bu olguların gözünden; tüm bu olguları da müziğin gözünden tartışmaya olanak sağlayan bir platform yaratmıştır. Bir diğer açıdan müzik, özellikle 1970'lerin ikinci yarısı itibarıyla Türkiye'deki Kürt kültürü ve siyaseti için güçlü ve zengin bir direniş kaynağı haline gelmiştir. Bu bağlam içinde bu tez, müzik merkezli direnişin Türkiye'deki Kürt toplumu içindeki sosyokültürel yansımalarını keşfetmek için yola çıkmıştır.

Bugün Nevruz gibi yeniden keşfedilmiş geleneksel (ya da neo-geleneksel) bir olgu ya da radikal sol ve sosyalist kavramların egemene karşı gelişen dilinden türeyen savaştı direniş konseptleri Kürt toplumunun kolektif hafızasının şekillenmesinde aktif rol oynamaktadır. Bunun yanında Ahmet Kaya gibi siyasi ve siyasallaşmış popüler kültür figürleri ve anma, kutlama gibi modern konseptler ya da internet ve televizyon gibi görsel merkezli teknolojik kaynaklar, müziği direnişe dair temaların sosyokültürel ve politik biçimlenişinde ana kanal olarak öne çıkarmaktadır. Kürt ifade kültürü bugün, mitoloji, tarih, modernite, sosyalizm ve milliyetçilik konseptlerini on yıllardır inşa edilen etkili bir müzik-politik diliyle hayata geçirmektedir. Diğer taraftan Türkiye'deki Kürtlerin bugünkü siyasi pozisyonuyla da bağlantılı olarak bu dil, süregelen direniş hareketi ve tahayyül edilen özgürlük modeli arasında da aracılık etmektedir. Üçüncü bölümde incelendiği gibi bugün Nevruz konsepti ve Nevruz kutlamaları Kürtlerin direniş temelli özgürlük hareketinin ağırlıklı olarak mitolojik ve tarihsel tarafını vurgularken, dördüncü bölümün konusu olan Tunceli'nin etnopolitik yapısı ve Munzur Kültür ve Doğa Festivali gibi her yıl düzenlenen festival etkinlikleri de radikal sol fikirlerle desteklenmiş bir özgürlük hareketi imgesine odaklanmaktadır. Ayrıca beşinci bölümde konu edildiği şekliyle Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi gibi siyasi-kültürel kurumlar veya Ahmet Kaya gibi sembolik figürler de Kürt kimliğinin maruz kaldığı haksız yaklaşımı simgelemektedir. Son olarak altıncı bölümde de analiz edildiği gibi, öfke, intikam, mücadelecilik, vatanseverlik, savaştı saldırı ve zafere dair baskın duygular ise internet ve uydu televizyonu gibi nispeten daha güvenli platformlarda dışavurulmaktadır. Bu noktada müziğin imgesel alanlarla güncel siyaset ve muhalefet pratikleri arasındaki bağı kurgulamadaki kritik konumu dikkat çekmektedir.

Bu çalışma, direniş, şiddet, savaş, çatışma gibi temaların müzik ve dans aracılığıyla kimlik kurma ve estetik bir çerçeve tasarlama faaliyetindeki rolünü ortaya koyma açısından önem taşımaktadır. Bu noktada Kürt ulusal ve kültürel hareketinin Türkiye'de gelişen kısmıyla sınırlandırılan bu tezin, Türkiye'de yaşayan Kürtlerin tümünü temsil eden bir araştırma olarak yola çıkmadığı gerçeği de önemli bir ayrıntı olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Özetle bu tez Türkiye'de müzikal öğelerle derin bir şekilde yoğrulmuş Kürt ifade kültürünün dönüşümünü direniş, milliyetçilik, şiddet, baskı ve çatışmalı siyaset bağlamları içinden tartışan, başlangıç niteliğinde bir akademik anlatımı temsil etmektedir. Bir yandan müziğin toplum içinde varabileceği

kapasitenin genişliğini ampirik olarak göstermeye çalışırken, diğer taraftan müziğin bu potansiyelinin evrenselliğine belli bir şüphecilikle yaklaşmaktadır. Üzerine tatmin edici bir akademik literatürün halen oluşmadığı bir ulus olarak Kürtlere, henüz ortaya çıkan bir etnomüzikolojik dalın perspektifinden bakan bu tez, her iki literatüre de mütevazı bir katkı sağlayacaktır.



# 1. INTRODUCTION: MUSICAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF RESISTANCE

## 1.1 Purpose of the Thesis: Musico-politics

<i>Kîne em?</i>	Who are we?
<i>Cotkar û karker</i>	Farmer and worker
<i>Gundî û rençber</i>	Peasant and laborer
<i>Hemû proleter</i>	All proletarian
<i>Gelê Kurdistan</i>	People of Kurdistan
<i>Şoreş û volkan</i>	Revolution and volcano
<i>Tev dinamêt in</i>	All dynamite
<i>Agir û pêt in</i>	Fire and flame
<i>Sor in wek etûn</i>	Heated like quarry
<i>Agir giha qabsûn</i>	Fire reached the fuse
<i>Gava biteqin</i>	When it explodes
<i>Dinya dihejî</i>	The world shakes
<i>Ev pêt û agir</i>	This flame and fire
<i>Dijmin dikuji</i>	Kills the enemy
<i>Kîne em?</i>	Who are we? <sup>1</sup>

(Perwer, 2012 [1979])

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 2012, on behalf of the artists of Istanbul MKM *Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi* (Mesopotamia Cultural Center)<sup>2</sup> in Turkish or NÇM *Navenda Çanda Mezopotamya* in Kurdish, three Kurdish musicians, with whom I had interviewed earlier for the current study, held a press conference at the Istanbul branch of İHD *İnsan Hakları Derneği* (Human Rights Association) of Turkey along with two other Kurdish artists. In their press statement (İstanbul Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi, 2012) addressing Turkish government's contradictory stance between its foreign and home policies, and criticizing the unethical attitude of mainstream media toward Kurdish resistance, they called for an end to unlawful detentions and war in Kurdish-

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<sup>1</sup> The Kurdish original of the lyrics are translated into English by the author.

<sup>2</sup> MKM (Mezopotamia Cultural Center) is one of the most important Kurdish organizations founded in 1991 to promote Kurdish music, language, literature, and cinema. MKM will be discussed more fully in chapter 5.

populated areas, constitutional recognition of the rights to all nationalities and beliefs existing in Turkey, and the disclosure of the perpetrators of Roboskî incident.<sup>3</sup> The statement that calls all artists to raise their voices, in addition, condemned the policy of Sunni-Turkism adopted by Turkish government, women murders, ongoing hostility to Alevi<sup>4</sup> citizens, antagonism toward Kurdish people living in western cities of Turkey, and the obstruction of communication with the city of Şemdinli (Şemzînan) in which a severe battle had been lasting for almost ten days:

... Everyday countless arrests are made under the name of KCK<sup>5</sup> operations, scales of justice are rendered dysfunctional, MPs that are the political representatives of Kurdish people are dragged along the ground and made targets, mayors are jailed, journalists are silenced, and guerrillas of Kurdish liberation movement are slain in violation of international laws of war.

... The Prime Minister, who is an advocate of democracy, human rights, and freedom for oppressed and unprotected peoples living outside of his own country, continues to ignore more than 20 million Kurdish populace nearby, and even going further, he comes out against the demands for democracy and freedom made by Kurdish populace living in Syria.

... The artist who is the conscience of society has the responsibility toward seeing the fact, and we can be true artists only by fulfilling this responsibility. (İstanbul Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi, 2012)

Since it was Saturday, many MKM artists including musicians and cinematographers joined the vigil of the *Cumartesi Anneleri*<sup>6</sup> (Saturday Mothers) gathering in the nearby square following the press conference.

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<sup>3</sup> On the 28<sup>th</sup> of December 2011, reportedly being mistaken for Kurdish rebels, 34 Kurdish civilians who were allegedly smuggling products from Iraq into Turkey were killed by Turkish warplanes near Ortasu (Roboskî) village of Uludere (Qileban) district in the province of Şırnak (Şirnex).

<sup>4</sup> Alevi is a religious and ethnic identity associated with Pre-Islamic folk, Shia Islam, Sufi mysticism in Turkey. Alevis and Alevism as an ethnic, political, and religious identity will be discussed more in detail in chapter 4.

<sup>5</sup> KCK *Koma Civakên Kurdistan* (Union of Kurdistan Communities), defined as the “urban wing” or sometimes the “upper organizational structure” of the PKK *Partîya Karkerên Kurdistan* (Kurdistan Workers’ Party) by the mainstream media in Turkey, is an alternative social and political system of organization of Kurdish communities based on democracy, gender freedom, and ecological life. A large number of Kurdish journalists, politicians, activists, trade unionists, and mayors have been accused of links with the organization and detained in Turkey since 2009. For the original text (in Turkish) of KCK agreement, see the Url [http://tr.wikisource.org/wiki/KCK\\_Sözleşmesi](http://tr.wikisource.org/wiki/KCK_Sözleşmesi).

<sup>6</sup> Inspired by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, the Saturday Mothers protested the disappearances of their daughters and sons in police custody every Saturday between the years 1995 and 1999. Resuming their weekly vigil in 2009, The Saturday Mothers, who comprise a large proportion of those that are Kurdish inasmuch as the disappearances have been mainly Kurdish rebels, activists, or ordinary citizens, gathered in protest for the 459<sup>th</sup> time as of 11 January 2014. The latest figure can be found on their official website (<http://www.cumartesianneleri.org>).

### **1.1.1 Kurdish musicians and politics**

Both the approach of this announcement and the activity in which Kurdish musicians taking an outright position per se were by no means a surprising occasion in Turkey's social and political circumstances. A large number of Kurdish musicians have become inextricably bound up with political life, human rights issues, Kurdish identity, and the Kurdish liberation movement in Turkey for quite a long time. Notwithstanding having been usually troubled by these kinds of acts, they, as their joint remark points out, have been concerned to take responsibility toward having a say in state and government politics in addition to their occupational activities that are already quite political. This statement indicating an explicit political activity, therefore, was neither the first nor the last.

For years, Kurdish musicians who reside in Turkey or at least who were born and raised in Turkey but somehow had to flee and settle in another country have played a vital part in expression of suffering, resentment, and anger that Kurdish people have felt. Not only have those Kurdish musicians represented social and political repression that Kurds have encountered in Turkey but also they have boosted both political and armed struggle that aim for the equal rights of Kurdish people arising from their Kurdish being. Both amateur and professional, most of the Kurdish musicians have engaged in music-related activities that serve the defense and rebellion of repressed Kurdish nation by recounting sufferings of Kurds, developing morale for resistance or counterattack while raising public awareness of Kurdishness to get people politically organized at the same time. Cemil,<sup>7</sup> a MKM musician and the vocalist of a band that has released one of the top-selling Kurdish music albums of all time, emphasizes that being a Kurd, and its utterance in Turkey is already a political standpoint. He recalls that after the first album of the band had been released, members of the band were invited for music nights organized by Turkish leftist groups, and even if they sang a song about a melon, people were waving the V sign and were asking whether the song was about a guerrilla or not (Cemil, personal communication, May 3, 2011).

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<sup>7</sup> I use one-word fictive names in order to protect most of my interlocutors, informants, and interviewees. Several full names used with the consent of interviewees are real.

Şivan Perwer (as we will see in chapter 2), possibly one of the most influential figures among Kurdish musicians, typifies the beginnings of this movement with his song *Kîne Em?* (Who are we?), the first verse of which forms the epigraph to the current chapter. Şivan Perwer composed the song based on the poem *Kîme Ez?* (Who am I?) written by the prominent Kurdish nationalist poet Cegerxwîn, and gave the name of the song to his fifth album released in 1979. This particular style of musico-political behavior that blends with ongoing conflict and fight has mushroomed and turned rapidly into one of the most distinctive characteristics of Kurdish music. Subsequently, this highly vehement and war-related corpus of music that retains intense pain, violence, and bellicosity has challenged the legislative restrictions on Kurdish language, culture, and identity, and constructed a musical dominion over Kurdish society and culture. Correspondingly, reciprocating this relatively new model of music making, performance style, and the persona of Kurdish musician with all those partisan motives behind, Kurdish people have had a hand in establishing a distinguishing musical taste and performance routine rooted in the agony and aggression of warfare. Kurds, to a certain extent, have been receptive to the comparatively new image and manner of Kurdish music, and they have enhanced and extended its sphere of influence by incorporating it into their public occasions such as wedding celebrations, festivities, commemorations, and concerts. Public protests and meetings, rallies, propaganda activities, demonstrations, and all political activities the like, in addition, have always been apt to embrace this music's inflammatory effect. Thus having a bilateral strength that can convert cultural and artistic events into political ones and vice versa, the new crop of Kurdish music has encouraged Kurds to express and explore their political sentiments, and brought covertly political Kurdish social life to light. This made every single occasion, regardless of its social, cultural or artistic attributes, become very political in character. Musicians adopted a patriotic discourse that praises the Kurdish history, culture, geography, and the Kurdish way of life. A significant majority of Kurds heroized musicians, and treated them as forerunners, true patriots, and intellectuals of Kurdish society as musicians explicitly ventured to sing in Kurdish where music in Kurdish language was prohibited, or to say the least, under surveillance. Kurds witnessed Kurdish musicians and music producers facing prosecutions, restrictions, imprisonments as well as concert organizations banned or music recordings withdrawn from circulation, thereby being more closely introduced to the tyranny of

the state that refused to allow their culture and language. Musicians, and their actions and narrations, therefore, were regarded as matters of national honor in that those were the ones who stood up for Kurdish culture and language the most in the public eye. Kurdish people have relied on musicians, by whom their views and feelings are represented affectively, for their cultural, political, and linguistic rights. In summary, patriotism, violent struggle, and grievance in Kurdish music, to a degree, were concomitants of the denial of an existing language and identity by legitimized violence and suppression in Turkey; consequently, Kurdish music infused with these emotional reactions and certain political objectives born of them has had a profound influence in determining Kurdish people's aesthetic experience, celebratory habits, and political views and practices.

Kurds living in Turkey have been subjected to policies of denial, repression, and assimilation on different levels through legislation, prohibition, and coercion executed by the state ideology since the foundation of modern Turkish Republic in 1923. The ones who were filled with indignation, and who did not prefer to refrain from their ethnic and national identities, on the other hand, launched a political struggle in the late 1950s as a defense mechanism, and included a segment of attack in this mechanism by initiating an armed struggle in 1984. Having reassured by this all-out oppositional movement, remarkably after the rise of armed struggle, music and dance or any kind of special event formed by music and dance have been, to quote Baran, "strongholds of Kurds' and Kurdistan's struggle for liberation by reflecting and promoting both political and armed segments of the movement" (İbrahim Halil Baran, personal communication, November 13, 2012). The advent of Kurdish armed struggle and the intensification of Kurdish ethno-politics in the early 1980s coincided with certain developments in music recording and distribution technology. The musical substance produced in those conditions reached the great mass of the Kurdish population and positioned in Kurdish expressive culture on account of Kurds' traditional fondness for dance-related activities. The music, which was internalized both corporeally and emotionally, triggered Kurds' national pride and provided them with an enduring political memory. After a while, any Kurdish song alone, mostly regardless of its theme, became political for having a potential to include elements that comprise crime as well as being an unrecognized language by the state ideology. Musicians, music and dance and events carried out by them often

caused further political and jurisdictional pressure by which all activities related to these events were outlawed. Music supported the Kurdish political and armed movement in many different ways that are direct or indirect. It has sometimes become a call to arms, or a reason to dance that reveals the sense of solidarity, an account that provides Kurds with ideological instruction, or a catalyst for expression of anger and pain.

Even though Kurds in Turkey have been put in jeopardy of disconnection from their language, they, in part, have succeeded in protecting and cultivating the consciousness of identity paradoxically through the language imposed by the only hegemonic power. This can be observable in a large number of their resistance songs written in Turkish. Given that the language signifies one of the most palpable elements of an ethnic and national identity, it would not be controversial to emphasize that the repression on Kurdish language, which is implemented via mandatory education in Turkish, and the media as well as the government decrees prohibiting the use of Kurdish language, was one of the most important factors in the emergence of Kurdish resistance in Turkey. One of the reasons why Kurds have coordinated their identity by means of resistance is because they have not been able to do it by means of their language on which the suppression of identity is distinctly felt. Therefore, music, functioning as a kind of alternative communication system that might break the barriers created by language, has had a vital role in organizing the culture of resistance through which significant portion of the concept of Kurdish identity is shaped. Political language that triggers resistance has been successfully articulated by music. By evaluating Kurdish music and musicians with this frame, this study attempts to investigate the ways in which Kurdish music and dance in Turkey, with the development of mass communication, cultivated a method of expression that has direct impact on cultural, social and political life of Kurds in Turkey. On these grounds, I argue that the impact of politico-nationalist artistic expression in Kurdish music on the armed struggle has been substantial. It still, as I have attempted to point up through the current study, maintains its capacity for creating prospective images concerning the practicability of liberation, war, victory, and post-struggle concepts. I will elucidate this phenomenon and its existing endurance through ethnographically exploring some of its structural composites rather than drawing on a diachronic analysis. In so doing, this study will represent an

attempt to answer the following question: How and to what extent could music and music performance resonate resistance and war, and in what ways reflections of these in music affect collective memory, and configure the social, political, and cultural habitat wherein individuals generate different artistic meanings and emotions during social interaction out of which basic interpretations of self, family, cohesion, resistance, nation, history, and power arise as they temporarily surpass hegemonic pressure? Throughout the study, I will and should be looking for answers to the following questions as well in order to provide a substantial answer to the main question. What are the war's functional connections with the performing arts? How does political protest and resistance manage to find settlement in performative domains and turn into a constitutive of social and cultural way of acting?

### **1.1.2 Kurdish music and politics**

The emergence of intense politicization in Kurdish music with Şivan Perwer in the mid-1970s, in other words, signifies not merely a shifting musical tendency triggered by socio-political, cultural, or global environment. It was, in many respects, the beginning of an era in the political culture of Turkey's Kurds as a point of change — the beginning of prospective violent struggle, anger and pain, shifting social order, new customs, rising courage, and intensification of national sentiments. Of particular relevance to the present study are a number of works that comparably explore armed and political resistance, conflict, war, violence, nationalism, ethno-regional movements, ethnicity, and identity in an ethnomusicological perspective in different areas across the world: in Chile (Fairley, 1987), Zimbabwe (Turino, 2000), Palestine (McDonald, 2006), Croatia (Pettan, 1998; Baker, 2010), Brazil (Fryer, 2000; Cambria, 2012), Mexico (McDowell, 2008), and Colombia (Lozano, 2012).<sup>8</sup> It was also an important point in the transformation of expressive culture centered on struggle for national liberation — one I seek to unravel in this study on the basis of related concepts searched by several scholars targeting various areas in the world:

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<sup>8</sup> In addition to a number of articles (Araújo, 2006; Kartomi, 2010; Pettan, 2011; O'Connell, 2011; Baker, 2013) that extensively survey the area in which music meets with war, nationalism, resistance, violence, peace, and conflict transformation, there are topical studies, although they treat the connections between music and politics, resistance, and violence in different ways from the current study (Daughtry & Ritter, 2007; Sweeney, 2001; Pieslak 2009; Cooper 2009), and many collections (Wolfe & Akenson, 2005; Johnson & Cloonan, 2009; O'Connell & Castelo-Branco, 2010; Kip & Pegley, 2012; Urbain, 2008; Paquet, Saunders, & Stuempfle 2007) that bring prominent scholars from different perspectives together to investigate music in these contexts.

popular culture, mass media, and identities (Street, 1997; Stone [C. R.], 2008), social change (Plageman, 2013), historical imagination, transculturation, resistance (Comaroff, 1985; Scott, 1985, 1990), politics of memorialization (Hodgkin & Radstone, 2003), and modernity and pain (Le Breton, 2005).

Kurdish music's intimacy with contentious politics and nationalist movement in the mid-1970s had no bearing on the armed struggle, which had not been put into practice at the time. It was, in some respects, a reflection of prevalent oppression as well as of political dismay. What caused the launch of armed struggle in 1984, in other words, had already been transforming the musical language for almost a decade; the relationship between armed struggle and artistic expression in the context of Kurdish socio-cultural and historical parameters at least could hardly be construed as cause and effect. The existing strong combative overtone in Kurdish music is a reflection of ongoing contentious politics, social changes and experiences on the one hand and a major motivator for practical applications of ideas on the other.

Kurdish music's rapid adaptation to the aggressive language of resistance and self-assertion also elicits insight into the complexity of understanding the status of Kurdish cultural and political identity since the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. Having been founded on a secular and nation-state ideology that centered Turkishness, The Republic of Turkey followed a completely opposite policy — which is going to be discussed in detail in chapter 2 — to that of its predecessor Ottoman state in order to neutralize Kurds and the concept of Kurdishness; and since Kurds developed hope for their own state during nearly at the same time Turks struggle for their own — also during which Kurds helped Turks in their fight — Kurds were severely suppressed as soon as Turks ensured their state. The coercive effects of the newly founded state and its self-confident ideology on the formation of socio-cultural and economic life, as it were, have been immense across Turkey. Quasi-autocratic one-party regime continuing until 1950 was brought back by three destructive coup d'états that occurred at the beginning of each decade starting with 1960.<sup>9</sup> Theoretically disregarded Kurds were practically Turkified primarily by

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<sup>9</sup> Military-backed state ideology in Turkey, which seems to be in decline in recent years, made its presence felt in 1997 once again with a non-violent intervention, referred to as the “postmodern coup” ever since, in the then coalition government formed by prime ministership of Necmettin Erbakan, the leader of the political Islam-based Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*). Looked at in a certain way, increasing deprivation of cultural, economic, and political rights during this long period at the expense

employing the method of assimilation. Yeğen (2011) refers to this policy, which emerged after the 1920s, and excluded the other by forcing it to fit to the ideologically defined identity, as the “discourse of categorical denial” (p. 110-111).

To classify the aforementioned aspects of Kurdish music developed after the mid-1970s simply as protest music or the music of oppositional resistance could also hardly be satisfactory. Objection to existing social inequalities voiced based on certain values and principles that will presumably give rise to higher standards is incorrectly understood as the core of these musical styles in the general public. The conditions that shape Kurdish expressive culture, in which music has become one of the most explicit gauges of Kurdish equality-based ethno-nationalist opposition, in this understanding, indicate a point that transcends the question of basic socio-economic inequalities. The conceptualization of issues positioned around this point such as national rights, assimilation, internal colonialism, and ethnocide, therefore, seems particularly important to understand the coverage of the political side of Kurdish music and its role within socio-political life of Turkey’s Kurds.

## 1.2 The Scope

The earliest motive for the current study, in this context, was a concert that I happened to attend in Istanbul on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2010. As an ethnomusicology student who had been trained as a musician for years and who had always been interested in politics and its moral and ideological considerations, I was eager to scrutinize the connection between music and contentious politics. The concert entitled “*Venamire*” (Unextinguished), which was organized by Istanbul MKM Mesopotamia Cultural Center, took place at the *Bostancı Gösteri Merkezi* (Bostancı Performance Center) in Istanbul’s Asian side. I was astounded by the never-ending emotional intensity of the concert atmosphere in spite of the lengthiness of it. Despite some ritualistic acts such as the moment of silence and anthem singing with which I had been already familiar, in addition, overcrowding, extreme loudness, vigorous and collective involvement of the audience in the entire performance by dancing and singing as well as committed slogan chanting, video shows on large screens, and

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of keeping the core ideology intact caused deep disbelief and indignation among Kurds who has posed one of the biggest threats to this ideology.

eloquent speeches of musicians in the venue were unprecedented for me. I had never thought that music and politics would be connected to each other to such an extent. That said, widespread demonstration of nationalist sentiments filled with overt expression of warfare, pain, vengeance, violence, and aggressiveness prevailing the concert, in addition, made me wonder almost instantly as to what made their politics so contentious.

The second strong motivation for this study was provided by McDonald's critical question about relationship between music and violence; he asked, "why haven't ethnomusicologists sought to better understand the histories of death, displacement, and dispossession effecting and affecting the societies within which they work?" (2009, p. 58). Developing into one of the main thrusts of ethnomusicology, the study of music as human experience paves the way for investigating experiential facets of war, violence and conflict manifested in cultural and artistic practices such as music, thereby providing a fresh outlook on generation, renovation, and transformation of cultural, aesthetical, and societal norms. Ethnomusicology of violence presents an arena in which many fundamental issues such as culture, identity, performance, and social practice can be observed in their relation to music and dance-centered events. One of the recent sources of curiosity for ethnomusicology is to find out how and in what circumstances violent expression can gain access to performance acts. Thinking and evaluating violence beyond its negative connotations is a necessity to fulfill this curiosity.

In the very initial stage of the current study, therefore, the excessive bellicose and violent manner that Kurdish musico-politics employs was an intriguing point for me, wherefore I originally intended to rest the entire study on the concept of violence and its relationship with music. As the research progressed, I developed a strong inclination toward a certain viewpoint that considers violence and bellicosity in Kurdish music as mostly epiphenomenal sides of a nation-centered resistance and cultural change. Violence, which occupies a significant part of musical style in Kurdish expressive culture, on the other hand, has been an important stage for constructing the rationale for the basic arguments of the study. A succinct critical discussion of violence that will take place later in this introductory chapter as well as a number of empirical details about it in the following chapters (especially in chapter 6) in this respect, will provide further insight as to how violent elements operate

within performance acts such as music and dance in Kurdish culture of expressive resistance.

The basic argument of this study, after all, is that music, along with popular culture, technology, and both traditional and modern values, has been more prevalent and more effectual in socio-political if not in martial opposition and resistance of Turkey's Kurds than one might expect. I am mainly concerned in this study with their cultural and societal zones representing the coalescence of music and resistance politics — Newroz<sup>10</sup> (traditional New Year) celebrations, cultural festival, commemoration and anniversary concerts, and Internet and satellite TV as well as leading musical figures and organizations — which all have close connections with the profound cultural change that Turkey's Kurds have experienced for almost 30 years. Music for Kurds has been a strong repository, the control of which is of prime importance, in the maintenance of political energy, of oppositional stamina, and of persuasiveness of both armed and political struggle. Long-term countermovement and self-assertion of Kurds, I argue, has expanded through certain spheres of activity that centers on the decisiveness and guidance of music. With its capacity to rapidly and effectively create prospective and retrospective images, music has acted as an intermediary between mass populations and the ideological vision based on an ethno-regional revolution and defiance by permeating everyday practices, protest patterns, and both traditional and modern entertainment settings. This process is, at the same time, the integration of Kurdish political and armed movement into Kurdish popular culture and public realm.

Global and virtual world, and location and their relationships to concepts such as nationalism, anti-hegemonic movement, victimization, political and national identity, and social movement render some questions visible at this point from the theoretical perspective. How has musical and dance-related articulation of national imagination been shaped in modern culture dominated by mass migrational movements and contemporary media? How crucial are these factors in creating theoretical premises for resistance? How do we treat propaganda, given the distinct body of popular culture produced by the resistance movement at issue? How does a nation-based

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<sup>10</sup> Newroz is the pre-Islamic festival of New Year, spring equinox. The word “newroz” has a number of spelling variations in English Language texts such as Nowruz, Newruz, Nauruz, Nauroz, Nevruz etc. Newroz is the version accepted in Kurdish.

resistance movement relate with global opposition circles engendered by a variety of dynamics such as feminism, life-style politics, ecological revolution, and multiculturalism? Where are ethno-regional movements situated in a setting surrounded by postmodern morals and consumption patterns, international relations, and economic mobility? These questions push the ideational boundaries dealing with potentials of existing canons and of those that oppose them in today's world as the spheres of resistance proliferate but fragment and the dominant powers become silent but constantly expand.

The events and both virtual and practical productions in question in this study, to a great extent, are expressions of a broader resistance that feature a militia-aided socio-political movement in which diverse nationalist movements and class struggles are involved. Continued existence of warfare that is always within the bounds of possibility, along with the long-standing exposure to ideological and military oppression, infuses various kinds of highly violent, vengeful, painful, and victimized voicing styles into this resistance, articulation of which, as given performance fields demonstrate, is artistically and masterly achieved by musical and terpsichorean acts and products. I hope to provide an understanding of the constitutive role of music in this acculturated and socially embraced resistance movement by deliberating over practice approach, as well as over several notions associated with the people in question such as social movement, ethnicity, identity, colonialism, and nationalism, effects of which on musical inspiration and performance have already been broadly investigated in ethnomusicology, sociology, and cultural studies in recent years (see Brown, 2008; Stokes, 1994; Randall, 2005; Biddle & Knights, 2007; Cepeda, 2010; Sugarman, 1997, 1999).

### **1.2.1 On violence**

The twentieth century has been described as “the most murderous century of which we have recorded” by the historian Eric Hobsbawm (2002, p. 16). His reliance on the frequency of wars and estimated deaths associated with these wars seem relevant to this assessment. Neil Whitehead (2004) comes to a parallel judgment about the last years of the twentieth century by referring to “the increase in the use of violence as a means of political and cultural assertion, most notably in the context of postcolonial conflicts” (p. 3). Small wonder no discrepancy is envisaged for the current century as

the rise of globalization that can hold both explicit and well-disguised cruelty which is depicted by Michael Gilson (2002) as “euphemisms for state violence” and normalization of war and violence in media for the sake of “economics of pleasure and leisure” (p. 100). For my argument, it is important that violence and conflict are of two natural phenomena that have never had a tendency to decrease throughout the history of humanity, and yet somehow, seen as cruel abnormalities and threats that needed to be stamped out in order for us to establish what we think of as order. How can violence be stamped out without blueprints and tools that have a potential for creating more violence than the one wished to be obliterated? Apparently, no better solutions have been invented, or at least, have gained acceptance than the one in stock; and apparently, violence, war, and conflict have inextricably strong but camouflaged links, which constantly make human being fail to realize that order is simply built upon violent foundations, with the image of perfect order in our minds, and they are active participants in the process of construction and maintaining of what we identify as order. It seems that we are able to grasp what Charles Tilly (1975) called “war makes the states” solely in the figurative sense (p. 42).

As for violence of Kurdish music, Hêmin, who is the singer of a well-known music group among Kurds, has claimed that political stance is a necessity especially for Kurdish people to survive, and art and politics are inextricably intertwined and cannot be separated from each other at any time. For him, violence is an outcome of facts, and the existence of the need for artistic expression of violence is not a cause, but it is an effect. There is a furiousness, and with reason (Hêmin, personal communication, March 14, 2011). Similarly, Behar, another acclaimed singer who is primarily associated herself with the agony of Kurdish mothers who lost their sons or daughters in war, points out that the stories and songs that tell about bravery, and struggle have existed for centuries in Kurdish culture and since Kurds are constantly in revolt, any Kurdish artist as well as any Kurd takes great delight in it. According to Behar, it is not easy to find any Kurdish artists who have not been influenced by the Kurdish rebellions of Sheikh Sait, Mt. Ararat, and Dersim, and the soul of thousands of people displaced cannot be expressed by pen (Behar, personal communication, April 21, 2011).

In this respect, this study will be concerned with exploring the role of violence in shaping cultural meaning, judgments of sentiments, ways of seeing and of perceiving

the world, or in erudite word, “aesthetics” by remaining remote from the district of justification or disapprobation of violence, and by seeking parameters transcending criminological perspective that tends to portray it as collapse of order and ethics. In so doing, musical and textual analyses of political and nationalist songs and thorough investigation of the use of sonority and song texts will assist me in executing a critique of the morality and efficacy of incorporating elements of violence in music as a means to fight injustice.

### **1.2.2 On nation, nationality, and nationalism**

Defining Kurdish defiance and the diverse movements surrounding this defiance in Turkey is complicated. Kurdish identity’s subordinated position under the superordinate of Turkishness necessitates a brief commentary on nationalism. In an attempt to differentiate nationalism from nation-state nationalism, because of reasons that I will try to justify below, this study intrinsically pays attention to the elementary link between the timeworn concept of nationalism and resistance.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century, as Abizadeh (2004) notes, witnessed the evolution of the idea of nationalism toward one of the most disastrous actions so severely that no anticolonial liberation movement has been able make its notoriety open to debate (p. 231). Even though it is still the driving force behind many violent conflicts across the world mainly caused by endeavors to dominate as well as to emancipate, nationalism, due mainly to its both historical and ongoing affiliation with xenophobia, outweighs intellectual attempts at giving it a second thought. There have been, on the other hand, Abizadeh (2004) continues, several theorists who have aimed to bring about reconciliation between nationalism and the concepts of liberal democracy (p. 231). Having been originated in the works of Mill (1861) and Renan (1882), a compromise between liberal views and nationalism waited for the early 1990s to reappear. In her seminal work, Tamir (1993) offers the concept of liberal nationalism as a key to non-xenophobic form of nationalism as well as a non-individualistic form of liberalism. She defines liberalism and nationalism as two significant ideologies that need each other to get rid of their utopic burdens based on cultural self-determination. According to her, “no individual can be context-free, ... but all can be free within a context” (p. 14). Giving a great deal of reflection on nationality as well as its entwinement with existing personal identities in his major study, Miller (1997)

similarly sought to theorize the rationality of nations' desire for self-determination based on the respect for similar claims. Still, as Smith (1992) puts it, "nationalism's halcyon days are drawing to a close, and that the current spate of fissiparous ethnic nationalism runs counter to the 'major trends' of world history" (p. 62).

I have a quite modest perspective for understanding nationalism. It was, on original principle, one of the conceptualizations of mainstream liberation movements based on national identity starting to emerge after the mid-18th century. In the course of time, it turned into an order of domination that maintains its existence based on the so-called "internal and external threats" of similar movements. Under the manipulation of nation-state nationalism, in other words, "nationalism" turned into nations' attempts to establish superiority over others whereas similar nationalist actions of others were denounced as products of primitive and divisive ideology.

As a large ethnic group spreading over four political nations, and imagining a shared linguistic family, religion, history, territory, ancestry, and kinship, Kurds show many characteristics that represent a nation. In addition to many distinctive cultural patterns, the armed and political resistance movement of the last 30 years alone has created its own shared values, behavior patterns, and beliefs among Kurds, thereby constructing a distinctive national culture. The word "nation" is, on the other hand, again anthropologically, an alternate term for state or nation-state (Kottak, 2002). The word nationality, again in anthropological sense (Kottak, 2002), I believe, finds the middle path between an autonomous political entity and in expressing Kurds' specific status. Ethnicity, nation, or national identity are frequently used sometimes interchangeably and sometimes in compliance with the emphasis within the context. In a similar vein, terms such as nationalism and ethno-nationalism — as Kurdish movement features pre-independent types of ethnic and territorial nationalisms according to the categorization of Smith (1991, p. 82) — are employed in the text to imply motivation of Kurds in their seek of justice, equality, and liberation.

The broad use of term nationalism, on the other hand, is also equated with longing for a nation or a nation-state. Regardless of whether the final destination of the liberation movements is nation-state, any liberation movement itself sometimes tends to be used to refer to nationalism. The least defective generic concept — even though I will not be using it for practical reasons together with others that I will mention below — to define the motive of Kurdish political and armed movement in Turkey, I

believe, is proto-nationalism, which refers to the devotion of dominated people to their own long-established habitat, culture, and language instead of to the patriotism of prevailing ethnicity or nation, which is the point where resistance arises. I am, maybe optimistically, therefore, inclined toward the concept of proto-nationalism in order to avoid the polysemy of nationalism. With its historically established left-wing principles, which will be frequently illustrated in the following chapters, Kurdish nationalism is predominantly a non-state movement in spite of its ethno-regional origins as well as its current diasporic faction. Incorporating an anti-colonialist socialist character, Kurdish political movement, I argue, features various types of liberal nationalism. It is interesting to note that there is, in addition, a substantial degree of anti-nationalism within the ideological frame on which it rests, particularly in Turkey. Nevertheless, there are various traces of nation-state nationalism (as we will see throughout the study) in Kurdish proto-nationalism. Both for practical reasons and for not ignoring this nation-state discourse of Kurdish movement, to put another words, I frequently use “Kurdish nationalism,” instead of proto-nationalism in the study to refer to various characteristics (ethnic, national, and regional liberation as well as various types of class struggle) that generate Kurdish defiance features in Turkey.

Even though Kurdish people in Turkey may be defined as subculture or co-culture in sociological terms, and it may be politically controversial to recognize their distinctive cultural presence as a distinctive nation, it is anthropologically essential to define Kurds as a national culture mostly because of their historical involvement with a number of languages as well as a certain territorial allocation. This national culture, on the other hand, particularly in Turkey has rapidly lost its distinctiveness since the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. Anthropological classification of Kurdish culture and nation is extremely difficult because of these variables. Kurds’ growing political realization of the need to struggle against assimilation, in addition, evolved into resistance politics for various reasons, rather than into their national culture that they have had for centuries. In other words, instead of concentrating on endangered national culture, which was anxiously realized, resistance movement spared great effort in developing self-assertion, national identity, and social revolution by appropriating cultural residues mostly for

their symbolic usage, thereby leading to further vulnerability of national culture, though contributing to national consciousness.

For identifying the ideology that leads to Kurdish armed and political movements, I will be using the word “nationalism,” which I frequently use, mostly in the former sense owing to the fact that nationalism cannot only be limited to the nation-state nationalism (in its latter sense) in today’s world. Kurdish nationalism, in this study, refers to a number of aspects that Kurdish social, cultural, political, and armed movements have. Even though it barely has means to put the ideology of nation-state nationalism into practice, on the other hand, Kurdish nationalism, as we will have a chance to see them in Kurdish musical culture, also promotes elements and concepts associated with it. This is why I feel obliged to emphasize the small, albeit potential, component of nation-state nationalism in Kurdish ethno-political movement, which mostly employs Kurdish national identity to preserve and expand its domain. Still, it would be unfair, because of these, to categorize Kurdish nationalism into the group that is associated with subordination of other nations, or ethnic, religious, and cultural and social groups.

In general what the above discussion suggests is that Kurdish nationalism has developed mainly as a cultural and political liberation, and as equalization maneuver centered on emancipation from oppression. I choose to define Kurdish movement, including all of its components, ideas, and practices, under the term “nationalism.” In this way, there is no need for now, I argue, to try to delineate the complex structure of Kurdish movement in Turkey with an alternative concept other than “nationalism.”

### **1.2.3 Method**

Seeking to understand the many facets of the phenomenon in question, this study, to a large extent, is a product of a qualitative ethnographic research that predominantly used observational methods to collect data in addition to interviews, Internet, and historical resources.

Field research has been the main methodological guide for this study. In addition to analyzing musical products (songs, music videos) in terms of their lyrics, characters, forms, and audio-visual features, I have observed many events centered on musical performances as well as on political demonstrations in order to analyze the collected

information with descriptive, socio-historical, and comparative methods. So long as performers and audiences allowed me, I made a number of video and sound recordings of performances in order to use them for feedback interview where performers and I can review the whole event and discuss meanings emerged during musical performance. Extensive part of the fieldwork has taken place in Istanbul where a significant Kurdish population resides. In addition to observation of performance practices of musicians, celebrants as well as onlookers in festivals, concerts, protests, demonstrations, lectures, and wedding celebrations primarily to interpret the temper and emotional state of the public, I have spent a significant part of my time for open-ended unstructured interviews and conversations. I have come into contact with many Kurdish informants and befriended many Kurds living in Istanbul through participating their social and cultural networks such as Kurdish languages courses and dance lessons. Moreover, I have conducted field research in several cities of Turkey (see figure B.5) that are densely populated by Kurds whereby I participated in many events such as celebrations of Newroz (Kurdish New Year), festivals, concerts, and weddings in order to monitor how participants temporarily break the barriers of repression and go beyond ethnic and cultural subordination. In addition to gathering information through interviews with musicians and listeners, dancers, intellectuals, artists, writers, and activists to make detailed observations about their musical narratives as well as their social positions in Kurdish community.

Following one of the main portions of the methodology of my study I have relied on interviews with a number of Kurdish musicians majority of whom are affiliated with Mesopotamia Cultural Center MKM. Many musicians involved with MKM have been arrested and subjected to lengthy interrogations, and in spite of frequent police raids on the institution, MKM and its associate KOM Music Company are the two leading institutions under which many prolific Kurdish musicians produce and perform. MKM, its foundation, affiliations, and activities, will be discussed with more details in chapter 5. I hold countless interviews and conversations with amateur musicians, dancers, and music enthusiasts as well as politically active Kurds, both in Istanbul and in Kurdish-populated cities in eastern and southeastern Turkey. As for musicians, I shaped my interview questions based on receiving information about the influence of personal and social experiences they have as Kurdish musicians in

Turkey on their ideational preparation and production of their music. During our conversations, I looked for the role of pain or anger they have in constructing them as musician and I tried to identify the signs relating to their meticulousness in active resistance movement by asking direct or indirect questions about resistance and war songs and the legitimization of violent practices.

Internet research (chat rooms, blogs, and forums) has been an important source to which I have referred for information. Because the ever-increasing demand for Internet technology causes great changes in peoples' communication practices as well as in their music-related activities, it behooves the ethnomusicologist to develop techniques and guides for internet-centered research. Even though the large part of musical creation, sharing, and consumption seem to be taking place outside of the Net, many ethnomusicologists have recognized that off-line musical culture has a great influence on the everyday Internet life, and vice versa. As far as I have observed throughout my research, for Kurdish people, who have been stricken by political conflict for many years, the virtual community created by online interaction has a significant role in pursuing musical activity. Grossman and O'Brien elucidate how restrictions have been broken by means of technological advances and how mass media has encouraged the community's confidence to gain its missing values:

Given the mechanisms of exclusion on the part of dominant state media networks in relation to the Kurds, the online distribution of music, language, art, culture and Kurdish party political propaganda via the Internet promises to reconfigure previously restricted networks of media access and consumption towards a more diverse range of competing public spheres. (2006: 283)

A detailed survey of the internet activities such as music-related political discussions, music and music video sharing practices, advertisements of concerts and recordings and their reviews have contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of motives behind specific musical production and its appreciation. As Abigail Wood has noted, engaging with e-fieldwork will provide new viewpoint for answering constantly asked questions on meaning and role of music in society (2008: 185).

Given the great influence of online social life on that of off-line, and vice versa, music-related activities are prominently reconfigured by computer-mediated communication. Having been stricken by political conflict for many years, Kurds, who have encountered marginalization on the part of national media, have benefited

greatly from online distribution mechanism through which they are freely able to carry out musical, cultural, and political activities that have already been intertwined. Considering the immensity of virtual community created by Kurds living in homeland and diaspora, I have expended a great deal of effort on internet-centered research for the study. I have discovered countless Internet forums, and websites in which I can analyze online activities of Kurds such as music-related political discussions, music and music video sharing practices, advertisements of concerts and recordings.

This study, to sum up, is an ethnographic picture of Kurdish resistance in Turkey portrayed by its musical culture. Apart from making a plain contribution to ongoing discussions about social, individual, ethnic, national, structural, or functional properties of music, I specifically have the intention of expanding on multilayered positioning of music across political, violent, combative, and insurrectionary movements. I will attempt to theorize this *musical conventionalization of resistance* in Kurdish society with three different perspectives at the end of the current chapter. First, I should discuss some overarching conceptual issues such as practice and resistance relating to the polarity between hegemonic structures and routines of agency as well as to the current ethnomusicological perspectives.

### **1.3 Critical Perspectives**

#### **1.3.1 Practice**

Culture, which was traditionally seen as a concrete edifice transferred between people and generations, is conceptualized by scholars disposed toward its ever-changing and regenerating nature today (Kottak, 2010, p. 28; Ortner, 2006, p.14). For many scholars, as Ortner (2006) notes, with the influence of globalized world it is an organism with an increased mobility whose constituents are constantly replaced by new ones that are tolerable by its relatively less dynamic forms that change much slowly (pp. 12-13):

The historic turn took shape in late 1970s and early 1980s in anthropology changed the traditional world of anthropological objects —“cultures”— that they were not timeless and pristine objects, but were themselves products of restless operation of both internal dynamics (mostly local power relations) and external forces (such as capitalism and colonialism) over time. (Ortner, 2006: 9)

External or internal variables, on the other hand, might affect the rate and the quality of change in every culture. This study, in parallel with the contemporary paradigm for culture, seeks to explain as to how culture is reproduced and built by daily practices of music and dance predominantly shaped by ongoing resistance politics. Even though I value the role of agency in explaining this phenomenon, I believe that ignoring structural constrictions of the prevailing social order would be a mistake.

Practice approach, as Rouse (2007) points out, pays attention to the relationships between cultures developed by exchange of power, people, and goods, and treats culture as a dispersed units in which diverse practices existing together (p. 506). Practice theorists argue that social and cultural structures are constantly reproduced by practices as well as practices are reproduced by cultural structures; or practices shaped by structures are also shaping structures. As Bourdieu (1990) concludes: “the conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures” (p. 53).

Within the context of music, “practices,” particularly the ones that involve highly coordinated and mobilized activities, is of the primary concern to this study. As Ortner (1984) answered to the question as to what practice is:

In principle, the answer to this question is almost unlimited: anything people do. Given the centrality of domination in the model, however, the most significant forms of practice are those with intentional or unintentional political implications. Then again, almost anything people do has such implications. So the study of practice is after all the study of all forms of human action, but from a particular political angle. (p. 149)

Practice theory, scope of which is still expanding, started to shape in the 1970s by the writings of theorists such as Bourdieu, Giddens, and Foucault. They questioned both, as Ortner (2006) points out, the “theories of ‘constraint’” that challenged authority of functionalism such as interpretive anthropology, Marxist political economy, and French structuralism (p.1), and Phenomenological theories that derived from interactionism led by Goffman. The former group, according to Ortner (2006), basically concentrated on deconstructing external forces to reveal their influence on human behavior as the latter group overrates the value of agency in transforming the whole society (p. 2). Bourdieu, Giddens, and Sahlins attempted to comprehend and

eliminate the contrast between systems of domination and social practices.<sup>11</sup> Even though these systems of domination severely restrict spheres of activity, as they basically argue, they are also, albeit to a certain extent, transformed by them (Ortner, 2006, p. 2). Gramsci's impracticability of absolute domination, as Ortner (2006) — referring to Williams — also points out, is an important base for practice theorists at this point (p. 6). Practice theory, in other words, attempted not to ignore power without placing it at the center of its theoretical framework. Ortner notes:

The modern versions of practice theory appear unique in accepting all three sides of the . . . triangle: that society is a system, that the system is powerfully constraining, and yet that the system can be made and unmade through human action and interaction. (1984, p. 159)

Bourdieu's notion of "habitus" delineating "the permanent internalisation of the social order in the human body" (Eriksen & Nielsen, 2001, p. 130) while recognizing "the agent's practice, his or her capacity for invention and improvisation" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 13) is a critical concept in practice approach. I would like to argue, within this context, that music, in certain settings such as the one discussed in the current study is an important incentive for individuals to take action, a source of action that leads human ability to struggle against restrictiveness of order. Music, in this sense, provides a solid ground on which individuals and clusters of individuals find meaning for effectively materialize their actions as methodological individualists claim. With its existence, music is one of the most important factors in formations of public spheres that deeply affect political action. Individuals' efforts to take part in performances that I will discuss in various places in the following chapters establish an important support for this theoretical framework. Music in Kurdish society located itself at the center in which practices increased their potential.

One of the most influential scholars among the second generation of practice theorists, Ortner (2006) criticized the practice approach of Bourdieu and Giddens for lacking "a recognizable concept of culture" (p. 11) in addition to indicating the problem of what she calls "ethnographic refusal" in resistance studies:

I argue that many of the most influential studies of resistance are severely limited by the lack of an ethnographic perspective. Resistance studies in turn are meant to stand in for a great

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<sup>11</sup> See in particular Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), Giddens's *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (1979), and Sahlins's *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities* (1981).

deal of interdisciplinary work being done these days within and across the social sciences, history, literature, and cultural studies (p. 42).

Still, scrutinizing the feminist anthropology and male dominance, Ortner, one of the key figures to lead the improvement of practice approach, has strived to shift the theory's emphasis away from prevailing designs to resistance and resistance studies in order to provide a better understanding of the scope of agency as well as constraining powers. In her words, "... resistance ... is a reasonably useful category, if only because it highlights the presence and play of power in most forms of relationship and activity" (Ortner, 2006, 44).

### **1.3.2 Resistance**

Both transforming and being transformed by culture, explicitly oppressed people might wrap themselves up in the costume of defiance in some parts of the world to fight against structures created by dominant powers that restrict them from partaking in the change of culture to which that they belong. With an instinct and awareness for protecting, or at least for establishing the reciprocal relationship with their culture, people concentrate more on this fight, thereby leading to another process of change that rapidly superseding the existing identity and culture that characterize them. It is possible that this change would be faster and wider in cultural structures that are under threat and strict control, and the existence of internal effort to protect this structure might double both the speed and character of cultural change. Using cultural elements mostly as instruments, on the other hand, practices organized around resistance might cause alienation from the object to be protected in the first place. In other words, effort made for the self-preservation of culture gives birth to vigorous practices of resistance that rapidly spread across the mechanism of cultural change.

All these swirling vortex of contemplative activities aside, music is at the center of this study mainly because the resistance, and the body enabling the organization of the cultural change caused by the resistance are broadly provoked by music in Kurdish expressive culture in Turkey; music's constitutive role in maintaining rapid transformation of Kurdish culture as well as the entire resistance politics and activities, as seen by this study, is paramount.

Ortner's views on the resistance studies that show the apparent examples of what she called "cultural thinning" in the process of reconceptualization of culture concept in anthropology were an important cautionary advice in the shaping of my views about music in Kurdish society. The lack of interest in the role of religion, which is "a rich repository of cultural beliefs and values and often has close affinities with resistance movements" for her was one of the primary that leads to cultural thinning (2006, p. 50). Just as religion for many societies is an important component of culture in creation of patterns of behavior and thinking, music, as the following chapters will primarily endeavor to demonstrate, grants similar formations in many ways for Kurds in Turkey.

James C. Scott is a prominent scholar who has conducted groundbreaking research into the resistance of the subaltern. For him, there are many different forms of resistance, and to define the line between resistance and obedience is extremely problematic (1985, p. 290). Focusing on micro-societal relations between the subaltern and the dominant, Scott calls collectivity of resistance into question. Even though they do not seem to evolve into collective behavior that explicitly challenge the authority, individual actions play an important role in resistance politics, as a result of which they are also in the category of resistance. In his classification of resistance, Scott focuses more on intentions than on direct results of actions; he concludes that class resistance:

includes any act(s) by member(s) of a subordinate class that is or are *intended* either to mitigate or deny claims (for example, rents, taxes, prestige) made on that class by superordinate classes (for example, landlords, large farmers, the state) or to advance its own claims (for example, work, land, charity, respect) vis-à-vis those superordinate classes. (1985, p. 290)

Scott's broad description of resistance, which has not excluded inconclusive individual or collective actions, received criticism for romanticizing the concept as well as of ignoring internal conflicts and individual interests in subordinate class (Moore, 1987, p. 825). Both Scott's contemplation of resistance and its criticism provide the current study with a vital point that locates the critical role of music in connection between collectivity and individuality. A series of practices such as gossip and denigration, defined as "speech acts" by Scott (1895, 1990), which is also a critical concept to be discussed later in this chapter.

### 1.3.3 Ethnomusicology among theories

Questioning the place of music in cultural criticism in their book entitled “Music and Cultural Theory” (1997), Shepherd and Wicke (as cited in Stone [R. M.], 2008) criticized postmodern and cultural theorists for overlooking music’s position in social life; for them, music’s capacity, which needs a particular manner of investigation since it widely differs from language, is not only meaningful in the symbolization of social processes but also in the formation of social processes (p. 202). Musical experience, as Stokes (1994) similarly argues, already has a huge impact on describing peoples’ way of positioning themselves in society. From collective dance to operating a CD player, music has an important role in organizing collective memory and experience of place, thereby shaping moral, political, and economic order (p. 3). One question that needs to be asked, however, is whether Stokes is mostly referring to an abstract potential of music that is still subject to structural conditions in which the influence of music is tangible enough.

As remarkable as their argument sounds, to conclude, I believe that the role of music depends on the cultural, historical and political positioning of a society as well as wide variety of factors in each society. This encouraging power of music might be variable according to temporal and spatial features of the phenomenon. It might be effective not only for the moment and place but also for broader space and location. With the production and performance of music, a potential for a social movement that goes beyond protest, which can be explained as serious conflict, might emerge. The producer and consumer enforce this process by reciprocally forging this source. Music and musician go beyond the situation of becoming simple representative of a situation or time. Societies formed by life-sustaining anxieties about self-expression, for instance, might take up music, as an important form of expression, as central object and medium of practice to shape whereas some others, even though music seems to be an important part of social order, employ it mostly as habitual practice. Emotive role and potential of music, I claim, increases in contexts such as Kurdish experience. Music’s capacity for social change, in other words, is not ubiquitous, and it should be preceded by a caveat about a number of socio-political and cultural factors. It seems important to observe music without overestimating its potential, which might bring about overlooking dominant structures in social control this time. I do not mean to suggest by this that such potential of music is out of the question in

the sense that Shepherd and Wicke posit. On the contrary, the influence of music that I attempt to theorize in this study, after all, is quite similar to that of mentioned by Shepherd and Wicke.

For Stone [R. M.] (2008), the dichotomy between phenomenology and structuralism is a key guide for ethnomusicological research, for one of them is more dominant in creation of meaning (p. 222). Even though it seems extremely demanding, and also maybe unnecessary, to challenge this paradigm, considering the persuasive power of rationalizations of similar mind structures as well as that of many others of individual voice and social interaction, this study is a product of discomfort caused by feeling of restriction — which is partly eased by the practice approach — by this paradigm. The study's methodological involvement with ethnographical fieldwork, which is largely ignored by structuralist perspectives, shows its propensity for agency as well as its skepticism to ideological parameters in explanation of a music-related phenomenon at the center of the issues of national and ethnic identity. However much led by the phenomenological perspective, on the other hand, this study, as it tackles the very structure of dominant set of ideas obtaining the processes of reproducing resistance in the field, is not only largely concerned with the power of constraint but also the outcome of the distinctiveness of the phenomenon under study.

Even though there are many ethnographic studies in music that have masterly challenged the dichotomy between these two theoretical schemes, Sugarman's seminal book "Engendering Song: Singing and Subjectivity at Prespa Albanian Weddings" (1997) presents a thorough formulation for ethnomusicological rethinking of the dominant structure/agency divide in addition to an outstanding critique of adaptation of social theory in music studies. Inquiring into the role of wedding ceremonies in relation to the perception of honor and shame in the transformation and affirmation of social identities as well as into the integration of individuals into the process conducted by dominant structure in Albania, Jane Sugarman carefully observes the positions of culture, society, tradition, and agency in an ethnographical setting. Even though she does not give particular attention to capacity of individual practices in socio-cultural structures, and sees them mostly as parts of the wholeness, Sugarman touches on the problematic of a priori relation between cultural patterns and individual practices.

Interpretive anthropology has had a large influence on ethnomusicological studies. In many ways the current study employs a number of theoretical and methodological postulations of it. Resources of hermeneutic theory that sees culture as a socially shared web of meanings which could be analyzed by ethnographical interpretation of the text generated by social action transferred into anthropology mostly by Clifford J. Geertz. As an activity of expression, the role of musical performance in conveying social meanings as well as in confirming and evoking basic values of society compelled the interest of many ethnomusicologists. Adopting this approach, they set their aim as understanding the experiences of individuals that is associated with a musical tradition. They have analyzed meanings of musical behavior in the eyes of individuals (Sugarman, 1997, p. 24). In addition to encouraging ethnomusicology to emphasize the individual representation in musical actions and in their designs, interpretive anthropology geared ethnomusicology to abandon functionalist approach and to pay attention to individual ideas of musicians, listeners, and collective meanings created by music. Neglect of the role of individuals, their ideas and practices in the construction of these meanings and culture, on the other hand, bore many resemblance to that of interpretive anthropology and two other, to use Ortner's phrase again, "constraint theories." Sugarman is an important figure in skillfully articulating the drawbacks of this approach. Suggesting that musical practices and expressions seemed to be designed by power structures have individual initiatives behind them, she basically criticized the logocentric approach adopted by majority of interpretive ethnomusicologists who examine music as a conscious (emphasized by ethnoaesthetics) or unconscious (emphasized by ethnoscientific structuralism) reflection of broader socio-cultural superstructures or belief systems. Sugarman (1997) is seriously concerned with the tension between communal meanings associated with musical practices and negotiations and conflicts among people about meanings (p. 26).

Even though the current study's approach to the role of music in socio-cultural context is similar to that of Sugarman, I mostly reach different conclusions because of the differences between two societies in question. This basically results not from the existence of two different perspectives but from the objects under study. In the current study, we come across many examples that might have us think that music could constantly shape the culture and society whereas Sugarman's study mainly

demonstrates music's role in the adaptation of individuals to the dominant structure. Sugarman's central ethnomusicological endeavor, that is to say, is to corroborate Rouse (2007), who says that "[a]ctions governed by norms also involve understanding and responding to the meaning of one's action, and of the situation in which one acts" (p. 502).

McDonald (2012), whose main research area has a contextual relationship with the current study, on the other hand, simply characterizes the strong links between politics and music and related practices as primary resource in creating cultural and social norms as well as national imagery:

... performative and expressive media are not epiphenomenal to larger social, political, and economic forces, but rather they are constitutive of social, political, and economic forces. Music, dance, poetry, graffiti, and the like do not merely *reflect* popular sentiment. They in fact *generate* popular sentiment, shaping national and political identities and affiliations, and providing performative spaces for subverting and reinforcing entrenched power structures. (p. 131; emphases in original)

Regarding Kurdish society in Turkey, in this sense, we are able to observe not only the structural homogeneity but also capacity of agency in formation of the constitutive clusters of belief and thought through musical practices. Socio-political and cultural mobility of Kurds for the last 35 years has allowed them to intervene the links between nonmusical and musical spheres in creating and replacing metaphors.

Having discussed what is the main philosophical attitude of the study toward dialectic between hegemonic structure and human action as well as how variable might music's role be in different contexts, the next section of this chapter addresses the eclectic theoretical model intending to explain the phenomenon with which this study is particularly concerned.

#### **1.4 Theoretical Framework**

Why do I have to claim that music's role is not merely nominal in Kurds' struggle for their national rights? What is my rationale behind this?

There are three points that assist me to construct the theoretical framework of the study. The first point addresses the question of performativity. Drawing on J. L. Austin's theory of speech-act and the concept of *performative utterances*, from which Judith Butler benefited to develop many of her postulations regarding gender,

and politics of hate speech and censorship, I endeavor to devise a humble theory to support the illocutionary force of musico-politics of Kurds in Turkey, or to use one of present-day's heavily used computer terms, music's act as *proxy* for Kurdish resistance and identity politics. Austin (1962) employs the grammar term "performative," which signifies expressions that are actualized by its utterance such as "I am speaking," to define situations when performatives that "do not 'describe' or 'report' or constate anything at all, are not 'true or falls'; and would not normally be described as, or as 'just', saying something" (p. 5). Austin gives such example as the utterance "I do" that solemnizes a marriage or "I give and bequeath my watch to my brother" in a will; he draws attention to utterances realized "in ... the appropriate circumstances," which is mostly related to practices happened before or through the existence of an empowered or "appointed" entity (p. 8). The expression "appropriate circumstances" is quite important within the main context of the current study, as I will recurrently point out the social, political, and cultural settings for Kurdish music to be empowered in Turkey. Austin also remarks on the "difficult or marginal cases where nothing in the previous history of a conventional procedure will decide conclusively whether such a procedure is or is not correctly applied to such a case" (p. 31). Butler (1997) picks up where Austin left off and furthers the discussion of performative in her critique of Bourdieu for associating performative utterances only with "social power," and for disregarding "the possibility of an agency that emerges from the margins of power (p. 156). Butler (1997) exemplifies the latent potential of performative, which she calls the "political promise of the performative" (p. 161), in "challenging existing forms of legitimacy" with well-known disobedience act of Rosa Parks:

When Rosa Parks sat in the front of the bus, she had no prior right to do so guaranteed by any of the segregationist conventions of the South. And yet, in laying claim to the right for which she had no *prior* authorization, she endowed a certain authority on the act, and began the insurrectionary process of overthrowing those established codes of legitimacy. (p. 147; emphasis in original)

Departing from Butler's emphasis on the role of the "iterability" of performative in the transposition of power (pp. 147-148), I simply see musical performance in Kurdish society as a performative area that also provides a magnetic source for reiteration. The iterability of musical performativity in constructing discourse, speech, and gestures to effectuate resistance is also infused with national identity in

Kurdish cultural context. From a similar perspective, Fluck (2005) defines this process as the “aestheticization of politics,” which is the result of possible constituents of resistance he uses the word “aestheticization” in the meaning of “a mode of authorization that no longer relies on a systematic philosophical, political or moral argument but on the power of a particular image, representation, or performance” (p. 22).

Performative authorization of music leads to, as I would call, the “conventionalization of resistance,” which refers to conventional power of music that seizes the authority to materialize resistance. The frequent use of the few performative words such as “promise” and “dedicate” in Kurdish songs as in “I (or we) promise,” and/or “I (or we) dedicate” as we will see many examples of them in the following chapters, in this sense, is not an uncanny coincidence of the exemplification of the authorized position of music in Kurdish society. I will attempt to demonstrate throughout the study as to how Kurdish musico-political discourse constantly and powerfully declares resistance by mainly using national identity as well as many other injustices.

The second theoretical point regarding the relationship between Kurdish musico-politics and national resistance is associated with the theory on migrants and minorities proposed by John Ogbu researching into educational system in the United States. For Ogbu (1991; 1992), minorities in the United States are divided into two different categories. The first category comprises people who immigrated or whose ancestors immigrated to the United States voluntarily in search of better life conditions whereas the second category comprises African Americans whose ancestors were forced to come to the United States, or Native Americans who underwent serious oppression. Ogbu (as cited in Elbers, 2010, pp. 301-302) notes that the students belong to the latter group develop certain strategies for, to use Ogbu’s phrase, “cultural inversion,” which refers to rejecting behaviors that are associated with the oppressor. They adjust their behaviors mainly for not “to do the White man’s thing” in school whereas the students of the voluntary immigrants find various ways of “accommodation without assimilation” as they show certain tendency to adapt themselves to the school system (Ogbu, as cited in Elbers, 2010, p. 302).

Resistance is associated with any activity engaged in the refusal of imposed principles. Despite their cultural, historical, and political attachment to the dominant Turkish identity, Kurds have attempted to engage the aggressive political discourse of music for demonstrating their refusal of this identity. Quite apart from its role in boosting Kurds' sense of belonging, Kurdish music plays a significant part in the refusal of Turkishness. The Kurd listening to or performing Kurdish music, in other words, not only associates herself with Kurdishness but also dissociates herself from Turkishness. In addition to developing an area for "speech acts," to use Scott's phrase again, music, in this respect, has been an effortless — albeit to a certain degree — and effective area for Kurds in Turkey to create a "cultural inversion."

The third point is about the popularization of resistance. Performance, along with popular culture and mass media, is another suggestive concept within the context composed mainly of practices centered on music in question. What is more, popular culture and mass media play important roles in the proliferation of conventionalization that I mentioned in the first of these three points. Throughout the study, therefore, I will be charting the ways in which music absorbs political resistance, war, pain, and conflict into the domain of performance. The events that are strictly observed and described in detail are performance areas not only for performers on the stage but also for audiences. Throughout the study, I strive for the understanding of many ways in which these performances transfer into daily practices in Kurdish society. Political language in Kurds' musical practices, in this regard, is a projection of collective, or more suitably conventional practice of performance that lead us to the speech-act theory and the concept of performative.

On another level, popular culture and mass media are two critical phenomena in the conveyance of these performances into daily practices. The capabilities of popular culture and everyday life in molding urge to resist were first brought up for discussion (as cited in Fluck, 2005, p. 23) by John Dewey's *Art as Experience* published in 1932. Influenced by Dewey, Fluck asserts, Raymond Williams, in his study *The Long Revolution*, resuscitated the resistance by setting up the basic attitude toward patterns of daily practices and popular culture largely maintained by British Cultural Studies today, which sees popular culture as a challenge to, as Fluck called, the "iron-cage logic of instrumental reason." (p. 23).

The barbershop singing practice of the United States, I argue, is one of the finest examples to describe popular culture's mostly overlooked role in challenging overpowering innovations. Barbershop is an unaccompanied vocal music genre that employs homophonic texture of four-part (tenor, tenor, baritone, bass) harmony using primarily dominant, diminished and half-diminished 7th and augmented 6th chords as well as tritones. After Barbershop music had experienced a popularity particularly throughout the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the increasing popularity of jazz, swing, gospel music, and ragtime as well as technological advancements such as microphone, radio, electric instruments that caused disinterest acoustic music after the 1920s drove its practice to the verge of extinction (Hicks, as cited in Ayling 2004, p. 55). Although the exceptional role of many enthusiasts and some institutions such as the Barbershop Harmony Society founded in 1938, can not – and probably should not – be underestimated in keeping barbershop music alive, various forms of popular culture partook in preservation and refinement of this unique style. After the mid-1980s, barbershop quartets started to appear in many episodes of the popular TV shows such as the Simpsons, Friends, Scrubs, Family Guy, Mystery Science Theater 3000, The Suite Life of Zack and Cody, Diagnosis Murder, The Marvelous Misadventures of Flapjack and in many others. In many of these TV appearances, professional barbershop singers performed barbershop music. As far as the musical characteristics of the barbershop singing style are concerned, fundamental and distinctive features of the barbershop harmony have remained strong, as it has continued its development and reached new enthusiasts worldwide. When their role in the continuance of the barbershop tradition is taken into account, one can feel free to think that the popular culture and mass media might not be the “bad boys” of our time. Popular culture industry has changed the image of barbershop quartet time to time, which made an important contribution to the genre, but it has not touched the essence of this unique style.

That said, popular culture, I particularly argue within the context of Kurdish musical resistance, is not only useful for continuation of dominant structures but also realistically practical to ignite opposition as well as to, to use Plageman's phrase, “inculcate social change” (2013, p. 17).

What follows in this study is a musico-political resistance of Kurds in Turkey in mostly ethnographical and in partly historical context. I argue that music has not only

been a reflection of political life of Kurds but also has had a large influence on having Kurdish public life integrated into resistance politics. This is, in other words, a detailed account of how cultural, ideological, historical, and modern sources has been employed to coordinate practices of protest, violence, and pain through music-centered practices. What follows is also a simple commentary about cultural transformation caused by political resistance in Kurdish society. I have the intention of showing the number of ways in which musico-politics shapes cultural production during repression and resistance as well as music's capacity in creating oppositional behavior against power.

I would like to note at this point that many arguments and rationalizations of mine here do not represent the entire Kurdish society in Turkey, which may seem as a potential drawback of this study. Many concerts as well as many public, political, and social occasions that I have participated, and the majority of interviews that I have made for my research characterize a particular segment of the Kurdish society in Turkey, which is a rather politically, economically, culturally, and linguistically fragmented group. This study has been concerned predominantly with those Kurds who politically prioritize their cultural and national identities and therefore it does not have any information or comment about those who remain out of this group.

The next chapter describes a background to the Kurdish political history and Kurdish music against which the succeeding chapters will give a more detailed view of current musico-political practices of Turkey's Kurds. Tracing the period during which Kurdish music has merged with intense politics, resistance movement and armed struggle as well as its influences, and several critical phenomena and figures in its development, this chapter attempts to portray the origins and development of Kurdish national consciousness through music, and the predominance of political music in Kurdish cultural life in Turkey. Starting with chapter 3, I begin to share and discuss details that I acquired through fieldwork. Chapter 3 explores the role of music and dance in enhancing political and cultural significance of Newroz for Kurdish population in Turkey. I basically discuss Kurds' musico-political behavior through detailed descriptions of Newroz celebrations that I observed two consecutive years in two important Kurdish populated cities in southeastern Turkey; the first one was in Diyarbakır in 2011 and the second was in Hakkâri in 2012. Chapter 4 describes the celebrations of the annual Munzur Festival of Culture and Nature held

for the 11<sup>th</sup> times in July 2011 in Eastern Turkey's Tunceli province. Since Tunceli, which is traditionally known as Dersim, is not only critical for Kurdish political movement but also for many radical left wing organizations this chapter is quite significant to discuss the musico-political similarities between Turkey's leftist movements and Kurdish nationalist movement. Chapter 5 explores two music-centered events bearing the names of Mesopotamia Cultural Center and Ahmet Kaya, two important symbols of Kurdish resistance in Turkey, in the context of remembrance, commemoration, and anniversary. Chapter 6 examines the role of media communication technologies, basically satellite television and Internet, in forging new practices of Kurdish musico-politics after the mid-1990s. It also analyses music videos of two popular resistance songs widely distributed by means of media in relation to the combative discourse of Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey.

Each chapter includes songs, performers, the political atmosphere at the time, public behavior and reactions, leading concepts, sometimes chronologically sometimes discursively as required by the adopted style of narrative analysis. Starting from chapter 3, each chapter is structured based on case studies investigating different events and domains that show Kurdish political movement's various forms of expression through music. With the descriptive explanatory analysis and occasional use of historical records and archives to reveal musical articulation of nationalist resistance and identity formation in these events, I also intend to show the close relationships, regarding content, motivation, and behavior, among these cases that seem to be independent from each other. Many songs performed in these events and included in these chapters for review may be accessed online. I should note here that the number of music groups, musicians, and songs that have not been mentioned in the study are a lot more than those that have been mentioned. I have not included every song, nor have I not remarked on every musician and music group that I came across during my research. Reactions of audiences, information I received from interviews, Internet research centered on Kurdish music discussion forums, and music and video sharing sites helped me decide on critical performances, musicians, songs that epitomize the Kurdish musico-politics.

I assess this process in which readers' critics and comparisons as a part of my text. My analyses and interpretations have not meant to be flawless but they have meant to

provoke additional and mostly controversial judgments and opinions. This study, albeit with an atypical frame of reference, seeks to present an ethnographically lucid snapshot of musically charged political lifestyle — or politically charged musical lifestyle — of Kurds in Turkey taken from the early years of the second decade of the 2000s. Both observed and archival details in the ethnographic chapters regarding objects, meanings created, behaviors, and relations between them discovered in the field (including the virtual) in addition to brief historical analysis of chapter 2, I suppose, will also be conducive to this picture in understanding of the transformation of Kurdish expressive culture that is still in progress. I have paid particular attention to treat each event as a set of overlapping texts that have strong links among them as well as to the adversarial setting that the study is mainly concerned, and to approach these links and their meanings, which they continually change, within their social, historical, and political contexts.

The following chapters of this study, in short, will examine how the balance of power has been constructed between musical culture and political resistance in Kurdish society in Turkey. Before proceeding to the ethnographically designed chapters of the study, on the other hand, it will be necessary to address a number of basic details about Kurdish music as well as the origins and development of Kurdish national consciousness through music in order to provide an instructive ground before going into more depth about the predominance of resistance music in Kurdish cultural life in Turkey.



## **2. OVERVIEW: KURDS, MUSIC, AND SURVIVAL**

The chapters of this study are designed to anatomize ethnographically the role of Kurdish political music in Kurdish cultural and socio-political life in Turkey. They describe various events and settings in which Kurdish music takes the initiative in the movement of Kurdish political resistance and the assertion of national identity, thereby acutely transforming Kurdish expressive culture. Thus, they do not specifically concentrate on recounting Kurdish music in terms of musical forms, instruments, performance settings, dances, performers, or historical periodization. Today, comprising a great portion of Kurdish performing arts and culture, the musical repertory driven by Kurdish ethno-nationalism, political and armed resistance received little (Blum and Hassanpour 1996; Aksoy 2006; Grossman and O'Brien 2006; Sarıtaş 2010; Lundberg 2010) sociological or ethnomusicological inquiry. This chapter, accordingly, attempts to establish an explanatory backdrop against which the predominance of political music in Kurdish cultural life in Turkey might fully be understood and assessed.

Kurdish cultural diversity has not been subjected to standardization of an independent political structure, and yet it has not been able to get away from the assimilation and annihilation policies of hegemonic powers, either. Kurds, according to their historical positioning and progress, presumably have remained under the influence of, and had to interact with, both neighboring and remote peoples and cultures in their homeland (to a great extent) more than many other peoples in the world. This is an important factor that increases the degree of heterogeneity in their music today as well as in their many other sociocultural textures.

The music of Kurds is probably one of the least researched musical traditions in the Middle East on account of a number of historical, social, and political reasons. Today, it is not an arduous task to build a bibliography on the music of Kurds by piecing together the scanty studies that are either specific or comprehensive or

compendious.<sup>12</sup> A number of succinct texts on Kurdish music, in addition, are found in many publications as a supportive subject to the main study. Terminological complexity arising from sociocultural, geographical, and linguistic heterogeneity, close resemblance to adjacent musical cultures, the cultural hegemony of those states that portion the Kurdish lands, and the potential political hazard are some of the reasons that inconvenience any kind of study to describe Kurdish music today. It seems important here to emphasize that an in-depth ethnomusicological study attempt on the music of Kurds in the current situation would require a travel at least in four different countries whose ideological norms and values have been imposed in different ways on Kurdish musical culture for years. Finding themselves within a diversified media of musical expression and multifarious terms — or no term at all — to define them, many researchers are intimidated by an unestablished or nonstandardized terminology in Kurdish music.

It is important to elucidate the characterization of Kurdish music without overlooking the political and military turmoil, Kurds' extensive displacement, particularly between the mid-1980s and the late 1990s, the denial of the existence of Kurdish people in Turkey until recently, and the restrictions on Kurds' claims for their political and cultural rights. To depict a satisfactorily lucid picture that is specific to Kurdish music seems to be one of the most difficult jobs for researchers at this point. Even though there have historically been quite distinguishable territories densely populated by Kurds who remained autonomous in various degrees for centuries almost until the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they never formed a monolithic political and/or cultural block. The region containing countless autonomous socio-political divisions was never able to materialize the basic institutionalization to compete with neighboring centralized powers. Kurdish music missed the opportunity to unearth its identity throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century in which conventional Kurdish

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<sup>12</sup> Dieter Christensen, whose studies on Kurdish music constitute the significant part of articles in primary academic reference works such as Garland Encyclopedia of World Music and Grove Music Online, provides the most credible resources both on the essentials and specificities of Kurdish music in English and German (Reigle, 2011, p. 319). Some studies in Turkish such as Bayrak's anthology of Kurdish folk songs *Kürt Halk Türküleri (Kilam û Stranên Kurd)* [Kurdish Folk Songs] and three-volume study *Kürt Müziği, Dansları ve Şarkıları* (Kurdish Music, Dances and Songs) published 1991 and 2002 respectively, and the book of Nezan et al. *Kürt Müziği* (Kurdish Music) published in 1996 includes articles discussing Kurdish music from various perspectives as well as song collections. For detailed information and comments on Kurdish music literature and ethnographically valuable recordings and song collections, see Ozan Aksoy (2006), "The Politicization of Kurdish Folk Songs in Turkey in the 1990s." [http://www.umbc.edu/MA/index/number11/aksoy/ak\\_0.htm](http://www.umbc.edu/MA/index/number11/aksoy/ak_0.htm).

territories have been shared by nation states that carry out severe monolingualistic and monocultural policies. Today, many researchers are left with no option but to investigate Kurdish music on regional basis. In respect to this, I analyze the music of the Kurds living in Turkey in connection to the political and cultural parameters/developments in Turkey. First, I should briefly touch upon Kurdish ethnics and the conflict in which Kurds in Turkey have been involved with a prolonged resistance movement.

## **2.1 Kurdish Ethnic and a History in Conflict**

Historical records show that Kurds have been living for centuries in a contiguous area of predominantly mountainous land in the Middle East geographically remaining roughly among south of the Pontic Mountains, southwest of the Caucasus mountains, east of the Eastern Taurus mountains, and northwest of the Zagros mountains, which politically corresponds to today's southeastern Turkey, northeastern Syria, northwestern Iran, and northern and northeastern Iraq (see figure B.3). In addition to Kurds who constitute the ethnic majority of the population, there are various ethnic and religious groups such as Zazas, Armenians, Assyrians, Yezidis (also Yazidi), Turcomans, Arabs, Turks, and Iranians across these lands.

Languages spoken across the Kurdish-inhabited areas today, other than the official languages of the states that have dominance over the area such as Turkish, Arabic, and Farsi, is another question of debate both on political and academic levels. There are two main linguistic viewpoints regarding languages spoken across Kurdish-inhabited areas; one regards a number of main languages such as Kurmanji, Sorani, Zaza, and Gorani as dialects or varieties of Kurdish whereas the other sees each of them as separate languages belonging to Northwestern Iranian languages. Of the two predominantly spoken languages of Kurdish-inhabited areas Kurmanji<sup>13</sup> is mainly spoken in southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq, and Sorani is largely spoken in northeastern Iraq and northwestern Iran.<sup>14</sup> The linguistic relation between these two

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<sup>13</sup> I should note at this point that the frequent use of the word "Kurdish" to suggest a particular language in the present study mainly refers to the language that is also known as Kurmanji.

<sup>14</sup> McDowall (2004) draws a distinction between Sorani spoken in Iraq and Sorani spoken in Iran in that the latter is related to modern Persian rather than Sorani (p. 10). Classifying Kurmanji under the name of Northern Kurdish, Ethnologue also classifies Iraqi Sorani as Central Kurdish, and Iranian Sorani as Southern Kurdish (see [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com)).

languages, as McDowall (2004) suggests, is close to that of German and English (p. 9). On the other hand, even though their coverage zones are geographically distant from each other, Zaza, which is spoken mostly in the northwest of the Kurmanji-speaking areas in east-central Turkey, and Gorani, which is spoken mostly in the southeast of the Sorani-speaking areas in northwestern Iran, are linguistically related to each other more than they are related to Kurmanji and Sorani (see figure B.2). The language issue, particularly on the basis of relationship between Zaza and Kurmanji, is going to be discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

The population figures suggest that Kurds constitute one of the largest ethnic groups in the world that does not have an independent state. The calculation of the current population of Kurds living in the aforementioned area, since there has never been an official census data, is largely bound up with the estimates of a number of demographical researches. McDowall (2004) estimates that Kurds number between 24 and 27 million today, at least 13 million of whom live in Turkey whereas there are more than four million living in Iraq, up to seven million in Iran, and more than one million in Syria (p.3). Based on these numbers, Kurds constitute 17 percent of Turkey's total population while they constitute 23 percent and 10 percent of the populations of Iraq and Iran, respectively. Even though there are some objections to them from different parts of both Turkish and Kurdish societies, the latest statistics of KONDA, one of the most reliable public opinion research and consultancy companies in Turkey, show that Kurdish population — including Zaza people<sup>15</sup> — in Turkey is calculated as 13.4 million in 2013, a figure that corresponds to the 17,7 percent of Turkey's total population (Erdem, 2013). Still, because of assimilation policies proceeding in Turkey, these figures may not be congruent with the number of people that identify themselves as Kurd. There are a number of Kurdish enclaves outside the traditionally inhabited areas, in addition, such as in central Turkey, Khorasan province in northeastern Iran, central Iran, Baluchistan, Turkmenistan,

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<sup>15</sup> Today, Zazas' Kurdishness is gradually becoming one of the controversial subjects among Kurds and Zazas in Turkey. Many Kurds and Zazas believe that Zaza identity is part of Kurdishness. There are a small number of Zazas, on the other hand, who see themselves as a separate ethnic identity. According to the Social Structure Survey conducted by KONDA Research and Consultancy in 2006, the latter group constitutes the 0,41 percent of the adult population in Turkey whereas the former group constitutes the 8,61 percent of the population. People who see themselves as Zaza, in addition, constitute the 4,5 percent of the entire Kurdish and Zaza population (KONDA Araştırma ve Danışmanlık, p. 25).

Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, (Izady, 1992, p. 103; Bruinessen, 1992, p. 11). Apart from Turkey's metropolises, on the other hand, many European countries such as Germany, Sweden, England, Austria as well as the United States and Australia host a considerable proportion of Kurdish population as a diaspora community as a result of martial, political, and economic hardships experienced particularly in the last 30 years in Kurdish-populated areas.

There is not a fundamental difference between the nascence of Kurdish national identity and that of any other nation. The degree of sense of belonging as a Kurd was probably not less than that of as a French or Russian during the age of emperorship. Similarly, Kurdish political nationalism was one of the consequences of the development of nationalism in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Kurds' acquaintance with nationalist ideology in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century was not later than that of many other nations' in the Middle East (Bozarslan, 1992, p. 74). In this sense, almost every nation's "cultural heritage" is much older than its nationalism and it is not special to Kurds contrary to statement of Yavuz (1998, p. 10).<sup>16</sup> Essentially, neither 20<sup>th</sup> century political nationalism nor 16<sup>th</sup> century "apolitical ethnicity" (Yavuz, 1998, p. 10) of Kurds is different than many other nations. "Accepting the existence of a fixed homeland and a timeless Kurdish identity is highly problematic for the Kurds, just as it is for the other ethnic groups" (Özoğlu, 2004, p. 41).

The fact that there was barely an experience of statecraft on the part of Kurds throughout history might be misleading to hold an opinion on their national consciousness. The historical or current circumstances of Kurds might not necessarily suggest their lack of desire for national self-government. A nation that has not claimed its independence with a clear demand such as becoming a state is not less committed to its liberation than other nations are. As Sir Arnold Wilson, colonial administrator of Mesopotamia (Iraq) during and after the First World War, notes, Kurds "have a conception of frontiers which is different from ours but quite reasonable. Sovereignty is not vested in land but in people" (Ryder, 1925, as cited in O'Shea, 2004, p. 74-75).

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<sup>16</sup> One of the limitations with Yavuz's explanation is that it overlooks the significance of comparison at this point. Even though he has not asserted that the fact that nationalism is much younger than its "cultural heritage" is specific to the Kurdish nation, his argument gives such impression (1998, p. 10).

McDowall (2004), arguably, correlates the delayed ethno-nationalism and statelessness of Kurds with the lack of a civic culture and an established literature (p. 2). Still, even though we do not have necessary devices to measure civic and literary potential of ethnic groups, it seems quite problematic to claim that all nation-states in the world have more developed civic culture and literature than Kurds have. Obviously there might be some other facets of this issue, and external ramifications emerge in the region and the overpowered “politicization of ethnicity” of Kurds in the middle of these ramifications might partly be elucidative at this point. As Gerard Chaliand (as cited in Entessar, 1989) has noted, “political ethnicity has developed since the creation of the political and geographic boundaries of the modern nation-state system, which for most of the Middle East took place in the twentieth century” (p. 84).

### **2.1.1 Ethnogenesis**

The exact origin of Kurds and the term “Kurd” is a subject that a compromise has yet to be reached in academia. Although there are a number of theories proposed, no scholarly attempt has convincingly demonstrated exactly from which ancient dwellers of the region Kurds are descended. The academic failure to connect between modern Kurds with several ancient peoples that lived in today’s Kurdish lands diverted present-day scholars to another postulation arguing that Kurdish ethnicity is an amalgamation of various ancient inhabitants in the region that have different ancestries (Bruinessen, 2000, pp. 4-5; McDowall, 2004, p. 8).

Tracing the ascriptions in relevant texts to allegedly different versions of the word “Kurd” throughout history, Asatrian (2009) reports that it denoted a number of lifestyles and people such as slingers, robbers, shepherds, nomads, cattle-breeders, and brigands before it evolved into an ethnonym (p. 28). McDowall (2004) agrees that the term “Kurd” had the meaning for nomad during Islamic expansion, and many travelers, including those of Europeans after the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and historians used it to imply brigandage until the 11<sup>th</sup> century (p. 13). Today’s ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diversified Kurdish society seems to corroborate the presence of various lifestyles and groups in the past of Kurds. As Bruinessen coherently remarks, “cultural variations between the various regions of Kurdistan, as well as the existence of two culturally distinct social strata in several regions, seem to indicate that the

present Kurds have incorporated quite heterogeneous ethnic elements” (Bruinessen 2000, pp. 4-5).

### **2.1.2 Kurds up to the 16<sup>th</sup> century**

References to Kurds in historical records, mostly in Arabic sources, amplified after Muslim armies encountered Kurds as they made their way to the north in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Although they at first provided significant forces to Sassanid armies that stood up to Arab invasions, Kurdish tribes, as well as Sassanids, had to capitulate following the Arabs’ decisive dominance across region (McDowall, 2004, p. 21). Kurds soon after converted to Islam, and, remarkably, became one of the most famous military forces of Islamic armies in the subsequent centuries.

According to McDowall (2004), mostly incoming Turkic groups rather than Arabs troubled Kurds throughout the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries (p. 22). As noted by many scholars, interestingly at this point, Seljuks, one of the Turkish dynasties, were the first people to officially use the term “Kurdistan” when they were in power in the Middle East throughout the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries (Zaken, 2007, p.1; McDowall, p. 6; Yildiz, 2004 p. 7). However, as Özoğlu suggests, the use of the word “Kurdistan” hardly had political connotations until the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (2004, p. 27).

The beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century witnessed two nascent empires both to the west and to the east of Kurdish-inhabited lands. Before long, both the Safavid Empire striving to expand its territories to the west and the Ottoman Empire seeking to move forward to the east appreciated winning Kurdish tribes over.

Since Turkey’s Kurds and their politico-cultural practices and struggles in present-day Turkey primarily encircle the main center of the study, it would be purposive to focus more on the history of the relations between Kurds during Ottoman Empire, which is the predecessor of the Republic of Turkey.

### **2.1.3 Kurds and the Ottoman Empire**

It seems that opportune circumstances were never surfaced for Kurds to establish a politico-military dominion over its traditional and surrounding territories in the early modern era. Many scholars associate this with their social organization and the existence of Kurdish-inhabited areas under two opposing military powers, namely

Ottoman and Safavid Empires, quite a while after the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Strohmeier, 2003, p. 9).

Gaining the official recognition of Ottoman administration, Kurdish tribal leaders created a system of local independence over the following two hundred years on condition that they admitted Ottoman suzerainty by remaining within their domains and protecting borders, and by provision of troops to the Ottoman armies when required (McDowal, 2004, p. 29). Some scholars note that this period of quasi-independence gradually gave way to subjection after the treaty of Zuhab (also known as the Treaty of Kasr-ı Şirin) signed in 1639 between Ottoman and Safavid Empires; the frontier, which is established between two empires by the treaty, officially divided the Kurdish homeland, and centralist policies of both empires after the treaty jeopardized many tribes and emirates existing position. (Edmonds, 1971, p. 87). It must also be noted that after the 19<sup>th</sup> century, first the Russian Empire and then the British Empire intending to impede the Russian expansion were involved in the historical controversy in the region. The British supported a manageable Kurdish region as a buffer zone, which necessitated intervention in Kurdish administrative structure. The last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly after the Treaty of Berlin signed 1878, marked the beginning of a new phase in which several new states in the Balkans seceded from Ottoman Empire. Ottoman Empire also accepted and undertook to guarantee the legal rights of Armenians in compliance with the Treaty of Berlin.

Aside from the rapidly altering power relations in the region, Ottoman State's ongoing policies for decreasing the degree of autonomy in Kurdish region caused a number of rebellions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One of the most significant of these rebellions was the Bedirhan occurred in 1847, which is considered as the basis for Kurdish political movement today. Since Bedirhan was the leader of the last remaining emirate in Kurdish region, the repression of the rebellion marked the annihilation of the emirate system.

Because of conflict and hostility between tribes, warfare, and lack of economic stability in the region, Kurdish people, during this period, had nothing left to unite them other than Islam in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Ottoman administration, which seem to share the same concerns with them in terms of their threatened religious identity, remained as the only ally. However, Ottoman Empire was on the eve of a

great change in which Muslim identity would be replaced by the concept of Turkism, and by nature, and this new concept was not ready to work cooperatively with Kurds.

There was, on the other hand, as McDowall (2004) states, a considerable degree of political mobility started as of late 19<sup>th</sup> century (p. 87). McDowall (2004) indicates that traditional tribe values with Sultan and his caliphate were a rescuer for many Kurds; many others, those educated in cities, were inclined to assemble under more comprehensive Ottoman identity whereas others were eager to autonomy within a broader Muslim state. There were also Kurds who wanted an absolute independence. McDowall points out that these divisions still exist in Kurdish society (pp. 87-88).

Having been surrounded by fighting empires that desired to exercise power over Kurdish-inhabited lands as much as possible, Kurds had no option but to get involved in the First World War (O'shea, 2004, p. 83). In spite of historically intermittent tensions, fear of non-Muslim threats conduced to a Kurdish-Ottoman partnership as a Muslim alliance in the region during the World War I.

The victory of Allied powers at the end of the war created one of the most important opportunities for Kurds in history in terms of their self-determination. The British forces had already taken control of the large part of the Kurdish lands and the provisions of the Armistice of Mudros signed between the Ottoman Empire and the Allies allowed them to do more when required. The Turkish struggle for independence led by Mustafa Kemal was based in Ankara. The Treaty of Sèvres signed between Ottoman Empire and Allies was rejected by the National Movement (*Kuva-yi Milliye*) and by the National Assembly established in 1920 in Ankara because Istanbul, occupied by Allies, was still the center of the submissive Ottoman administration. Turkish Nationalists were politically and militarily occupied with Allies, and Greek and Armenian claims as well as the government of Istanbul.

The first attempt to make use of the opportunity for a Kurdish state during this time was known as Koçgiri Rebellion led by the Istanbul-based Society for Rise of Kurdistan (*Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti*) and the chiefs of Koçgiri Tribe in Dersim (today's Tunceli) region in 1921. The leaders of the rebellion called for nascent administration and assembly in Ankara to recognize the Kurdish autonomy, release of Kurdish prisoners, and withdrawal of the Turkish officials and forces from Kurdish areas. As Romano (2006) points out, "the demands were all Kurdish

nationalist in nature, rather than religious, class, or otherwise based” (p. 29). The rebellion, which was nationalist and led by Alevi tribes whose belief system was different from that of Sunnis’, was replied noncommittally by Sunni Kurds who had a historical hostility to Alevi sect and saw a possible Armenian state in the region as the first and foremost problem. Interpreting Mustafa Kemal’s statements as his consent to Kurds’ rights in the new administration that would probably replace that of Ottoman, Kurds not only postponed their national demands but also supported Mustafa Kemal in his armed struggle.

Mustafa Kemal’s one of the first operations after the victory in August 1922, on the other hand, was the abolition of the sultanate, which put an end to Ottoman Empire, in November 1922. The Treaty of Lausanne signed between Turkey and Allies of World War I in July 1923 did not include any kind of clause about Kurds’ rights and their future in Turkey. The proclamation of the Republic of Turkey in October 1923, and the subsequent radical reforms of secularized Turkish nationalism and modernization, put Kurds in one of the most vulnerable positions in their history.

#### **2.1.4 Kurds and the Republic of Turkey**

The Kurd has always been an unresolved moot point since the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, and as Yeğen (1999) notes, “whenever the Turkish state spoke on the Kurdish question, it did so without pronouncing the name of “Kurds”” and kept silent on the ‘Kurdishness of the Kurdish question’” (p. 560). Remarkably, two synonymic expressions in which the word “Kurd” has been largely heard in Turkey for years are *Kürt sorunu* (Kurdish problem) and *Kürt meselesi* (Kurdish question), of which socio-political implications are openly discussed by Baran (2012b) as follows:

The designation “Kurdish problem” is an example of a terrible contamination and distortion. This designation, which Turkish political mindset uses consciously and pronounces Kurds “problem” in their own lands, is an indication of how the language that hegemony uses is shiftily built... How do Kurds, who have been living in the same lands for thousands of years and whose lands are divided by the invasions of imperialist Turk, Arab, and Persian communities, become “problem” in their own lands? If there is a problem in Kurdistan, it is the Turkish, Arab, and Persian problem, and this problem must be urgently resolved. Everyone, by all means, will answer differently to the question “what is the problem of Kurds?” But most of these answers will be those that are produced by hegemonic mind, and those that are also imposed on Kurds today. Are Kurds’ problems economic problems? Are

Kurds' problems peasantry, urbanity, provincialism, forced migration, or suchlike sociological positioning problems? Is Kurds' problem the prohibition of their language, belief, and culture? Or is Kurds' problem, along with all these problems, the denial of their own sovereignty in their own lands? What is it?<sup>17</sup>

The Kurdish existence was simply denied within the borders of the newly founded Republic of Turkey after 1923. The founding cadres of the Republic of Turkey had their reasons of course. Solidarity of each fighting groups for independence was at the forefront. And Kurdish uprisings both on the eve of and after the foundation of Turkey considered as activities disturbing this solidarity. Unlike Ottoman Empire who used the concept of *millet* and Islamic symbols to keep Kurds under control, newly founded Republic of Turkey carried out an explicit campaign against Kurdish existence. Military campaign during the first 15 years of the republic accompanied and followed by rigid state policies to obliterate Kurdish national identity with all the elements that constitute it. Theoretically disregarded Kurds were practically Turkified primarily by employing the method of assimilation.

The ongoing period in which the discourse based on the denial of Kurdish nation, identity and language dominated, to sum up, was officially launched with the foundation of the Republic of Turkey. Ironically, Muslim identity of the Turkish republic remained relying relatively on the *millet* concept of the Ottoman Empire, yet all Muslims were considered Turks in the new state. This was backed by many "academic" publications claiming that Kurds were in fact "Mountain Turks," whose language was largely influenced by Persian (Sagnic, 2010, pp. 128-129; Entessar, 1989, pp. 93-94). Article 39 of the treaty of Lausanne, which seemed to assure the non-Turkish Muslim minorities, could be ruled out only by this kind of policy claiming there is no non-Turkish Muslim community in Turkey (Koivunen, 2002, p.84). The new Turkish state was more than eager to accept Kurds into every level of its system as long as they abandon their Kurdishness. The government of Ankara, in addition, had made a considerable effort to restrain Kurds from organizing themselves into their national interests during the Turkish war of independence. The new state, having extricated itself from external enemies, had more change to divert its forces to internal issues. All of a sudden, Kurds lost their international support as well.

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<sup>17</sup> The Turkish original of the text has been translated into English by the author.

One of the most important Kurdish organizations of the early days of the Republic of Turkey was *Azadî* (Freedom) whose members were mostly the ones that had realized the misdeeds of Kurds and the importance of eliminating the internal differences in Kurdish society for liberation. With its respected title and personality, Sunni Naqshbandi Sheikh Said led the rebellion against central government in 1925. Sheikh Said rebellion, aside from many small-scale uprisings, was followed by two other major rebellions, Ararat rebellion (1927-1930) and Dersim Rebellion (1937), and both received as violent response as Sheikh Said did from the government.

To sum up, none of the Kurdish rebellions emerged during the first years of the Republic of Turkey was formed as mass movements. Romano (2006) has drawn attention to the fact that masses following their leaders were mostly involved in tribal or in religious interests rather than those of national in this rebellious period (pp. 36-37). Conflicts among tribes continued to exist as well. Even today, the tribal identity, to some extent, is a phenomenon that keeps its significance in Kurdish society. Many Kurds who do not react when a political or military problem occurs between the state and Kurds do not abstain from getting involved in a tribal feud (Romano, 2006, p. 27).

Following the brutal suppression of Dersim Rebellion, a deep silence hung over Kurdish nationalist movement mostly because there were few people left to lead another rebellion because of imprisonments, deportations, exiles, or executions, and those tribal leaders remained, as McDowall (2004) indicates, chose to collaborate with the government (p. 207). Having seen the severe bloody precautions taken by the government to inhibit people lost their hope for further struggling. In other words, the already disunited Kurdish social political structure almost completely fell apart after the late 1930s.

The resuscitation of Kurdish nationalist movement started in the late 1940s with some significant changes both in Kurdish society and in the Turkish political life influenced by some global changes. First, the insertion of multi-party structure and electoral reform into the Turkish political life from one party dictatorship created wider opportunities for people to be involved in politics, including Kurds. Second, the political struggle of Kurds in Iraq that had already started in the late 1910s culminated a major uprising in 1943 led by the respected leader Mulla Mustafa Barzani, which had a significant influence on Kurds in Turkey. After retreating to

Iran where he meanwhile supported the foundation of the short-lived Republic of Kurdistan (Mahabad Republic) in 1945, Barzani was invited in Iraq by the new regime against which he resumed his revolt in the early 1960s (Meho, 2001, pp. 18-19; Marcus, 2007, pp. 19-20; Romano, 2006, p. 188). In Turkey, the first elections made in 1950 moved opposition center-right *Demokrat Parti* (Democratic Party) came into power with the support of the 52 percent of voters. The results of the first elections might give an idea about people's satisfaction with the administration of the new regime in its first 27 years. New government, on the other hand, did not make any changes on the Kurdish policy of the state other than defining the problem on progressive economic terms (Heper, 2007, p. 171). Democratic Party was overthrown in an army coup in 1960 on the grounds that it had caused serious damage to secularity and democracy of the Republic of Turkey (Romano, 2006, pp. 40-41). The new constitution imposed by the army after the overthrow of the elected government, on the other hand, rather democratic contrary to its undemocratic overthrow of the elected government. Kurds, if only indirectly, were encouraged to avail themselves of the new constitution opening large space for social and political rights. Even though the socio-political standards introduced by the constitution was extremely far from defining Kurdish entity in Turkey, they provided scope for leftist opposition movements in which many urbanized Kurds gained ideational maturity and expressed their identity rather freely. The changing economic circumstances and urbanization had also made significant alterations in the Kurdish society; tribal affiliation was dissolving and a new educated Kurdish generation was emerging based most on leftist political affiliation (Romano, 2006. pp. 41-42). *Türkiye İşçi Partisi* TİP (The Labor Party of Turkey), along with many leftist organizations such as *Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* DİSK (The Confederation of Revolutionary Workers Unions), *Türkiye Devrimci Gençlik Federasyonu* known as DEV-GENÇ (The Federation of Revolutionary Youth) were some of important venues with which Kurds identified themselves partly because of economic reasons and partly because of these organizations' openness to Kurdish rights (Özcan, 2006, p. 76; Romano, 2006, p. 42). As of the late 1950s and early 1960s, in addition, publications in Kurdish language started to appear which, to use Bozarslan's words, "serve[d] to symbolize the first signs of autonomy and specificity for Kurdish nationalism within the social movement" (1992, p. 76). Within the TİP, as Özcan (2006) points out, those who were originally bound up with the Kurdish

movement, on the other hand, formed the “Eastern Group,” and hold public demonstrations known as “Eastern Meetings” in several Kurdish populated cities in 1967 (p. 76). Meanwhile, Kurds’ efforts to organize their separate associations in the late 1960s resulted in the foundation of *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları* DDKO (The Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Clubs) in Istanbul, Ankara, and several Kurdish cities in eastern Turkey (McDowall, 2004, p. 411). DDKO, to quote from Marcus (2007), “blended the Marxism so popular at the time with a Kurdishness, thus marking a new step in development of a Kurdish political identity in Turkey” (p. 21). Another branch of Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey that was heavily influenced by Kurdish movement in Iraq represented by *Partiya Demokrata Kurdistanê* PDK (Kurdistan Democratic Party) led to the secret foundation of *Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi* TKDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey) in 1965 (Bozarslan, 1992, p. 76; Marcus, 2007, p. 20). Expanding their domain within the TİP, Kurds succeeded in adding a statement about Kurdish reality in Turkey at the Party’s Fourth Congress. Kendal (as cited in Romano, 2006) states that the statement, which was one of the main reasons for the ban on party’s activities after the coup d’état in 1971, read: “there is a Kurdish people in the East of Turkey ... The fascist authorities representing the ruling classes have subjected the Kurdish people to a policy of assimilation and intimidation which has often become a bloody repression” (p. 43).

Political conflict in 1960s transformed into armed conflict in 1970s due partly to the restrictions of many rights that the constitution provided (Romano, 2006, p. 45). The disappointment caused by the ban of particularly leftist political organizations and imprisonments of political activists, many newly emerged leftist organizations established their armed wings along with their political bodies in the 1970s. Giving up hope of defending their identity within Turkish left, many Kurds, having been experienced in left-wing politics from socialist movements in Turkey, established their Kurdish organizations majorly in Kurdish towns whereas many others resumed their activities within Turkish leftist groups emerged mostly from DEV-GENÇ, TİP, and DİSK especially after the military junta left the political arena to the political parties, and withdrew behind the curtain (Romano, 2006, p. 47).<sup>18</sup> Publications of

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<sup>18</sup> Drawing on İsmet G. İmset’s study *The PKK* (Ankara: Turkish Daily News Publications, 1992), Romano (2006) lists some of the Kurdish political groups organized in this period as follows: Beş

these groups provided important national consciousness centered on leftist ideas across Kurdish cities in the 1970s. The military coup in 1980, on the other hand, destroyed both Kurdish and Turkish leftist movements in Turkey and the only Kurdish group that survived this harsh military rule was the *Partîya Karkerên Kurdistan* PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) that it engendered not only the embodiment of Kurdish leftist, nationalist and armed movements all at once and developed a political Kurdish nationhood but also a dramatic social, political, economic, and cultural changes in Kurdish society after the mid-1980s.

PKK was founded in 1978, although its birth could be traced back to 1974, under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan, a former supporter of DEV-GENÇ. Öcalan and many others from the cadre of PKK had left Turkey before the third coup d'état of the Republic of Turkey in 1980 and waged the recruitment and training process in camps existing in Syria and Lebanon (Romano, 2006, p. 50). Having differed from its counterparts in its proneness to violence, PKK initiated a guerrilla warfare in 1984 against the Turkish Army, representatives of the feudal structure seen as collaborators of Turkish government in Kurdish lands, and many other political competitors that would be a threat to their case. The attacks of PKK rapidly increased and established a political dominance over the Kurdish insurgency in Kurdish lands in the following years.

The government and the Turkish Army took their usual precautions and responded harshly to both to the guerrillas and civilians as potential insurgents. Laizer (as cited in Meho, 2001, p. 15) describes the extent of the Turkish military campaign against PKK's attacks:

[The Turkish army campaign] is an all-out military on-slaughter to end Kurdish resistance in the most brutal fashion (250,000 soldiers versus 15,000 guerrillas and Kurdish civilians). ... [Its aims are] murder, extra-judicial killings, and silencing of the Kurdish opposition—prominent writers, journalists, MP's, and even Kurdish businessmen shot, tortured, or imprisoned, and the opposition press forced into closure. The true face of the [campaigns] is in fact the military target of razing all rebellious Kurdish villages, mass deportations and

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Parçacılar (1976), Şivancılar (1972), DDKO – Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Clubs (1969), DDKD – Revolutionary Democratic Culture Association (1975), TKSP – Turkish Kurdistan Socialist Party (1975), Kawa (1976), Dengê Kawa (1977), Red Kawa (1978), Rizgarî (1977), Ala Rizgarî (1979), KUK – Kurdistan National Liberationists (1978), Têkoşîn (1978), Yekbûn (1979), TSK – Kurdistan Socialist Movement (1980), and the PKK – Kurdistan Workers' Party (1978) (p. 47).

massacres of the villagers themselves, and the arbitrary killing and detention of Kurdish civilians who refuse to become state-paid militia against the PKK. The killings are carried out by military and death squads with the civil governments' complicity.

The violence of government beginning with the coup was also another factor in the flow of new recruits to the PKK. Military government established one of the most restrictive constitutions regarding fundamental rights and freedoms in Turkey in 1982 and banned the use of Kurdish language, without mentioning the word "Kurdish," in public in 1983. Martial Law that had been effective since 1978 in the region was replaced by the state of emergency rule in 1987, and both caused mass killings, imprisonments, tortures, and evacuation and destruction of villages in Kurdish-inhabited areas in Turkey. Kurdish village guards hired by government, in addition, had devastating effect on the Kurdish society. The following decade witnessed some attempts on the part of government to provide political solutions to the issue aside from those of military. However, moving under the shadow of the army, the government took the easy option and pursued some policies that used an iron fist in a velvet glove. In 1991, the public use of Kurdish language, except in broadcasts, publication, and education was permitted. The new anti-terror law took effect in the same year, on the other hand, broadened the definition of terrorism to the point where "any kind of action . . . with the aim of changing the characteristics of the Republic."<sup>19</sup> Turgut Özal, the president of Turkey, implied an amnesty for PKK guerrillas and Kurdish detainees, and an option for solution to the problem based on negotiation. Özal was the one, on the other hand, when he was the prime minister between 1983 and 1989, who put both village guard system and state of emergency in Kurdish-inhabited areas into effect (Gunter, 1997, p. 61). Announcing a unilateral ceasefire, PKK offered the government, as McDowall (2004) writes, "a declaration in favor of a negotiated solution and a willingness to allow Kurdish deputies, rather than the PKK, to negotiate with Ankara on behalf of Kurdish people;" p. 437). The sudden death of Özal, on the other hand, brought all military policies back to solve the PKK insurgency in Turkey. Army's counter-insurgency operations in 1993 caused PKK to abandon the ceasefire and another period of violence started. PKK was weakened by the specially trained military forces and

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<sup>19</sup> The full text of anti-terror law is (as cited in Romano, 2006, p. 55) available in Helsinki Watch, "Turkey: New Restrictive Anti-terror Law," June 10, 1991.

military equipment supported by the huge military aid received from the United States and European countries as well as by the cooperation between Turkish Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq in fighting PKK guerillas located in Northern Iraq (Romano, 2006, p. 57). Kurdish politicians, journalists, intellectuals, writers, and legal political parties that articulates Kurdish rights in Turkey, in the meantime, were strictly prevented from taking action in the Turkey's political arena. The weakest point for the PKK and Kurdish resistance movement, on the other hand, was the capture of Abdullah Öcalan in 1999. The PKK announced ceasefire in the same year that would continue until 2004. Abdullah Öcalan's trial resulted in death sentence at first, and then it was commuted to life imprisonment partly because of Western pressure and Turkey's candidacy for European Union, and of Abdullah Öcalan's possible value for further control over PKK.

In November 2002, *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* AK PARTİ (Justice and Development Party), a breakaway political movement from the long-established Islamic-oriented political tradition, ended the eleven-year period of coalition governments in Turkey, receiving 34 percent of the vote in the general elections that brought about almost the two-thirds majority of the seats in the parliament. Following certain policies based on economically liberal and socially conservative values, AK PARTİ increased its vote rate in each of the following general elections, which reached almost the 50 percent in 2011. Being a political group that has remained in power the longest in the history of the Republic of Turkey, AK PARTİ has also been the strongest mainstream political movement in Turkey that seems willing to reduce the military's authority over political life as well as to take concrete legislative steps rather than insisting on military policies toward solving the "Kurdish question." PKK's increasing tendency to use political means rather than those of military during this period, partly because of the imprisonment of its leader, is another factor in the formation of AK PARTİ politics. Even though it succeeded in decentering the military over the years, the party has always made no bones about showing its strong tendency to emphasizing if not to strengthening the a priori superiority of Sunni-Muslim, Turkish, and male identity over all other religious, ethnic, national, and gender identities. In spite of some minor measures to ease certain linguistic and political restrictions on Kurds as well as several poor and

uncoordinated initiatives, AK PARTİ governments have proposed neither a detailed report on the issue nor a roadmap in order to achieve a peaceful solution to the oppression of Kurds.<sup>20</sup> Failing to show any party-political concern for the basic recognition of cultural, linguistic, and national rights of Kurds in Turkey, AK PARTİ, in this sense, has barely gone beyond Turkish national pride and political pragmatism.<sup>21</sup> At the time of writing, the so-called “solution process” or “peace process” has been officially ongoing for almost one year (since 21 March 2013), on which Abdullah Öcalan’s message calling on guerrilla forces to retreat from Turkish territory was read to thousands of Kurds during the Newroz celebrations in Diyarbakır, whereupon PKK started to withdraw its guerrilla forces on 8 May 2013 as a part of peace negotiations between Abdullah Öcalan and the government. Still, there has not been any considerable attempt at supporting the process on the government’s part except for the formation of the “wise people committee” consisting of 63 intellectuals and “publicly-accepted” figures tasked with describing the aim of the process across Turkey. AK PARTİ government seems to be looking for ways to impose its own conditions rather than to improve the process based on compromise.

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<sup>20</sup> Whereas there have been several positive steps (partly for alignment with the *acquis*) toward acknowledging Kurdish cultural, political, and linguistic rights such as allowing private Kurdish courses in 2003, releasing four imprisoned Kurdish deputies after ten years in 2004, initiating the Kurdish TV channel TRT 6 in 2009, permitting the teaching of Kurdish language as an elective course in 2012 during the last-twelve-year period of AK PARTİ governments, various state reactions against Kurdish political movement such as retaining of high election threshold preventing Kurdish parties from being fully represented in the parliament, expanding the scope of anti-terror law in 2006 restricting Kurd’s political activities, mass arrests of Kurdish politicians and activists, military operations, and closure of pro-Kurdish political parties (HADEP in 2003 and DTP in 2009) have continued.

<sup>21</sup> As an important constituent of the “Democratic initiative process” or officially the “Unity and Fraternity Project” launched in 2009, the so-called “Kurdish initiative” or “Kurdish opening” was the first public attempt of the AK PARTİ government to lessen restricted rights of Kurds by raising the level of democratic standards in Turkey. The most remarkable moment of the process was the welcoming of a group of guerrillas coming from PKK camps in Iraq by a large number of people on 19 October 2009. Severe nationalistic reactions occurring in the mainstream Turkish media after this date gave way to silent shelving of the process. In 2011, in addition, it was revealed that secret talks between Turkish *Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı* MİT (National Intelligence Organization) and PKK had been ongoing in Oslo for more than 2 years (see <http://www.chris-kutschera.com/A/Oslo.htm> for more details).

## 2.2 Kurdish Musical Practice in Turkey

Lacking a specified art music tradition,<sup>22</sup> and cultural and artistic institutionalization, Kurdish music does not allow a simple classification pattern for itself. The two main categories, with the exception of liturgical repertory, that familiar to Kurdish music audiences in Turkey today include various kinds of traditional music (*dengbêjî*, *dîlok*, *evînî*, *lawik*, *stran*, *şêşbendî*),<sup>23</sup> and a number of popular music forms. Even though the acquaintanceship of Kurdish culture with the Eurocentric concept of music, which it has diffused rapidly, is rather recent, today, contemporary music genres, as in many cultures, comprise an important portion of Kurdish music. Various popular music styles is formed under the influence of Kurdish traditional music repertory as well as western-style pop, rock, jazz, blues, and rap, Turkish-Arab fusion *arabesk*, and Turkish *özgün müzik*, which is a hybrid of Turkish folk and western music elements mostly identified with protest music. Most of these genres, in this sense, use a variety of instruments range from those deemed to be indigenous to the area to those of neighboring cultures and western or international. A huge body of political, resistance and guerrilla songs, in addition, largely extend to all of these musical styles.

Apart from a number of relatively long musical forms such as *Çîrok û stran* (legend or story with song) *beyt*, *lawje şere* or *mêrxweş* (Epic songs), and *evînî* or *hejkirinî* (love narratives) under the category of sung narratives and/or *Dengbêj* tradition (*Dengbêjî*), Kurdish traditional music in Turkey includes a huge repertory that comprises numerous types of short and simple lyrical folk songs. These are

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<sup>22</sup> The concept of art music is another area that uncovers Kurds' aspirations for institutionalization as an essential part of sovereignty and national competitiveness. In a region where many cultures have developed their own classical music tradition, it might be conceivable that there would be a dormant art music tradition of Kurds who once lived, to a certain extent, as principalities. However, a dearth of notation or such written documentation of music in Kurdish history, and/or lack of certain musical practices of a classical tradition today renders the possibility of an extinct Kurdish art music merely a conjecture. *Muzika Serayê ya Kurdî* (Kurdish Palace Music), published in 2007 by Kom Müzik, an Istanbul-based record label devoted to Kurdish music, typifies Kurds' efforts to explore and also reconstruct the culture of national art music. The book includes scores and sound recordings of instrumental pieces composed based on the melodic modes (*meqam-s*) mentioned in *Mem û Zîn*, the classic epic of Ehmedê Xanî, the 17<sup>th</sup> century Kurdish poet and writer.

<sup>23</sup> For a comprehensive picture of Kurdish traditional music (historical background, song and dance forms, musical instruments, performers, and performance settings), I recommend a comparative reading of certain sources such as Nezan et al., 1996, Bayrak 2002, Çelebi, Yıldırım, and Ataş 2006 in Turkish, and Izady 1992 pp. 265-268, Christensen 2002, and Blum, Christensen, and Shiloah 2001 in English.

considered under various categories, though I must add the caveat that such categorization might be somewhat controversial, such as *dilok* (ceremonial songs) *lawika govendê* (dance songs), *heyranok* or *stranên evîne* (love songs), or *stranên karan* (work songs), which are performed according to the content or context in which they are performed (Christensen 2001; 2002; 2007; Çelebi, Yıldırım, Ataş 2006).<sup>24</sup> Along with many songs in different languages from that of Turkish in Turkey, the majority of these songs, as Stokes (2010) suggests, have been subject to institutionalization of Turkish nation-state building, and “passed off as “Turkish,” with newly composed Turkish words.” He adds that the “Turkish forms and adaptations of these songs were the only ones to enjoy a public life throughout most of the twentieth century” (pp. 134-135).

The basic character of traditional Kurdish music is generally understood as monophonic or heterophonic and anonymous folk music based on voice quality, and melodic modes (*meqam*). The traditional aesthetic sensibility is mostly concentrated on voice whereas instruments, even though there are many, have mostly the secondary role in Kurdish traditional music (Christensen 2002). Many musical forms attach importance on certain norms of performer’s fabric of voice and her ability to control it as well as narration and substantiality as aesthetic requirements. A bright but elegant voice, and a vocal range that pushes the limits of higher pitches are culturally regarded as important components of Kurdish music that deserves approval and admiration (Christensen 2002).

Traditional Kurdish music is actually embedded in a broader artistic, literary, and performative body. A significant portion of traditional Kurdish music in Turkey today includes what Christensen (2001; 2002; 2007) refers to as sung narratives. Sung narrative is mostly a combination of proses both spoken and sung. Featuring recitative singing, certain types of *meqam*-s, free rhythm, they mostly prioritize the content of the story over music. Kurdish oral literature in which musical narrative takes an important place comprises a large proportion of themes about war, mythological figures, heroism, bravery, love, nature, daily relations, and tribal

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<sup>24</sup> Kurdish terms used for song and dance forms, instruments, ceremonial practices, and naming and classification of performers vary from region to region because of nonstandardized terminology, historical, socio-geographical, and linguistic and dialectal diversity in the Kurdish-inhabited areas in Turkey. I have attempted, as far as possible, to include particularly notable discrepancies.

affairs, and the bardic tradition functioning like a chronicle of the region is one of the most important media that conveys Kurdish art, culture, literature, society, and belief system to future generations.

Performances of sung narratives are without doubt a phenomenal side of Kurdish culture in that they represent not only a form of musical performance but also a practice of historical accounts as they contain great details about past events with names, venues, families, and states in remarkably impressive performance techniques. Memorized stories are told in various sung narratives across region by mostly traveling singers and storytellers called *dengbêj* (traditional bard) who recites relatively long stories with special vocal timbres and techniques. Keeping account of many historical and social events, values, beliefs, customs, legends, and stories, *Dengbêjî*, for many Kurds living in Turkey, is a vital tradition through which collective memory of Kurdish nation is reconstructed and passed on. *Dengbêj-s*, as Bruinessen (1998) defines, are the “guardians of the historical memory and the traditional moral norms of Kurdish society as well as commentators on contemporary events” (p. 11). With their excellent memorization skills, they narrate stories with a special style that incorporates both singing and speaking. With the rare use of musical instrument, music mostly supports the main flow of the story in *Dengbêj* performances. Some *dengbêj-s* used to travel whereas some were under auspices of tribal leaders or *mîrs*. Many of the major Kurdish singers today refer to the influence of *dengbêj* tradition and style as one of the greatest influence on their own performances.<sup>25</sup> The traditional *Dengbêj* performances are barely kept alive today, but many of recorded narrations of distinguished *Dengbêj-s*, Bruinessen (1998) argues, are easily and widely disseminated (p. 49).

Performances of sung narratives were highly widespread across Kurdish-inhabited areas as cultural, social, political, and intellectual activities until the 1970s. They were mostly downgraded by developing music recording industry, and new political ideas that humiliate feudal and traditional concepts over 20 years thereafter. Technological advancements, rapid urbanization, international influence also distributed the negligence of this long-established tradition. *Dengbêj-s* have played a fundamental role both in the elaboration of Kurdish history, and in the revitalization

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<sup>25</sup> For two Turkish-language accounts of *Dengbêj* tradition, see Parlıltı 2006, and Uzun 2007.

of Kurdish music culture since mid-1990s. Still, even though there is a political struggle to reevaluate this culture today on the part of Kurds, it is mostly a nostalgic tradition that struggles to live. There are fewer people from new generations to follow this tradition and great performances it created, and even though there are many recordings of these performers, today's conditions, obviously, do not create motivations and experiences to exceed these performances. Considering the variety of the ways to create, record and popularize musical products and the cross-cultural influence of the global music in our day, a huge repertory of anonymous folk songs and sung narratives performed by *Dengbêj*-s that is actually at the heart of Kurdish music is appreciated merely as a traditional value and a source of modernization today.<sup>26</sup>

Today, Kurds in Turkey, and probably in other states in which they live, still and mostly rely on their traditional line dance practice called *govend*.<sup>27</sup> This includes dancers holding each other's hands (sometimes behind their backs) or shoulders according to the type of the dance with synchronized body, foot, and arm movements. In spite of its gradually decreasing variety, dance, by all accounts, remains as a prevalent mode of social activity as well as a form of collective performance in Kurdish culture today. As we shall see throughout the study, it is one of the most powerful areas, along with music, where the expression of Kurdish ethnic and political identity surfaces. Today, it is not only a political symbol as an indispensable activity of many cultural and socio-political occasions but also, as implied in many resistance songs and videos (see chapters 5 and 6), a political evocation of uprising. Working in conjunction with music, cultural symbols, colors, and dressing style, dance has transformed into a manifestation of defiance throughout the last 30 years. As we shall also see in the following chapters, it is very common for dancers to make their own music (*lawika govende*) for their *govend* with various types of singing practices as well as to dance to the accompaniment of amateur or professional instrumentalists and musicians and their traditional or commercially popularized songs. Wedding celebrations, and as the following chapters discuss,

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<sup>26</sup> For an excellent study of the appropriation of *Dengbêj* tradition as a cultural and national value, see Clémence Scalbert-Yücel 2009, "The Invention of a Tradition: Diyarbakır's *Dengbêj* Project," *European Journal of Turkish Studies*. [http:// ejts.revues.org/4055](http://ejts.revues.org/4055)

<sup>27</sup> The word *Govend* is interchangeable with the Turkish word *halay* among Kurds in Turkey.

Newroz (new year) celebrations, festivals, various commemorations and public concerts organized for particular reasons by political and cultural institutions constitute the most important areas of which the duo of dance and music is the nucleus. Dance zone, which is generated by audiences by pushing the limits at times, in this sense, is one of the most important parts of these events in Kurdish culture, be it political or festive; in point of fact, political events, in many cases, transform into those of festive and vice versa, and dance is an important medium to construct this transitivity.

Today, the role of various musical instruments, both traditional and modern, in Kurdish music rapidly grows. *Tembûr*<sup>28</sup> (long-necked folk plucked lute), which is identical to Turkish *bağlama* or *saz* (also known by these names) and used both in various traditional and popular music styles, is without doubt the most common instrument among Kurds in Turkey today. A number of percussion instruments have conventionally important function in Kurdish expressive culture of which dance is one of the crucial parts. Several types of frame drums, some of which have metal jingles, are known as *erbane* (*erebane*), *bendîr*, *dayre* or *def*, and goblet drum *dimbek* (also *dimbilk* or *daburqe*) are also quite discernible beyond traditional genres. Even though it is considered non-Kurdish by some Kurds since its played by othered gypsy musicians called *mitrib*, *Dahol*, a double-headed big cylindrical drum played with wooden sticks, is another percussion instrument that is widely used in weddings and other celebratory events. *Dahol* is mostly accompanied by *zirne*<sup>29</sup>, a double-reed woodwind instrument resembling a conical oboe, in these events. Oblique rim-blown flute *bilûr*<sup>30</sup> (also known as *bilwêr* or *şebbabe* in some areas), which is traditionally associated with shepherds, is becoming widespread in popular music. *Dûdûk*

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<sup>28</sup> The terms *Tanbûr*, *tambûr*, *tembûr*, and *tunbûr* refer to a wide range of long-necked lutes used art, folk, and religious music across the Middle East and Central Asia. The instrument called *tembûr* (*tenbûr* or *tanbur* in some sources) in Kurdish is identical to *saz* or *bağlama* used predominantly in Turkish folk music. It is, therefore, also known by these terms — or only by these terms — in Kurdish majority regions of southeastern Turkey. In this respect, *tembûr* is not to be confused with *Tambur* (also *Tanbur*), a Turkish classical music instrument. Another long-necked fretted lute that is similarly called *tembûr*, which is similar in shape but different on the number of strings, is regarded as a sacred instrument among Kurds adhered to Ahl-e Haqq religious sect in Western Iran. On *tanbûr*, see Scheherazade, Morris, Baily & Duringet 2001, and on Kurdish musical instruments, see Skalla & Amiri 1999, Blum, Christensen & Shiloah 2001, and Christensen 2002.

<sup>29</sup> *Zirne* may be known by other terms such as *zorne*, *sez*, or as in Turkish *zurna* in the region.

<sup>30</sup> The word *bilur* might also be used for a fipple flute that is also called *pik* or *dûdik*.

(sometimes known as *qernête*, *balaban*, or *mey*) is another cylindrical double-reed oboe instrument that has found a place in popular music in recent times. Spike fiddle *Kemençe* (also *riçek* or *ribab*) is another string instrument that still maintains its popularity in some areas. In addition to several string instruments such as long-necked banjo-like Turkish instrument *Cimbiş* or *Cûmbûş*, *keman* (violin), *qirnate* (metal clarinet), middle eastern instruments such as *qanûn* (trapezoidal plucked zither), *ûd* (oud), western-style popular music instruments such as different types of guitars, clarinet, flute, drums, and synthesizer became a part of various types of Kurdish popular music in relatively recent times. Kurdish music, to sum up, which is known mostly as rural and anonymous, is gradually being urbanized and modernized by regional and global musical genres and styles, and the diversification of Kurdish music with a wide range of instruments is an important area where this process could prominently be observed.

A fieldwork-based ethnomusicological account that endeavors to discuss Kurdish music and musicians in the context of contentious politics, war, violence and resistance, from this point forward, should like to make its way to the main point. Kurdish musico-political behavior, as we shall see, encompasses a variety of musical genres, instruments, dances as well as many other practices and performance settings. Working in collaboration with political organizations, and in accordance with political developments, it constantly constructs the notion of Kurdish ethno-national struggle and resistance. What follows is a brief historical evaluation of the development of this phenomenon considering in turn government policies, migration, urbanization, political organization, communication technology, and armed struggle.

### **2.2.1 Kurds' practice of musical resistance and propaganda**

Many researchers' first opinion regarding Kurdish music, as they reveal it on the first sentence of their articles, as to how it is an integral part of Kurds' sense of belonging (See Skalla and Jemima, 1999, p. 378; Christensen, 2002, p. 739). These hypothetical statements that might partly be true basically stem from the political circumstances caused by policies of ethnocide and linguicide in which Kurds have lived for years. The most severe form of the disqualification of Kurdish music probably has taken place in the Republic of Turkey where Kurdish language and music was denied and forbidden by law for many years, and a substantial Kurdish music repertory has been

redeveloped in Turkish language. Having been pressured and acculturated by an ideology that built on Turkish ethnicity and language, many Kurdish musicians, who drift away from their mother tongue with each generation, have begun to make music in Turkish or in Kurdish under the influence of Turkish, which they actively think and speak. Today, as we shall see in the last chapter, there are countless songs in Turkish that embrace Kurdish nationalist discourse and call people to Kurdish political and armed resistance. This, on the one hand, started to become an important component of the character of Kurdish music and contributed to the political awareness of retrieving the Kurdish identity on the other. In keeping with the context, the remainder of the chapter will mostly be referring to the music's role in the revitalization of Kurdish ethnonational consciousness, and the origins, growth and promulgation of Kurdish political and protest music among Kurds in Turkey.

The performance of music in Kurdish lands in the Ottoman period, even though today we have little information about the pieces, genres, performers, composers, and performance venues in this period, were presumably freer than it was in the significant part of the republican period. During the early years of the republican period, in which central authority was still working on its institutionalization across the country, there was likely to be a relative freedom for Kurdish music. In accordance with assimilation and annihilation policies to obliterate Kurdishness in Turkey's territories, the performance of music in Kurdish language was banned, and existing music was adapted to Turkish music repertory through Turkey's cultural policies based on collecting and compilation, Kurdish singers singing in Turkish, and Turkey's official media institution TRT *Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurumu* (Radio and Television Corporation of Turkey). Turkey's nation-state policies implemented based on Turkish ethnicity sparked a nationalist counteraction that endures today on the part of Kurds in the late 1950s. Music, in various and gradually effective ways, was one of the most functional instruments to embody this reaction as well as to create a modern nationalist narrative and discourse thereafter through various means. The first instruments to relax Kurds in these circumstances were the units established within Yerevan and Baghdad Radios that began broadcasting in Kurdish in 1955 and 1961 respectively. Countless singers, musicians and *dengbêj*-s who are regarded as

historic for Kurdish music today were first heard by means of Yerevan and Baghdad Radios.<sup>31</sup>

### **2.2.2 The dawn of artistic and cultural revival: Yerevan and Baghdad Radios**

Kurdish music, like Kurdish language, was an area on which government pressure heavily focused. The period that began with radio, under these circumstances, expanded the limits of Kurdishness in the minds of Kurds in that various Kurdish socio-economic classes and lifestyles had a chance to establish closeness with each other based on Kurdish language and ethnicity as well as to get informed about the world in a more efficient way.

Kurdish broadcasting unit began its activities in 1935 in Yerevan National Radio in Soviet Armenia for only 15 minutes per week; after it shut down two years later in 1937 and remained silent for thirteen years, the unit resumed its activities in 1955 (Greve, 2006, p. 254). Repression on Kurdish language rendered Yerevan Radio, as Akboğa (2012) defines it, “the scream of a forbidden language or the stronghold of the Kurdish enlightenment” (p.16). It was, in this sense, more than a regular radio broadcast for Kurds. Kurdish broadcast, even though it is very limited at first, attracted a great deal of attention from day one in many Kurdish-populated cities especially in Turkey and Iraq. Hearing their language among many other languages and their music in many different forms on the radio created a sense of belonging to a larger community among Kurds. Resurgence of Kurdish collective identity, and artistic, cultural, and national sensibility is traceable in many programs of the radio such as *Serhildanên Kurda* (Kurdish Uprisings), *Rojnîşa Çandê* (Cultural Calendar) *Zimanê Te yê Dê* (Your Mother Language) (Akboğa 2012, p. 18). Aside from laying the foundation for strengthening the national feelings among Kurds, Yerevan Radio functioned as a kind of Kurdology center in which a number of women and men of letters, musicians, and researchers worked for Kurdish history, literature, and music (Akboğa 2012, p.19). Yerevan Radio’s Kurdish broadcasting, in addition, served as a

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<sup>31</sup> Eslîka Qadir, Fatîma Îsa, Şeroye Biro, Seîdê Şamedîn, *dengbêj* Karapetê Xaço, Reşîde Baso, Memê Kurdo, Efoyê Esed, Egîde Têcîr, Memoyê Silo, Şibliyê Çaçan, Egîde Cimo, Aramê Tikran, Silêmanê Mecîd, Şex Şamilê Beko, Xelilê Abdûllah, Ahmedê Mîrazî, Sakiro, Mihemed Arifê Cizrawî, Hesên Cizrawî, Îsa Berwarî, Asa Evdile, Eyşe Şan, Meryem Xan, Sûsîka Simo, Belga Qado, Dîlbera Wekîl, Xana Zazê were some of the many important singers, musicians singing in Kurdish, and *dengbêj*-s whose voices were publicized through Yerevan and Baghdad Radios. Today, these names create a moment of nostalgia among Kurds when they talk about those radio days.

structure mediating the linguistic divisions across Kurdish lands (Akboğa 2012, p.19). As for Kurdish the correlation between music and ethnicity, Yerevan Radio popularized numerous musicians and traditional Kurdish genres and folk songs, and made a lasting contribution to reorganization of Kurdish collective identity. The music of Radio Yerevan, in some respects, was probably the first phenomenon to interconnect Kurdish political identity with music, which may be regarded as the earliest form of Kurdish musico-political behavior. Radio Yerevan, as Akboğa (2012) states, had a vital part in Kurdish society in terms of the protection, development, and handing down of collective consciousness to next generations (p. 18). Having had an opportunity to listen to their language and music through Radio Yerevan after the second half of the 1950s, Kurds' national sentiment started to awaken after a two-decade silence. Political revitalization of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey, correspondingly, started at the end of the 1950s. Kurds, first and foremost, witnessed the extent and depth of their language, music, identity, and culture by means of short programs of Radio Yerevan. After 1970s clandestine listening to Kurdish music cassettes was extremely prevalent across Kurdish-inhabited areas. Many Kurdish musicians living in neighboring countries enjoyed widespread popularity over these years among Kurds in Turkey.

Kurdish broadcasting unit in Baghdad Radio, albeit less popular than Yerevan Radio among Kurds in Turkey, was another domain that promoted Kurdish music and musicians. Containing programs that address predominantly Kurdish culture and art, Baghdad Radio was also an important school for Kurdish music shaped by the influence of Arab music tradition (Çelebi, Yıldırım, Ataş 2006). As for the development of Kurdish music, Yerevan and Baghdad Radios, as well as Urmia, Kermanshah, and Tehran Radios in Iran that began broadcasting in Kurdish, enabled a range of musicians, genres, performance techniques, songs, and sung narratives to reach masses, which marked the beginning of a cultural and artistic revival in Kurdish society. This, in turn, was an important foundation from which next generations largely benefit.

Satellite technology and Kurdish television broadcast after the mid-1990s opened a new era in terms of promulgation of Kurdish music and political movement, to be discussed in more detail in chapter 6 reckoning with the role of music in Kurdish martial and political propaganda activities through media communication and

Internet technology. Before discussing the beginning of Kurdish protest music in detail, I will briefly need to touch on Turkish protest music and related socio-political conditions that also paved the way for the development of Kurdish protest music.

### **2.2.3 The influence of Turkish protest music**

The political music tradition in Turkey, from which Kurdish protest and nationalistic music tradition partly derived in terms of ideation, approach, and style, started in the mid-1960s (Gündoğar, 2005, p. 28). In this respect, musical connection between Turkish public opposition and that of Kurdish was paralleled by the development of Turkish leftist and Kurdish leftist ethnonationalist movement. Turkish pop and rock music culture influenced by Western popular music had already established itself since the 1950s in Turkey when a reactionary movement that focused on combining folk music materials with popular music styles begun in 1960s (Gündoğar, 2005, p. 28). Ruhi Su, who received Western opera and vocal training in the 1940s, pioneered this movement by concentrating on Anatolian culture and folklore. Contrary to mainstream musical behavior, Su collected and compiled folk songs and sung them according to his educational background in the 1960s, as well as composing poems of Turkish poets such as Yunus Emre (1240?-1321?) and Pir Sultan Abdal (1480-1550) and making songs regarding social issues. Revolutionary socialist ideas, a significant part of which was a reaction to western imperialism, that swept especially in urbanized areas in this period was another reason why folk culture, literature, and music was of great value to many intellectuals. By the early 1970s, folk songs referring to social injustices were important sources for a number of musicians' music making strategies (Gündoğar, 2005, p. 29). Some modernized folk songs with new arrangements, instruments and vocal styles, and some created new songs that musically resemble folk songs, and some composed songs in popular music style but under the influence of musical texture of folk songs in many ways. The main themes were, accordingly, honor, fight against injustice, and virtue (Gündoğar, 2005, p. 29).

In the 1970s, new themes about labor struggles and system of exploitation, troubles of urban life, financial uneasiness, gradually integrated into many songs in composed in various genres and rich musical instrumentation. New lyrics or completely new songs seeking a way out for better life and justice gradually replaced themes of many

folk songs that mostly centered on the expression of “that’s just the way it goes” (Gündoğar, 2005, p. 30). Critical but at the same time submissive discourse bowing solemnly to the inevitable yielded to a more aggressive and organizer discourse. Running in parallel with growing labor and socialist movements, many political organizations, parties and labor unions took advantage of these musicians and vice versa in various propaganda activities throughout the 1970s (Gündoğar, 2005, p. 31). These activities, and suchlike that socialist organizations arranged were going to be adapted more or less in the same way by Kurdish political movement in the following years. Late 1970s also witnessed Turkish musicians such as Melike Demirağ, who mentioned, albeit implicitly, hardship of the eastern Turkey or women’s burden under feudal conditions (Gündoğar, 2005, p. 32).

Kurdish intelligentsia that begun to develop after the late 1950s were not much different than the Turkish leftist community regarding their approach to local culture. Kurdish music was mostly concealed and sequestered. The most important channel through which Kurdish music met with masses in Kurdish-inhabited areas in eastern and southeastern Turkey, as mentioned above, was a number of radio stations that partly broadcasted in Kurdish language outside Turkey. Even though there are few Kurdish music recordings made in the comparatively libertarian political conditions of the 1960s, and in the early 1970s, the performance of Kurdish music and the production and dissemination of Kurdish music recordings in Turkey were largely restricted, and record players and albums were both costly for the region’s economic circumstances and unsafe to possess. Eyşe Şan was one of the most important singers of this period who made Kurdish music recordings.

Music in Kurdish language was performed in clandestine settings or in remote rural and local areas. Musical culture of rural areas, on the other hand, was mostly degraded as the symbol of feudal structure by urbanized and educated Kurds. In the late 1960s, many Kurdish musicians started to perform Kurdish folk tunes with Turkish lyrics in radio stations of the TRT (Radio and Television Corporation of Turkey) found in Diyarbakır and Erzurum whose coverage was Kurdish-populated areas while many others were forced to relocate in neighboring countries and found relatively unconstrained circumstances in order to make their music heard through radios (Gündoğar, 2005 p. 34). Broadcasting recordings of many Kurdish singers who had died, in addition, radios enabled Kurdish music of previous years to reach

masses. Kurdish folk music or newly composed music resembling traditional Kurdish tunes mostly dominated the radio repertory of this time. Rediscovery of folk music in the 1970s generated a new type of commercial behavior in which many musicians collect Kurdish folk songs to perform them with newly written Turkish lyrics (Gündoğar, 2005, p. 34). With the fresh dynamism of Kurdish opposition movement in the late 1960s created musical gatherings called *Dayanışma Geceleri* (Solidarity Nights) organized by Kurdish students and notables in several Kurdish cities in which many Kurdish singers performed Turkish versions of Kurdish songs. Nascent tradition of protest and political music that was rooted in folk music and literature in Turkey, in addition, also began to transform Kurdish music that centered on Kurdish identity and nationalism. The breakaway of Kurdish national movement from Turkish leftist movements in political arena after mid-1970s (following the amnesty of 1974) planted the seeds of a musical movement that sprung from Kurdish language, culture, national symbols, along with the lexicon and sociopolitical philosophy of Marxism and socialism (Gündoğar, 2004, p. 97; 2005, p. 36). Significant portion of musical language of this new genre, in addition, was influenced by Turkish and a number of protest music traditions across the world, and political propaganda and nation-building efforts spreaded through and teamed up with cultural regeneration movement. Şivan Perwer is probably the strongest figure that marked the beginning and progression of this musical movement, as will be discussed below.

#### **2.2.4 Şivan Perwer**

Cultural expression of Kurdish national identity compressed into a cramped space for years in Turkey erupted from the vent that Şivan Perwer unblocked after the mid-1970s. The musical expression of Kurdishness, snowballed with countless amateur and professional musicians and music groups particularly after the late 1980s, was expeditiously imbued with insurgent, bellicose, and revolutionary concepts as well as with patriotic, bedeviled, and nation-state narration.

Refusing to sing in Turkish, Şivan Perwer was the first known musician to jeopardize his career by singing publicly in Kurdish. After his striking rendition of a Kurdish song in a concert organized by Kurdish activists in Ankara, Perwer performed in several concerts in which many audio cassettes were recorded and distributed under

the counter in Kurdish-populated areas. Perwer's music reached the larger sections of the local populace a huge part of which had already been radio audience for years. Growing cassette culture, in addition, was another factor in spreading his fame. In spite of the instant popularity that he achieved in Turkey's Kurdish-inhabited areas, conventional illegality of singing in Kurdish forced him to fled Turkey in 1976. After settling in Germany in the same year, Perwer made tens of albums comprised of songs many of which were his own compositions in various musical styles as well as anonymous Kurdish folk songs. Composing his songs based on his lyrics as well as poems of renowned Kurdish poets and writers who are regarded significant for Kurdish political movement Perwer's efforts in the construction of the national sensibility among Kurds has established him as an icon of Kurdish music since the mid1970s. "I want my songs to bring a message about my people, about their reality, their situation, their suffering, social misery, about occupation. I must give Kurdish Music a face, a personality. I want to serve my people with my music," he says in his official website regarding his aspirations (2007). Political content of his music containing different tenets than those of feudal values has always been an important component of his music since the beginning. Perwer's music created a new expressive culture in which social and political traumas of Kurds could find meaning. The difficulties of burgeoning and urbanizing working class, ethnic awareness in search of expression found a strong representation in Perwer's music. Additionally, lyrics of his songs frequently incorporated an imagery of an ideal world presented by Marxist-Leninist principles, a prevalent anti-imperialist discourse, and the idea of right to self-determination, shaped both emotional and intellectual sphere for all segments of Kurdish society. Kurdish political activist, writer, and poet İbrahim Halil Baran who grew up in the countryside of the city of Şanlıurfa (Riha) in southeastern Turkey explains Perwer's music's influence on Kurds in the 1980s as a phenomenon that rapidly replaced the then existing rural-urban conflict in Kurdish society with a resistant national identity growing to a struggle for liberation (İbrahim Halil Baran, personal communication, November 13, 2012). Opposition and violent conflict between political fractions, and rural guerrilla warfare launched by several leftist groups in Turkey, and Kurds' resistance in Iraq also caused themes of armed resistance and warfare penetrate into his songs. Importantly, Perwer's numerous songs give the very first examples of Kurdish resistance music that abundantly employs pugnacious and warlike vocabularies. The first stanza of the song *Daye Tu*

*Megrî* (You Don't Cry Mother), composed on the poem of Kurdish writer Mehmed Emîn Bozarslan, in his first album *Govenda Azadixwazan* (The Dance of Those Who Want Liberation) that dates back to 1975 reflects the militant approach in the choice of lyrics<sup>32</sup> for his music:

*Ez xortê Kurd im pir bi nav û deng* I am a flamboyant Kurdish youngster  
*Va min hilgirtî bombe û tifeng* I shouldered bomb and rifle  
*Ez dê herim şer ez dê herim ceng* I am going to the fight I am going to the battle  
*Ger nezîvirim daye tu megrî* If I do not return you don't cry mother

Apart from his emphasis on Kurdish national identity, Perwer reserved a considerable space for emblematic figures of Marxism in his songs. The concept colonialism, the colonization of Kurdish lands, and the political independence of Kurds as being the most topical subjects under debate at the time were frequently treated in Perwer's songs. Unlike many other musicians following him, Perwer has remained as an independent musician and never affiliated with any political party or organization.

Perwer's own compositions have never lost their connection with traditional Kurdish music. His main instrument, *tembûr*, employed for his music and his voice and singing technique as well as its cultural and musical background have an important role in this. Even though he is open to new musical genres, singing and composing styles, he paid particular attention to Kurdish traditional music genres and styles such as *dengbêjî*. His speaking before some of his songs, for example, resembles narrative songs, *dengbêjî* tradition of Kurdish culture.

He rarely adopted the standard song producing method, in which tunes were sung with new modernized lyrics containing political lyrics, which was quite common in Turkey around the 1960s and 1970s. Many folk songs in Turkey became protest folk songs with this way. Perwer's style has a broad spectrum. He created new compositions that relied on existing forms and provided new songs to traditional Kurdish music as well as singing existing non-political folk songs, and combining different forms and styles such as march outside his homeland with his own singing technique and Kurdish melodic structure. His vocal technique containing glottal

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<sup>32</sup> The Kurdish original of the lyrics are translated into Turkish by Gündoğar (2005, pp. 43-44). The English translation has been made by the author.

stops and ornamentation are important characteristics of Kurdish music performance. In sum, Perwer embraced a large spectrum of musical expression and reconcile Kurdish traditional music with the expectations of urbanized, educated, and young Kurds, and different styles with traditional Kurdish music lovers. In addition to political content of his music, his leading position in the clandestine music culture across Kurdish lands brought about the circumstance in which he was not only embraced as a singer but also as a political figure by Kurds. According to Aktan (2013), “his voice was so captivating that it enraptured Kurds just like the effect of the perfume created as Grenouille Jean-Baptiste, the protagonist of the Patrick Süskind’s novel ‘Perfume,’ sprinkled on the crowd as he was going to the gallows.” *Lawik* form that treats heroism, death, agony, lament, and *dilok* form including songs for dance and entertainment were an important for base for the compositions of Perwer. The charisma of his songs, in addition, is attributed to his singing mystique as well as to the content and music of his songs. Gündoğar (2005) describes his vocal technique and timbre of his voice as a firm and determined voice that organizes struggle and calls out to people for self-knowledge (p. 60).

Perwer’s music has had a deep impact on the evolution of Kurdish music. Many musicians still sing his songs in different styles or make songs as those of his. It would not be far-fetched to argue that the transformation of the entire musical culture of Kurds that encompasses both the revival of traditional and popular music culture and, most importantly, the culture of political resistance songs after the 1980s has been largely patterned by musicianship of Şivan Perwer.

Confluence of the rise of socialist movements and the awakening of modern Kurdish nationalism in Turkey shed some light, to some extent, on the socialist texture of Kurdish nationalism. Even though they were theoretically influenced by the socialist drift in Turkey after the 1960s many Kurdish nationalists, due to a growing disenchantment with many left-wing organizations with regard to the rights of Kurds, settled down to stand on their own feet after the amnesty granted in 1974. The movement that led to the foundation of PKK, similarly, started with the decision of Abdullah Öcalan and his six friends to struggle for a national liberation of Kurds that is completely independent from Turkish left but based on Marxist-Leninist ideology.

In addition to listening to Perwer, which is alone considered an unequivocal political identity, knowing all of his songs and writing the lyrics in public spaces, putting up

his posters, and most importantly, finding spare or obsolete audio cassettes to reproduce and distribute Perwer's albums are performed as distinct political activities throughout 1980s in Kurdish-populated areas as well as in other big cities that have large Kurdish populations in Turkey. Many songs such as *Kîne Em* (Who are We?) considered symbolic by many politically active Kurds at the time had a unifying and consolidative impact on the construction of ethnic and national identity of Kurdish people. Şivan's music enabled many Kurds who were active in Turkish left to deepen their national sentiments. "The theory was fleshed out in Şivan's music, and many ideational activities that we performed were done by music" says Cemal Atila (personal communication, November 7, 2012).

Ciwan Haco and Nîzametîn Arîç, whose musical efforts have been widely appreciated by Kurds in Turkey since the early 1980s, are two other influential diaspora musicians, along with Perwer, in artistic and musico-political renewal of Kurdish identity. Gündoğar (2004) defines music of Ciwan Haco as "the episode of adventure of Kurdish music opening up to the world" (p. 287). Drawing on a wide range of musical genres such as blues, jazz, slow, pop, and rock, Haco revealed a completely different charm of Kurdish music. Relying on the works of Kurdish poets in his first few albums, many songs of him carried certain political and cultural elements of Kurdishness (Gündoğar, 2004, p. 288). Still, Haco's music, which has partly adopted an overt politically oppositional approach, falls into a distinctive category in Kurdish music that had a huge impact on the style of many Kurdish musicians in Turkey. Kurdish youngsters living in Turkey's metropolises who were already familiar with rock and pop music, Baran points out, were urged to appreciate and retrieve their identity by Haco's musical character throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s because they realized that Kurdish music not only folk or political but also part of universal musical culture (İbrahim Halil Baran, personal communication, November 13, 2012).

### **2.2.5 The 1980s and the armed struggle**

The rise of a politically caused Kurdish emigration from Turkey to Europe after the late 1970s gave way to the formation of an educated diasporic community that would instinctively develop various ideas on the political union of all Kurds. The emergence of Şivan Perwer, who was also in Europe after 1976, had already

demonstrated the role and significance of music in overcoming the political, regional, cultural, religious, tribal, and linguistic differences in favor of subsuming them under Kurdish national identity. Because of the impracticality of political and/or cultural expression of Kurdish identity and ethnicity in Turkey, on the other hand, it would not be adequate and possible for Kurdish music to become Kurdish per se. Music gradually became the main instrument to convey the idea of the political unity of Kurds in the 1980s, during which the armed struggle of Kurds in Turkey also began. National imagining shaped by music, and PKK's practical contribution to it, drastically altered Kurds' political stance. Before long, as I will subsequently discuss in this chapter, music, which is still an important part of PKK's propaganda process, started to play an indispensable role in the radicalization of Kurdish people. The potential, efficiency, and the unavoidable monopolistic position of Kurdish music in political arena was discovered by Şivan Perwer, and it so embedded itself in Kurdish social and cultural life that it would never be remain only as music so long as political conflict and restrictions on Kurdishness prolonged. Local musical elements, with productive works of Şivan Perwer and other Kurdish musicians such as Nasir Rezazî and the Kamkars from Iran, started to become valuable as components of a national structure during 1980s. Along with the influence of Western musical styles and song form, which simplified to reach new generations, Kurdish music entered a new phase in which it established a different cultural, social, and political modus operandi.

After the PKK launched attacks on the Turkish Army in 1984, Kurdish music making activity took propaganda as another position. Realizing music's key role, PKK actively employed music in various activities such as wedding celebrations and social and political gatherings, introducing its political and philosophical stance, and receiving political and armed support from Kurdish people. By the time PKK launched its guerrilla warfare in 1984, Kurds had established a considerable size of diaspora community in Europe where social and political rights were much more secured, and by means of a number of cultural and political organizations, PKK managed to popularize its cause rapidly throughout Kurdish-populated areas, and music, as many Kurds would agree today, was absolutely a crucial part of this activity. Music has always been a central medium for PKK to stay in communication with Kurds in Turkey. Güneş (2012) notes that music became a medium representing

PKK's struggle, creating a myth of modern resistance and a discourse of national liberation (p. 209). PKK's special effort on music and the role of political and cultural activity in Europe was truly manifested in the music of Koma Berxwedan (Group Resistance), a popular band founded in Germany in 1981.

Hunerkom, which includes members of Koma Berxwedan among its activists, was founded by PKK as a Kurdish cultural organization to promote Kurdish culture, and carried out many activities in a number of countries in Europe after 1981. A lot of Kurds emigrated Europe for political reasons found opportunity to unite, organize, and disseminate their products by means of Hunerkom (Güneş, 2012, p. 210). PKK reorganized Kurds who were forced to immigrate to Europe, and used their cultural and political products in order to increase its influence on Kurds in Turkey (Güneş, 2012, p. 210). Musical products, imaginably, which were distributed and reproduced in Kurdish-populated areas disguisedly, were the fastest and efficacious means to produce the desired results. With music, Kurds in Turkey were notified of the vulnerability of the Kurds and the occupation of Kurdish lands as well as of the Kurdish history, culture, language, and the philosophy and the method of the national liberation movement carried out. After 1991, with the partial lift of the ban on the public use of the Kurdish language in Turkey, cultural centers similar to those existing in Europe began to appear in Turkey as well. One of the most important of these was *Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi* (Mezopotamya Cultural Center) founded in 1991 (MKM will be discussed in detail in chapter 5).

There were a number of channels for political activity in Kurdish-dominated territories in southeastern Turkey since the Turkish state was not still bureaucratically and militarily well organized in the area during the 1970s. Military coup in 1980 and the beginning of the armed activities of the PKK in 1984 led the state to establish a more methodical order in the area. However, the PKK also intensively pursued its own political and armed organization as well as propaganda activities. Members of the ERNK<sup>33</sup> who were dressed in civilian clothes and carried out their activities mostly in rural areas were able to meet people face to face to circulate PKK's political accounts. Atila, recalls that the distribution of audio

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<sup>33</sup> *Enîya Rizgariya Netewa Kurdistan* (Kurdistan National Liberation Front), the public relations and propaganda branch of the PKK, was founded in 1985 and maintained its activities until its disbandment in 2000.

cassettes consisting of political songs, speeches, slogans, and sounds of machine guns was one of the main activities of ERNK militants mostly in Kurdish rural areas in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Cemal Atila, personal communication, November 7, 2012).

One of the main differences between PKK and other pro-Kurdish organizations, in this regard, was the way in which they propagated their cause. PKK made use of music video and photograph instead of theoretical publications. According to Atila, the militant units who were trained as fighters were not intellectually equipped for propaganda activities; ideological and strategical elaborations designed by Ocalan and central executive board were publicized clandestinely through professionally made audio and later video cassettes both in Kurdish territories or Turkey's metropolises, and people would come together in particular places to listen to or watch these recordings (Cemal Atila, personal communication, November 7, 2012). Another important outlet for activities of Kurdish political movement in Turkey's metropolises, to which a large number of Kurds migrated, on the other hand, was wedding celebrations. Even though Turkish army and intelligence network, with the advantage provided by emergency rule in effect after 1987 in southeastern Turkey, established a somewhat operating system in the area, people, as the local inhabitants and majority of the area, were able to find ways to form their platforms, albeit underground, for political communication, and did not need to politicize their weddings. Kurds living away from their homelands, on the other hand, due to lack of legal political domains of their own, found little opportunities for political activity in the events, picnics, or concerts organized by various associations or non-governmental organizations dominated by Turkish left; and wedding celebrations provided one of the safest channels through which large masses gather and politically organized around music, dance, and entertainment in those years.

#### **2.2.6 Political propaganda and Kurdish weddings in Istanbul in the 1990s**

Relatively loose political circumstances and the amalgamation of Kurdish political movement with Turkish left that barely continued in the 1970s were superseded by strict regulations and a relatively independent but fragmented Kurdish political movement after the military coup in 1980. With the extensive migration from Kurdish-inhabited areas after the mid-1980s, proscribed pro-Kurdish political

organizations found the only opportunity for their political activities in wedding ceremonies in Turkey's metropolises. Wedding ceremonies, in other words, were one of the few communal venues where Kurdish contentious politics, music, and entertainment intersected; they were one of the major legs of Kurds' sociocultural transformation through intense politicization, particularly in big cities that receive mass Kurdish migration in Turkey and Europe. Weddings were generally appropriated as political events by one of the political organizations with which the parents or relatives of the bride and groom are affiliated, and members of neighbor political organizations are invited as guests. They, because of this, become an aggregation of numerous ideological formations organized around Kurdish liberation movement. Booths where various political and cultural publications are sold as well as people selling bulletins or collecting donations among tables are important components of wedding halls. "Kurdish weddings, in addition, created the development of their own ceremonial procedures such as announcement of all political organizations invited as official guests as well as of messages sent as telegrams mostly by Kurdish political prisoners" (Cemal Atila, personal communication, November 7, 2012). Aside from music and dance, performance of a theatrical work that analogically tells the Kurdish resistance is another crucial portion of these weddings that enhance political atmosphere. The association of the traditional line dancing *govend* (*halay* in Turkish) and political songs, which is very common today, possibly dates back to these wedding events. After a while, police raids and detentions became routine parts of these weddings. Today (see figure 2.1), weddings mostly preserve their political character in Kurdish society.

Yıldırım (2006), importantly, mentions the influence of *kom-s* (music groups discussed in the next section) on the transformation of Kurdish wedding celebrations, which offer the most convenient settings for traditional music and dance activities in Kurdish society, after the early 1990s. Musical repertoire and/or performance styles of *kom-s* adopted by local music groups or individual musicians in these years, apparently, marked the beginning of a long period in which aesthetic of Kurds' musical and dance-related behaviors striven to fit into an unfamiliar cultural fabric.



**Figure 2.1 :** Bridal gowns displayed in the shopwindow of a store in Van, Turkey. Colors (yellow-red-green) associated with Kurdish culture have been intensively used by Kurdish political and armed movement. Image courtesy of Ufuk Özlem Badak (Badak, 2012, p. 74). Used with permission.

### **2.2.7 Music groups, institutionalization, and the 1990s**

With the influence of rapid urbanization, displacement, and migration, a considerable part of Kurdish populace, who remained under the monoethnic Turkish ideology for years, were severely influenced by socialist ideology after the 1960s and produced musicians that were far from their roots. By the time the armed insurgence initiated by PKK, Kurdish popular music, mingled both with socialist and nationalist ideas, had already completed the preliminary stage of its politicization process. The period between the late 1980s and the late 1990s witnessed a revolutionary change in Kurdish popular music in Turkey. Drawing on interviews with tape makers and sellers in Diyarbakır, Scalbert-Yücel (2009) notes that hundred of thousands bootlegged copies of cassettes including political songs of many singers such as

Şivan Perwer, Xelîl Xemgîn Aram Tigran, and *kom-s* such as Koma Berxwedan are disseminated in the 1980s (p. 7). Observing the rise of Kurdish armed struggle after the mid-1980s, and having been heavily influenced by Kurdish diaspora's political music mainly performed by Şivan Perwer, Koma Berxwedan, Ciwan Haco, and Nîzamettîn Arîç as well as by Turkish protest music groups such as Grup Yorum and Kızılırmak, many young Kurds mostly living in Turkey's metropolises came together and formed countless music groups (*kom-s* in Kurdish) producing predominantly political music that centered on the cause of Kurdish liberation movement.<sup>34</sup>

Even though there were individually reputed Kurdish musicians such as Fırat Başkale, Gani Nar (Dijwar), Baran, and Armanç who were engaged in political issues (Gündoğar 2004), the music of *kom-s* undeniably had a huge impact on Kurds' social life in Turkey both as a political assertion and ethnic appreciation.<sup>35</sup> Music of *kom-s* dominating Kurdish music throughout the 1990s, in this regard, was the embodiment of the intensity in the Kurdish nationalistic sentiment and Kurdish political and armed struggle. "Many Kurdish *kom* musicians during this period", as Baran (2012a) fairly points out, "were citified youngsters who drifted apart from Kurdish language and traditional Kurdish music and would not have been musicians had they not had Kurdishness inside them." The words that they chose for the names of *kom-s* such as *agirê jîyan* (fire of life), *çiya* (mountain), *rojhilat* (east), and *azad* (free) tend to support his argument. The emergence of *kom-s*, accordingly, demonstrates the level of obstructions that Kurds faced in expressing themselves as Kurds in Turkey. Music-related political activities and propaganda of Kurds such as listening to music, possession, reproduction, and dissemination of it throughout the 1980s, obviously

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<sup>34</sup> Exploring their role in the construction of Kurdish identity, nationalism, and mass mobilization with many diligent interviews and song analyses, B. Siyem Ezgi Saritaş's Master's thesis *Articulation of Kurdish Identity Through Politicized Music of Koms* (Saritaş 2010) might be taken as one of the most comprehensive studies of Kurdish music groups (*kom-s*) that started to emerge after the late 1980s. Ozan Aksoy's article *The Politicization of Kurdish Folk Songs in Turkey in the 1990s* (Aksoy 2006) is another valuable text that contextualizes the development of Kurdish political music in *Kom-s'* repertoire.

<sup>35</sup> Koma Amed, Koma Mezrabotan, Koma Çiya, Koma Vengê Sodirî (Group Voice of Morning in Zaza language), Koma Rojhilat, Koma Dengê Azadî, Koma Rewşen, Koma Gulên Xerzan, Koma Azad, Koma Agirê Jîyan are the most acclaimed Kurdish music groups among the tens of *kom-s* appeared after the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s in Turkey. Some of these groups were disbanded, and some of them still exist and maintain their popularity. There is also folk dance group Koma Serhildan affiliated with MKM, and a famous guerrilla band Koma Awazê Çiya.

enough, sought its expansion through music again, this time making it, on the eve of 1990s.

Two other factors, which are somewhat connected to each other, gave boost to the production of Kurdish music in Turkey in the 1990s. The first was the establishment of Kurdish music industry in Turkey. Europe and Arab countries were the only centers for mass production, marketing and dissemination of Kurdish music until the late 1980s. Bootlegged versions of cassettes of Şivan Perwer, Mihemed Şêxo produced abroad or as well as some *dengbêj* and propaganda cassettes were an important parts of Kurds' musical culture during the 1980s. Ses Plak was the first record lable to have been founded in 1986 with the intention of producing and disseminating music in Kurdish language in Turkey. The company released its first album<sup>36</sup> in 1988, which included only one song in Kurdish in addition to songs with Turkish lyrics among which several Kurdish words interspersed. All the copies of the album across Turkey, Ethem Güner, the founder of the Ses Plak says, were confiscated within one week, and the company was tried for publishing in an unknown language (Gönençay, 2012). Rahmi Saltuk was the first musician to sing mostly Kurdish songs in his album released in 1989; the album was also banned and confiscated immediately after its release (Gündoğar, 2004, p. 243). Ses Plak, in spite of confiscations of albums, trials, and economic pressure, released dozens of albums, most of which were the albums of MKM musicians and *kom-s* as well as Turkish protest music groups such as Kızılırmak, and distributed albums of diaspora musicians such as Şivan Perwer and Ciwan Haco during the 1990s. Kalan Müzik, another record label founded in 1992, focused on producing folk, contemporary folk, religious, and art music practices of Turkey and neighboring cultures, and became an important platform for Kurdish and Zaza music in the 1990s in spite of many legislative difficulty. Kom Müzik was established in 1997 as a MKM enterprise and devoted itself exclusively to Kurdish music. Aside from various archival projects such as releasing Yerevan Radio's past recordings or *Şahiya Stranan* (Festivity of Songs), which is practically the retrieval of Turkified Kurdish songs, Kom Müzik has released many albums of MKM musicians as well as albums of numerous Kurdish musicians living in Europe, Iraq, and Iran since its foundation (Aksoy, 2006). The

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<sup>36</sup> The singer of the album was Beşir Kaya, who received great popularity among Kurds throughout the 1990s.

second factor in the abundance of Kurdish music production was a law amendment. In 1991, the Law 2932, which came into force in 1983 to ban the use of Kurdish language without using the word Kurd or Kurdish,<sup>37</sup> was repealed. This legal amendment, which allowed the use of Kurdish language in broadcast, recording and publishing, on the other hand, made of no value since it was counterpoised by a “new anti-terrorism law”, as McDowall (2004) points out, “which covered any democratic attempt, for example by demonstration, rally or publication, to moderate the stringent character of the state” (p. 431). Juridical constraints on Kurdish language continued though based on different laws, and many recordings in Kurdish were included in the scope of crime, and as Blum and Hassanpour (1996) indicate “distributors and purchasers” continued to “face various types of interference from officials and others” (p. 325). The amendments of articles numbered 26 and 28 of the constitution in 2001, which had prohibited Kurdish language in the expression, dissemination of thought, and in publication again without mentioning Kurdish, and Law No. 4771 passed in 2002 that allowed the establishment and broadcasting of Kurdish radio stations and television channels gave more space in the use of Kurdish in Turkey (Uçarlar, 2009, pp. 143-144). Today, nevertheless, as an inchoate democracy, the Republic of Turkey has many legal arrangements such as anti-terrorism law, which is still considerably in force, or the Law of Political Parties<sup>38</sup> that could easily form basis for restricting Kurdish language, culture, and political movement in Turkey. As Stokes (2010) points out, the use of Kurdish language “was, after all, banned in public contexts in Turkey until 2002; to insist on speaking Kurdish in public not only marginalized non-Kurdish speakers (who may well have been fans), but also flouted the law” (p. 135).

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<sup>37</sup> The Law 2932 entitled “The Law Concerning Publications and Broadcasts in Languages other than Turkish” (*Türkçe'den Başka Dillerde Yapılacak Yayın Hakkında Kanun*) forbade “the declaration, circulation and publication of ideas in a language which is not the first official language of a State recognised by Turkey” (see Uçarlar, 2009, p. 134).

<sup>38</sup> The first two subsection of Article 81 of the Law of Political Parties reads, for example, “political parties cannot assert, based on the difference of national or religious culture or sect or race or language, that there are minorities across the state of the Republic of Turkey,” and they “cannot pursue the goal of subverting the national integrity by creating minorities across the state of the Republic of Turkey through preserving, developing, or disseminating languages and cultures other than Turkish language or culture, and cannot be engaged in activities in that direction.” Article 82 of the same law, in addition, reads “political parties, in the state that is an indivisible unity, cannot pursue the goal of regionalism and racism, and cannot be engaged in activities in that direction.” For the whole text of the law in Turkish, see <http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.2820.pdf>

The major organization under which a large number of *kom*-s were supported to perform their musical activities, during this period, was MKM *Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi*<sup>39</sup> (Mezopotamya Cultural Center) or NÇM *Navenda Çanda Mezopotamya* in Kurdish. Having been founded for the purpose of studying Kurdish language, culture, and history, MKM established its most tangible accomplishment with Kurdish music. Shortly after having been founded in 1991, MKM seized the control of Kurdish music market, and became the main center of the institutionalization of Kurdish political music that predominantly shaped the market in 1990s, thereby establishing the most effective link between political struggle and the Kurdish public in Turkey, to be discussed in more detail in chapter 5). New branches of MKM opened in many other Kurdish migrated cities such as Izmir, Adana, and Mersin in the following years provided many young Kurds with the opportunity of musical and political organization. The first examples of music group formations, according to Yıldırım (2007), date back to political disagreements out of which tens of Kurdish political fractions were borne. Several political organizations that these fractions created formed and encouraged music groups such as Koma Dengê Azadî, Koma Dengê Kawa, Koma Berxwedan, that politically represent themselves to take part in their activities (Yıldırım, 2007).<sup>40</sup> Aksoy (2006) attributes the cooperative efforts of amateur musicians in and as music groups to the existing practice of protest music both in Turkey such as Grup Yorum and Kızılırmak and overseas such as Inti Illimani. The emphasis on collectivity and unity, in addition, in accordance with the character of the political movement, was an important factor in music making activities as groups (Saritaş, 2010, p. 78; Aksoy 2006). Saritaş (2010), based on the information given by her interviewees, adds that conditional factors such as the necessity of cooperation caused by musical inexperience of members, close possibility of their arrest, escape, or death as well as the dearth of space to make Kurdish music individually urged them to remain as groups (p. 79). The authority of

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<sup>39</sup> I have chosen Turkish MKM in preference to Kurdish NÇM here in this particular situation. Mesopotamia Cultural Center is widely known and uttered by its Turkish appellation MKM *Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi* among Kurds, since it was founded, due to linguistic restrictions on Kurdish, under its Turkish title.

<sup>40</sup> Koma Dengê Azadî (Group Voice of Freedom) was the music group representing PSK *Partiya Sosyalista Kurdistan* (Kurdistan Socialist Party), and Koma Dengê Kawa (Group Voice of Kawa) worked in line with *Kawa*, a political group adopting Maoism and then Albanian socialism (another group *Dengê Kawa* was also a breakaway from *Kawa*). Koma Berxwedan, as already mentioned, was associated with PKK, and carried out their activities in Europe.

PKK over MKM, with which almost all *kom*-s were affiliated, on the other hand, cannot be disregarded at this point. The structure and running of the organization and its activities, in all likelihood, were mostly configured by direct or indirect instructions coming from PKK.

MKM has always been a politically motivated cultural center, which is quite unavoidable in Turkey's juridical and ideological circumstances. The pressure on MKM and on its musicians and *kom*-s from the state in the 1990s, therefore, was tedious. Many *kom* and individual musicians who had pursued their activities independently at the beginning joined MKM to take advantage of the protection of a Kurdish organization and to enjoy a broader popularity (Saritaş, 2010, 79). MKM organized various events and concerts in which musicians affiliated with it partook and let their music known by wider public. This reputation, however, came at a price. Musicians had to be politicized more toward the discourse of PKK, and as Saritaş (2010) points out, they were easily exposed to police raids, detainments, trials, and confiscation of albums, which caused an archival loss, because of MKM's position in the eye of the state (p.80).

The political songs of *kom*-s, as well as of many other individual musicians increased after the late 1990s, were mostly in Kurmanji language along with other languages that are considered dialects of Kurdish such as Zaza and Sorani. They featured lyrics about leftist and socialist concepts and resistance-centered Kurdish nationalism by specifically referring to themes such as international solidarity of the oppressed, Kurdish guerrillas, and the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan (nicknamed "Apo"); this made constant use of words such as *azadî* (freedom), *gerîla* (guerrilla), and Apo (Aksoy, 2006). Saritaş (2010) also draws attention to other recurrent words in their repertoire such as *serhildan* (uprising) *berxwedan* (resistance) and *serxwebûn* (independence) as symbols of Kurdish liberation, *govend* (line dance) and *berîvan* (woman milking cow, ship, or goat) representing Kurdish social and cultural life, and blood, war, enemy, gun, and Kalashnikov signifying armed struggle (p. 85). Subjects such as migration, death, love, longing for village life, hardships of war, victimization and struggle of Kurdish women also had a wide space in the repertoire of both *kom*-s and individual musicians in the 1990s. Music of *Kom*-s, running in parallel with the approach of political and armed movement, included both nationalist and socialist (at least in the earlier stages) concepts by musically

incorporating Turkish protest music elements along with traditional Kurdish musical forms as well as newly composed songs in mostly westernized instrumentation and singing practice (Yıldırım, 2007; Aksoy, 2006). The concepts that represent socialism and proletariat, Sarıtaş (2010) argues, gradually lost their influence on the lyrics of *kom*-s as the intensification of armed conflict revealed the significance of national liberation; strongly militarized lyrics exalting Kurdish national fight also began to decline and they were replaced by folk music elements in *kom*'s repertoire as well with the ceasefire declared by PKK in 1999 (p. 87-88).

The enigmatic relationship between guerrilla music and guerrilla's music has always been an intriguing point in Kurdish political music. As Sarıtaş (2010) refers to them as "musician militants" (p. 92), not only are there civilian musicians who fiercely employed guerrilla's warfare and life in their songs but also there are guerrillas, or musician guerrillas to say the least, incorporated both music and armed struggle into their main activities and provided the repertoire of Kurdish guerrilla music with many songs that are considered phenomenal among Kurds today. Several members of Koma Berxwedan had actually been trained as guerrillas in PKK camps in the early 1980s before they went to Europe and were engaged in musical activities. Many of musician guerrillas such as Defîla (both name of the band and singer), Hozan Hogir, and Hozan Serhad died in armed conflict. Numerous songs and music videos of Koma Awazê Çiya, — a popular music group composed of musician guerrillas — one of whose famous songs *Oremar* will be analyzed in chapter 6, constitutes one of the greatest portions of the Kurdish music shared on the Internet today. The long and lyrical quotation from one of Abdullah Öcalan's writings below gives an idea about the correlation he made between music, musician guerrillas and Kurdish armed struggle as he interprets Kurdish resistance movement by analogy with Kurdish music:

Kurdish culture's clear reflection of itself to mind and emotions was materializing through music that has limited opportunities. I have listened to Kurdish kilams since my childhood. Meryemxan, Cizrewi brothers were the voices heard at once. But hearing Aram Tigran's voice for the first time within the conditions of Ankara created a different effect. When I interpreted later on, I reached the conclusion that that voice was much closer to the Kurdish reality, especially to the reality of Kurdish people and to the articulation of its truth. For that reason I accepted that art was another explanatory form of truth. Within the meaning of that voice there was a call for both the reality of Kurdish nation and hopeless love was being vocalized. Therefore, it was rather compatible with the reality that I live. On the one hand

trying to expound on Kurdish question with ideological quest, on the other hand its consolidation with music was an understandable matter. Music and ideological seeking were going hand in hand for Kurdish question ... Armed struggle, in these very periods, was going to have a repercussion as the strongest and fairest voice of the truth. ... So it was. Even though it could not be initiated very well technically and tactically, the onset of 15 August 1984<sup>41</sup> had a great repercussion in Kurdish reality. Kurds sought after were making their presence felt, were attending in waves in spite of all the negativity. Singers and music groups were proliferating; the number of friends was increasing. I was tearing the loneliness and becoming socialized. The truth that I had longed for was strengthening the reality and the reality was strengthening the truth. Arrival of singers at guerrilla environment in person, gathering of commoners exceeding tens of thousands in camp areas on Newroz days were fairly refreshing. The arrival of Aram Tigran in my field and the opening of Med TV started to give hope to hopeless love ... As I was in Rome, my acquaintance with another music again came into question. The piece that I listened to during my rough hospital imprisonment was the rendition of *Derwêşê Evdî* by Bavê Salih. I did not know the story of the epic, but its music was impressive. It was uncertain as to how much the singer was aware of the contents of the epic as he sang it. In my opinion, this epic has reflected the death agony of long-awaited Kurdish statecraft since Ahmedê Xanî. It once again coincided with the reality that I live. The feeling that I had lost was pertinent to the idea of Kurdish nation-state. This feeling of mine was in the death agony within the existing world conditions, in the Moscow-Rome line, and with gladio in merciless pursuit. The rhythmic sounds of music made me feel this to the marrow. *Derwêşê Evdî*, as is known, gives voice to the hopeless resistance of both last Yazidis and Kurdishness that struggling to survive on assimilation and annihilation articulated in the person of Edûlê. Even though it is narrated by a male bard, every word of Edûlê seemed as if a culture that remained alive for thousands of years was breathing its last. *Derwêş*, whenever he dived into Mosul plain from Sinjar Mountains, was essentially exhibiting a heroic resistance to Muslim Arab feudalism. This was a tradition of thousands of years. Its root was going back to Sumerians, or maybe earlier. *Derwêşê Evdî* was the last of representative of this tradition. *Derwêş*'s falling off horse and his injury was essentially the falling and injury of a history and community. Slow death of wounded *Derwêş* in the telling of Edûlê turned into such an expression that it was sufficient to easily describe a ten thousands years of history and the oldest folk tradition. (Öcalan, 2013)<sup>42</sup>

Apart from musicians who were already motivated by Kurdish political and armed struggle in their musical activities, there were several musicians whose music was gradually shaped by the movement. Aram Tigran, Armenian musician and composer

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<sup>41</sup> August 15, 1984 is the date on which PKK first attacked Turkey's armed forces, thereby launching the official Kurdish armed insurgency that has lasted since then.

<sup>42</sup> The Turkish original of the text has been translated into English by the author.

who sang mostly in Kurdish traditional or neo-traditional songs and won acclaim for his musicianship among Kurds during the 1970s and 1980s, for instance, composed and performed many songs about Kurdish liberation movement after the early 1990s.

In spite of their societal, traditional, regional, and historical closeness to Kurdishness and Kurdish liberation movement, Zaza people who mainly reside in Dersim (today officially Tunceli) and the surrounding area in eastern Turkey, have represented one of the most controversial issues of Kurdish liberation movement based on certain religious, linguistic, and political differences. Even though Zaza people (particularly Alevi Zazas as discussed in chapter 4) made a great deal of contribution to Kurdish ethnonationalist cause both by supporting political and armed movement by either taking part in crucial administrative positions or guerrilla ranks, Zaza politics today remain between, or in one sense above, the Turkish and international leftist movements and Kurdish ethnonationalism. Political vagueness between two ethnicities still hovers mainly because of universally complex relationship between socialist and ethno-nationalist concepts. Musical practices that represent Zaza ethnicity and region today, to a certain extent, reflect this political dilemma, and it is not common in Zaza popular music, as Yıldırım (2007) points out, to witness musical works in which ethnopolitical and socialist discourse combined. This distinctive musico-political behavior of Zaza people will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4. But before going further, I should briefly mention the works of certain musicians who have come to prominence as representatives of the popular music of Dersim.

The early 1990s marked the beginning of a revival in Dersim music that had remained latent for years. Collection and musical arrangements of folk songs and spiritual sung poetry *deyiş-s* (literally “saying”) of Alevi religious sect in Dersim paved the way for popularization of the music of the region (Yıldırım 2007). Metin Kahraman, one of the founders of the widely acclaimed Turkish protest music band, and his brother Kemal collected many folk songs and created a sophisticated and influential musical style that combine Dersim folk music culture and protest music elements with neo-traditional and popular music forms and sounds (Yıldırım 2007). Ahmet Aslan and Mikail Aslan are two of the most prolific musicians from Dersim today who are able to craft their distinctive approaches to folk music culture of Dersim under the influence of Metin and Kemal Kahraman (Yıldırım 2007). Singing in Zaza, Kurmanji (Kurdish) and Turkish languages, these and many other Zaza

musicians such as Ozan Serdar and Sozdar, who mostly emerged after the early 2000s, generally exclude propagandist and direct political discourse from the content of their music even though they do not eschew showing their support for Kurdish political movement by taking part in the concerts and events arranged by various Kurdish political organizations in Turkey and abroad. Singing predominantly in Turkish, Dersim-based musician Ferhat Tunç, on the other hand, has forged a distinct protest music style that covers both resistance-centered concepts of revolutionary left and Kurdish nationalism in Turkey since the early 1980s. His musical orientation has gradually been drawn to *arabesk* (arab-influenced) genre as his lyrics has incorporated a wide range of themes such as struggle of guerrilla, state's unjust treatment of people and political revolutionaries, and torture in prisons (Gündoğar, 2004, p. 273). Dersim-based protest music band Grup Munzur, in addition, mainly adopts Turkish protest music practice and sing in various languages such as Kurdish, Zaza, and Turkish as well. Koma Vengê Sodirî (Group Voice of Morning), another music group that conduct musical activities within MKM, mainly focuses on the performance of collected folk songs in Zaza language.

During the 1990s, many Turkish protest music groups such as Grup Yorum, Kızılırmak, Özgürlük Türküsü, Grup Ekin, and Kutup Yıldızı also embraced Kurdish identity, culture, folklore, and political and armed struggle both in Kurdish and Turkish languages sometimes by newly composed songs, or by singing existing Kurdish folk or political songs (Gündoğar, 2004, p. 255).

One should be mentioned briefly at this point as one of the most controversially popular figures of music after the mid-1980s and through the 1990s in Turkey. Creating a never firmly defined protest music style that fuses elements of pop and folk with those of *arabesk* and *özgün müzik* genres Ahmet Kaya, a half Zaza half Turkish singer, established an emotional bond between his music and people of various social stratas and political identities in Turkey. Due to an infamous incident he underwent in 1999,<sup>43</sup> and his sudden death one year later, Ahmet Kaya acquired a legendary position in the eye of Kurds even though he never sung in Kurdish —

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<sup>43</sup> In 1999, Ahmet Kaya announced his wish to sing a song in Kurdish language and to shoot a video of it at an annual music awards ceremony that was broadcast live on TV. Protests by other celebrities and music producers were followed by a smear campaign in the mainstream media. Kaya had to leave Turkey to avoid accusations and potential trial for making separatist propaganda. He died in France in 2000.

except the one released in his first posthumous album — or never had lyrics directly about Kurdish political cause. Being accused of holding a separatist Kurdish identity by some on the one hand and highly acclaimed for his political stance at the side of oppressed Kurdishness on the other, Ahmet Kaya has become one of the most symbolic musical figures in the middle of a historical clash in Turkey. Kaya and his political and musical position will be discussed more fully in chapter 5 in an attempt to explicate the conflict between hegemonic Turkish and dissident Kurdish identities that has often been manifested by the expression – or the possibility of expression – of Kurdish language and music.

To summarize, *kom-s* were the most visible music-related form of upsurge in both political and armed resistance of Kurdish ethnic identity in Turkey throughout the 1990s. “Kurdish music of the 1990s, which was born and grew fast in urban area,” Baran (2012a) argues, “caught Kurds both ethnically and politically.” In fact, functioning like a unit of propaganda production they engendered the most important pillar of the Kurdish resistance movement. They, in turn, marked the beginning of an ineluctable transformation in Kurdish expressive culture. According to Baran (2012a), “it was nearly impossible, not to come across a song that do not contain words such as “Kurd” and “Kurdistan” ... if a cassette had been registered officially, the word “Gulîstan”<sup>44</sup> would have been used in lieu of Kurdistan.” The emergence of record labels producing Kurdish music, institutionalization efforts led by MKM, relative softening of legislative pressure on Kurdish language boosted Kurdish music production. Gündoğar (2004) points out that record labels released more than a hundred albums within one month following the repeal of Law 2932 (p. 243). Intense political messages with the prevalent resistance theme in the lyrics were mostly combined with formal, tonal, rhythmic, and melodic basics of Kurdish folk music, and, most importantly, with march style, which was seemingly one of the most admired musical forms in *kom-s* musical compositions during the 1990s (Gündoğar, 2004, p. 245). The second half of the 1980s also witnessed a proliferation of Turkish protest music groups and albums which developed mutual interaction with Kurdish music and politics.

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<sup>44</sup> The word “Gulîstan” alludes to land, fields, or garden of rose.

Kurdish musicians causing an extensive transformation of Kurdish music during these years are largely criticized by many Kurdish intellectuals today for rejecting Kurdish social order, traditional music, and belief system that came into existence through centuries. Kurds who engaged in musical activities in the 1990s, as Gündoğar (2004) and Rênas (n.d.) observe, were living in cities, and their aesthetic criteria were largely shaped by a variety of musical genres in Turkey; they, in addition, belatedly improved their skills on Kurdish language, and were heavily dissociated from Kurdish musical forms and conventional singing practices (p. 245). Baran (2012a), similarly, points out that defective Kurdish in songs caused by lyrics translated from Turkish gave rise to a severe damage on Kurdish identity, culture and language even if it was enough to construct a political identity. Still, these destructive aspects of the Kurdish music in the 1990s seem to be overshadowed by Kurdish cultural and political identity that found a way to express itself. On the one hand, Kurdish resistance music advanced through great contributions of *kom*-s after 1990s, but on the other, it brought about an estrangement from traditional Kurdish culture on part of many Kurds. Baran (2012a) claims that one generation positioned itself on a line that describe its thousands of years old social structure as “feudal,” their music that relies on *dengbêj*-s as “primitive,” and their heroes as “reactionary.” Many epics that tell conflicts among tribes over musical forms, Kurdish court music nourished by Kurdish aristocracy, and Kurdish sufi music were deserted (Baran, 2012).

### **2.2.8 Ceasefire, return of the conflict, 2000s, and today**

Ceasefire announced by PKK following its leader Öcalan’s capture in 1999 marked the beginning of an extensive change in the history of Kurdish political music. The sudden cessation of armed conflict and emergence of political ambiguity caused an inclination towards historical, folkloristic, and cultural aspects of Kurdish ethnicity in musical policies of Kurdish musicians and cultural institutions return to essence (Saritaş, 2010, p. 89). With the first years of 2000s, archival and ethnographical works replaced musical activities centering on composing of songs with fervent political lyrics during the 1990s (Saritaş, 2010, p. 89; Yıldırım 2007). MKM’s *Şahiya Stranan* project dealing with the reproduction of Turkified Kurdish folk songs in a series of albums released in 2000, 2004 and 2011 consecutively exemplifies this tendency in Kurdish music practice.

Musicians publicized individually after the late 1990s superseded the predominant approach favoring collective appearance in the public eye during the 1990s. This was partly, Saritaş (2010) indicates, related to political conditions that pushed Kurdish public to discredit contentious nationalistic approach as well as many group members' developed self-confidence as individual musicians. The emergence of various mediums for political and propaganda activities such as TV, printed and online publications, Internet, and political organizations disburdened Kurdish musicians of these political engagements (p. 91). According to Yıldırım (2007), in addition, cultural centers' neglect of research, education, and innovative production channels caused disintegration of collective entities in Kurdish musical life. Even though they made certain political and conditional adjustments to their musical approach and discourse, many musicians, individually or collectively, mostly kept their activities within the Kurdish political movement. Participating in the political and politicized cultural occasions or making music for propaganda activities of Kurdish political parties remained as main activities of many musicians during the first decade of the 2000s.

Having taken a break from armed activities, PKK also found an opportunity to concentrate more on its propaganda activities during this period and brought an initiative on music during the early years of the first decade of 2000s. The emergence of Kurdish musicians involved in *arabesk* music was basically an outcome of this initiative. PKK, according to Baran, realized the potential of *arabesk* music during this period and encouraged Kurdish *arabesk* musicians in order to win over Kurds growing up with Turkish *arabesk* musical culture in the outskirts of Turkey's metropolises to Kurdish political movement (İbrahim Halil Baran, personal communication, November 13, 2012). *Arabesk*, in this sense, became the new genre of pro-Kurdish propaganda and resistance songs after 2000s. In collaboration with Kurdish diaspora, PKK spared special effort in promoting its cause through music. In addition to promotion of *arabesk* music, musician guerrillas or bands composed of them such as Awazê Çiya, as already mentioned briefly, whose musical works were widely disseminated through Kurdish satellite TV channels and Internet were another side of the continuation of musical propaganda of Kurdish resistance.

The period starting with the first years of new millennium witnessed a massive commercialization of Kurdish music as well. Behind this change were Diaspora's

cultural organizations such as Hunerkom and record label Mîr Mûzik (Yıldırım, 2007). Having integrated with universal music industry and marketing strategies because of growing digital age, the public facade of Kurdish music started to differ from that of earlier periods. Image making and famousness, as Yıldırım (2007) points out, were important themes of Kurdish music industry regardless of the content or genre. Young population of poor Kurdish suburbs in metropolises was the major consumer of these musical products that were mainly disseminated as music videos by means of satellite TV (Yıldırım, 2007).

During the war-free period lasted until PKK ended the five-year ceasefire in 2004, Turkey mostly used delaying tactics on recognizing Kurds' cultural and political demands. As Yıldırım (2007) points out, Turkey's procrastination policy precludes Kurds from living the cultural side of identity struggle, which led to either more assimilation or, to borrow his term, "cultural ghettoization" of Kurds. Fluctuating socio-political settings and government agencies' excessive dependence on status quo have never created a safe zone for Kurdish expressive culture in Turkey. Stylistic tendency, production, commercialization, and marketing of Kurdish music are still determined by countless parameters.

Today, many cities regarded as outside Kurdish-populated areas such as Istanbul, Izmir, Mersin, and Bursa in Turkey have more Kurds than many Kurdish cities have. On the one hand Kurds could barely find reasons for protecting their ethnic identity within today's city life under the pressure of socio-economic and virtual textures of postmodern era, but on the other hand they have been sided with a movement striving for organizing an opposition against a modern nation-state mindset that is reluctant to accept them as they are for years. The music of Kurds, clearly, reflects this socio-political predicament; it is still a vital meeting point for many Kurds, probably more among the younger population, not only as a liberator of Kurdish culture, language, and identity but also as a window for global civilization to which all these concepts are somewhat secondary.

Several *kom*-s maintain their musical activities and popularity as their repertoire, though mostly developed in the 1990s, still produce and convey meaning in today's conditions. In addition to *kom*-s, and many individual musicians that have been performing since the 1990s and before, numerous young musicians concerned with artistic productivity as well as with political conditions after 2000 is still an

important part of Kurdish culture. Many songs continue to have political content regardless of any musical category, i.e., *arabesk*, pop, neo-folk, rock, or rap. Kurdish public's general tendency toward appreciation of traditional music, on the other hand, is quite discernable. Nonpolitical music, although it is slightly political as long as it is in Kurdish language, also encompasses various popular music genres. Predominance of political organizations or politicized cultural organizations on social and cultural life of Kurds, on the other hand, mostly prevents nonpolitical music from taking place in collective occasions. Kurdish Satellite TV channels under the control of PKK also openly favor political songs. Local TV stations or several satellite TV channels of Autonomous Kurdistan Region in Federal Iraq, individual concerts given by nonpolitical musicians are important sources for nonpolitical Kurdish music in Turkey.

To summarize, violence on Kurdish music created violence in Kurdish music and today this causation repeats itself in different forms. State-owned channel TRT 6, one of the channels of Turkey's national public broadcaster TRT (Radio and Television Corporation of Turkey) has been broadcasting in Kurdish, Zaza, and Sorani languages since 2009. Many politically active Kurds and Kurdish musicians, on the other hand, have taken a very cautious approach against the channel on account of the fact that it barely represents Kurdish society and culture. Even though access to Kurdish music is easier than ever, its existence is still unacceptable to general public and state authority. There seems to be ongoing unspoken hindrances to production, dissemination, advertisement, marketing, sale, and availability of Kurdish music in Turkey. Kurdish musicians, including Turkish singing musicians or protest music groups such as Grup Yorum, could easily be accused of being a member of terrorist organization or of making propaganda of terrorism. Not only government agencies but also private corporations and institutions covertly marginalize Kurdish identity. Major music stores are resistant to sale of Kurdish music products as mainstream media largely negates Kurdish music and other ways of expression of Kurdish identity. Kurdish albums are hardly available on digital market. Even though Internet, as we will see in chapter 6, has become one of the most effective areas where Kurdish identity is freely expressed, many Kurdish websites, including music-related forums, are not accessible to Internet users in Turkey as many others' accessibility is on the line.

Today, even though they differ from the 1990s in terms of manner of expression, musical works extensively deal with peace and freedom, and indiscriminate and seizure of Kurdish identity by focusing on concepts such as sacrifice, resistance, martyrdom, revenge, homeland, and Newroz (as we will see in the next chapter) as a cultural and historical representation of Kurdish insurrection. They also stress particular themes based on massacres of Kurds, bravery of guerrilla, military victories, leadership of Abdullah Öcalan, and the cult figures of the liberation movement. Kurdish history, colors, landscapes, cities, villages, social life, and people are also important themes that support the imagination of a national integrity. Furthermore, many political songs of 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s are still sought after in that intensity of conflict largely prevails in spite of occasional political atmospheres that are full of high expectations emerged by peace attempts. The constant political tension that prolongs Kurds' vulnerability keeps feeding the political tone in musical expression. Kurdish cultural centers that are abundant today still retain a share in the political opposition. The contentious and political attitude that Kurdish music adopts is primarily related to denial of Kurdish ethnicity. As we will see more closely starting from the following chapter, politics is still an important part of Kurdish cultural life, and music, so long as the present political conditions prevail, does not seem to change its direction for its own stream. Music is not only an important component of the struggle for political recognition of Kurdish identity but also a key medium for political and armed resistance. Being involved in countless activities such as composing, performing, recording, reproducing, sharing, listening, broadcasting, selling, protesting, celebrating, and dancing, Kurdish music continues to serve Kurdishness and its political purposes in today's Turkey.

### **3. NEWROZ: A NEO-TRADITIONAL GROUND FOR INSURGENCE**

Military operation, arrest, guerilla, fighter, shoot, murder, social suffering, victimhood, victim, state violence, perpetrator, struggle, suppress, war, destroy, burn down, IDP (Internally Displaced People), assassinate, assailant, security force, terrorist, detain, deport, exile, resistance, armed conflict, soldier, surveillance, dissident, punish, militia, massacre, road blocks, checkpoints, prison, torture, detention . . . (Weiss, 2011, pp. 109-111).

#### **3.1 Traveling to Diyarbakır**

On the 20<sup>th</sup> March of 2011 in Istanbul, I headed for the airport in the early morning to catch my flight to Diyarbakır (Diyarbakir, Amed)<sup>45</sup> to attend and observe Newroz<sup>46</sup> celebrations. I noticed the unusual crowd at the boarding gates from which Diyarbakır flights depart. Apart from regular passengers who seemed to be going back home after a short or long visit in Istanbul, or passengers traveling for business purposes, there were many passengers traveling particularly for participating in Newroz celebrations. Among them were several Turkish journalists, correspondents, and columnists, and many Kurdish people who were carrying passports of various European states and others who seem to be residing in Istanbul but traveling to celebrate Newroz drew my attention.

During the flight I was reading a scholarly article on narratives of violence in Kurdish community (Weiss, 2011), and I happened to start highlighting the words that connote violence in some manner. The presence of the article per se was already giving a clue but when I accumulated the words above before I reached the forth page of the article, I instantly developed a sharper understanding about the city I was

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<sup>45</sup> Diyarbakir is what most Kurdish people call the city that is officially known as Diyarbakır. The name of the city changed to Diyarbakır in 1937 in order for it to be more relevant to Turkish Language. Another word “Amed” used by Kurdish media is a politically motivated name derived from the word Amida, the name of the city during the Roman and Byzantine periods.

<sup>46</sup> Newroz is the pre-Islamic festival of New Year, spring equinox. The word ‘newroz’ has a number of spelling variations in English Language texts such as Nowruz, Newruz, Nauruz, Nauroz, Nevruz etc. Newroz is the version accepted in Kurdish.

traveling to. I was going to a place where people's perception of violence is different than mine. Even though I had an idea about the meaning of every word I highlighted, unlike the inhabitants of Diyarbakır who knew them by experience, I had never even seen a person in handcuffs literally in my life.

The plane landed at Diyarbakır Airport in about ninety minutes after the departure. A number of green-colored shelters in the airfield and army's quarters just outside it that I saw during the short ride to the apron made me realize that it was a joint-use (both civilian and military) airport. Azad, a Kurdish friend of mine from Diyarbakır, with whom I studied music at university in the late 1990s and early 2000s picked me up at the airport and gave me a quick tour of the city before we went to the area where official Newroz celebrations would take place.

Based on Newroz celebrations that took place in Turkey's two politically significant Kurdish-populated cities (Diyarbakır, on 20 March 2011 and Hakkâri, on 21 March 2012), this chapter tells how discourses and practices of aggressive political resistance generated largely by music and dance are entrenched in Kurdish society within the larger spectrum of a mythicized national imagination. Before turning to Diyarbakır Newroz celebrations, I should briefly return to the religious, mythological, and political origins of Newroz, particularly in relation to Kurds' attempts at reconstructing their national politics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **3.2 Newroz and the Performance of Myth**

Because myths are beliefs that cannot be substantially verified by evidence, they are generally regarded as partly or completely false and therefore lacking in reality. But it cannot be denied that when people believe them, their belief has reality, or that people act, even base their lives upon them, especially in times of crisis (Shafer, 1972, p. 313).

We have created our myth. The myth is a faith; it is a passion. It is not necessary that it be a reality. It is a passion. It is a reality by the fact that it is a good, a hope, a faith, that it is courage. Our myth is the greatness of the nation! And to this myth, to this grandeur, that we wish to translate into a complete reality, we subordinate all the rest (Benito Mussolini 1922 [Finer 1935, as cited in Baumer 1978, p. 748]).

Newroz, observed by various nations such as Iranians, Afghans, Azerbaijanis, and many others influenced by Zoroastrianism, has indisputably become the most important festival — particularly in the past three decades of political upheaval — for Kurdish people in Turkey. Whereas it is celebrated simply as “Spring New Year

Festival” among various nations on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March sometimes spreading over one week, Newroz primarily represents the expression of Kurdish identity and resistance for Kurdish nation that does not have an independent sovereign nation-state. Making reference to the Persian epic poem *Shahnamah* by Firdawsi, which has numerous mythological accounts that many peoples in the region rely on for tracing their origins today, Kurds consider Newroz the origin of uprising led by Kawa the Blacksmith against tyrant King Zahak (Zohak, Dahhak or Dehak).

Even though the original text, in which Kawa helped the rightful king Faridun overthrow Zahak, was interpreted differently, Kurdish people seem to have accomplished creating a national myth and keeping this myth alive through Newroz celebrations where a strong correlation between ethno-genesis and today’s resistance movement is generated (Firdawsi, and Alexander Rogers, 1907, pp. 21-47). As Mary Fulbrook (1997) points out, accuracy is not a requirement for a myth to be accepted by a nation. In fact, people may truly be distinguishing it from historical facts; hence myths are “essentially propagated for their effect rather than their truth value” (p. 73).

As we will see later in the current chapter, with political events and figures associated with Kurdish rebellions — particularly the last rebellion led by PKK — after the foundation of Republic of Turkey, many songs performed in Newroz celebrations suggest that Newroz has a capacity to date Kurdish struggle against tyranny to a mythicized history. The tyrant narrated by the legend of the blacksmith Kawa and the Republic of Turkey’s state authority as the representative of present-day tyrant are frequently articulated in banners, songs, slogans, and speeches. Positioning of Kurdish identity in this manner conjures up Castells’s definition of resistance identity (1997) as “generated by those actors who are in positions/conditions devalued and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society” (p. 8).

### **3.3 Newroz and the Performance of Resistance and Hegemony**

Appreciation of Newroz as a Kurdish national festival by Kurds living both in Iraq and in Europe dates back to 1950s (Bruinessen 2000). Kurds living in Turkey, on the other hand, started to consider Newroz a potential concept for unification and

cultural revival of Kurds only after the late 1970s.<sup>47</sup> As Turkish state insisted on imposing a policy of assimilation, pressure, and denial against Kurds and forbade any idea or activity considered to be suggesting Kurdish culture, language, history, and identity, political friction over Newroz quickly intensified. By the end of 1980s, on the one hand, Newroz became a symbol of struggle for Kurds and an instrument to express Kurdish national identity, and on the other hand it was perceived to be a hazard threatening the unity of Turkish state (Yanık, 2006, p. 285).

In 1991, The Ministry of Culture declared Newroz to be a Turkish festival whose roots could be traced back to Central Asia, homeland of Turkic people, and gave it an official name “Turkish Ergenekon Festival.” The word Newroz was Turkified as “Nevruz” and the Kurdish spelling of Newroz was forbidden. However, the most violent Newroz celebrations were experienced in the early 1990s when the intensity of warfare between Turkish soldiers and Kurdish guerrillas reached its peak. During Newroz celebrations in March 1991, security forces killed 31 demonstrators. In 1992, March marked the most violent Newroz celebrations. Government troops opened fire and killed at least 91 demonstrators in Cizre, Şırnak and Nusaybin (Url-1).<sup>48</sup>

Similar to a state ceremony, as will be discussed in this chapter, the entire celebrations, whether controlled by people or organization committee, are arranged in an extremely systematic way. The celebration formula features a scheme in which time management, which centers on various dissident practices and restricted spontaneity, prevails, rather than an entertainment space where the concept of time is weakened. Resistance-based patriotism working in tandem with notions of leftist ideology and the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan is another important factor that strengthens political positioning of Newroz. People reveal their resistance identity resting on Kurdishness not only by dancing that includes political songs as well as slogans but also parading through city (particularly in Hakkâri Newroz celebrations) as a continuation of dancing. Importantly, Kurdish political organization’s recruitment of such concepts as political freedom, legal status, self-determination,

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<sup>47</sup> For a detailed account of Kurds’ socio-political relationship with Newroz in Turkey, see also Delal Aydın’s Master’s thesis *Mobilizing the Kurds in Turkey: Newroz as a Myth* (Aydın 2005).

<sup>48</sup> *Human Rights Watch World Report 1993-Turkey*, 1 January 1993.

and linguistic rights is congruous with the process of nation making. In this sense, Newroz provides the ideal symbolic terrain and instruments for expressing the legitimacy of Kurdish nation through the Newroz myth, and for articulating the legitimacy of the political independence of a Kurdish state through the existence of Kurdish nation. As a cultural reflection and institutionalization of Kurdish identity, Newroz, as Demirer (2012) also observes, is a “routinized collective activity” that facilitates the mass participation in political struggle as well as developing a common discourse regarding Kurdishness (p. 77).

### **3.4 Newroz in Diyarbakır**

Diyarbakır, predominantly populated by Kurdish people, is the largest city in Turkey’s Kurdish-populated region. However, the city center was notably quiet that day because the large majority of city dwellers had already started to gather in the Newroz Park. Numerous palls of smoke produced by Newroz bonfires lit at different places around the city were visible as I was doing sightseeing both inside and outside the old city walls. On our way from the city center to the Newroz Park where the biggest bonfire had been located it was possible to see the ongoing conflict, trauma and inquietude in the city by observing the buildings, institutions, the infamous Diyarbakır Prison, and shops and branches of banks that have metal shutters. On the one hand there are organizations founded and supported by Municipal Government controlled by pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party BDP (*Bariş ve Demokrasi Partisi*) such as Cegerxwîn Youth Culture and Art Center, but on the other hand there are institutions established by central government such as Ziya Gökalp Sports Hall. Cegerxwîn (Cigerxwîn) is a renowned 20<sup>th</sup> century Kurdish nationalist poet, writer, journalist, and historian, and Ziya Gökalp, conversely, is the pioneer ideologue of Turkism from Diyarbakır.

After we parked our car, we walked fifteen minutes to reach the Newroz area. Sellers of flags, balloons, and ribbons with red, green and yellow-colored were abundant on our way. Youngsters were singing popular guerilla marches and tunes as they were passing through checkpoints set by police. Because the area had already been filled with hundreds and thousands of people we were unable to advance toward the stage after a certain point. A large red, green, and yellow-colored platform had been set up for public speakers and musicians.

There have always been strong overtones of resistance and uprising motivated by nationalism in Newroz celebrations for considerable part of Kurdish community and this year's celebrations did not seem to be making any difference. On the left side of the platform was there a huge poster of Mustafa Malkoç who, at a recent time, had allegedly set himself on fire to death to protest the anniversary of imprisoned Kurdish militant leader Abdullah Öcalan's capture. Portraits of Zekiye Alkan who burned herself in Newroz 1990 in Diyarbakır, and Raşan Demirel who burned herself in Newroz 1992 in İzmir were placed next to Malkoç's picture. Large images of Kurdish politicians Cihan Deniz, and Hüsni Ablay who died together in a car accident in 2008 were posted on the right side of the stage and pictures of Kurdish activists and Kurdistan Free Life Party PJAK (*Partîya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistanê*) members Şirin Elem Hulo and Husên Xizrî who had been executed recently in Iran were located alongside them. Among the audience were a number of children, teenagers, adults, and elders dressed in guerrilla uniforms or carrying posters of Abdullah Öcalan, the founding leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party PKK (*Partîya Karkerên Kurdistan*). Öcalan's another large poster was also fixed to the upper part of the stage. Celebrations were organized by the BDP and Democratic Society Congress DTK (*Demokratik Toplum Kongresi*), an organization affiliated with BDP, and in accordance with the structure of the organization committee speeches — in Kurdish — were given by Ahmet Türk, the co-chair of DTK, and Gültan Kışanak, the co-chair of BDP, and Osman Baydemir, the mayor of Diyarbakır. The speech given by Abdullah Öcalan in Newroz 1998 was also shown on big screens placed on both sides of the platform. Hozan Cömert, whose two sons died at guerrilla warfare, was one of the musicians who sang for the crowd.

Although one of the most popular Kurdish singers, Behar, was supposed to perform according to the information I had obtained before I went to Diyarbakır, the program ended surprisingly soon. The next day I ran into Behar at Diyarbakır Airport. She was going back to İstanbul after a tiring concert tour in Kurdish region for Newroz celebrations. She told me that she had been waiting backstage for her turn until she was told that the program had ended. After she told me that, rumors going round since the day before that organization committee was too hasty in ending the program in order to make sure people march into the city center made more sense. Skirmishes between people and police who would not let them into the city were

inevitable, and conflict, as one of the main components of Newroz celebrations for years, would again make its voice heard.



**Figure 3.1 :** Diyarbakir Newroz area after official celebrations ended. Photo by the author

After the official program had ended, whereas many people made their way to the “Democratic Solution Tent” in city center many others remaining in the area formed dance lines (*govend* in Kurdish) and proceeded with celebrations. When people had started to leave the area we were able to walk towards the stage with more ease. Cognizant of the omnipresence of violence and performative quality of war, resistance, and conflict in Kurdish society, I made particular effort to observe dance lines sometimes by making some short recordings with my little camera as I was walking along. I paid attention both to members of dance groups and to people watching dance circles on the basis of their age, sex, number, and apparel. I also sought to assess the structure of dances with regard to movements, melodies, and instruments employed.

There were tens of dance lines moving independently from each other. Some lines consisted of less than ten people while some others made large circles assembled up to thirty dancers. Sometimes lines were very close to each other that they came together and formed larger circles. Majority of people in dance chains were from those in the 15 to 30 age group, and there seemed to be no predominance of either

female or male. Most people in dance lines were wearing modern clothes with red, green and yellow-colored strip headbands, flags and scarves with same colors on their shoulders, or around their necks, or in their hands to wave as they were dancing. *Pûşî* (also *poşu* or *kefiye*), the traditional Kurdish and Arab white and black checkered scarf, is also a common accessory as well as traditional Kurdish costumes among dancers. The ensemble of *zirne* and *dahol* was the main accompaniment for dancers. In some dance lines, on the other hand, dancers were singing *lawika govende*<sup>49</sup> (dance song) accompanied only by one *erbane*<sup>50</sup> (frame drum) or without any instrumental accompaniment. I was surprised when I witnessed a responsorial type of dance-song because I believed this type of singing is performed only by Kurds in Iraq. However, I was even more surprised when I overheard that the song, the lyrics of which were in Turkish, was *Ha gerilla*<sup>51</sup> by Delîla<sup>52</sup> û Argeş (sometimes Argeş û Delîla), one of the most popular guerilla songs among Kurdish people. As I was recording people singing and dancing to the song, I paid more attention to its lyrics that go as follows:

<i>Mevziden mevziye fırlayan</i>	Leaping out of one emplacement towards the other
<i>Canını savaşa adayan</i>	Dedicating her life to combat
<i>Yorgunluk, açlık, susuzluk demeden</i>	With no complaints about fatigue, hunger, thirst
<i>Yılmadan savaşır gerilla</i>	Guerilla fights without being daunted
<i>Cihanın umudu gerilla</i>	Guerilla is the hope of the universe
<i>Halkımın umudu gerilla</i>	Guerilla is the hope of my people
<i>Yer gök inim inim inliyor</i>	The ground and sky are groaning bitterly
<i>Sabahın ilk ışıklarıyla</i>	With the first lights of the morning

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<sup>49</sup> Songs sung during the line dances may sometimes be called *strana govendê* or *kilama govendê* in the region.

<sup>50</sup> Different spellings such as *arbane* or *erebane* may occur for *erbane*. Appellations such as *tambourine*, *def*, *defe*, *daf*, or *bendêr*, *bendîr*, or *daîre*, *dayre* may also be used without clear distinction for the instrument depending on region, its size, or rings or other accessories that it may have.

<sup>51</sup> Various videos of the song *Ha gerilla* uploaded by various users could be found on YouTube.

<sup>52</sup> For further information about Delîla, one of several musician guerrillas who is widely acclaimed by Kurds in Turkey, see chapter 5.

<i>Al kanlar içinde uzanmış</i>	Lying in red blood
<i>Göğsü paramparça gerilla</i>	Guerilla whose chest is shattered
<i>Biz de canımızı adadık</i>	We too dedicate our lives
<i>Uğruna düştüğün kavgaya</i>	to the cause that you fight for (to the fight that you died for)
<i>Her baktıkça kara namluya</i>	Every time we look at the black gun barrel
<i>Seni anacağız gerilla</i>	We will remember you guerilla

It was quite interesting to observe an obviously entertaining and pleasurable social interaction through which people voice and act out roles of resistance, war, and violence. Traditional dance movements, a shared legend, military and modern costumes with ethnic accessories and colors, a song sung in the language of the hegemon with which being in conflict were coming together both for enjoyment and for promoting violence as a means of political and cultural assertion. According to information I received later on the same day, the ones who decided to leave the area for marching into city center to gather in front of “Democratic Solution Tent”, on the other hand, were experiencing a more tangible fight of which I witnessed a representation in the area. These two events occurring simultaneously rendered usage of dance line metaphorically for joining the fight and uprising in many popular Kurdish songs quite meaningful.<sup>53</sup> In addition to this, according to a media report, people continued to sing and dance in the tent as well (Güzeldere, 2011). This might suggest that there is indeed a thin line between expression of beauty and expression of anger that these two coalesce and borrow each other’s identities at times.

After people had finished dancing and singing, and started to leave the festival area, we decided to head for the space that we parked our car. After we got out of heavy traffic on our way out of the Newroz Park and passed by a large number of policemen carrying full protective equipment located in the city center to prevent collective marching, we arrived Azad’s brother’s apartment in which I was going to spend the night. Roj TV, the most popular Kurdish satellite television station based in Denmark, was turned on in the apartment. I knew this situation was not specific to this apartment. Throughout Turkey’s Kurdish region, almost every building has a

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<sup>53</sup> See chapter 6 for a detailed analysis of the song *Oremar*.

satellite dish on the roof for inhabitants to watch Kurdish broadcasting TV channels. Kurdish Satellite stations, beginning with the establishment of MED-TV in 1994, have proliferated rapidly after 2000s and today there are more than 20 TV channels broadcasting in Kurdish.

Relating directly to the significance of the day, Newroz celebrations held in different cities in Kurdish region were shaping the biggest portion of television broadcast that day. Skirmishes occurred in various cities between police and people during celebrations seemed to be as equally important as celebrations. MMC TV (Mesopotamia Music Channel), unofficial organ of the PKK along with Roj TV, broadcasting Zaza, Kurmanji, Turkish, Arabic, and Farsi music twenty-four hours a day, is another widely watched TV channel among Kurdish people. Apart from videos showing images of everyday life and natural environment from Kurdish lands, and concert performances of any Kurdish musicians in any genre, a great deal of music videos displaying public demonstrations, funeral ceremonies of martyr guerrillas, videos of songs composed for/by guerrillas, and a number of collages made of video clips and photograph images of guerillas and clashes with police in Kurdish cities accompanied by resistance and nationalist songs are constantly being aired. A collective memory woven differently from that of the constructed by prevailing ideology is revealed through the narrative of MMC TV and Roj TV. Obviously, violence as a mode of unfair treatment to which people have been subjected for years and as a tool for resistance seem to be the common denominator for this narrative. Leaving a more detailed discussion of the impact of the telecommunicational advancements (particularly satellite TV and Internet) on Kurdish musico-politics to chapter 6, this chapter will proceed with the Newroz celebrations that took place one year later in Hakkâri where a more extensive observation was made about both before and during the celebrations.

### **3.5 Traveling to Hakkâri**

*“İyi günler, iyi yolculuklar! Bir kimlik kontrolü yapalım. [Good day, good trip! Let’s have your IDs checked]”* said the soldier as soon as he opened the sliding door and stepped into the van. On his shoulder was he carrying his gun that was barely concealing his distrustful look. It was Tuesday, 20 March 2012, the day before Newroz celebrations, and precisely one year after my trip to Diyarbakır.

It was my third attempt to see Newroz celebrations within that week. The celebrations coincided with the peak of police persecutions of Kurdish activists and politicians, and the government abruptly canceled the program in Istanbul that usually took place on the closest Sunday to the 21<sup>st</sup> of March in previous years. The police forces had prevented people who wanted to celebrate Newroz independently from gathering in the intended area two days ago. My second attempt was the celebrations in Van (Wan), a Kurdish-populated city in eastern Turkey as stated by the present-day political map. Celebrations had been scheduled for March 20 before the Governorship of Van canceled them as well. After I had witnessed the skirmish between the police and the people gathering for the celebrations that morning, I was headed for Hakkâri (Colemêrg), another Kurdish City located about 130 miles south of Van, with the hope of achievement in my third attempt.

I was among the 15 passengers in the van that had departed from Van for Hakkâri for about three hours ago. The words uttered by the soldier were the first Turkish words that I had heard since the previous checkpoint at which we had been stopped about one hour ago. All I heard, with the exception of these two checkpoints at which I heard Turkish language, was the sound of the engine, loudly Kurdish-speaking passengers, and quietly played Kurdish music coming out of the speakers throughout the journey. The second checkpoint, on the other hand, was not as quite so smooth as the first one since one of the passengers, who was a young boy in his early twenties, refused to present his ID card to the soldier. After a short argument between them, the soldier asked the boy to step out of the van and to walk with him. They walked up to a group of soldiers who were waiting outside of a booth on the edge of the road. Meanwhile, the driver and several passengers sought to conciliate in the dispute as they both grumbled about the frequency of ID checks and advised the young boy not to challenge. A few minutes later our IDs were checked and the young boy, who probably had to have his own ID checked as well, returned to the van. The sliding door of the van was closed and the journey resumed.

### **3.5.1 A car stereo withstanding**

Having gone through an emotional strain, all passengers fell silent. The driver had already turned off the music just before he pulled over at the checkpoint. All I heard at that moment was nothing but the sound of the engine. As soon as the checkpoint and soldiers behind us disappeared from sight, on the other hand, the driver changed

the CD and broke the silence with the music of a well-known Kurdish singer Diyar's famous song *Biz Söz Vermişiz*<sup>54</sup> (We Promised), which was one of the few songs of him that has Turkish lyrics. It was quite ironic that Turkish language emerging as control and power throughout the journey was the basis for displaying disobedience against them this time. The volume was also much higher than before and it was very likely that all passengers were not merely hearing but also listening to the simple and repetitive tune, and the following lyrics of the song:

<i>Dersim, Ağrı, Zilan</i>	Dersim, Ağrı, Zilan <sup>55</sup>
<i>Hani katlettiler cani cani</i>	Where they massacred villainously
<i>Birer birer hesabını</i>	Until we call them to account for each
<i>Sorana dek savaşıyoruz</i>	We will fight
<i>Biz bu yola baş koymuşuz</i>	We give up our lives for this cause
<i>Leş bir yana baş bir yana</i>	Corpse is on one side, the head is on the other
<i>Biz Mazlum'a söz vermişiz</i>	We promised Mazlum <sup>56</sup>
<i>Bu yolda dönüş yok bize</i>	There is no turning back on this cause
<i>Biz bu yola baş koymuşuz</i>	We give up our lives for this cause
<i>Leş bir yana baş bir yana</i>	Corpse is on one side, the head is on the other
<i>Biz Apo'ya söz vermişiz</i>	We promised Apo <sup>57</sup>
<i>Bu yolda dönüş yok bize</i>	There is no turning back to us on this cause
<i>Şehit verdik on binlerce</i>	We gave ten thousands of martyrs
<i>Biz söz verdik şehitlere</i>	We promised martyrs
<i>Kızıl bayrağı göklere</i>	Until we put up the red flag in the sky
<i>Dikene dek savaşıyoruz</i>	We will fight

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<sup>54</sup> There is not an official music video of the song *Biz Söz Vermişiz*, yet there are a number of amateur video attempts comprising images and footages of symbols of Kurdishness such as Kurdish rebel leaders, guerrillas, musicians, flags, and landscapes of Kurdish-inhabited areas on YouTube and many other video-sharing websites.

<sup>55</sup> Dersim denotes the brutal suppression of Dersim Rebellion that occurred in 1937-1938 (See chapter 4 for further discussion of Dersim question). Ağrı and Zilan represent the Ararat Rebellion and its suppression known as Zilan massacre that took place in 1930.

<sup>56</sup> One of the founders and central committee members of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), Mazlum Doğan, is an iconic figure for the Kurdish Liberation Movement. In 1979, he was arrested and sent to Diyarbakır Prison where he committed suicide in protest three years later on a Newroz day, March 21, 1982. Following his action, which turned into a symbol of resistance, four other PKK detainees immolated themselves on May 18, 1982.

<sup>57</sup> "Apo" refers to Abdullah Öcalan, the founder and leader of PKK.

<i>Biz bu yola baş koymuşuz</i>	We give up our lives for this cause
<i>Leş bir yana baş bir yana</i>	Corpse is on one side, the head is on the other
<i>Biz Hayri'ye söz vermişiz</i>	We promised Hayri <sup>58</sup>
<i>Bu yolda dönüş yok bize</i>	There is no turning back to us on this cause
<i>Biz bu yola baş koymuşuz</i>	We give up our lives for this cause
<i>Leş bir yana baş bir yana</i>	Corpse is on one side, the head is on the other
<i>Biz Apo'ya söz vermişiz</i>	We promised Apo
<i>Bu yolda dönüş yok bize</i>	There is no turning back to us on this cause
<i>Diyarbakır meydanına</i>	In Diyarbakır square
<i>Mazlum Doğan'ın büstünü</i>	Until we put up Mazlum Doğan's effigy
<i>Yanına da Kemal Pir'i</i>	Also Kemal Pir's <sup>59</sup> next to it
<i>Dikene dek savaşırız</i>	We will fight
<i>Biz bu yola baş koymuşuz</i>	We give up our lives for this cause
<i>Leş bir yana baş bir yana</i>	Corpse is on one side, the head is on the other
<i>Biz Kemal'e söz vermişiz</i>	We promised Kemal
<i>Bu yolda dönüş yok bize</i>	There is no turning back to us on this cause
<i>Biz bu yola baş koymuşuz</i>	We give up our lives for this cause
<i>Leş bir yana baş bir yana</i>	Corpse is on one side, the head is on the other
<i>Biz Apo'ya söz vermişiz</i>	We promised Apo
<i>Bu yolda dönüş yok bize</i>	There is no turning back to us on this cause

Both emotions triggering series of acts that result in playing of this song and the practice of listening to it in itself certainly implicated something different from a humble pleasure or a traveling routine. Driver's way of directing the situation where he used his initiative in the articulation of collective feelings through song selection, volume control, and the decision on playing the song itself may simply be regarded as a performance; and considering the passengers' assenting silence, it was a culturally accepted political act that represents a way of resistance against authority. The passengers presumably were not listening to the song for the first time, yet perhaps seldom had they found it as reflective of their feelings as at that moment.

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<sup>58</sup> Mehmet Hayri Durmuş, founding member of PKK, was one of the detainees in Diyarbakır Prison. He died on hunger strike that he and three other PKK members had started on July 14, 1982 to protest mistreatment.

<sup>59</sup> One of the Turkish members of the PKK, Kemal Pir was among the four PKK detainees who died on hunger strike started on July 14, 1982 in Diyarbakır Prison.

Overlapping with the intense sentiments of retrospective fear and anger, and with the incident that causes them, the song playing at that particular moment, reached its most effectual level over people who interact with it. The song emerged as a kind of struggle for dissipating the discrepancy between physical and mental locations that passengers live in. However, its effect was not limited to a specific time and space. Although it seemed to be an expression of a recent incident, the song also served as a mnemonic for the pain and struggle that has existed in a larger area for a long time, and created, as Jonathan Ritter (2012) called, a “social space for collective remembrance” (p. 200). The incident is a reification of a greater social and historical fact as well as an example of how Kurdish people perform their bitterness, *inter alia*, through practice of music listening. The practice of playing and listening to this particular song at that moment, in other words, become a method of coping with a prevalent political and psychological pressure. A cultural activist, writer, translator, publisher, and dancer who was born, grew up, and was engaged in various political activities in Varto (Gingim), one of the most important cities in Kurdish political movement in Eastern Turkey, in the late 1970s and early 1980s supports these conjectures with the following words:

There are certain periods of slackness. People are in a constant friction with searches, checks, and such and such but after a while this situation starts to turn into a routine. It starts to loosen. The soldier becomes loose, the state becomes loose, and a mutual slackness prevails. Imbalance of authority starts to become less distinct. These [incidents such as the one occurred at the check point] are particular examples that tell and remind the reality of the situation where that guy [the driver] startles and define the state authority again. (Cemal Atila, personal communication, November 7, 2012)

### **3.5.2 A song that promises and reminds**

Lyrics, musical style, discourse, and singing technique of the song are fairly illustrative for estimating its role and impact at this point in much the same way as the account of its appearance. The song successfully articulates such feelings as anger, retribution, devotion, and determination that passengers had to repress and were not able to express properly. Furthermore, deviating from the conventional march style of political and protest songs, Diyar’s vocal timbre and singing style that are fairly consistent with cultural and artistic values of Kurdish lands establish an instant connection with people.

Indicating specifically in what places and manner, and referring to certain historical moments at the same time, the first two lines, for instance, describe the violence that people were treated with. Lyrics do not include any words such as “Kurd” or “Kurdistan” for clarification as to what the object of the statement is, and yet it is deducible from the context who came up against this mistreatment and where. This may also suggest that the cause addressed frequently in the song is not only about ethnic or national liberation but also about an imagined social order. Representing socialism, red flag in this respect is another image that constitutes the premise of this argument. The subject of the first statement appearing in the first two lines is not exactly clear either, and still, background information notifies us that it be the Turkish state and its agencies, one of which is the armed forces as a perpetrator that committed the aforementioned massacres in the song. That passengers faced with a member of the armed forces as an authority figure before they started to listen to the song shows the permanence of the situation today. The soldier, therefore, is one of the nexuses that provide passengers a mental transition between the moment at the time of listening to the song and the recent incident encountered in physical world. Similarly, passengers reaffirm the emotional tie between people that song describes as victims and themselves through the checkpoint at which they felt the bonds of oppression and injustice. The distinction between “we” and “they” that the song stresses, in short, precipitates passengers into redefining the experience that they went through.

Predominantly using the “we” subsequent to the specification of peoples’ victimization in the first two lines, the lyrics emphasize their determination to struggle and revenge in different ways. Thus, passengers identifying themselves with the “we” in the song are given a powerful source not only to cure the despair that they felt just a moment ago but also to transform it into confidence and optimism for opposition — which is also manifested in the action of listening to the song — to the ruling power. The song heightens the feelings of commitment and loyalty to the cause by harnessing emblematic figures of the Kurdish liberation movement that are impressed on collective memory as well as reminding the veneration of martyrs — which highlights the sacred aspect of the fight in question. The song marks three particular occasions as to when peoples’ fight will end. Whereas avenging peoples’ oppression seems to be somewhat vague as a criterion, putting up red flag and

effigies, which are characteristics successively of revolutionary socialist ideology and nation state, gives a certain clue about the purpose of the fight in question. Bearing in mind the omnipresence of statues, effigies, sculpted reliefs, and silhouettes of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk — founder of the Republic of Turkey — in squares, parks, and in many public institutions such as schools, hospitals, and libraries in every part of Turkey, it is very likely that the expression of Kurdish national identity in the song, which is articulated as “putting up effigies”, is borrowed from the similar practice of Turkey’s modern state nationalism as the closest model.

### 3.5.3 Magnetism of musical repetition

Musically speaking, the song has two sections. The eight-bar instrumental opening section (see figure 3.2) displays a persistent and steadfast character by means of sequence and obstinate continuance of particular notes in the lower register of violins colliding with the syncopated pattern of *erbane* (frame drum). Melodic contour moving first down and then up between the fifth and seventh bars, and rising sequence of four-note motive compressed into 32<sup>nd</sup> notes in the eighth bar elevate the initial tension even more, and yet a general ardent tone of the section is prolonged.

**Figure 3.2 :** The eight-bar instrumental opening section of the song *Biz Söz Vermişiz*. (Synthesized hi-hat cymbals playing over the whole section, and electronic drum strokes occurring on the last beat of the eighth bar are not included in the transcription).

The beginning of the second section, on the other hand, resolves this rapidly increasing tension and generates a victorious and processional setting with the

introduction of main tune (see figure 3.3) played twice by *zirne* and *tembûr* (long-necked fretted lute), along with violins, ongoing strokes of *erbane*, and synthesized drums and cymbals in the background. The instrumental section is connected to lyrics that are based on the same (main) tune with a two-bar transition consisting mainly of chords and rhythms produced by an electronic keyboard. In other words, the entire second section of the song (verse, refrain, and the instrumental bridge) consists in the only dominating twelve-bar tune (including the repetition of the last four bar) and a two-bar transition appearing before every verse. Even though the same twelve-bar tune plays repeatedly, conventional song structure — the point at which instrumental bridge occurs and repetition of the same four lines after every eight lines — tells us that the song comprises three stanzas in which every eight lines forming the verse are followed by a four-line refrain.

♩ = 192

Der sim Ağ rı Zi lan ha ni kat let ti ler ca ni ca ni

5  
bi rer bi rer he sa bı nı so ra na dek sa va şı rız

**Figure 3.3 :** The main tune of the song *Biz Söz Vermişiz* along with the lyrics of the first four lines. The tune scores the sections formed of each four lines as well as the instrumental bridge following every twelve lines throughout the song.

The perpetual repetitions of the same tune with various statements reflecting feelings and opinions that passengers presumably wish to give voice to was likely to have a therapeutic and hypnotic effect. Both vigorous and firmly established music and dignified character of the lyrics were catalysts for soothing the shared sense of indignation on the one hand and for stimulating perseverance with resistance on the other.

### 3.5.4 Collective listening

Criticizing the cognitive, psychological, philosophical and sociological studies of music for having a quite narrow scope in the study of music listening, Deschênes (1998) emphasizes the importance of psychosocial and psychocultural context as “the main context in which music is enjoyed” and suggests psychosocial and psychocultural factors as to how “they entrain and bound one’s grasp on music, one’s

cognition of music” (p. 136). Following him, I argue that, through listening to the song, passengers in the van had a chance to justify their anger; they found an outlet to drain their outrage at the same time and established, in Deschênes’s words, a “cognitive integration” (1998, p. 140) with the music. In addition, even though they concealed their opposition from the authority, passengers might have been convinced by the activity of listening to a particular song itself, which is identified as an activity disapproved by the authority, that they stood up to it. This secure way of dissidence is in line with Scott’s definition of resistance — as already mentioned in the introductory chapter — that “focuses on intentions rather than consequences” (1985, p. 290). The music might have also lessened passengers’ general vulnerability of which the checkpoint reminded them. However, may music performing the function of lessening vulnerability be overshadowing their established fact of defenselessness? How resistance expressed through music listening activity affect the resistance in practice? These do not seem to be questions that have smooth answers. Still, the fact that a significant portion of the song includes expressions such as “they massacred villainously” in describing the violence to which people were exposed, and “corpse is on one side, the head is on the other” or *biz bu yola baş koymuşuz*, literally translated “we put our heads on this way,” for illustrating people’s fortitude, underscores how warfare and conflict prevail upon social and cultural life in the region. The prevalence of this type of music and severity in its verbalism, in addition, as Deschênes rightly argues, sheds some light on the musical acculturation of Kurds:

We might appreciate a large number of types of music, but we can only identify with one primary type of music, the one that conveys the values that correlate the psychosocial and psychocultural situation of the society in which we were born. (1998, p. 142)

The appearance of intensive zeal in practices of listening, singing, dancing, or composing among Kurds, accordingly, points to the existing intention and determination of resistance at any price.

A series of popular songs, this time in Kurdish, which was stylistically akin to *Biz Söz Vermiştiz*, played in the van until a police checkpoint appeared at the entry to the city center after Diyar’s song had ended with a fade-out. It is nonetheless questionable whether those could retain the emotional density of passengers who were cooled off by Diyar’s song that emerged with the proper timing. This minor

incident seems to be an account of a major social and political phenomenon. It could be portrayed as a scale model of musical embodiment and expansion of Kurds' feelings. That being said, it would not be excessive to make a connection between driver's way of using his authority and a musician's prominence of expressing general public's emotions and experience. This partly explains why most Kurds regard musicians as public figures that take risk of being against dominance just like guerrillas do. One of my Kurdish interviewees who is also an amateur musician, for instance, told me that he once believed that success in musicianship correlates with being guerrilla (Qenco, personal communication, July 13, 2012). In this respect, musicians, songs they sing, people who listen and dance to songs, individuals such as music producers and concert organizers who create opportunities for music to be sung and heard signify a fundamental role in profoundly politicized Kurdish populated regions. They are, in a sense, all workings of the same world of resistance as guerrillas, weapons or other components of war, and guerrilla musicians and music groups represent a reification of this assumption. Even though they are somewhat similar to what the current study constantly formulates, these issues prompted by the incident that I experienced on my way to Hakkâri remained persuasive during Newroz celebrations held the following day, and helped me modify my frame of reference in the study.

### **3.6 An Authorized Celebration under Surveillance: Newroz Day in Hakkâri**

#### **3.6.1 Hakkâri province**

The city of Hakkâri is also the name of the administrative center of Turkey's Hakkâri Province, which is, the same as the other 80 provinces, administered by a governor appointed by the central government. Hakkâri Province is divided into four districts including the central district that is also officially called Hakkâri. The majority of population lives in Hakkâri, on the other hand, still uses the Kurdish word "Colemêrg" for the city center. The other three districts of the province, namely Yüksekova (Gever), Şemdinli (Şemzînan), and Çukurca (Çelê), are administered by appointed sub-governors that are affiliated with province's governor. According to

the data of Turkish Statistical Institute<sup>60</sup> (2012) on the year 2011, there are more than 82,000 people who live in the central district out of almost 22,000 of which live in rural areas in Hakkâri Province. As for the entire province including the other three districts, the population is almost 273,000.

The events that Hakkâri has experienced in recent history, on the other hand, are more crucial than those of present-day population statistics illustrate. Hakkâri and the other four districts of Hakkâri Province have probably been one of the most devastated areas since the warfare between Kurdish insurgents and Turkey's Army that begun in 1984. In this regard, the word "Hakkâri," which has always been associated with armed clash, raid, martyrdom, "PKK terrorism," and "separatism" by the mainstream media in Turkey, would not usually evoke pleasant feelings in Western Turkey<sup>61</sup>. Hakkâri is known as one of the most dangerous places to do military service in Turkey. In other words, it is a word that has unhappy connotations, and a place where both sides have deeply felt the pain of war. Having been one of the most overwhelmed provinces that experienced the state of emergency decree that gave rise to mass deportations and severe restrictions to civil and political rights particularly in the 1990s, Hakkâri Province, which is also quite secluded because of natural features and yet borders Iran to the east and Autonomous Kurdistan Region in Federal Iraq to the south at the same time, is a strategically important military and political center for both Turkey and Kurdish political and armed movement.

Of Kurdish-populated provinces that have been subjected to state's cultural, political, and linguistic assimilation policies in Turkey, Hakkâri, along with the Şırnak Province that split away from Hakkâri in 1990, is perhaps the least assimilated area in Turkey's Kurdish-populated areas. In spite of the wide-ranging demographic change caused by long-standing war conditions that gave the state a sufficient reason

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<sup>60</sup> For a more thorough population statistics of Turkey regarding the year 2011 see <http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=10736>

<sup>61</sup> I use the term "Western Turkey" here to better describe the general opinion of the predominantly Turkish-populated areas in central, western, and the Black Sea coast of northeastern Turkey. Kurds live in the eastern and southeastern parts of Turkey also frequently use this term along with several similar expressions such as the "west of Turkey", or simply the "West" to define non-Kurdish areas in Turkey.

to implement forced evacuation of villages<sup>62</sup> (McDowall, 2004, p. 440; Kurban, Çelik, & Yüksek, 2006, p.13), the topography that precludes industrialization and modernization, thereby keeping people in contact with Kurdish language and local customs in their social and economic relations have contributed to the province's cultural and linguistic authenticity. Another domain in which this authenticity demonstrates itself, furthermore, is politics. Hakkâri is one of the few Kurdish populated provinces in absolute support of left-wing Kurdish nationalism in Turkey. More than 80 percent of eligible voters in the province cast their votes for independent candidates endorsed by the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) in general elections held on 12 June 2011. BDP mayors of the central district and the other three districts of Hakkâri Province are, in addition, have been in office since 2009 and before. Hakkâri is also one of the leading provinces that show approval of Kurdish armed resistance movement by providing Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and its armed wing People's Defense Forces (HPG) with a significant number of activists, fighters, and with an active source of logistical support (McDowall, 2004, p. 425).

### **3.6.2 Congregation**

As soon as I arrived in Hakkâri city center after a four-hour travel, I started to walk along the only busy street of the city to find for a place to stay. The first thing that struck me was the way that mountains encircle the city on all sides. The mountains, the central character of countless stories, songs, news, narratives, and speeches about and from the region, were giving the impression of being within easy reach as if they had justified their position in Kurdish culture and society. After I checked in a hotel, I called an informant from Hakkâri on the telephone to find out about the customary course of celebrations on Newroz days in the city center. Based on the information I received from him, people would usually gather in front of the municipal building and walk together to the area where the official celebrations take place.

The following day, which in many respects was quite similar to the travel experiences of previous day, I stood by information given by my informant and went

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<sup>62</sup> McDowall (2004) indicates that governorate-general evacuated almost 400 settlements before 1990, and destroyed over 2,000 villages and hamlets causing more than 750,000 homeless by the end of 1994 (p. 428).

to the small square in front of the municipal building in the early morning. Even though there were only a few people when I got there, people coming from different sides turned into a sizable crowd within a very short time. The first *govend* (line dance) arrangement formed by about a dozen teenage boys designated the roles of performer and onlooker within the crowd, thereby transforming it into an organized community. An antiphonally and a cappella sung *lawika govendê* (dance song) coming from the members of the *govend*, furthermore, cut in the hubbub in the square and created a setting of a quasi-formal ceremony. That is to say, the *govend* and the accompanying vocals became an enactment of the beginning of Newroz celebrations. Tightly formed *govend* divided into two separate singing groups chanting alternately, were moving clockwise as dancers were holding hands down at sides. Traditional clothes that are similar to guerrilla uniforms, black checkered scarfs called *pûşî*, yellow-red-green scarfs among the dancers and onlookers, and a flag comprising three separate pieces of fabric in yellow-red-green colors were the visual supplements having political connotations to the whole setting. In the meanwhile, banners prepared by high school students, were being hung on the fences of the municipality. As one of the banners, in Kurdish, was saying “Êdî bes e! An azadî an azadî, Newroz pîroz be” (Enough already! Either freedom or freedom, Happy Newroz), the other one next to it, in Turkish, was saying “Dehakların zulmüne karşı çağdaş Kawa Mazlum Doğan gibi direneceğiz” (Like the modern Kawa Mazlum Doğan, we will struggle against the tyranny of Dehaks). The number of people in the line, in the meanwhile, started to increase with new participants. The first song was connected to another song uninterruptedly by changing neither the basic step nor tempo and singing style. This was the responsorial singing of the guerrilla song in Turkish that I had heard from one of the line dances in previous year’s Newroz celebrations in Diyarbakır. The song was connected to another popular song called *Gever* as with the same type of smooth transition as the previous one. *Gever* is the name of the city (officially Yüksekova) and one of the four districts of Hakkâri Province that is located almost 50 miles east of Hakkâri. The song *Gever* that has anonymous lyrics is associated with one of the local singers of Gever known as Mesut Geverî. Dancers started to beat time with clapping during the dance performance of this song, and as soon as the *dahol* (double-headed cylindrical drum) joined at a musically crucial point a few minutes later, cheers and whistles of the audience became louder, thereby elevating the overall exuberance in the square. All

this briskness grown within a very short time culminated in the collective shouting of *Bijî Serok Apo* (Long live leader Apo), one of the most acknowledged slogans among Kurds living in Turkey, without disturbing the main beat. The people gathered in the square both for dancing and observing then reached the point at which they were trying to arrive since they had been merely a crowd.

The co-occurrence of line dance and antiphonal singing without any instrumental accompaniment lasting almost five minutes shaped the introduction of the 20-minute *govend* performance. The introduction ending with the collective utterance of a political message on which there is almost a complete unanimity, as current social and political context indicates, could partly be construed as the materialization of both dissidence itself and celebration of dissidence at the same time. *Dahol* and *govend* continuing after the slogan prevented the momentum from disappearing on the one hand and created a phase of relief and transition on the other. The *dahol*'s sonorous and firm sound and its rhythmic ostinato induced a trance-like state that the act of dancing itself had already initiated.

The dance line in the meanwhile expanded, and almost twenty teenage girls, albeit as an unseparated unit, were involved in it as well. Strokes of *dahol* prompted dancers, who remained in the pace of dance and *dahol*'s beats, to chant another slogan *Bê Serok Jiyan Nabe* (No life without leader) subsequent to the first slogan; and they repeated the same slogan that preceded cheers, clapping, and sounds of *tilîlî*<sup>63</sup> triggering the slogan saying *Bijî Serok Apo* again. As if they were following a particular sequence, dancers chanted slogans, each of which lasted about 10 seconds, in about every 30 seconds and finely integrated them into the *govend* and strokes of *dahol*. Slogans, usually initiated by one of the dancers throughout the *govend* performance, frequently appeared like an *idée fixe* from within the flow of music and dance. The rhythm of the slogan chanting was gradually heightened by cheers and applauds coming from onlookers who were enthusiastic about the performance. The following table shows the sequential steps of the slogans emerged in the first half of the *govend* performance.

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<sup>63</sup> *Tilîlî* or *Lîlan* (*Zılgıt* in Turkish) is a high-pitched ululation sound made mostly by Kurdish women to express both happiness and grief according to pervading tone of the situation. Many Kurds politically equate it with the demonstration of Kurdish identity whereas many Turks consider it as an inflammatory expression of Kurdishness.

**Table 3.1** : Sequential steps of the slogans during the *govend* performance.

<i>Govend</i> (Line Dance)	<i>Dahol</i>	Vocality	Time
		Dance songs	00:00-04:50
			04:50-04:55
		<i>Bijî serok Apo</i>	04:55-05:05
			05:05-05:37
		<i>Bê serok jiyay nabe</i>	05:37-05:47
			05:47-06:17
		<i>Bê serok jiyay nabe</i>	06:17-06:27
			06:27-06:33
		<i>Bijî Serok Apo</i>	06:33-06:43
			06:43-07:19
		<i>Bijî Serok Apo</i>	07:19-07:33
			07:33-07:37
		<i>Bê serok jiyay nabe</i>	07:33-07:46
			07:46-08:09
		<i>Selam! Selam! İmralı'ya bin selam</i> <sup>64</sup>	08:09-08:17
			08:17-08:24
		(Unidentified slogan)	08:24-08:33
			08:33-09:27
		<i>Bijî Serok Apo</i>	09:27-09:37
			09:37-10:36
		Dance Songs	10:36-11:03

After the five-minute slogan section had ended, dancers, following a smooth transition, started to sing another song. Even though slogans and whistles coming from the crowd protesting police vehicle passing by interrupted the song, the fundamental pulse was never disrupted and dancers resumed singing after this spontaneous protest. The song ending up with another slogan session discontinued both *govend* and *dahol* strokes for less than five seconds. This enabled dancers to sing in a different meter and *dahol* to change the main tempo and rhythmic pattern for the first time. It is important to note that this five-second with complete silence was deemed a rest within the performance rather than an unexpected pause or interruption. Dancers sang two more songs for the rest of their *govend*, last of which was *Yan Mirin Yan Diyarbakir* (Either Death or Diyarbakır), one of the most emotive songs for many Kurds owing to its musical and verbal articulation that distance the song from political discourse for the good of Kurdish folk tradition. Even though there are slight discrepancies among its various versions in terms of lyrics, the song maintains its semantic coherence to a certain degree. Predominantly performed way of its lyrics can be translated as follows:

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<sup>64</sup> This is a slogan in Turkish saying “Greetings! Greetings! A thousand greetings to İmralı.” The word “İmralı” is the name of the small prison island in the Marmara Sea where Abdullah Öcalan, the founder and leader of PKK, has been serving a life sentence since 1999.

<i>Wa dibînîm Diyarbakir</i>	There I see Diyarbakır
<i>Rabûn cotkar û karker</i>	Peasant and worker rose up
<i>Min û te hev re bang dikir</i>	Me and you cry out together
<i>Yan mirin yan Diyarbakir</i>	Either death or Diyarbakır
<i>Her bijî Diyarbakir</i>	Long live Diyarbakır
<i>Yan mirin yan Diyarbakir</i>	Either death or Diyarbakır
<i>Diyarbakir poz li banî</i>	Diyarbakır is proud
<i>Derdorê wî mêrg û kanî</i>	Fountain and meadow all around
<i>Min û te hev re soz danî</i>	Me and you promised together
<i>Yan mirin yan Diyarbakir</i>	Either death or Diyarbakır
<i>Her bijî Diyarbakir</i>	Long live Diyarbakır
<i>Yan mirin yan Diyarbakir</i>	Either death or Diyarbakır

The song ended line dance that had been performed for 20 minutes and led all people to gather in the dance zone with applauds, cheers, *tilîlîs* and vigorous chanting of *Bijî Serok Apo* slogan. Positioning closely together, people assembled in front of the municipal building for experiencing one of the most special and communally shared moments of the day, the collective singing of the song *Çerxa Şoreşê*<sup>65</sup> (The Wheel of Revolution). The lyrics of the song that was wholeheartedly sung by the crowd can be translated as follows:

<i>Îro çerxa şoreşê fireh digerîne</i>	Today the wheel of revolution revolves widely
<i>Li qadên cîhanê deng dilerzîne</i>	The sound vibrates in the squares of the world
<i>Destarê proleter hûr diherîne</i> <sup>66</sup>	Proletarian's hand-mill grinds in bits
<i>Kedwxarî û nokeran ji qada hiltîne</i>	Exploitation and servants ripped from the square
<i>Tovê jîyanê reşandîn li qada şîn didan</i> <sup>67</sup>	Seed of life sprinkled came into leaf in the square

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<sup>65</sup> *Çerxa Şoreşê* is a popular song of the Kurdish protest music group Koma Berxwedan (Group Resistance), one of the most influential music groups in the recent history of Kurdish music. Being akin to performance of many national anthems, it is performed before many occasions such as concerts, celebrations, or protests. People gathering in the square sing only the first and last four lines of the song. Chanting of the slogan *şehîd namirin* (martyrs won't die) at times fills the role of *Çerxa Şoreşê* on some occasions.

<sup>66</sup> This line repeats as "Destarê proleterya hûr diherîne."

<i>Simbula şax didan dengê partîzan</i>	Hyacinth rooted the voice of partisan
<i>Pêlên bayê herikandin ji nav dilê çiyân</i>	Waves of the wind flew away from heart of mountains
<i>Rabûn ser pîyan jîn da Kurdistan</i>	They rose to their feet gave life to Kurdistan
<i>Nav dîwarê zîndana heya serê çiyân</i>	Out of dungeon's wall to top of mountains
<i>Hildan alên sor, berxwedan jiyân</i>	They raised red flags, resistance is life
<i>Rê ronahî rêber têda xwîna şehîdan</i>	Road is bright, martyrs' blood the present guide
<i>Rêberê me ye partîya karkeran</i> <sup>68</sup>	Workers' party is our guide

People sung the song antiphonally. The second group was repeating the last five or six syllables of each line (determined by the meter) after the first group sung the whole line shaping each musical phrase. Both the original version of the song and its renditions that I had heard earlier in many events differed from this style in that they were sung in responsorial style. The music is formed from three descending sequences of a six-measure phrase whose last two measures are confirmed by chorus repetition. Figure 3.4 shows the original version in which singer alternates with a chorus. In Hakkâri, singer's part was substituted by another group of people.

The overall solemnity during its rendition suggests that people ascribe special value to both the song and its collective performance like a national anthem. When a number of varied versions of its lyrics and their translations into Turkish that I found on the Internet are taken into consideration, on the other hand, it would not be implausible to think that people have different notions both about the meanings of the words and the subject matter of the song. People, both individually and/or as organized whole, give different meanings to the song and its lyrics than the song itself proposes, or maybe the actual significance of the song is the utterance of particular words and statements and the performability of it per se in a prescribed order.

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<sup>67</sup> This line repeats as “Tovê jinê reşandîn li qada jîn didan,” which means “Seed of life sprinkled, came into being in square.”

<sup>68</sup> People gathered in the square replaced the statement *partîya karkeran* (workers' party) with *Serok Öcalan* (Leader Öcalan).

♩ = 112

Voice

İ ro çer xa şo re şê fi reh di ge rî ne fi reh di ge rî ne  
(singer) (chorus)

Vo.

7 li qa dên cî ha nê deng di ler zî ne deng di ler zî ne  
(singer) (chorus)

Vo.

13 des tar ê p ro le ter hûr di he rî ne hûr di he rî ne  
(singer) (chorus)

Vo.

19 ked xwa rî û no ke ran ji qa da hil tî ne ji qa da hil tî ne  
(singer) (chorus)

Vo.

25 des tar ê pro le ter ya hûr di he rî ne hûr di he rî ne  
(singer) (chorus)

Vo.

31 ked xwa ri û no ke ran ji ka da hil tî ne ji qa da hil tî  
(singer) (chorus)

Vo.

36 ne ji qa da hil tî ne  
(singer)

**Figure 3.4 :** The sequential pattern that lays the basis for *Çerxa Şoreşe* (the first stanza) and the confirmatory repetitions of chorus. The music repeats in the other two stanzas.

The slogan-like key statements that bear traces of countless social, psychological, and political experiences such as *berxwedan jîyan* (resistance is life), *serok Öcalan* (leader Öcalan), *heya serê çîyan* (to top of mountains) *xwîna şehîdan* (martyrs' blood) are conceivably crucial to entire performance of the song that includes showing V-signs with both hands and standing still along with singing (see figure 3.5). The elements that imply a socialist revolution are overshadowed by the idea of

Kurdish existence and resistance, which is more apposite to the current political and social values.



**Figure 3.5 :** The collective singing of *Çerxa Şoreşê*. Photo by the author

### **3.6.3 Insights into the ceremonial congregation**

Regardless of considering how much an improvisation something would be when it is flawless, this flow of activities that are combined to form a ceremonial congregation of people before marching to Newroz area offers a compelling example of a perfect improvisation. Generalization might be dangerous at this point. However, it can be argued that a society's well-defined common objective shaped by vital demands is probably articulated by thoroughly organized procedures that inhibit spontaneity. The characterization of the Newroz celebration, as it appeared in this setting, would hardly be defined as festivity. If we could extract politically motivated expressions and activities that took place during the congregation ceremony on Newroz morning, we would have very little left to correlate it with traditional significance of Newroz celebrations. Even though there are clear indications such as dancing and singing that this is a celebration, it is not easy to catch its basic evocations like coming of spring or New Year. Ascriptions to literary and

mythological figures of Newroz such as *Dehak* or *Kawa*, on the other hand, are the results of their reasonable adaption to today's political climate.

The entire *govend* performance in which onlookers were involved as much as dancers and singers, was performed in a way that seem to have a definite frame as a work written and rehearsed for stage. Punctilious calculation of transitions and durations as well as the prevailing musical pulse and its uninterruptedness not only between large sections but also between performing segments in pieces presented different set of acts as a large-scale artistic work. The overall order and flow of performance comprising a structured interaction among line dance, various types of cheers of audience, and *dahol* also indicates an established coherence, order, and discipline in the entire setting. This *govend* performance exhibited here is merely one of many performance units of the day. Since emotions and ideas represented within a 20-minute performance here are the ones that have generally been suppressed, or at least uttered with cautious and a certain amount of nervousness, they are expressed by way of compressed and compact outbursts. People, who are aware of the significance of the day, continue to articulate suchlike feelings of theirs in different ways and various settings by spreading numerous modules of expression throughout the day.

High-sounding ending of the line dance that emphasizes fearless tenacity as well as despair with the outcry of the song saying "either death or Diyarbekir," and its immediate transformation into slogans and cheers leading to *Çerxa Şoreşê* suggests that the entire performance is relatively rhetorical. This is of course a spectacle that has a broad participation and little distinction between performer and bystander owing to its characteristic that encourages changeover between these roles. It, therefore, becomes a performance displayed by public to the ruler out there rather than a performance to or within public, or a casual moment of entertainment of public. This model of neatly arranged display, on the other hand, becomes, perhaps involuntarily, a rehearsal for role as a self-contained power that orchestrates time and individual behavior.

Succeeding the *govend* suffused with slogans and songs with sociopolitical connotations, *Çerxa Şoreşê* was a sort of prelude to main body of the celebrations. Since it emerges as the most common and entrenched performance in many diverse events that Kurds organize, the song *Çerxa Şoreşê* and the ways in which Kurdish

sense of belonging is inscribed in its performance deserves particular attention. Even though its performance in Hakkâri was a continuation and extension of a rather long singing and dancing period that had already yielded a sense of cohesiveness, it, heralding the beginning of a given program, generally gives all participants the first opportunity of acting together in many other events. As a performance that requires all participants, including onlookers, to be performers and to sing in stillness with a specific gesture, it forms a single entity that has a single perception of moment and space out of a fragmented crowd, like during a performance of any national anthem, thereby creating a sense of unity, solidarity, and togetherness among individuals.

The way and conditions of its performance indeed share remarkable similarities with those of national anthems. Still, there are certain differences between them in terms of their capacity and functions. Unlike ambiguous antagonist or antagonists that exist in narratives of many national anthems, for instance, *Çerxa Şoreşê* is performed under the pressure and intimidation of a power that is not in the least ambiguous. Potential risk of suffering the consequences of its performance that is seen as an act of defiance renders solid ideational and emotional bonds more possible among individuals compared to those performing a national anthem in a certain safety. Both the performance technique of the song that entails two groups singing reciprocally and threatening presence of an oppressor strengthen the possibility of cohesiveness and interdependence, which, in turn, creates a situation that motivates people for insubordination.

In general, the moments in which performances of national anthems take place lack in conditions that verify the content of the text. The risk free performance of a national anthem in a society that has left many images of threat behind can scarcely go beyond the remembrance of the past. In the given context, its performance assumes a prospective situation whereas national anthems mostly assume that of retrospective. *Çerxa Şoreşê* is performed for the sake of an expected victory, which is the liberation brought by emancipation from subjection, and also as a part of course of action. Even though most national anthems embrace a number of references to the future in contemplation of an infinite, albeit vigilant, national entity, they function as a reminder of the past triumph since they were born as an outcome of that triumph. This essential quality of national anthems, perforce, reduces its effectiveness on everyday life in which many events and activities enabling and

stipulating its performance take place. From the moment a song that emulate national anthems can be performed freely, that is to say, when it gains status as a national anthem, it starts to lose its persuasive power that it had before. The current political and social climate, therefore, cause *Çerxa Şoreşê* to be a tangible part of war and resistance, and to be a reassuring vitality around which many Kurds can gather. Hence, Apparurai's remarks (2000) on national anthems are more relevant to performances of songs such as *Çerxa Şoreşê* rather than national anthems:

National anthems produce lumps in the throat and flags induce tears in the eye. Insults to national honor can greatly assist internal mobilization and violation of national sovereignty can create irate mobs. Sacrifice, passion, anger, hate are all parts of the symphony of affects in which love—here love of the nation—is the orchestrating force. (p. 130)

Concepts and images that are emblematic of Kurdish fight for existence such as mountain, martyr, leader in the song as well as the phrase *berxwedan jîyan*,<sup>69</sup> which is one of the most prevalent catchphrases with which Kurds have identified themselves, are quite substantial in establishing the nexuses between this ceremonial congregation and collective marching. In other words, not only does the end of the collective performance of *Çerxa Şoreşê* signify the completion of one of the most important component of celebrations, but it also points to the collective marching to Newroz area where the climax of celebrations would take place.

#### **3.6.4 Parading through city**

Along with ceremonial congregation and official celebrations in the field, collective marching is one of the building blocks of Newroz day in Hakkâri. The visible effort for making use of the time well within the community was shaped during the short interval after congregation ceremony in the form of dance line for so-called guerrilla dance made by more than 40 young boys. Having been devised by young urban Kurdish population in the late 1990s as a cultural product of ongoing war, guerrilla dance have enjoyed widespread popularity among teenagers throughout Turkey's Kurdish lands. As in the case of here in Hakkârî, slogans such as *Bê Serok Jîyan Nabe* in Kurdish or *Vur Gerilla Vur! Kürdistan'ı Kur!* (Strike guerrilla strike!

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<sup>69</sup> *Berxwedan jîyan e, serhildan jîyan e* (resistance is life, revolt is life) is also the recurring phrase of Şivan Perwer's famous song *Serhildan Jîyan e* in his 1988 album (2012 [1988]).

Establish Kurdistan!) in Turkish are chanted by dancers rhythmically to sequence of steps.<sup>70</sup>

The orderliness that had been prevailing since the first gathering in the square also stepped in during the organization of tight marching formation. Creating a highly charged atmosphere, collective walking of people to the Newroz area was identical to a protest march. The most salient characteristic of the crowd awaiting parade to start, without question, was the stentorian singing and chanting of slogans as well as loudness of *tililîs*, cheers and whistles. Screaming national, political and martial willpower out seemed to be one of the primary activities at this point. A wide repertoire of slogans appeared, thus revealing people's sentiments regarding experience of war and resistance. Even though different slogans chanted by different groups at the same time, together with various sounds of cheers and applauds, rose to a clamor time to time within the long and large crowd, I was able to catch the following slogans (mostly in Turkish), in addition to a few aforementioned ones, under strict police surveillance during the march:

<i>Geliyor geliyor Apocular geliyor</i>	Coming, coming, Apoists <sup>71</sup> are coming
<i>Her Kürt gerilla doğar</i>	Every Kurd is born as guerrilla
<i>PKK halktır, halk burada</i>	PKK is the people, the people is here
<i>Jin, jiyan, azadî (in Kurdish)</i>	Woman, life, freedom
<i>Halkın H'si Partizanın P'si Gerillanın G'si HPG</i>	H of Halk (People) P of Partisan G of Guerrilla HPG
<i>Baskılar bizi yıldırılmaz</i>	Oppressions cannot overawe us
<i>Kürdistan faşizme mezar olacak</i>	Kurdistan will be grave to fascism

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<sup>70</sup> In addition to this recently invented "guerrilla dance," there are several traditional dance patterns known as *govenda gerila* (guerrilla dance) or *govenda şoreşgeran* (dance of revolutionists). According to one of my interviewees who is a professional dancer and dance teacher, these dances and their accompanied songs caused a deep polarity in Kurdish society after a number of video images in which Kurdish guerrillas in the mountains dancing and singing in these patterns are widely disseminated in the region through Internet. Some people and institutions in the region (particularly official ones that are affiliated with the state) removed these particular styles from their repertoires whereas many people (particularly youngsters) supporting Kurdish political movement intensely promoted them (Sidar, personal communication, November 16, 2013).

<sup>71</sup> A small organization, which is a breakaway from Federation of Revolutionary Youth (Dev-Genç) in Turkey, founded under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan in Ankara, Turkey in 1974, preceded the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Later on, core members and recruits of this organization became known as "Apocular" in Turkish in the meaning of "followers of Apo" or "Apoists."

Similar to singing and dancing, collective walking and shouting has always been an enticing method for communities not only to display but also to feel and test the strength of cohesion as far as possible. From this standpoint, dancing, singing, and equally important acts of walking and shouting together with other acoustic actions such as clapping and ululating under the concept of celebration that has been acknowledged as a symbol of resistance represent, to a certain extent, the embodiment of charm of power and assertiveness. Offering a complete protection, safety and power, the crowd creates a captivating atmosphere that decreases the degree of hesitation in participating and encourages visceral partaking. Major actions of this atmosphere such as dancing, walking, singing, shouting, and many other visible and audible gestures actually exist along with the undercurrent of anger and resentment, and they, being extensions of an only fundamental impetus, necessarily substitute each other.

Contrary to deterioration of time perception resulting from indulging in carnival-like setting, behavior pattern of the crowd shows strong inclination toward time management in Newroz celebrations. The celebrations, at least throughout congregation and parade, are formed to prioritize well-organized collective performance to demonstrate and announce discontentment to the powerful rather than broadly accepted festivity standards such as relaxation, flexibility, and variety in appearance, behavior, and food and drink. The parade throwing uniformity of the celebrations into sharp relief ended when people reached to security checkpoints set up upon arrival in the Newroz area; and no sooner had the majority of people walking in procession passed through checkpoints than the third and the longest phase of the celebrations officially started.

### **3.6.5 The bonfire celebrations**

The platform set up at the corner of a rather large area drew attention to the political gravity of the celebrations from the very start with several banners on both sides and above along with snowy mountains behind; and the abundance of flags and posters among audiences that were closest to the platform along with red, yellow, and green balloons strung above the platform and area were confirming this image (see figure 3.6). The entire area was alive with people, many of whom dressed in traditional clothes, from all age groups in contrast to square congregation and parading dominated mostly by youngsters. The platform backed with a large banner saying

*Newroz Pîroz be!* (Happy Newroz!). On the right side of the platform was there a banner saying in Turkish *Teslimiyet ihanete, direniş zafere götürür* (Surrender leads to betrayal as resistance leads to victory), a statement attributed to Ali Çiçek, one of the four PKK detainees who died on hunger strike started on July 14, 1982 in Diyarbakır Prison. There were two banners attracting attention on the left side of the platform; as one of them was saying in Kurdish *Rabe nevîye Kawa, geş bike dîsa agirê Newrozê û bişe wîfîne zalimê* (Rise up grandchild of Kawa, blaze like Newroz fire and burn the tyrant) the other was specifying Kurds' political demands in Turkish such as recognition and statutory guarantee of Kurdish identity, Kurdish language, right to self-determination, political status, and right of organization. A significant number of loudspeakers arranged in tiers on both upper sides of the platform were saying a lot about the self-assertion and ambition of making these visual messages heard as well. Even if one who was oblivious to the context directly had come to the Newroz area without joining congregation and marching and had had to pass through checkpoint she would have possibly treated the whole event as a public meeting organized for a serious protest. This picture also broadly shows Kurds' strong inclination toward taking the rare opportunity in an effective way to collectively voice their existence.



**Figure 3.6 :** Hakkâri Newroz area and stage. Photo by the author

Having been allotted mostly to speeches and announcements, the first two and a half hours of the celebration program did not include live music. A local music group comprising a number of guerrilla-like dressed young girls who are the students and amateur musicians of Feqîyê Teyran<sup>72</sup> Cultural and Art Center, — which was

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<sup>72</sup> Feqîyê Teyran is a 17<sup>th</sup> century Kurdish writer and poet.

founded within the structure of Municipality of Hakkâri in December 2011 — and two other local musicians, one of whom singing in *dengbêji*<sup>73</sup> style, offered their performances respectively at the end of the celebrations. Certain songs selected by the organization committee, on the other hand, played during the periods between numerous speeches and announcements. The first song that welcomed people entering in the area, accordingly, was highly meaningful within the context and course of celebrations. The song *Em in Apocî*, of which lyrics are translated below, sung by music group Koma Nergiza Botan (Group Narcissus of Botan) not only rhythmically and melodically but also verbally and discursively sustained the emotions and opinions that had found voice in the slogans of those walking to the area:

<i>Kî dibêje bila bêje</i>	Whoever says whatever
<i>Em bêçar in ne çar çapulcî</i>	We are neither helpless nor four marauders <sup>74</sup>
<i>Em dimeşin bi milyona</i>	We are walking with million
<i>Em kurd in em in Apocî</i>	We are Kurds we are Apoites <sup>75</sup>
<i>Bijî Kurdistan</i>	Long live Kurdistan
<i>Serhed û Botan,</i>	Serhed and Botan
<i>Her bijî Amed</i>	Long live Amed
<i>Paytexta Kurdan</i>	Capital of Kurds
<i>Cizîra Botan</i>	Cizîra Botan
<i>Em şagirtên mamoste ne, mamoste</i>	We are disciples of master, master Anter <sup>76</sup>
<i>Anter</i>	
<i>Em ciwanên Öcalan in, serok û rêber</i>	We are youngsters of Öcalan, leader and guide

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<sup>73</sup> As mentioned in chapter 2 in detail, reciting stories inspired by life and nature in Kurdish lands in a distinctive singing style, *dengbêji* (sung narrative tradition) and *Dengbêj*-s (traditional bards), as culture bearers, are one of the most important characteristics of Kurdish society.

<sup>74</sup> The whole sentence makes reference to the frequent portrayal of PKK militants as deluded, helpless, and marauder by official authorities and media. Having derived from the Turkish word “çapulcu,” the word “çapulcî” (marauder) emerged as a result of phonetic change.

<sup>75</sup> Due to a similar phonetic change, the Turkish word “Apocu” has past to Kurdish as “Apocî”

<sup>76</sup> Publishing papers, journals, writing articles, dramas and a dictionary in Kurdish language in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Musa Anter, a Kurdish writer, poet, and activist, was one of the most influential figures in revival of Kurdish political movement in Turkey after a long silence. He was murdered by an unknown assailant in Diyarbakır in 1992.

<i>Ez zanime heya herê der</i>	I know till the end
<i>Ev zanime heya herê der</i>	I know this till the end
<i>Bijî Kurdistan</i>	Long live Kurdistan
<i>Serhed û Botan</i>	Serhed and Botan
<i>Her bijî Amed</i>	Long live Amed
<i>Paytexta Kurdan</i>	Capital of Kurds
<i>Cizîra Botan</i>	Cizîra Botan
<i>Bijî Kurdistan</i>	Long live Kurdistan
<i>Bijî Gerîla yê</i>	Long live Gerilla
<i>Şêrê çiyay</i>	Lions of mountains
<i>Tev hev re bejîn</i>	Sing together
<i>Serok Öcalan, sayın Öcalan</i>	Leader Öcalan, venerable <sup>77</sup> Öcalan
<i>Disa dubare sayın Öcalan</i>	Repeat again, venerable Öcalan
<i>Car din dubare birêz Öcalan</i>	Once again, venerable Öcalan
<i>Bijî Kurdistan</i>	Long live Kurdistan
<i>Serhed û Botan</i>	Serhed and Botan
<i>Her bijî Amed</i>	Long live Amed
<i>Paytexta Kurdan</i>	Capital of Kurds
<i>Cizîra Botan</i>	Cizîra Botan

The logical continuity as well as stylistic similarity between the end of parading and the beginning of bonfire celebrations, as suggested by the song's lyrics above and its notational representation below (figure 3.7), was striking. The main difference between the two parts was the point from which the pretensions were vocalized. The music boomed out from the stage in a slogan-like song form was a persistent and confident proclamation of a nation's values and passions. Similar to slogan chanting, the song, which is performed by a group of singers, retains its tune mostly on one pitch with confirmative repetition on the one hand as it orally rejects all imputed identifications and characterizations before making its own definitions clamorously on the other. Its highly rhythmic, techno/electronic style beats are unquestionably helpful in creating this severe but impassioned character of the song.

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<sup>77</sup> The Turkish title "sayın" is used before last names as a matter of protocol or courtesy. A few public usage of it for Abdullah Öcalan, by mistake or on purpose, have been highly controversial in Turkey.

♩=110

Voice

Kî di bê je bi la bê je em bê çar in ne çar ça pul cî

6

Vo.

ne çar ça pul cî em di me şin bi mil yo na em kur din em in a po

12

Vo.

cî em in a po cî

**Figure 3.7 :** The notational representation of the first four lines forming the first verse of the song *Em in Apocî*.

After a certain point, however, all-embracing and relatively idealized political ambiance that had been going on since the congregation at the square turned into a more formal setting centered on current politics. The song was interrupted a few times for Kurdish and Turkish announcements of a number of political figures and activists taking part in celebrations such as two MPs and the mayor of Hakkâri Province, provincial chairman of BDP, a member of provincial council, central district chairman of BDP, regional representative of Human Rights Association İHD (*İnsan Hakları Derneği*), spokeswoman of BDP woman council.

The whole bonfire celebrations, especially after another collective singing of *Çerxa Şoreşê* had marked the beginning of official celebrations, were mostly followed this procedure which announcements and public speeches interrupted music, thereby disrupting line dances formed among audience. The performance of *Çerxa Şoreşê* in the area was partly the last action of people as absolute leader of celebrations. Growing up in a community of which dance is a cultural characteristic, people in the area openly showed discontent with this process particularly during interruptions whereas they cheered delightedly as the volume of music was turned up again. People in bonfire celebrations seemed more willing to enjoy the occasion per se, as opposed to two previous phases of the celebrations, than to express resistance and anger. This might suggest that Newroz may not be seen completely as a means to express opposition, and for people, there is a tendency to scale down the intensity of protest, and festivity itself, in its literal sense, is the focal point of the community at this step of the celebrations. This perspective might give rise to a second thought, on

the other hand, that people do not enjoy a protest in which they do not engage, and they turn toward dancing both to keep their dynamism steady and to remain within their own romanticized imagery of protest and resistance while they ostensibly accompany actual political discourse continuing on the stage. The politicization of Newroz celebrations in turn does not bother people of Hakkâri as long as their actions remain as the main determinant of celebrations, and yet the scope of their actions shows that they do not want to relinquish the exultant side of celebrations to monotony of daily politics.

Relegation of present-day political and social issues to a secondary level on the part of people whose role is limited to that of audience's with the beginning of bonfire celebrations reveals that collective participation in the celebrations under a highly symbolic political atmosphere and discourse is sufficiently a meaningful remark in the sense of present-day politics, and it mainly constitutes the essence of Newroz spirit for the majority of people in Hakkâri. Slogans and songs are relatively abstract and symbolic structures and they pave the way for collective participation and expression. Furthermore, specification and particularization of slogans, songs, dances and other related activities by present-day political discourse poses a threat to collective joy and exhilaration. Bearing this in mind, I would like to note here that the crux of the Newroz celebrations, lighting the bonfire at the center of the area (see figure 3.8) as one of the most symbolic actions of Kurdish resistance movement, takes place at this phase of the celebrations.



**Figure 3.8 :** Lighting the Newroz bonfire. Photo by the author

Quite apart from music, which seems to be one of the reasons that gathers and keeps people in the area, bonfire celebrations involve a number of politically resonant protocols such as processional greeting of selected leading political figures who are under custody by reciting their names, and announcing congratulatory messages forwarded from political detainees, local union representatives, and many other civil initiatives, organizations and institutions. In addition, invitation to concrete political action seems to be one of the critical parts of this ceremony on the part of politicians and activists; people are asked to sign a petition addressed to parliament calling for Kurdish cultural and political rights — which are also summarized on the large banner near the platform — before they leave the area, and they are also informed about a recently formed political platform comprising a plenty of associations and civil society organizations. A number of brief speeches delivered by politicians and activists such as the mayor and one of the MPs of Hakkâri, spokeswoman of BDP woman council as well as other speeches on behalf of organization committee and on behalf of Confederation of Public Laborers' Unions KESK (*Kamu Emekçileri Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*) among which various songs or parts of songs are placed.

Regarding Newroz as the day on which people of Kurdistan demolished slavery, speeches — some in Kurdish and some in Turkish — mostly incorporate a discourse over Newroz's connection with Kawa legend and insurgency, and attribute a symbol of insubordination to Newroz bonfire by referring to numerous self-immolation cases in the history of Kurdish political movement. Detentions of Kurdish activists and despotic policies of the government as well as Kurdish demands for identity, language, and political freedom are also important matters of concern to each speaker. Selection of songs intermittently playing between speeches, on the other hand, is limited to eight songs played somewhat randomly; two of them, Roj's *Özgür Bir Tutsak* (A Free Captive) and Halit Bilgiç's *Bu Halk Yılmayacak* (This People will not be Deterred) — which was also used as one of the campaign songs in general elections that took place on June 11, 2011 — were folk-rock style songs in Turkish as the lyrics of the former allude to Abdullah Öcalan and those of the latter focus mostly on peace and fellowship of peoples as well as the revenge for tyranny. The other six songs that are in Kurdish, Mesut Geverî's *Gever*, Sîmar's *Zap*, Koma Awazê Çiya's (Group Melody of Mountain) — which is a music group formed by

Kurdish guerrillas — *Oremar*,<sup>78</sup> Aynur Doğan’s rendition of *Keçe Kurdan* (a Şivan Perwer song)<sup>79</sup> as well as Kawa’s *Newroz*, and Aram Tigran’s *Newroz* sung by another singer, relatedly echo combative and patriotic expressions in a celebratory folk-pop style in both implicit and explicit manners. A key point here is that disregarding the speeches and sometimes even songs playing loudly, people, as they did throughout the square congregation, produce their own performance spheres by forming plentiful large and small dance lines in the area and dancing to songs that they sing. As one of my interviewees notes, “If we do not create our own setting, we cannot enjoy. ... Slogans, after a while, bore us. We go and make our own corner, and hang out there. Otherwise it is not entertaining” (Mihemed, personal communication, March 28, 2012).

In sum, a substantial part of the bonfire celebrations, essentially, bears witness to an implicit competition between the stage that holds the mechanism of sound producing, thus controlling area’s discourse and the crowd downgraded from taking a leading part to the position of audience. The structure of the bonfire celebrations, which is based on a predetermined schedule conducted from the stage, restricts and suspends potentiality of organized and collaborative act in the area, thereby causing people’s activities mostly discontinuous here unlike those in congregation and parading. People were warned, for example, not to shout slogans other than the ones that had been predetermined by organization committee. That the distinction between audience and stage becomes apparent at this level of the celebrations brings out the audiences’ tendency to refuse this distinction as well as their dissatisfaction with the role that falls to them. Audiences’ desire for maintaining their position as key determinant in the progress of celebration is evident. They want to continue with

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<sup>78</sup> For a detailed textual, musical, and visual analysis of the song *Oremar* and its video, see chapter 6.

<sup>79</sup> Symbolizing the role of women in Kurdish political movement, *Keçe Kurdan* (Kurdish Girl) is one of the most critical songs in Turkey’s recent history of Kurdish musical recordings. The song, whose original name was “Girîng e Jin û Mêr Tev Rabin” (Great Uprise of All Women and Men), was first released in 1977 in Şivan Perwer’s third album entitled “Herne Pêş.” Having been repopularized by Aynur Doğan (2004) in her first album released in 2004, the song was widely acclaimed in Turkey. In 2005, on the other hand, the song caused the prohibition of the entire album, and the impoundment of all its copies on the grounds that it invites Kurdish girls to mountains to fight, thereby distributing propaganda of an armed organization (Url-2). Kalan Müzik, the record label releasing the album, counterclaimed and succeeded in lifting the ban on the album six months later, proving that there was no element of crime in the song (Url-3). In 2009, Adana province’s office of the chief prosecutor instituted legal proceedings against Mehmet Arslan, the executive editor of the radio station *Dünya Radyo*, for broadcasting the song on the radio (Url-4); he later was acquitted on all counts (Url-5).

their oppositional and identity-related claims in a participative and enjoyable fashion based on singing, shouting, and dancing. Lighting the bonfire, being regarded as an action that belongs to them, is also one of the reasons for people to remain in the area. The organization committee on the stage, on the other hand, is responsible for conveying political messages as much as possible and making necessary adjustments to keep people in the area. Even though audiences approach their previous position that they actually desire for after local musicians had taken to the stage following a number of speeches the dominance of the sound of stage continued. Still, bonfire celebrations that feature a show of strength with the crowd and impressive stage and sound system always contained a tacit rivalry between people and political elites represented on the stage.

### **3.6.6 Insights into Newroz celebrations in Hakkâri**

Being positioned at the center of a guerrilla warfare that has been lasting for almost 30 years with a fluctuating intensity and Republic of Turkey's political, economic, and military pressure, and bearing deep-rooted psychological and social traces of war and political conflict as well as enduring the pain of them, the majority of Hakkâri people, pertinent to the dominant Kurdish political rationale, look on Newroz celebrations not as a suspension of ongoing psychology of war but as a temporal zone to declare righteousness of their case. The entire celebrations are filled with both ideological politics — the greatest part of which is expressed in dancing, singing, *tilîlî*-s, cheers, slogans, apparel, flags, and banners — and practical politics that are mostly framed in speeches. In this regard, as the incident occurred during the travel demonstrates, it would be theoretically convenient to correlate Newroz celebrations with existing sociopolitical and cultural conditions in the region. Music listening as a practice of defiance, remembrance of passed pains, and display of resoluteness about the future suggests that strict state authority is not only limited to way in which Kurds celebrate Newroz. That the key features of songs (political and slogan-like) that play do not change neither before nor during Newroz celebrations also sets an example for demonstrating Newroz as an event that is mostly outside of a festivity.

### 3.7 Conclusion

As demonstrated in this chapter, Newroz, as undoubtedly one of the most significant phenomena of the recent Kurdish political history, is an observably influential concept in the construction and manifestation of the dominant narrative describing resistance-based national identity for Kurds in Turkey. The adapted mythological account of the Newroz, in addition, creates a national identity that shaped by Kurds' perennial idea of resistance. In this way, Newroz is, as Stone [C. R.] (2008) (drawing on Chatterjee) formulates in describing Baalbeck Festival in Lebanon, the "classicization of tradition and the appropriation of the popular" (p. 25).

Festivity, unity, and togetherness evoked by the concept of mass celebration, on the other hand, rapidly transform into political energy imbued with a strong national narrative in Newroz celebrations. Politically and ethnically marked music and dance, in this context, are two of the most important components that establish Newroz celebrations as a powerful national ritual in the lives of Kurds. "Memory ... is at the heart of nationalist struggles," writes Hodgkin and Radstone (2006, p. 169). Habitually being woven into phonic manners of expression such as slogan chanting, whistling, and clapping, all of which signify defiance, music and dance have, as several examples about music listening practices and repertory of sloganic songs have shown, a pivotal role in the reproduction of Kurdish "public memory," which is, to use Hodgkin and Radstone's words (2006), "inseparable from discourses of national identity" (p. 170). Still, the emphasis on national character is more evident than the emphasis on nation-building. Making way for the performative authorization of music that validates leadership, martyrdom, past afflictions and oppressions, commitment, and determination, Newroz is one of the most important concepts for Kurds in Turkey that provides them with the articulation of dignity, distinctive identity, authenticity, and unity, which are listed among "key motifs and themes" of nationalism by Smith (2009, pp. 62-63).

As shown in the chapter, Newroz celebrations that took place in both Diyarbakır and Hakkâri, adequately reflect the impact of the long-standing warfare and conflict on the Kurdish-populated region of Turkey. This is not only result from the mythological and national connotations of the concept of Newroz but also from the state's atrocious suppression of Newroz celebrations itself, particularly in the early 1990s. The format of the celebrations, especially bonfire celebrations, in both cities

has many similar aspects. Providing more opportunity for organized and collective behavior basically because of its low population compared to Diyarbakır, celebrations in Hakkâri expand into a larger space and time, in which association of Newroz with collective defiance, practical politics, anger, pain rather than with festivity become more evident. Strikingly exemplifying the combination of three important components of Kurdish musico-politics, dance, songs, and slogans, congregation was the point in which the political and cultural anger of Kurds against the power was intensely heated. Parading with slogans is the second phase of the celebrations where this anger expressed through sonorous atmosphere of slogans, whistles, and *tilîlî*-s. Two phases in which people timely organized themselves without any particular directive are replaced by bonfire celebrations as the third phase of the Newroz day where the musico-political competition between stage and people occurs.

The overall picture of the celebrations based on detailed observation suggests that people make every effort to create their own celebratory space, which many times reveals the contention between audience performance and stage performance. Summarizing the current academic view, in this context, Miller (2012) writes:

the process of nation making as a contest between multiple national imaginaries originating from both top-down (the state) and bottom-up (the citizenry) sources of agency and propagated through intertextual representations, of which cultural performance is a primary and particularly efficacious example. (p. 175)

Of value in this connection were the bonfire celebrations in which competition between the dominating stage and people in the area is clearly felt in Newroz celebrations in both cities. In my analysis, both the authoritative position of the stage that centers on music and speeches and the people as a major determinant of the celebrations that center on music and dance propagate the discourse of resistance against the greater authority by this intense rivalry. The audience's competitive behavior of this sort will be also discussed from another angle in chapter 5.

Newroz celebrations show how warfare and conflict prevail upon social and cultural life of Kurds in Turkey. Music, music-related acts, and dance in Newroz celebrations, in this sense, are central tools shaping the concept of Newroz in which political claims and demands associated heavily with Kurds' resistance, and partly with their nation-building. Constantly being revealed by musical expression, many

characteristics of expressive enactments regarding Kurds' political struggles such as collective behavior in timely and militaristic manner, and mobilization efforts of the political movement show the impact of Kurdish nationalistic resistance on socio-cultural texture. What follows in the next chapter is a description of another musico-political culture on which Kurdish liberation movement rests.

#### **4. PROTEST IN JOY, PROTEST ENJOYED: FESTIVAL AND POLITICAL FIERCENESS IN DERSIM**

The key of mountains, the land of mystics, the ancient soil of freedom and fire; return to Dersim to be purified, to cherish, and to become liberated!<sup>80</sup> (Munzur Kültür ve Doğa Festivali [Munzur Festival of Culture and Nature], 2011)

My second trip to Diyarbakır was on the 27<sup>th</sup> July of 2011, this time to meet my friend Azad with whom I had agreed on traveling together to Dersim (present-day Tunceli), in which the annual Munzur Festival of Culture and Nature was to held for the 11<sup>th</sup> (unofficially 12<sup>th</sup>) times that year. After staying overnight in Diyarbakır, we set off for Dersim, which is almost 140 miles away, very early in the morning. While the breathtaking landscape formed by grandeur of the mountains, brightly shining Munzur River, and the countless shades of green was shaping my first impression about nature as we drove into the region, I felt my increasing curiosity to explore the culture, conceivably related to nature I was observing, in which the epigraph of the chapter was set as the motto of the forthcoming four-day long Munzur Festival of Culture and Nature. What kind of link might that nature and culture I was about to get familiar with have had with the spiral of violence and war that Dersim has had for years? How have this long-lasting violence and that nature witnessing the war that causes this violence been revealed in the music and dance of Dersim people? By what kinds of emotions are the employment of politics and war governed in music and dance performances? This chapter will seek to answer these questions in the context of Kurdish liberation movement's relation to ethnic and sociopolitical texture of the region.

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<sup>80</sup> The text was translated from Turkish by the author.

#### 4.1 Dersim and the Complex Issue of Identity

Dersim<sup>81</sup> is the region in central Eastern Turkey surrounded by Erzincan province to the north and west, Elazığ province to the south and west and Bingöl province to the east. The name Dersim was Turkified as Tunceli in 1936, by which an absolute commitment shown to subduing the province hitherto had not been completely brought under central government control, as one of many results of assimilative politics directed against ethnic and religious minorities existing in the Republic of Turkey. The village formerly known as Kalan — also known as Mameki or Mamekiye — was designated as the capital of Tunceli province and its name was also changed to Tunceli.

Dersim, a rugged and mountain fastness region with narrow valleys, deep ravines and lots of rivers and their arms, is arguably the most distinctive province in today's Turkey in regard to its ethnic composition, spiritual and religious character, linguistic individuality, sociopolitical structure, and folklore. Popular opinion, both etic and emic, suggests that Dersim is a part of Kurdish-inhabited areas, and Dersim people are ethnically Kurdish whose only difference from the remaining Kurds is the religious sect (Alevism)<sup>82</sup> that they belong to. In his detailed account of social, religious, and historical aspects of Dersim region written at the beginning of the twentieth century, orientalist L. Molyneux-Seel suggests that he collected enough information in his two-month visit in Dersim to support the theory put forward by Armenian bishop of Kighi that Dersim people are of pure Armenian race, and uses the term *Dersimli*, which means the native of Dersim, for Dersim people (1914, p. 49). However, he made plentiful references to Kurdishness of Dersim people and Dersim region as a part of Kurdish land:

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<sup>81</sup> The boundaries of Dersim were larger than those of today's Tunceli province. Before 1936, southern part of Erzincan Province, northwestern part of Bingöl Province, northeastern part of Elazığ Province, northeastern part of Malatya Province, and eastern part of Sivas Province were deemed within the boundaries of Dersim region.

<sup>82</sup> Alevism is a syncretic and heterodox religious formation that is regarded as an extreme breakaway from Shi'a Islam. Along with several fundamental tenets of Shi'a Islam such as adherence to the Twelve Imams, it incorporates various elements of ancient pre-Islamic religions such as Shamanism, Mithraism, Zoroastrianism, Yazdânism, and Christianity (White, 1995, p. 3).

The Armenian bishop of Kighi, who has made a long study of the *Dersim Kurds*, maintains that they are of pure Armenian race...

... The Dersim villages are very superior to the collection of mud hovels which pass for villages in other parts of *Kurdistan* [emphases added]. (L. Molyneux-Seel, 1914, p. 49)

As for ethnic identity, the knottiest problem for Dersim people and for individuals who want to discover Dersim and its people is finding the right term for their own independent existence. A general inference can be drawn from the arguments of L. Molyneux-Seel that Dersim is one of the many regions in today's Turkey that used to have a considerable Armenian population. As Arakelova has indicated, language, religion, and culture of Dersim people have abundant in traces of Armenian influence (1999, p. 398). According to both researchers, Dersim people also had spoken Armenian before the massacre and expulsion of Armenians in 1915 from the Eastern provinces of today's Turkey until the 1930s when the last Armenians left the region, and Armenians who preferred to stay on their native lands voluntarily converted to Alevism (Arakelova, 1999, p. 398; Molyneux-Seel, 1914, p. 67). Kaya, who has presented one of the latest comprehensive studies on this matter, conversely, regards Zazas as people who constitute a distinguishing community within Kurds and excludes Kurds both as intruders and influencers as he emphasizes the distinct character of Zaza region:

The Zaza region is an area on which Persians, Armenians, Arabs, Mongols and Turks have left their marks. But these groups have been perceived as intruders and oppressors. Throughout history, the local population has successfully fought against intruders to preserve its distinctive character. They are also very uninfluenced by modernity and are associated with an agricultural lifestyle. (2011, p. 3)

Similarly, Armenians use the term Zaza Kurds to “distinguish them as a specific group from a common Kurdish background”, as suggested by Arakelova (1999, p. 398).

Even though Dersimness provides an honorable sense of identity for Dersim people, and *Dersimli* or *Dersimi* seems to connote all characteristics that Dersim people have, it also hides them all since none of them is explicit, and furthermore, replacement of Dersim with Tunceli in 1936 has been detracting the effect from the word Dersim creates per se ever since. The term, Alevi or Kızılbaş<sup>83</sup> (other spellings

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<sup>83</sup> The term ‘Kızılbaş’ (red head), derived from the red felt hat worn by the first Alevis and often taken

occur: Kizilbash, Qizilbash), employed by many Dersim people, on the other hand, comes from the religious sect (Alevism) that a large majority of Dersim people adhered to. Demographic predominance of Alevi in Dersim, in addition, provides the province with one of the particular distinguishing features in Turkey. Nonetheless, in defining Dersim people's ethnic entity, it is barely adequate by itself because Alevism is also practiced in various parts of Turkey, and the religious beliefs, practices and ethos of Dersim Alevi, which has various Christian and pagan traces, widely differ from those of central and western Anatolian Alevi. In recent years, many Dersim people, particularly the ones living in diaspora, esteem the word Zaza for the construction of ethnic belonging, with reference to the language spoken, above all other terms. However, Zaza is spoken not only by people living in Dersim but also by some people residing in other provinces remaining outside Dersim. Many Zazas also speak Kurmanji (Northern Kurdish) fluently, which is quite influential in the entire region. There are also a number of Dersim people speaking Kurmanji in addition to the fact that many Zaza people who follow Sunni sect of Islam, the sect followed by approximately 75 percent of the Kurds, live in neighbor provinces. An overall impression of mine suggests that while having a special affinity with Kurdishness, Dersim people attach great importance to emphasizing their belief system as both different from that of Alevi Turks and that of Sunni Zazas or Sunni Kurds, thereby making an effort to construct their distinct identity.

Terminology used by scholars on this issue has yet to be compromised as well. Not only do insiders have a disagreement but also outsiders as well as many scholars who carry out research into Kurds, Alevi culture, Dersim, and Zazas do not seem to meet each other halfway on giving a descriptive name to Dersim region and Dersim people. Arakelova, for instance, selects "Zaza" as the most suitable term (1999), and Kaya prefers the term "Zaza Kurds" (2011, *passim*), while Bruinessen, disregarding for their struggle for ethnic self-definition, uses the term "Kurdish Alevi" for all Alevi people who speak Kurmanji and Zaza without drawing any conclusion that they are essentially Kurdish (1997, p. 2), and McDowall, who considers Dersim a part of north-western Kurdistan with Zaza-speaking population, chooses the term "Dersim Kurds" (2004, p. 10, p. 208).

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as synonymous with Alevi, is mostly used pejoratively in Turkey.

In an anonymously written report (*Dersim Raporu*)<sup>84</sup> that was made public in 2010, the Republic of Turkey, as the main hegemonic power across the region, also seems to have been in confusion on this issue. Whereas there is a strong tendency to see Dersim people as citizens who have forgotten their Turkishness, several rationalizations are made towards the association of Dersim people with Kurdishness:

Until the Tanzimat (Reform) period, Kurds' minor local actions and major brigandage movements in eastern provinces inhabited by *Kurds* were disciplined by force. Towards *Dersim that shows the similar disposition*, on the other hand, this method was found inconvenient and a muddle along policy was followed. (Çalışlar, 2010, p. 153; emphases added)

I am neither willing to invent a new term nor to use a prepared one, thereby simply using the phrase "Dersim people." On the other hand, having a particular regard for Dersim people who still use the word Dersim for their native land, I would rather use "Dersim," with the exception of a few official designations, than use today's name "Tunceli."

Language is another issue that is more problematic than it seems. The language spoken in Dersim province and in some parts of other provinces such as Erzincan, Elazığ, Bingöl, Muş, Sivas, and Erzurum is named as Kirmanjki (other terms occur: Alevica, Dersimki, Dimilki, Northern Zaza, So-Bê, Zaza, Zazaki, Zonê Ma) by Ethnologue.<sup>85</sup> According to Ethnologue, Kirmanjki is one of the two member languages of a macrolanguage called Zaza. The other member of Zaza, on the other hand, is Dimli<sup>86</sup> (also named as Dimilî, Southern Zaza, Zaza, Zazakî), which is spoken mainly in Elazığ, Bingöl, and Diyarbakır provinces, upper courses of Fırat (Euphrates), Kızılırmak, and Murat rivers. Bruinessen's detailed description casts light on Dersim people's numerous designations of their language:

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<sup>84</sup> *Dersim Raporu*, estimated to be written in the 1930s, and printed only a hundred as "confidential," "private," and "under the record," was discovered in the Library of İzzettin Çalışlar, one of the commanders of the Turkish War of Independence.

<sup>85</sup> Ethnologue, founded by a distinguished linguist Richard S. Pittman, is an encyclopedic reference work cataloging all of the world's 6,912 known living languages. See the Url <http://www.ethnologue.com>.

<sup>86</sup> Dimli and Kirmanjki are mostly used interchangeably. In practice, there appears to be only one language with slight differences among various regions but different designations by their speakers.

When speaking Zaza, Dersimis often refer to themselves as *Kirmanc* and to their language as *Kirmancki*... When speaking Turkish or other foreign languages, both may in fact translate these names as Kurd and Kurdish, which appears to support the Kurdish nationalist viewpoint. However, the Dersimis (when speaking Zaza) call the Kurmanci language *Kirdasi*, and they refer to the Sunni Kurdish tribes as *Kır* or *Kur*. Their eastern Zaza-speaking but Sunni neighbours, in the districts astride the Murad river, are called neither *Kur* nor *Kirmanc* but *Zaza* and their language *Zazaki*, although it is practically identical with the *Kirmancki* spoken in Dersim. Another term used by some Zaza speakers (mostly in the Siverek region, but apparently here and there in Dersim as well) is *Dimli*... (1997, p. 17)

Since it is the only common word that suggests both Kirmanjki and Dimli, and the ethnic description is inclined to be made with it, Zaza will be used as an umbrella term in this study to indicate the language spoken by supposedly all Dimli and Kirmanjki speakers. There are also speakers of Northern Kurdish, so-called Kurmanji,<sup>87</sup> (other spellings and terms occur: Kermancî, Kirmancî, Kurdi, Kurdî, Kurmancî) in Dersim province and of course, almost all Kurmanji or Zaza speakers are bilinguals since these languages have been subject to assimilatory pressure from official language Turkish for years.

In spite of easily perceivable similarities, Zaza fairly differs from Kurmanji in terms of its grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, hence the main debate is on whether Zaza is a dialect of Kurdish or it is a separate language. In *Ethnologue*, both Zaza and Kurdish are grouped among the Northwestern Iranian languages, and yet Zaza is classified as a separate language group as Zaza-Gorani that includes six other dialects. Linguists such as David N. MacKenzie (1989, p. 541), Viladimir Minorsky (1992), and historians such as Mehrdad R. Izady (pp. 167, 169, 173-74) are of the opinion that Zaza is a separate language whereas specialists such as Hassanpour, who severely expresses his disapproval of the views of those researchers, claims that it is not as essentially different from many dialects of Kurdish as to be classified as a separate language (1992, p. 25). Contradicting views of insiders about their language are no different than those of specialists. There are many Zazas who refuse to accept their language as Kurdish and many others who claim vice versa. For now it seems reasonable to evaluate this subject either within the concept of “daughter languages” (Kottak, 2002) or within Mutlu’s approach stating that Kurdish languages are as

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<sup>87</sup> Kurmanji, one of the main Kurdish languages that has the greatest number of speakers in Turkey, is the most accepted term in academia rather than Northern Kurdish.

diverse in nature as Romance languages (1996, p. 519). It should be taken into account that language is not the only rallying point, and indicative of ethnic and national affinity, and that many people who identify themselves as ethnically Kurdish or Zaza although they themselves do not speak any Kurdish at all.

This study concerns itself with cultural expression caused by conflict, war, and contentious politics, and with the manifestation of feelings into which these concepts blended primarily in and through music and dance, and other related performable acts. Clearly, mapping an anatomy of war under discussion will provide a useful tool for developing a healthier insight for the study.

#### **4.2 Dersim and the Persistence of War and Resistance**

For Dersim people, as it has appeared so on many occasions in the course of the festival, continuous presence of concepts such as resistance, opposition, liberation, and rebellion throughout history is a source of pride that personifies Dersim. Political activism and contentious politics is an inseparable part of Dersim and there is a strong link, possibly going beyond the linguistic, cultural, and historical closeness, with both armed and political struggle of Kurdish resistance movement. However, not only Kurdish political movement but also many radical left wing activist organizations including Marxist, Maoist, Leninist, feminist, labor, and eco-socialist movements have found significant position in Dersim's social and political life, and wide support of Kurdish nationalist and resistance movement is rooted in Leninist approach that considers it within the scope of the right of nations to self-determination. Perhaps significantly, in addition to HPG guerrillas, some left-wing political groups have their own militia in Dersim region.

A number of incidents that have appeared throughout the history of the region clarify the rebellious character of Dersim. Authoritarian attempts to interrupt the partially self-governing status of Dersim, and refusal to accept these enforcements on the part of Dersim people in different periods cover a large portion of Dersim's history. Ottoman oppression of the Alevis on the basis of their allegiance to Safavid Dynasty and Shah Ismail's desire to extend the Shi'a Islam's area of influence ended in a major uprising in 1511, and this was followed by persecution of the followers of Shi'a Islam and the murder of the forty thousand of them in eastern Anatolia (Moosa, 1987, p. 45). In 1874-75, Ottoman Empire made another attempt to bring Dersim

under control by intervening militarily in the area. Even though Ottoman Government succeeded in establishing official buildings, and numerous military units were stationed in various districts, Dersim maintained their position as a semi-independent region, and Dersim people, as Molyneux-Seel claims, continued to “pa[y] no taxes, contributed no soldiers, and plundered and pillaged as they liked” (1914, p. 67). Ottoman State, with the increasing impact of Turkish nationalism boosted by “Young Turks,” went on a campaign to subdue Dersim, and in spite of heavy loses on both sides, Dersim came under the Ottoman rule to a certain extent in 1908. At the end of this military expedition, according to Molyneux-Seel (1914), Dersim people were forced into submission, and “their villages were destroyed, their flocks seized, and they were left in a state of wretched poverty” (p. 67).

Considering the possibility of the supersession of brutal Ottoman rule and its Sunni Islam-based administration by a fairer political establishment in which they can reclaim their self-rule and religious emancipation, the majority of Dersim people vigorously supported Mustafa Kemal and the political and military movement, so-called independence war, led by him. In this period, the Koçgiri rebellion, which is often seen as a pure Zaza, Kızılbaş, or Alevi uprising, broke out in western Dersim in 1920. The rebellion, planned by members of the Society for the Rise of Kurdistan (*Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti*), in Bruinessen’s words, “[t]he first rebellion of an expressly Kurdish nationalist character,” was savagely suppressed in 1921 (1997, p. 12). Bruinessen (1978) attributes the failure of the rebellion to the fact that many Dersim tribal chiefs supported Mustafa Kemal instead of rebel forces (p. 374). Contrary to expectations of the supporters of Mustafa Kemal, on the other hand, the new regime installed by the Republic of Turkey founded in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal, was unwilling to tolerate ethnic and religious diversity within the boundaries of this young nation-state, and Dersim was crushed one more time in 1937-38, notwithstanding that this time there was not a serious rebellious movement in the region. Having determined to put an end to Dersim’s non-Turkish and ungovernable qualities, political and military authorities of Turkey’s one-party regime masterminded a forceful campaign—repressing “all Kurdish social networks of self-expression” — against Dersim dating from the mid-1920s (Beşikçi, 1991, p. 29; Sherzad, 1992, p. 106). It has been argued, as a conclusion that also can be reached on the basis of past experiences of the region, that the tragedy occurred in

1937-38 was one of the sections of an elaborate plan that aims to annihilate the very likelihood of the survival of Kurdish identity (Bruinessen, 1994, p. 145).<sup>88</sup>

Even though the Kurds claim that the consequences of the massacre were much heavier for Dersim people, Bruinessen (1994) evaluating solely official military reports, points out, “10 percent of the population of Tunceli [*sic*] was killed” in 1937 and 1938 (p. 148). In the aftermath of the Dersim massacre, thousands of Dersim people were displaced to different regions of Anatolia under the Law of Resettlement (*İskan Kanunu*) of 1934 to receive more operative and quicker results in assimilation policies (Kieser, 2007, p. 55).

Frequent occurrences of an unresolved conflict throughout history shed some light on today’s political fierceness — which began to mature in the 1950s — in Dersim region. Considering the matter of ethnic or religious identity as subordinate to class struggle, in parallel with the political atmosphere in the 1960s and 1970s in the Western world, all segments of the Kurdish resistance movement — including Dersim — coalesced into radical left movements in Turkey. Many people from Dersim took active part in these political movements. They were also in top positions during the dissociation between Turkish left and Kurdish political movements leading the way to the formation of PKK in the late 1970s (Bruinessen, 1997, p. 14). From the beginning of 1980s to this day, Kurdish resistance movement has been represented predominantly by PKK, and Dersim still has the most pivotal role in this movement.

In addition to the opportunity I might have to draw a comparison with regions inhabited by ethnically designated (Kurmanji speaking and Sunni) Kurds, the current study includes music and dance activities in Dersim region in that in spite of all ethnic, religious and linguistic vagueness, the fact remains that Dersim has been an important region in which Kurdish political movement finds wide support, and a

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<sup>88</sup> As evinced in the Law of Resettlement of 1934, the Republic of Turkey has been following policies of assimilation, as opposed to policies of segregation, to construct national consciousness since its foundation. Governmental actions in Dersim, described as ethnocide by Bruinessen (1994, p. 152), prior and subsequent to 1938 epitomize the way in which obliteration of the elements that have a potential to awaken the Kurds to the Kurdishness, and distribution of the remains of these elements across western Anatolia was put into operation by this law. Today, Kurds of Turkey have same rights as Turks providing they do not reveal their true identity, and forced migration, thereby dissolving Kurdish identity into Turkish majority, has been an important leg in reaching the ideal of a homogeneous nation-state (Saraçoğlu, 2011, p. 56).

significant portion of its community's acceptance of Kurdishness without demur is still largely discernable.

### **4.3 Festival in the middle of Escalating Conflict**

The four-day long Munzur Festival of Culture and Nature that took place between 28<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of July in 2011 was timed to coincide with extreme political and social tensions triggered by the general elections held on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June in Turkey. Following the decision of the Supreme Election Board (YSK) on revoking deputyship of one of the elected independent candidates supported by the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) because of his prior conviction, other BDP deputies announced their boycott of parliament. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of July in Diyarbakır Thursday, the Democratic Society Congress (DTK) declared “democratic autonomy” within Turkey's borders. The same day marked one of the major armed clashes between Turkish Armed forces and PKK's armed wing HPG in the rural part of Silvan district of Diyarbakır province since the end of the PKK's unilateral ceasefire in February 2011. According to official reports, in spite of various speculations, 13 Turkish soldiers and seven HPG guerrillas died in the clash. The subsequent days witnessed a growing intensity in political accusations, military operations, detentions, and the Dersim Festival that invites Dersim's exiled people to return to native land was held under the shadow of this strained atmosphere.

These developments that came about on political and militaristic grounds unavoidably reverberated through artistic and social life. Dersim-born singer Aynur Doğan and her singing in Kurdish language during her performance at the 18<sup>th</sup> Istanbul Jazz Festival on the following day of the Silvan incident raised a storm of protest among audience. Aynur Doğan's performance was cut short and she was forced to leave the stage to the accompaniment of slogans such as “martyrs will not die, homeland will not be divided”, and Turkish national anthem sung by some protesters (Url-6). By drawing a comparison between this incident, in addition to several of others eventuated in murder, and the one that was experienced by Ahmet Kaya, I will seek to deconstruct the picture of populace in Turkey alarmed by any music performance in Kurdish language, or rather an implication of it, in chapter 5, thereby attempting to uncover another dimension of violence involved in the musical

activities of Kurdish resistance. That is to say, regardless of its content or prospective messages, any song sung in Kurdish alone might provoke violence in Turkey.

The intense political atmosphere in the city center of Tunceli was palpable as I roamed the streets on the first day of the festival. Signature campaigns to highlight the issue of mass graves and to reclaim corpses that had not been given to families for years, local newspaper sales by volunteers at cafés, and distribution of leaflets about forthcoming demonstrations or public speeches were just several of many visible political activities in the city. The statue of Seyit Rıza, regarded by Dersim people as the leader of Dersim rebellion in 1937, and the exhibition of photographs behind the statue under the title of “Museum of Shame” displaying the state efforts in destroying the natural, cultural, religious, and ethnic fabric of Dersim were the immobile components of the dynamic political life of the city. Festival-related activities — which were organized not only in Tunceli city center but also in many other counties of the Tunceli province — such as documentary screenings, discussions, panels, workshops, musical and theatrical performances, and exhibitions seemed to increase the existing fervor of the city on this matter. On the other hand, the opposing side was making its presence felt both across the city and region. In addition to security zones, army bases, and checkpoints on all sides of the city, the motto “We are strong, We are brave, We are ready” – Commando,” which is inscribed with gigantic set of letters on the side of a hill where a military unit is located in the south entrance to the city, comprise the elements that represent the authority to which a strong resistance put up in the city.

Concert performances executed in the evenings at the city’s sports stadium, significantly, functioned as the most vital sphere of the festival in which all the energy accumulated throughout daytimes was released effusively, and that being the case, the tone that made the event look like a protest rally never disappeared owing to continuous political speeches on the stage, and flags, banners, posters, V-signs, slogans, and sales of local newspapers among the audience. The politicized character of the concert that took place on the first day of the festival was more evident on account of the opening ceremony. A lengthy section composed of speeches made on behalf of organization committee, by the only female mayor—Tunceli mayor of BDP—out of 81 mayors of provinces in Turkey, by the chairwoman of the Labor Party EMEP (*Emek Partisi*), on behalf of Socialist Party of the Oppressed ESP

(*Ezilenlerin Sosyalist Partisi*), and by one of the BDP MPs of Diyarbakır respectively occupied a significant portion of the evening. Ceaseless military and political offensive of the state for centuries against Dersim, Alevism, and revolutionary and Kurdish identity of the region comprised the main themes of the speeches. Additionally, Dersim's insubordinate character, Dersim people's great determination to struggle to protect its culture, nature,<sup>89</sup> language,<sup>90</sup> and religion, remigration to the native land, the movements of peasants, labors, and women, the righteous and honorable resistance of Kurdish people, the right of education in mother tongue, and the democratic autonomy were among the topics that were frequently verbalized.

As specified in the festival program booklet — printed in Zaza, Kurmanji, and Turkish languages — the opening concert, as well as the concerts held in subsequent days, introduced a great diversity in selection of the musicians. Apart from local artists and children's choir of the municipality, *Koma Gulên Xerzan*, one of the most popular Kurdish music groups singing in Kurmanji, *Grup Yorum*, possibly the most acclaimed band in the domain of Turkish protest music, Sena Dersimi, a Dersim-based artist singing in Zaza who lives in Germany, and two other music bands *Grup Arjen* and *Grup Şiar* singing both Zaza and Turkish performed in the first concert of the festival without abstaining from sending political messages concerning ethnic, religious, natural, cultural, and linguistic matters. A large image of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, which is seemingly a permanent article of the stadium situated on the far right side of the stage, repeatedly came into conflict with this diversity on the stage and with all other activities taking place at the stadium throughout the evening.

Yellow-red-green colored flags and other items existed in great quantities in Newroz celebrations that took place in Diyarbakır were overshadowed by flags, banners, placards, and posters — dominated by red — of many leftist groups, political parties and organizations in this region. Spectators' apparel, in addition, seemed less traditional and ideological than that of in Diyarbakır. Compared to the Newroz celebrations in Diyarbakır, few people in Dersim, except the ones with flags and

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<sup>89</sup> Nature-related protests centered around tens of dams planned to be constructed by the state in the region.

<sup>90</sup> Zaza is in the Unesco's list of endangered languages, and its vitality is determined as vulnerable. See the Url <http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/index.php?hl=en&page=atlasmap>

posters who were affiliated with a political party or organization were wearing guerilla costumes, traditional clothes or accessories such as *pûşî* or strip headbands. Red strip bands representing Alevism prevailed in the area as the most common accessory. The spectators were giving their own performances by singing and forming innumerable dance lines in the spirit of songs performed on the stage. Slow songs increased the number of raised arms with V-sings whereas songs with fast tempo boosted dance groups both large and small.

The climax of the night, on the other hand, was triggered by a large number of leftist activists from People's Front (*Halk Cehpesi*), who had awaited with flags, banners, and posters at the very back of the audience since the beginning of the concert, when they gave Grup Yorum an enthusiastic welcome by marching across the field as the members of the band appeared on the stage. This small ceremony, with which the spectators staged their own show, was followed by the performance of one of the most phenomenal songs of the band on the subject of the mountains of Dersim, and by means of its music and lyrics the verity of war and resistance were immediately felt among audience. The lyrics of the song *Şu Dersim'in Dağları* (That Mountains of Dersim) go as follows:

<i>Şu Dersim'in dağları</i>	That mountains of Dersim
<i>Yiğitlerin odağı</i>	The center of the brave
<i>Güne durmuştu gece</i>	The night turned into day
<i>Canlar pusuya düşünce</i>	When the souls were ambushed
<i>Yırtılıyordu sessizlik</i>	The silence was being broken
<i>Gerillanın mermisiyle</i>	by the bullet of the guerrilla
<i>Dağların ılık yeri</i>	The warmth of the mountains
<i>Kavgamızda yol alıyor</i>	Advancing in our fight
<i>Dersimde doğan güneş</i>	The sun rising in Dersim
<i>Caniklerde çoğalıyor</i>	Mounting up in Caniks <sup>91</sup>
<i>Dersimde doğan güneş</i>	The sun rising in Dersim
<i>Toroslarda çoğalıyor</i>	Mounting up in Taurus <sup>92</sup>
<i>Ölmedi onlar yaşıyor</i>	They are alive, not dead

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<sup>91</sup> Mountains located on the mid-north coast of Turkey.

<sup>92</sup> Mountains located on the mid-south coast of Turkey.

*Bir türküdür Dersim dağlarında* It is a song in the mountains of Dersim  
*Onikiler çoğalıyor* Twelves<sup>93</sup> are mounting up  
*Bir türküdür Dersim dağlarında* It is a song in the mountains of Dersim  
*Gerillalar savaşıyor* Guerrillas are fighting

Even if political implications of the concert were quite observable right from the outset, the solemn performance of this song with its armed struggle-centric lyrics — including the ceremonial act of the audience that leads up to it — was more effective than all the political speeches, gestures and symbols preceding it in constructing a firm conviction that this festival was not merely a field of entertainment but also an emotional venue where people give vent to their anger, where they express their political aspirations, and in Ehrenreich’s words, where their “instinct[s] to playfully overthrow the existing order” arose (2011, p. 89). The manifestation of these intensive sentiments, albeit encouraged by displeasure and anger of the song, on the other hand, did not reflect badly on bodily gestures and sounds conveyed by spectators. They, with the delight promised by collective movement, seemed to be happier, more excited, and more willing to enjoy themselves. As Perman (2010) elaborated in his account of *muchongoyo* dance/drumming performances in Chipinge district in Eastern Zimbabwe, “signs of performance [that] signify ideas of social cooperation, cohesion, or strength... [and] the appraisal of these signs ... led to very evident feelings of joy, excitement, and collective happiness” (p. 446).

A different motive, concept of martyrdom, created a similar picture in the final concert of the festival, this time by means of a song sung by Dersim-based band Grup Munzur in commemoration of İbrahim Kaypakkaya,<sup>94</sup> undoubtedly the most iconic figure in Dersim. Grup Munzur, respected no less than Grup Yorum by Dersim people, was welcomed by huge flags of Federation of Democratic Rights

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<sup>93</sup> The number “twelve” signifies the Twelve Imams, the concept that shares certain similarities with the Twelver or Imami Shi’a Islam — the largest subdivision within Shi’a Islam, to whom divine qualities ascribed in Alevi belief system.

<sup>94</sup> İbrahim Kaypakkaya, the leader of TKP/ML-TİKKO (Communist Party of Turkey/Marxist Leninist-Turkey Workers and Peasants Liberation Army), was one of the most important figures of the idea of communist revolution through guerrilla warfare strategy in Turkey. His ideas, considered Kurdish people as a nation and defended their right to self-determination, were severely criticized by many socialist groups in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Following his capture five days after an armed conflict in which he was actively involved in Dersim, he was tortured for months and killed under interrogation on 18 May 1973 in Diyarbakır prison — notwithstanding his death was reported in official documents as “committing suicide” (İmset, 1992, p. 437).

DHF (*Demokratik Haklar Federasyonu*) as in the same manner as welcoming of Grup Yorum by People's Front, and visual images of Kaypakkaya that had been seen in large quantities in the concerts and other areas of activities since the first day of the festival found its counterpart in the system of organized sounds.



**Figure 4.1 :** A screen capture of the video by DHF showing concert area during the last night of the Munzur Festival of Culture and Nature.<sup>95</sup>

The mournful lyrics and music of the following song *İbrahim Yoldaş* (Comrade İbrahim) displaying admiration for Kaypakkaya's dignity generated a collective empathy among participants for their hero's suffering and agony, and again the ecstasy shaped by collectivity prevailed over melancholy of the song that ignited this collectivity in the first place:

<i>Silah kucağında kanlar içinde</i>	Gun in his arms, lying in blood
<i>Vurulmuş yatıyor İbrahim yoldaş</i>	Shot comrade İbrahim lying
<i>Yiğitler ölür mü üç beş kurşunla</i>	Bullets do not kill the brave
<i>Doğrulmuş kalkıyor</i>	Straighten himself up
<i>İbrahim yoldaş</i>	Comrade İbrahim
<i>Ali Haydar yerde</i>	Look at Ali Haydar <sup>96</sup>
<i>Bak yüzü boylu</i>	His face down on the ground
<i>Yiğitçe can verir yiğidin oğlu</i>	The son of the brave dies valiantly

<sup>95</sup> The video may be accessed at the official website of the *Demokratik Haklar Dernekleri Federasyonu* The Federation of Democratic Rights Associations (Url-7).

<sup>96</sup> It alludes to Ali Haydar Yıldız, one of the founders — together with İbrahim Kaypakkaya — of TKP/ML-TİKKO, who was killed in a combat in 1973 in Dersim.

<i>Başı duman duman Munzur'a doğru</i>	Comrade İbrahim feeling down
<i>Tırmanmış gidiyor İbrahim yoldaş</i>	Climbing towards Munzur
<i>İşkenceler devam ediyor böyle</i>	Tortures continue
<i>Parça parça kesip diyorlar söyle</i>	'Reveal the secrets' they say
<i>Sırları söyle</i>	As cutting in slices
<i>Sır vermeden ser veriyor</i>	Willingly gives his head
<i>Seve seve</i>	Without giving any secret
<i>Böyle can veriyor İbrahim yoldaş</i>	Dies this way comrade İbrahim
<i>Halkımız arıyor seni</i>	Our people are looking for you
<i>Her yerde</i>	Everywhere
<i>İşçiler ocakta</i>	Workers in the mines
<i>Köylüler dağda</i>	Peasants in the mountain
<i>Dökülen kanların</i>	Your blood, comrade İbrahim
<i>Kalmayacak yerde</i>	Will not remain on the ground
<i>Hesap soracağız İbrahim yoldaş</i>	We will call to account

Grup Munzur's performance of another song *Dağlarda Düğün Var* (There is a Wedding in the Mountains) on the same night served as a though-provoking illustration of the evolution of an artistic product prompted by experiences and expectations of individuals in a society. The perpetual and steadfast texture of the music of the song is promoted by the following lyrics that greet and celebrate the war with the utmost confidence and optimism:

<i>Öpüşür mavzerler düğün misali</i>	Rifles kiss like a wedding
<i>Dağlarda düğün var</i>	There is a wedding in the mountains,
<i>Savaşta selam</i>	Greetings to war
<i>Düğünler içinde yoktur emsali</i>	A wedding that is unrivaled
<i>Dağlarda düğün var</i>	There is a wedding in the mountains,
<i>Savaşta selam</i>	Greetings to war
<i>Halaylar çekilir kadın erkekli</i>	Dance lines made by women and men
<i>Dağlarda düğün var</i>	There is a wedding in the mountains,
<i>Savaşta selam</i>	Greetings to war
<i>Kadını erkeği hepsi tüfenkli</i>	All women and men with rifles
<i>Dağlarda düğün var</i>	There is a wedding in the mountains,
<i>Savaşta selam</i>	Greetings to war

<i>Büyüyor halkımız bayrak çekilir</i>	Our people grow, flag is hoisted
<i>Parça parça tepelere dikilir</i>	It is planted in the hills piece by piece
<i>Tarlanın tohumu ortak ekilir</i>	Seed of the field is sowed collectively
<i>Dağlarda düğün var</i>	There is a wedding in the mountains,
<i>Savaşa selam</i>	Greetings to war

Juxtaposition of this song with its original version rendered by another Dersim-based singer Ferhat Tunç, who was also a candidate for the parliament supported by BDP in general elections, conduces to unveiling of an analogy that is observed commonly within the repertoire of Kurdish protest music. The symbolic usage of *govend* dance line (Turkish *halay*) for resistance and war, and interchangeability of these terms in the general perception of Kurdish community is immediately identified. Apart from its melodic and rhythmic character that is suggestive of marching, and its explicitly articulated lyrics, several presentations of *tilîlî* during the performance contribute to assertive tone of the song. Ferhat Tunç's rendition of the same song employing a large melodic range, undulating motion, and arabesque style ornaments, on the other hand, embraces a somewhat more figurative language in its lyrics, compared to its version performed by Grup Munzur: The Lyrics of the Song *Dağlarda Düğün Var* (Ferhat Tunç's rendition) go as follows:

<i>Elinde tıfengi</i>	She is coming
<i>Çekmiş geliyor</i>	With the rifle in her hand
<i>Dağlarda düğün var</i>	There is a wedding in the mountains,
<i>Halaya devam</i>	Continue with the dance line
<i>Peşinde ordular takmış geliyor</i>	She is coming with armies behind her
<i>Dağlarda düğün var</i>	There is a wedding in the mountains,
<i>Halaya devam</i>	Continue with the dance line
<i>Gün bizim günümüz</i>	Today is our day,
<i>Tutuşsun eller</i>	May hands hold each other
<i>Bu bizim düğünümüz yansın ateşler</i>	This is our wedding, may fires light
<i>Türküler söyleyin haydi kardeşler</i>	Go fellows! Sing songs
<i>Dağlarda düğün var</i>	There is a wedding in the mountains
<i>Halaya devam</i>	Continue with the dance line
<i>Halaylar çekilir kadın erkekli</i>	Dance lines made by women and men
<i>Dağlarda düğün var</i>	There is a wedding in the mountains

<i>Halaya devam</i>	Continue with the dance line
<i>Kadını erkeği hepsi tüfenkli</i>	All women and men with rifles
<i>Dağlarda düğün var</i>	There is a wedding in the mountains
<i>Halaya devam</i>	Continue with the dance line

#### 4.4 Music, Dance, and Kurdish Protest and Dersim at the Crossroads

Left wing protest songs have been a great inspiration for those of today's Kurdish resistance movement in terms of singing style, metaphors used, instrumentation, lyrics, and themes. Accordingly, Dersim's political, geographical and historical position is momentous in the nexus as being in the vanguard of both movements. Dersim's bona fide stature may be recognized when the fact that the current Kurdish resistance movement embodies strong leftist overtones is taken into account. As it appears in *Cemo* — one of the most popular leftist protest songs rendered by *Grup Yorum* in 1990s — concepts such as immediacy of war, armed struggle and resistance, and metaphorical expression of these with the practice of singing, and Dersim's status as a shelter for these actions has passed to Kurdish resistance movement from Turkey's radical leftist movements that paved the way for it. The refrain of the song *Cemo*<sup>97</sup> goes as follows:

<i>Alında yıldızlı bere</i>	The beret with star in her forehead
<i>Elinde mavzeriyle</i>	With the rifle in her hand
<i>Çıkıp Dersim dağlarında</i>	Ascending to mountains of Dersim
<i>Türkü söylemek var ya</i>	and singing there...
<i>Oy Cemo, Cemo can, Cemo can</i>	Oh! Cemo, Cemo, Cemo.

This might suggest that the stimulus that blends warfare with artistic creativity in today's Kurdish resistance movement has its roots in the radical leftist movements' practice of singing for political protest. The course of events in political arena has been paralleled by that of artistic field, and today's Kurdish resistance movement and artistic creativity inspired by this movement are closer to the idea of war and violence than their predecessors. Kurdish political movement articulated in tunes and bodily practices retains many premises inherited from radical left with growing

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<sup>97</sup> Translated by Aylin Demir. 2010. In *Oral Poetry and Weeping in the Case of Dersimli Women*, 24. A thesis submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University.

emphasis on dance today, and this, I suggest, has something to do with the fact that Kurdish resistance movement's connection with war and violence is more tangible than yesterday's leftist political struggle. The more actual activity is experienced and involved in the cultural and social life of a community, the more artistic imagination derived from these is encapsulated by corporeality. In Giurchescu's words, "due to its multidimensional character, dance is used in certain circumstances to 'package' politico-ideological, educational, religious or economic messages" (2001, p. 111). Dunagan states, whose dance-centered approach bears resemblance to Giurchescu's, "human movement carries significance in that it is part of how I enact who I am in the world" (2005, p. 30). The point where "significance" or "message" is "carried" or "packaged" by dance, I discuss through the comparison of Kurdish artistic life and leftist movements' musical creativity in Turkey, is reached by an artistic or cultural movement, and that might be related to the intensity of these "messages" or "significances" felt in a society. In other words, other forms of artistic expression such as music, literature, photography or paintings might suffice to convey meaning before dance unless the potency that creates the meaning attains a certain level of concentration.

Comaroff's approach analyzing the feeling created by collective movement that dance leads to may help us form a theory about the increasing importance and practice of circle and line dances in Kurdish social and cultural life: "Whirling circle builds up a unitary momentum, like a dynamo generating the spiritual energy... The ever closer coordination of physical gestures under the driving beat and the physiological effects of the circling motion seem to dissolve the margins between individual participants, who act and respond as one body" (1985, p. 233). Dunbar, according to Ehrenreich, is also among researchers who "see group dancing — especially in lines and circles — as the great leveler and binder of human communities, uniting all who participate in the kind of *communitas* that [Victor] Turner found in twentieth century native rituals" (2011, p. 24).

On the other hand, the case that comes to light through Kurdish society and its relationship with dance reinforces Ehrenreich's assumption on the correlation between dance and collective defense. Ehrenreich (2011), while appreciating researchers who emphasize the role of music and dance "in keeping people together

in sizable groups,” presumes that “they may once have served the function of group defense in far more direct way” (p. 28):

Like primates in the wild today, early humans probably faced off predatory animals collectively—banding together in a tight group, stamping their feet, shouting, and waving sticks or branches... and the core of my speculation is that the predator might be tricked by this synchronous behavior into thinking that it faced—not a group of individually weak and defenseless humans—but a single, very large animal. When sticks are being brandished and feet stamped in unison, probably accompanied by synchronized chanting or shouting, it would be easy for an animal observer to conclude that only a single mind, or at least a single nervous system, is at work. (Ehrenreich, p. 28)

Cognizant of the fact that Kurdish society and Kurdish resistance movement have been involved in a more severe confrontation with the authority than Turkey’s radical leftist movement, Ehrenreich’s hypothesis, I believe, provides a compelling ontological explanation for Kurdish community’s and Kurdish resistance movement’s devotion to group dancing. Musical traditions of Kurdish people might already have a strong connection with dance by their very nature. However, in view of the traumatic experience they have had for years — “like the colonized people sought, through ecstatic forms of worship, a fleeting alternative to the horrors of their actual situation” (Ehrenreich, 2011, p. 172) — it must have been impossible for them not to develop or improve an artistic defiance technique that entails body movements.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

Functioning as a trustworthy repository of political activities both for Kurdish resistance movement and numerous leftist organizations, the long and vibrant concerts organized in the Munzur Festival of Culture and Nature indicate that collective singing and dancing and many other supplementary routines such as chanting slogans, cheers, whistles, marches, and waving flags may provide spectators with opportunity to interact faster, stronger, broader, and more effective, thereby coordinating performance-oriented activities for themselves. When it was motivated by the conflict and fight with the legitimacy of authority, violence can be an uplifting source from which many forms of expression utilize.

Themes of war, conflict, and violence embedded in the expressiveness of music and dance by means of various ways such as demonstration of defiance and vengeance,

narration of a painful memory, or remembrance of a heroic figure seem to have established a mine of joy in the war-afflicted areas of Dersim. Contradictory articulation of this statement may be clarified by suggesting that reflection of aggressive and traumatic feelings in music and dance would not be lessening the ecstatic quality of them; quite the contrary, expression of these feelings, when they are shared by a sizable proportion of the population, by means of the uniting quality of music and dance would be increasing the enjoyment felt by individuals. Delving further into the two symbols of Kurdish political and national culture as well as of the Republic of Turkey's pressure on Kurdish music, language, and culture, the chapter that follows moves on to consider the two Kurdish musico-political events that took place in Istanbul in 2011.



## 5. MKM AND AHMET KAYA: MUSICAL ICONS OF SELF-ASSERTION

*Şimdi gerillaların [sic] şarkı söylediği bi [sic] video izledim. İzlerken de düşündüm “Bu dağların başında [sic] bu dağ gibi yürekler oldukça umudumuz tükenmez.” [I have just watched a video that guerrillas sing. While I was watching, I thought as well “as long as there are these mountain-like hearts on top of these mountains, our hope will not come to an end”].*<sup>98</sup>

— A tweet by Mela Ehmed (2013)

*Yedikule Zindanları* (Dungeons of Seven Towers), an ancient fortress located next to city walls at the southwestern tip of the historical peninsula of Istanbul, played host to a long and impassioned concert on 3 September 2011 at which a large number of Kurds living in Istanbul were present. The fortress, the large courtyard of which occasionally serves as a concert venue today, was used for the purpose of imprisonment and execution of people for a long time during Ottoman era. The concert was organized in honor of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of MKM *Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi* (Mezopotamia Cultural Center), a historic institution in the recent history of Kurds in Turkey. Thus, the name of the venue where the concert was held sounded strangely meaningful that day as if it had implied the confinement of Kurdish identity in Turkey. Audience’s behavior outside the walls of the venue, contrary to their enthusiasm within the walls, was also quite expressive of individual uneasiness that Kurds generally felt in Turkish-dominated metropolises in Turkey.

About two months later, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 2011, another concert organized by two Kurdish cultural and political youth organizations, namely *Ronî Gençlik Kültür Merkezi* (Ronî Youth Cultural Center) and *Demokratik Yurtsever Gençlik* (Democratic Patriotic Youth),<sup>99</sup> on the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the political singer Ahmet

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<sup>98</sup> The text was translated from Turkish to English by the author.

<sup>99</sup> *Ronî* (“Enlightenment” in Kurdish) *Gençlik Kültür Merkezi* (“Youth Cultural Center” in Turkish) is an Istanbul based cultural organization formed mainly by Kurdish university students who are members of *Demokratik Yurtsever Gençlik*, the youth organization of BDP.

Kaya's death took place in an indoor wedding hall in Şişli district of central Istanbul. Kurds' wedding celebrations, as mentioned in chapter 2, had already started to act as mediums of political gatherings as well as social and cultural conventions after the late 1980s in Istanbul. Wedding halls, in addition, has been frequently hosted music-centered gatherings of leftist organizations. Having been sheltered by the camouflaging configuration of the venue, this concert was also no different than MKM's concert in that it epitomized the isolation and marginalization of Kurds, and social and bureaucratic constraints on the expression of Kurdish identity in Turkey. Even though they were organized for different purposes, as many concerts linked with Kurdish ethnicity in Turkey, these two concerts had many features in common, and both were filled with a mixture of multifarious emotions from exuberance, resentment, and frustration to lament, and dissidence.

As a city that has been attracting people from different parts of Turkey for years with its great potential in culture, tourism, media, commerce, industry, and education, Istanbul is the largest urban agglomeration of Turkey in which almost two million people (14.8 percent of its total population) who define themselves as Kurdish live (Ağırdır, 2008; Pultar, 2011, p. 19). In addition to many key figures of Kurdish music, art, literature, journalism, linguistics, and politics residing in Istanbul, the most important Kurdish institutions, publishing companies, journals, newspapers, and cultural centers are based in Istanbul. A considerable population of Kurdish university students coming from Kurdish-populated areas also nourishes the dynamism of this intellectual, political, and artistic productivity. Istanbul is, in this sense, arguably one of the most important centers that shape Kurdish ethnic identity in Turkey. Notwithstanding its role in the construction of Kurdishness, Istanbul, with its population of about 14 million, is a metropolis that has thick social and cultural boundaries, thereby easily sidelining and alienating Kurdish culture. Apart from political pressure mostly actualized by means of legal requirements, police, or army, Kurds are at risk of social pressure and isolation in Istanbul caused mostly by certain prejudice. Cultural and political events that gather Kurds together in Istanbul become more critical than those take place in Kurdish homeland at this point since the former have more spatial and temporal limitations than the latter. This could be read as a factor that might increase the level of cohesiveness during events in Istanbul. Events centered on such modern concepts as commemoration and anniversary, in addition,

seem much more suitable for relatively educated and urbanized Kurds. So, approached in this way, concepts of commemoration and anniversary mostly developed outside Kurdish homeland gradually spread throughout the society, and serve the embodiment of political opposition as well as the codification of national imagining.

Without downplaying the relationship between music and guerrilla warfare that the epigraph to the current chapter suggests, this chapter, based on two aforementioned events, seeks to learn how Kurds conduct their ethnic sense of belonging outside Kurdish homeland in Turkey, and how they voice their victimhood and opposition through concepts of commemoration and remembrance on the occasion of music-related anniversaries. On the other hand, aside from both descriptive and explanatory analyses of these two events, it will mainly focus on two major phenomena of the Kurdish liberation movement, MKM and Ahmet Kaya, as mainsprings of these events. Before moving on to the first event, MKM's 20<sup>th</sup> year anniversary concert, therefore, I will attempt to scope out MKM and its impact on the development of Kurdish national culture, institutionalization of political struggle, and disarticulation of power formation.

### **5.1 All in One: Mesopotamia Cultural Center (MKM)**

With the armed struggle initiated by PKK in 1984, resistance, defiance, uprising, and combat for the sake of these concepts became primary values and mode of behaviors for a considerable part of Kurdish society in the late 1980s. As mentioned earlier, the population deported from rural areas migrated to Kurdish cities and Turkey's metropolises. Migrated Kurds who had already been passionately politicized, along with others who migrated in previous years and decades, pursued their goal of political organization. MKM, in this sense, became a product and form of Kurdish political and armed movement's network for social support. "This migration," says Hêmin, one of the most important figures of MKM's musical activities since its foundation, "was also an ideational one and migrated Kurds endeavored to organize their socio-cultural textures and communication channels in metropolises that led to various organizations such as MKM and daily newspapers as a political reflection of social force" (Hêmin, personal communication, March 14, 2011).

MKM is probably one of the most important organizations that symbolize Kurdish ethno-nationalist concept and practice, and guide the socio-cultural and political direction that large sections of the Kurdish population follow in Turkey. Having been founded by a group of activists and intellectuals in 1991 basically in order to establish a systematic exploration of Kurdish art and culture, MKM mainly functioned as a political activism center to express Kurdish dissidence and victimization through music and other cultural and artistic means. “The values that were plundered, smashed, demolished, and that were subjected to assimilation had to be regained” says İbrahim Gürbüz, one of the founders of MKM, as he explains how the idea of establishing MKM ripened when he was in jail in 1985 (Kuray, 2011). MKM’s advertisement brochure, in a similar way, (as cited in Scalbert-Yücel, 2009) lists MKM’s objectives as “protect[ing] the culture, art, history and language of the colonized peoples of Mesopotamia,” and “recreating the national culture that had been destroyed and assimilated” (p.6). The expression “peoples of Mesopotamia”, as Scalbert-Yücel (2009) also indicates, simply alludes to Kurds in that the official use of the word “Kurd” was unlawful at the time (p.6). “Mesopotamia is Kurds’ homeland,” İbrahim Gürbüz confirms, “it is the region between Tigris and Euphrates rivers. First, its name was Upper Mesopotamia Cultural Center. Then we removed “Upper” and its name remained as MKM. Upper Mesopotamia is Kurdistan” (Kuray, 2011). Gürbüz also notes that the logo of MKM (see figure 5.1), which consists of figures that Kurds commonly ascribe to Kurdish culture and mythology such as Euphrates and Tigris rivers, mountain,<sup>100</sup> sun, Newroz fire, the blacksmith Kawa, as well as universally accepted symbols such as olive branch, and books representing science, was designed by painter Mahmut Nayır (Kuray, 2011).

The organizational structure of MKM comprised coordinated activities of three main departments, namely culture, science, and the arts. Language, literature, and history were the three subsections of science department as music, painting, folklore, and cinematography constituted department of the arts. Culture department organized as committees focused on collecting folkloric elements of Kurdish culture such as proverbs, songs, tales, and narratives. Science department were later separated itself from MKM to establish *İstanbul Kürt Enstitüsü* Istanbul Kurdish Institute in 1992. A

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<sup>100</sup> The large image that is akin to a mountain in which Euphrates and Tigris rivers are represented is also a symbolic map showing Kurdish lands.

large number of musicians, actors and actresses, cinematographers, dancers, and writers maintain various activities as individuals or ensembles within MKM today. Housing an outstanding library with thousands of sources, MKM is also engaged in educational programs such as language, literature, acting, cinematography, and music in forms of long-term courses and workshops (Url-8). MKM's small-scale activities in cinematography department turned into serious educational activities in 1995, which gave way to the foundation of *Mezopotamya Sinema Kolektifi* (Mesopotamia Cinema Collective) in 1996. In addition to organizing many workshops and seminars, the collective has produced a number of short and long films, and documentaries dealing with devastating effects of war and state pressure on Kurds' way of living (Sönmez and Çiçek, 2008).



**Figure 5.1 :** The logo of MKM

Many musicians practically dominating the last 20 years of the highly politicized Kurdish music venue in Turkey have matured at MKM. Kurds who become involved in art and music dealt with the social sentiment by tackling concepts within the movement. Countless music groups known as *Kom-s*, whose substantial influence on Kurdish music and ethno-nationalist movement during the 1990s were mentioned in chapter 2, emanated from within MKM. Statements of its founders show that the use of Kurdish language was critically important for all activities of MKM. Because of this, the use of language is likely to be another reason for all activities of MKM to be politicized since there had been an official ban on Kurdish language regarding publications and broadcasts until the year in which MKM was established. Additionally, since any music was, and still is to a certain degree, considered political had it been in Kurdish language, music-making in itself inevitably become a political act. Since it has a great potential in reaching people, Kurdish music produced by MKM rapidly became the center of propaganda activities as well. This

potential was explored soon and gave way to a domination of a certain kind of musical texture over others with the advantage of harsh political circumstances appeared during the 1990s in Kurdish-inhabited areas. The role of PKK, as the leading armed and political organization of Kurdish ethno-nationalist movement, in shaping of MKM's activities and policies cannot be disregarded at this point. Even though it was largely influenced and encouraged by PKK's armed struggle, MKM was not an undertaking of PKK. In addition to its primary position as a fighting organization, PKK raised itself as a main determiner in social, economic, and political issues. It was almost impossible for cultural organizations such as MKM to be completely independent from PKK, which overpowered countless Kurdish organizations that had been established throughout the 1970s, dominated the large part of Kurdish liberation and cultural movement by the 1990s. Having a journal and a cultural center were prestigious features for a political organization during the 1970s and 1980s. The first example of organizations that centered on Kurdish culture in Istanbul was *Stran* officially known as HKD *Halk Kültür Derneği* (Cultural Association of People) established as a cultural center of another illegal pro-Kurdish party PSK<sup>101</sup> *Partîya Sosyalîsta Kurdistan* (Kurdistan Socialist Party) in 1989 (Saritaş, 2010, p. 70). When MKM was founded in 1991 as a more inclusive Kurdish organization with a greater popular and political backing, many HKD activists and members joined MKM (Saritaş, 2010, p. 71). Several *kom*-s founded independently from MKM such as Koma Amed and Koma Dengê Azadî also joined MKM in the early 1990s (Saritaş, 2010, p. 77). Music groups such as Koma Çiya and Koma Agirê Jiyan that are identified with MKM also adventitiously began working under the umbrella of MKM. It is necessary to highlight that the influence of PKK and its assertive armed and political struggle was an important factor in this change. Furthermore, it is also worth noting that PKK adopted an aggressive policy against other Kurdish political and cultural organizations that were reluctant to fall under PKK's domination; MKM, even if it were formally independent, has barely conducted activities that PKK would not agree with. Therefore, MKM, as the only representative of Kurdish liberation movement, became the most important channel for PKK to communicate with Kurdish people not only in Istanbul but only across

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<sup>101</sup> PSK was the predecessor of the first legal pro-Kurdish party HEP *Halkın Emek Partisi* (People's Labor Party) founded in 1990.

Turkey particularly through albums and activities of MKM musicians within very short time.

MKM, in some respects, is structured like an executive branch of Kurdish political movement that exercises a constitutive function in Kurdish society. According to the interviews I have carried out, MKM has functioned as a part of a nationwide mechanism by which PKK's guidelines, predominantly shaped by Abdullah Öcalan, prescribe the role of Kurdish culture, art, and literature in their struggle against the Turkish state as well as in the organization of the possible future of Kurdish society. Having created an authoritative image among many Kurds who emphasize their Kurdishness in Turkey, Abdullah Öcalan, in addition to his leadership of armed struggle, superintended a nation-building project and formulated revolutionary policies about politics, economics, and social organization. Operating akin to a ministry of culture, MKM, in this respect, might be considered an epistemic community in which Abdullah Öcalan's ideological formulations are materialized and propagated. MKM musicians, as Sarıtaş (2010) observes, felt that they were supposed to take risk with their musical activities as guerrillas did with their guns in order to be a true musicians of Kurdish liberation; musicians were supposed to convey the guerrilla's struggle to Kurdish people and they were supposed to benefit from Kurdish folklore to serve the cause (p. 67).<sup>102</sup>

The founders of MKM, many of whom were largely influenced by socialist ideas, have also played an important role in creation of political conditions within the structure of MKM. On the one hand, their political ideas shaped by socialist and leftist values caused them to reject (or reluctantly accept) many elements that belong Kurdish culture and society, but on the other hand they aimed to protect Kurdishness. As many criticisms point out from new generation Kurdish intellectuals, within this dichotomy, there was not much left, particularly for music, to express Kurdishness other than language. Inquiring into the revitalization of *dengbêj* (Kurdish bardic tradition) as a nationalist project, Scalbert-Yücel (2009) observes that MKM, as a medium for implementing cultural policies of the Kurdish political movement, has never clearly put its intentions concerning Kurdish folklore into practice since its

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<sup>102</sup> For a detailed commentary on Abdullah Öcalan's views on music and art in the context of Kurds and Kurdish ethno-nationalist movement, and cultural restructuring that PKK has sought to build, see Sarıtaş, 2010, pp. 64-68.

foundation (p. 6). As of 1993, new branches of MKM began to appear in Izmir, Diyarbakır,<sup>103</sup> Adana, Bursa, and Mersin in Turkey in addition to in such cities as Slêmanî (Sulaymaniyah), Hewlêr (Erbil), and Duhok in the Autonomous Kurdistan Region in Federal Iraq. Today MKM has branches in 14 cities of Turkey.

In addition to its political mission that aims to cultivate a spirited resistance movement among Kurds, MKM was also an important portion of an ethno-nationalist project based on Kurds' traditional and cultural values. This appears in *Rewşen* (Enlightened), the Kurdish journal that MKM started to publish in 1992. An article in the first issue, as Scalbert-Yücel (2009) points out, deals with the value of unearthing the damaged Kurdish folklore not only as an action against the "occupying state," but also as a practice for the exploration of Kurdish nationality (p.6). "We founded MKM to generate a consciousness of nation, homeland, territory, and history" says İbrahim Gürbüz (Kurray, 2011). The discourse established on Kurdish national culture replaced that of on socialism, as Sarıtaş (2010) notes, mainly to emphasize Turkey's assimilation policies (p.66). Nevertheless, research activities and new productions centered on Kurdish folklore have mostly been relegated to lesser position by PKK's armed resistance, and its socialist, revolutionist, and modernist ideas that prioritize anti-hegemonic discourse and contemporary forms of expression (Scalbert-Yücel, 2009, p. 7).

MKM was the first organization to attempt to include a large number of aspects of Kurdish society at once. Even though it was founded as, and under the name of, a cultural organization, its foundation itself was an explicit political act that revealed a direct challenge to Turkey's monistic polity. That is to say, an organization's attempt at reconstituting a denied and forbidden language, art, literature, and culture instantly made it confrontationally political. MKM felt compelled to bring all the basic institutions of a nation-state together as it had to fight the hegemon that finds its objectives and values intolerable. Even though the foundation of the first legal pro-Kurdish party HEP *Halkın Emek Partisi* (People's Labor Party) in 1990 created another area for Kurds' political activities, Kurdish parties did not live long and they

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<sup>103</sup> Scalbert-Yücel (2009) reports, according to the information on its website, that *Dicle Fırat Kültür Merkezi* (Tigris Euphrates Cultural Center), which was founded in Diyarbakır in 2003, is regarded as a branch of MKM (p. 6). In conversation with me in Diyarbakır, an authorized officer of *Dicle Fırat Kültür Merkezi*, on the other hand, noted that all MKM branches in Turkey are affiliated with *Dicle Fırat Kültür Merkezi* (Rojhat, personal communication, July 16, 2012).

have always been under threat. There was a certain amount of risk in being a member of a Kurdish party. Apart from politicians, many journalists, reporters, writers were jailed or killed throughout the 1990s. Although it may be true that MKM, in addition to other reasons that make Kurds political, acted as a political institution it also, as officially a cultural center, provided a relatively safe zone for political activists. Many used MKM's activities as a cover for their political purposes.

MKM functioned as a socialization and organization center for many Kurds who want to participate in Kurdish political network in Istanbul. Positioning itself as an association, political party, school, institution, and union MKM became a societal unit where lots of activities took place at once. The difficulty for Kurds to become together either for social or political purposes made MKM a critical venue in Istanbul. MKM had to resist the state pressure on the one hand as it attains its objectives on the other. Its objectives, which are mostly unwelcomed by the body that holds it made everything harder for MKM in that had to spend great energy to remain intact. People in MKM and their activities were always at risk of being vanished. Either culturally or scientifically charged, all activities were backed by political motivations. Values that MKM and its actions seek to protect regarded by the state as terrorist or separatist. This made every activity political in that they all raised objection to the state. Activities about linguistics, folk song collection, or folklore studies, for example, were political even they do not carry the intention of being political. State and global dynamics on the other hand were rapidly vanishing values that considered Kurdish and Kurdishness. Many institutions of a nation-state have their own objectives and they are financed and supported by the state. MKM on the other hand had to survive first. In addition, it had to accumulate all activities under one roof because of the lack of resources.

Singing a protest song in Kurdish is a politically risky act in Turkey. Singing a folk song in Kurdish, on the other hand, does not make it less political or risky to some degree, and MKM musicians and other artists have not hesitated to take this risk. MKM is an institution that has received widespread public support, which has a great potential for providing activists and musicians with great courage and spirit. Even though their activities are not directly political, coordinators have political motivations and, to a large extent, they are emotionally and intellectually associated with Kurdish political movement. Majority of the products and activities, on the

other hand, had direct political intention, and served political organization of Kurdish movement. Music has been the most effective part of these activities. The most politicized and most active part of MKM, because of this, was music section. According to Hêmin, MKM is not eager to embrace musicians who want to refrain from politics (Hêmin, personal communication, March 14, 2011). There are musicians whose products did not include political elements. However, they take part in cultural organizations that MKM or other political Kurdish organizations arrange or they take part in press conferences or other political activities.

İbrahim Gürbüz depicts what kind of institution they imagined as they founded MKM: “It must have been a national institution where people from different thoughts, ideologies, and political tendencies come together and produce and develop Kurdish art, science and culture against assimilation, provided that they left their political opinions outside” (Kurray, 2011). To devise this type of pluralistic structure, of course, has never been feasible for an organization affiliated with an armed movement and ideology that has had a certain priority in the emancipation of a nation. MKM’s role in the transformation of Kurdish culture and society cannot be regarded as unintentional at this point. MKM’s reformative intervention in the Kurdish way of life was a part of Kurdish political movement’s revolutionary strategy. As Hêmin indicates, establishing itself as one of the pioneers in the Kurdish social and cultural upheaval, MKM organized its actions to remind Kurds, whose cultural life had mostly been retrograded under the influence of religion, of their authentic values with music, dance, and cinema. The cultural movement has begun in the early 1990s, as he characterizes, was the renaissance of Kurds and MKM has been the nucleus of this movement (Hêmin, personal communication, March 14, 2011). Ali Geçimli, one of the members of MKM’s Koma Agirê Jîyan, in a similar fashion, points out that MKM fulfilled the mission of survival and it will help Kurdish nation complete its cultural construction (Elaldı, 2011b). This discourse, to a certain extent, reveals the political ideology, which seems to be largely influenced by Marxist, progressivist, and modernist concepts, that has shaped MKM’s principles of actions.

The similarity between MKM and PKK, as Sarıtaş (2010) wisely shows, in terms of their hierarchical structures and political standpoints is worth mentioning here. Prohibition of emotional and sexual relationship among MKM members on the

grounds that it implies disloyalty to national struggle indicates that MKM modeled itself on PKK — or PKK designed MKM — in terms of organizational structure (p.76). This also suggests that MKM musicians were not only considered cultural guerrillas figuratively because of their music, but also they embraced guerrilla discipline in their lifestyles.

Having been one of the first large-scale institutional attempts representing Kurdish culture in Turkey, MKM created such an enthusiasm among Kurds that many flooded in to commit themselves to its activities. In addition to various in-house activities, as Genim, the founding member of MKM's Koma Çiya, notes, a sizable body of Kurdish folklore was accumulated in MKM by voluntary efforts of people (Elaldı, 2011a). What follows, within this scope, is a progressive exploration of the mighty concert that MKM and Kom Müzik organized for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of MKM. In so doing, I hope to characterize the relationship between the cause and the content of the concert as well as the expressive demeanor of audience as an important agent of Kurdish political movement, and to unearth ways in which Kurds' struggle and self-assertion politics shapes so-called cultural events.

## **5.2 MKM's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert: "The Resistance of Culture and Art"<sup>104</sup>**

As regards conflict between Kurdish liberation movement and government of Turkey, September 2011 in Turkey inherited a highly strained political atmosphere of August that witnessed intensifying attacks of HPG guerrillas, military operations of Turkey's army, and prosecution of countless Kurdish activists. Two days prior to the concert of MKM, a public demonstration held in Kadıköy district of Istanbul on the occasion of the World Peace Day, which is observed in Turkey on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September. The meeting was organized by *İstanbul Demokratik Kent Konseyi* (Istanbul Democratic City Council),<sup>105</sup> a political formation mainly led by BDP. Having represented the urbanized reverberations of the overall political tension, the demonstration, in which a number of socialist parties, non-governmental

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<sup>104</sup> The slogan phrase *Berxwedana çand û hûnere di salvegera 20. de didome* (The resistance of culture and art continues in the 20<sup>th</sup> year) appeared at the end of the film (mentioned below) shown during the concert.

<sup>105</sup> Democratic City Councils are political organizations formed by Kurdish political movement in western cities of Turkey by leaguings together with a number of socialist parties and non-governmental organizations.

organizations, professional organizations, and unions participated as well, turned into a chaotic atmosphere where police and demonstrators scuffled. The abundance of police officers at the main entrance of the concert venue two days later, therefore, seemed quite consistent in this context.

MKM's 20<sup>th</sup> year concert was organized by collaborative efforts of MKM and Kom Müzik, and in addition to a number of MKM musicians, *kom-s*, and dancers, several independent musicians such as Bandista,<sup>106</sup> Mikail Aslan (did not attend), and Niyazi Koyuncu<sup>107</sup> were invited to perform at the concert (figure 5.2 shows the MKM's concert ticket)



**Figure 5.2 :** MKM's 20<sup>th</sup> year concert ticket (Url-9).

When I entered the courtyard before concert started, many people, presumably with the unintended help of the physiognomy of the venue that gives a spacious room for audiences to move with no convenience of sitting (see figure 5.3), had already formed their own musico-political habitat in the courtyard by dancing *govend* to their own singing of political songs.

A well-known melody of a Kurdish song *Yek Mumik*, which is widely known as its turkified version *Bir Mumdur* in Turkey, was heard from loudspeakers — possibly the rendition performed within the *Şahiya Stranan* Project of MKM. An impressive high-tech system constructed for visual and aural recording and broadcasting was discernible. Two large screens were positioned on each side of the concert platform to project images from the concert taken by several cameras, including a jimmy jib,

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<sup>106</sup> Bandista is an Istanbul-based music collective that has won acclaim in recent years in Turkey for its diverse musical style that embraces an internationalist and multiculturalist approach to protest music culture. For more information about the collective, see its website <http://tayfabandista.org/#info>.

<sup>107</sup> Musician Niyazi Koyuncu is the brother of Kazım Koyuncu, a prominent musician, and cultural and environmental activist of Laz ethnicity who died aged 33 in 2005.

in front of the platform as well as to show videos created in advance. Another platform was established across concert platform as well for VIPs.



**Figure 5.3** : MKM's 20<sup>th</sup> year concert area (Url-10)



**Figure 5.4** : MKM's 20<sup>th</sup> year concert audiences (Url-10)

As in many events that Kurds organize, a moment of silence for martyrs, which was filled by the collective performance of *Çerxa Şoreşe*, was the first theme of the concert program. In spite of ongoing escalation of the overall political conflict, as in many similar occasions that transform anger into pleasure, concert audience did not seem to be disguising their glee over finding an opportunity to be a part of a vibrant crowd. Two presenters, Yıldız Gültekin and Kemal Ulusoy,<sup>108</sup> bantering each other, in addition to Yıldız Gültekin's improvised *dengbêj* style narration of MKM's 20 years of organizational and institutional development, were bringing relative comfort to the setting. Nonetheless, complexity and lability of mood within Kurds' ethno-

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<sup>108</sup> Both Yıldız Gültekin and Kemal Ulusoy are two performers who used to take part in the activities of *Jiyana Nû* (New Life), a theatre collective organized within MKM. Yıldız Gültekin currently lives in Denmark whereas Kemal Ulusoy lives in Diyarbakır, Turkey.

political identity mainly driven by violent oppression and struggle was revealed by Yıldız's short lyrical statement among this relatively joyful atmosphere: "which nation has warriors out of fire? Which nation's history is out of fire? Greetings to those who wrote our history with their fiery bodies." Audiences' slogans such as *Şehîd namirin* (Martyrs won't die) in Kurdish and *PKK halktır, halk burada* (PKK is the people, the people is here) in Turkish instantly followed this statement.

Performing successively, three *dengbêj*-s associated with MKM, namely Mihemedê Serhedî, Mem Bazid, and Hozan Veysi, presented the first as well as the least politicized part of the concert. Kazım Öz, the renowned director of Mesopotamia Cinema Collective, gave a speech on behalf of MKM after *dengbêj*-s' performances. He basically talked about the importance of MKM and its activities for Kurdish culture against the threat of assimilation policies. It had been six weeks, at that time, since the last time Abdullah Öcalan was permitted to see his family and lawyers. Denouncing government for authorizing army's air and ground assaults carried out into Iraq where PKK camps are located, and for not allowing Abdullah Öcalan to see his family and lawyers for six weeks,<sup>109</sup> Öz emphasized the political demands of Kurdish people, and referred to Abdullah Öcalan as the major political actor for a long-term solution to the bloody conflict in Turkey. After Öz's speech, a vibrant film comprising snapshots of video images from various concerts organizations as well as educational, political, and artistic activities that MKM undertook in previous years was displayed on large screens. Various voiced and bodily reactions of audiences also suggest that particularly the second part of the film showing images of deceased members of MKM, who were pictured as martyrs, stimulated nostalgia, bitterness, and sorrow among audiences. The Kom Müzik official Kobîn, with whom I interviewed and watched the whole concert at a very later date, described all video images that form this film as follows: (a) Newroz celebrations organized in an indoor arena (Abdi İpekçi Arena) in Istanbul in 1993; (b) a picnic organized by MKM; (c) music training activities in MKM; (d) various concert organizations of MKM; (e) concert images of *kom*-s and other music collectives such as Koma Agirê Jiyân, Koma Azad, Koma Asmin, and Şahiya Stranan; (f) drama and theatre activities; (g) cinematographical activities; (h) folk and modern dance activities; (i) literary

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<sup>109</sup> The government's isolation policy for Abdullah Öcalan continued for another 16 months, until 3 January 2013.

activities: editing and distribution of MKM's journal *Rewşen* (Kobîn, personal communication, November 28, 2013). According to the information that I received from Kobîn in the same interview, the second part of the film displayed the following figures as martyrs:

- Hozan Hogir: one of the most admired martyred musicians among Kurds in Turkey. He was a member of MKM Istanbul in the mid-1990s. His first album *Pêt* (Flame) was released in 1998. He joined PKK armed forces and died in an armed conflict in the same year. In 2011 Kom Müzik announced that a posthumous collection of his recordings would be released (Celadet, 2011).<sup>110</sup>
- Evdilmelik Şêx Bekir (Abdülmelik Şeyh Bekir): one of the founders of prominent music group Koma Amed. He died in an armed conflict as he fought alongside PKK's armed forces.
- Aynur Artan (Rotînda): Poet. She immolated herself in Midyat prison in 1998 (Url-11).
- Gaffur Doğan (Şehîd Şanoger Hêvî): a member of MKM Izmir. He was a prolific actor, director, writer, and scenarist. He died as a guerrilla.
- Nurşen İnce (Sarya): Actress, dancer and poet. She was a member of Istanbul MKM. She joined PKK in 1995 and died in 1997. The famous song *Sarya*, the lyrics of which written in the name of her by Murat Batgi, a famous Kurdish writer and actor, was composed, and performed by Koma Agirê Jiyân (1999) in its second album *Hêlîn*, which was released in 1999. There is another rendition of the song by acclaimed MKM singer Meral Tekçi. MKM singer Rûken also performed this song (lyrics and translation will be given in due course) later in the concert as well.
- Elî Temel: composer and poet. He is the lyricist and composer of several emblematic resistance songs such as *Waye PKK Rabû* (There PKK has risen) by Koma Berxwedan. He joined PKK armed forces and died in 1994.

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<sup>110</sup> Another martyred musician guerrilla who did not appear in the film probably because he never became a MKM member is Hozan Serhat (Süleyman Alpdoğan), a highly respected musician among Kurds in Turkey. After receiving formal music education in Izmir, Hozan Serhat joined PKK by which he was sent to spend some time in Europe for various musical activities. He returned to the guerrilla forces in 1996. He was killed in an armed conflict in 1999 (Url-12). A music video of one of his songs that includes many images of him as a guerrilla could be accessed on this link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQ-fjNF91Jo>.

- Şefik Yaktın (Argeş Norşinî) a prolific musician from MKM Izmir. He joined PKK in 2000 and died as a guerrilla in 2004.

MKM's music group Koma Çiya's (1998) well-timed performance of three political songs, one of which is the popular song *Berîtane*,<sup>111</sup> renewed the atmosphere of the setting after the display of the film that heightened the emotional poignancy of audience. Another MKM music group Koma Azad (2001) took the stage to sing another three well-known Kurdish songs, namely *Kes Nema*<sup>112</sup> (Nobody remained), *Dar Hêjîrokê*<sup>113</sup> (Fig Tree), and *Xerîb im*<sup>114</sup> (I am estranged). The emotional and evocative impact of all these songs performed by both groups on audiences as well as on cultural and political life of Kurds became visible on the stage during the performance of Koma Azad's last song *Xerîb im*; several youngsters who succeeded in sneaking onto the edge of stage attempted to proceed to the center to wave flags with yellow-red-green colors. They failed in their attempt. However, as Koma Gulên Xerzan, the subsequent group to perform, was getting ready for their first song, another better-organized group of youngsters whose faces covered with flags attained their aims and took control of the stage instantly. While several of them displayed a poster that had an image of Abdullah Öcalan, one of them who grabbed one of the singers' microphone, as he was raising a flag with others, started to sing the song *Çerxa Şoreşê*<sup>115</sup> after chanting the slogan *Gençlik Apo'nun fedaisidir* (Youth is the bodyguard of Apo). Audiences instantly responded to him by repeating the last syllables of the first line of the song that is mostly sung antiphonally. The members of Koma Gulên Xerzan did not interfere with this interference in the stage and waited for them to finish their performance. Similar actions were repeated several times by different groups during the concert to chant slogans.

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<sup>111</sup> The title of the song refers to Berîtan (Gülnaz Karataş), a Kurdish guerrilla who died in an armed conflict in 1992. She is one of many guerrillas whose life and death as a guerrilla have been legendarily glorified by Kurdish people and Kurdish political movement (Afşîn, 2013).

<sup>112</sup> *Kes Nema* is a famous song by Koma Azad that basically emphasizes the liberation of Kurdish people by describing them as the only people who have remained as captive.

<sup>113</sup> *Dar hêjîrokê* is an anonymous song popularized through the rendition of Aynur Doğan in her first album (2004) as well as in the film *Gönül Yarası* (Lovelorn), one of the most watched films in the mid-2000s in Turkey.

<sup>114</sup> *Xerîb im* is a popular song written and composed by Mistefa Gazî, a prominent researcher, writer, and composer.

<sup>115</sup> The role and modus operandi of *Çerxa Şoreşê* in Kurdish cultural and political life is discussed with a lyrical and musical analysis more fully in chapter 3.

The context shaped by the expression of emotional outburst and the confirmative position of audience is worth discussing at this point. After criticizing long speeches for turning event into a political rally, and *dengbêj* performances for slowing down the dynamism of the event on her blog, an anonymous Kurdish writer who was present at the concert writes these about the behavior of these youngsters:

Everything that I wrote above became invalid as of the moment at which youngsters jumped on stage and had audiences sing çerxa şoreşê. If they let me, I could have sung that song or xerfbim, or adarê until morning... Even that enthusiasm alone is worth going through all troubles. That is more than enough for me to say that I took delight in this concert. (Url-13)

Long speeches seem to be criticized for politicizing the event whereas *dengbêj* performances seem to be criticized for depoliticizing it. The actual criticism directed at these performances, on the other hand, may be located in the common trait between them: they both inactivate audience. This suggests that audiences openly insist on partaking in the politicization of cultural events. They mostly criticize performances not for being too political but for being political without them. Frequent slogan chanting, in this sense, is an indication of audiences' demand for participation and turning event into a collective performance. In other words, their actions intend not to moderate the politicization process as the first impression suggests but on the contrary, to intensify it by collective efforts of both stage and audience. Any politicization attempt without their active involvement is immediately rejected. For example, although *Çerxa Şoreşê* functions as a national anthem that provides a substantial source of political expression in itself, even its second performance seems to be a criticism-proof action because it can only come into being fully by allowing audience to take part in the political enactment it creates. *Dengbêj* performance that seems to decrease the political passion that concert creates as well as to relegate audiences to the position of listeners, is also demurred by audiences forming *govend-s* (line dances) to their own singing as an important bodily form of political expression in Kurdish society. It seems that performance of a song regarded as expressive of the Kurdish identity still represents the important part of music-related pleasure.

Koma Gulên Xerzan took the stage together with another acclaimed musician Rojda, who is the former member of the group as well as the sister of Hozan Çiya,<sup>116</sup> the lead singer of the group. The performance of Koma Gulên Xerzan centered on the unpolitical side of both traditional and contemporary Kurdish music. After singing two vocally demanding traditional songs popularized by the group, namely *Oy Felek* and *Helîmê* (Koma Gulên Xerzan, 1998), the group ended their performance by Rojda's energetic funky song *Evdô* (2012). It might be assumed in this regard that the sequential planning of the concert was carefully handled to keep the relationship between political passion and cultural activity on an even keel.

With the announcement of the message coming from the headquarters of BDP, which hold the ordinary convention in Ankara on the same day as the concert, as well as from the newspaper *Dersim*, and from Sarya Cultural Center in Bursa, audiences prepared to mobilize both for revival of political enthusiasm and for Koma Agirê Jiyân, one of the most celebrated *kom*-s of MKM. Maintaining its musico-political activities for more than 20 years, the group, apart from popularizing many folk songs, has produced numerous revolutionary songs that have definitely become the potent symbol of Kurdish political and protest music. According to its concert performance containing three songs, two of whose lyrics are translated below, it can be clearly seen, based on audience's reactions, that the group's musical behavior still has a major impact on Kurdish youth. Featuring the style of Turkish protest music groups appeared after the mid-1980s in terms of instrumentation, form, and melodic motion, both songs together effectually outline the lexicon and imagery of Kurdish victimization, resurrection, and liberation as they call people to uprising. The lyrics of the first song *Dîlan* (Agirê Jiyân, 1998), for example, employ direct Marxian references by indexing familiar concepts of socialist revolution and national liberation of Kurds:

<i>Tev rabin ji bo dîlanê</i>	All get up for dance
<i>Ev dîlaneke giran e</i>	This is a slow dance
<i>Dîlana me bi şoreşî ye</i>	Our dance is with revolution
<i>Dîlan rewşa şêran e</i>	Dance is the state of lions

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<sup>116</sup> I was informed that Hozan Çiya and Rojda had a brother who passed away as a guerrilla (Kobîn, personal communication, November 28, 2013).

<i>Çok bidin xwe bilezin</i>	Move your knee quickly
<i>Dîlan barê mêran e</i>	Dance is the load of braves
<i>Dîlana me bi şoreşi ye</i>	Our dance is with revolution
<i>Dîlan barekî giran e</i>	Dance is a heavy load
<i>Bi hezaran şehîd dan</i>	With thousands martyrs given
<i>Rêça rizgar Kurdistan</i>	The road to liberated Kurdistan
<i>Barê me barekî giran</i>	Our load is a heavy load
<i>Ji bo azadîya niştiman</i>	For freedom of homeland
<i>Kurdno rabin dîlanê</i>	Kurds get up to dance
<i>Dîlan dîlana me ye</i>	Dance is our dance
<i>Binêr mamoste Lenin</i>	Look at master Lenin
<i>Lenin li pêşiya me ye</i>	Lenin is ahead of us
<i>Ava Dicle û Firat</i>	Water of Tigris and Euphrates
<i>Firat li benda me ye</i>	Euphrates waits for us
<i>Kurdno rabin xilaskin</i>	Kurds get up rescue
<i>Bi destê me ye</i>	It is in our hands

Remarkably, the frequent usage of the word *dîlan*, which broadly embodies concepts such as dance, wedding, and festivity, has strong overtones regarding insurgency. The song, in this regard, intensively uses the metaphorical power of dance as uprising. As Saritaş (2010) insightfully states, dance is one of the most communal socio-cultural practices of Kurds that has been identified with current political struggle (p. 86). The name of the dance collective of MKM (Koma Serhildan [Group Uprising]), which also gave a series of dance performances later in the concert, also suggests this correlation.

The second song of Koma Agirê Jîyan (1998) *Adarê*, probably the most acknowledged song of the group, presents, despite slight differences in signifiers, as roughly the same picture as *Dîlan* does both musically and verbally. It similarly marks both revolutionary ambitions, this time referring to concepts such as *çiya* (mountain) and *Adar* (March) as metaphorical starting places for Kurdish insurrection:

<i>Çûme serê çiyayê Gabar</i>	I have gone on top of Gabar mountain <sup>117</sup>
<i>Kulilk vebûn nexşa bihar</i>	Flowers have bloomed embroidered spring
<i>Êdî bes e zilma neyar</i>	Enough with the enemy's cruelty
<i>Gelek xweş bû şahiya adar</i>	Festivity of March has become very pleasant
<i>Adarê, xweş adarê, kulilka ber biharê</i>	March, pleasant March, the flower bringing the spring
<i>Me ne zordestî, kevneperestî</i>	Lots of oppression, bigotry
<i>Me ne zilm û koledarî</i>	Lots of cruelty and servitude
<i>Şervane li ser zinar û lat</i>	Warriors on top of hills and valleys
<i>Dibezin ber bi roja fêlat</i>	Running to day of emancipation
<i>Gelê me rabe roja nû hat</i>	Rise our people new day has come
<i>Ew şehîdên rewşa welat</i>	They are martyrs of the homeland's sake
<i>Li zindanan bi berxwedanî</i>	With resistance in dungeons
<i>Çendî şehîd serî danî</i>	Many martyrs gave up their head
<i>Standin dîroka tolanî</i>	Wrote the history of revenge
<i>Li ser çiya ronî danî</i>	Brought enlightenment on top of mountain

In correlation with the celebrations of Newroz (New Year), as discussed in chapter 3, *Adarê* (March), the title and main theme of the song has mythological, historical, and political connotations in Kurdish socio-cultural sphere. With the implicit reference to Newroz and Kawa legend as the beginning of revival, uprising, and liberty, the lyrics openly seek to reestablish the relationship between past and present in terms of Kurdish liberation. Tigris and Euphrates, the region's two geographical entities mentioned in *Dîlan* to reinforce Kurdish sense of belonging are replaced by "mountain," another geographical characteristic of the region, in *Adarê*; both, in this sense, remind the process of the "territorialization of memory," to use Smith's definition (Smith, 1996, pp. 453-454). Strongly signifying rebellion and guerrilla warfare, as mentioned at various places throughout the text, "mountain" is a key concept of both leftist and Kurdish lexicon in Turkey. Today, many Kurds who are not familiar with the modern term "guerrilla," which has been passed off as "*gerîla*" in Kurdish language recently, still use the expression *Zarokên Çiya* (Children of Mountain) to refer to Kurdish rebel fighters. *Zordestî* (oppression), *zilm* (cruelty),

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<sup>117</sup> Gabar is one of the mountains in Şırnak (Şirnex) province in Turkey. It is known as one of the strategic locations that provided Kurdish militias with shelter and recruitment in the past.

and *koledarî* (servitude), as in many Kurdish resistance songs, are specified as causal factors associated with uprising. Listing *kevneperestî* (bigotry) together with these terms, in addition to the word *ronî* (enlightenment) incorporated into the last line, *Adarê* highlights the strong inclination of the movement toward modernity. Another theme of both songs that consistently takes part in the repertory of Kurdish resistance music is martyrdom. Of course, the concept of martyrdom has provided many similar movements in the world with spiritual power for centuries, and Kurdish political movement is not alone in monumentalization of those who died for the cause as an inducement to continue with present struggle. I would like to stake out at this point, however, that apart from its abundant treatment in songs, martyrdom is prevalent in slogans, speeches, and gestures such as moments of silence in Kurds' political performances. Youthfulness of Kurdish resistance movement in which reminiscence of the past occurs with less difficulty seems to be a reasonable assumption here about what renders its current viability more possible. The numerous interviewees' joint emphases on the dearth of Kurds who do not have deceased or jailed relatives as they account for the intensive politicization of them also seem to be connected with Kurds' deep sensitivity over martyrdom.

Despite all gloomy expressions regarding martyrdom, war, revenge, cruelty, and resistance, on the other hand, titles (and also the key words) of both songs *Dilan* and *Adarê*, which mainly evoke festivity, dance, and the liveliness of spring, interestingly suggest an optimistic picture. It seems, according to various observations carried out throughout the study, that Kurds somehow have got used to experience joy in this way. Chapter 4 partly discusses this contradictory side of Kurdish musical resistance and protest that strongly reverberates through people's actions.

Climaxing the concert with these songs, Koma Agirê Jiyân performed an upbeat song *Welatê Xo* (Own Land) in Zaza language. This, intentional or not, had stage transferred smoothly to Koma Vengê Sodirî, the only MKM music group that making music mainly in Zaza language. Koma Asmin, another MKM music group formed by female members who are already active in various *kom*-s, took the stage after Koma Vengê Sodirî's performance. Performing songs that are considered being correlated with women, Koma Asmin embodies the ideal position of women within Kurdish political movement as well as the combative side of them in the struggle

against hegemonic power.<sup>118</sup> Koma Asmin, which was the last *kom* that performed in the concert, were followed by one-song individual performances of three MKM musicians, namely Jêhat, Harun Ataman, and Rûken. This was another section of the concert that was obviously allocated for martyrdom; each singer consecutively performed three martyr-related songs, each of which is regarded as memorable by many Kurds. Jêhat performed *Dîrok* (History), a historic march in the repertory of Kurdish resistance music that is identified with its majestic performance by Hozan Hogir, the aforementioned martyred musician. The lyrics of the song that zealously equate Kurdish resistance and revolutionary movement with those around the world can be translated as follows:

<i>Li Vietnam Li Kûba wan kul in</i>	Those wounds in Vietnam in Cuba
<i>Li Çîpas in û li Filîstîn in</i>	In Chiapas and in Palestine
<i>Em agir in alav in û pêt in</i>	We are fire, blaze, and flame
<i>Em dîrok in tim li Kurdistanê</i>	We are always history in Kurdistan
<i>Bi kevîran em diçin ser tankan</i>	We are going against tanks with stones
<i>Bi daran êriş dikin panzeran</i>	We are attacking panzers with sticks
<i>Şervan bûnê bombê yen zindî</i>	Warriors have become living bombs
<i>Diteqin li Kurdistan li cîhanê</i>	Explode in Kurdistan, in the world
<i>Ji tariyê wê derin ronîyê</i>	They will go from darkness to brightness
<i>Wê azadbin wek gelê Kûbayê</i>	They will be free like the people of Cuba
<i>Ji tariyê we derin ronîyê</i>	They will go from darkness to brightness
<i>Wê azadbin wek gelê Angolayê</i>	They will be free like the people of Angola
<i>Nîşana Vietnam waye li dine</i>	There is the sign of Vietnam
<i>Agirê dîrokê bilind dibe</i>	The fire of history is rising
<i>Ala bilind dibe li zindanan</i>	The flag is rising in prisons
<i>Bi neynikan dikolin dîwaran</i>	They are digging walls with nails
<i>Bi xwîna xwe dîrokê nexşandin</i>	They are embroidering their history with blood
<i>Ji bo serxwebûna hemû însan</i>	For the freedom of all people

Harun Ataman, the founder and the lead singer of Koma Rewşen, an acclaimed rock music group formed in MKM's Mersin branch, performed *Zilan*, a song that was

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<sup>118</sup> On Koma Asmin, and on the role of women in the ideology of Kurdish armed and political movement, see Sarıtaş 2010 — particularly “Women in *Koms* and Articulation of Gender Identity Through Kurdish Music,” pp. 160-79.

written, composed, and performed by Delîla, another martyred musician guerrilla whose image has risen to an exalted position in Kurdish musico-political life for years.<sup>119</sup> The song *Zilan*<sup>120</sup> (see translation below) is also about another guerrilla known by her code name Zîlan (Zeynep Kınacı), who was killed by a suicide bombing that she carried out herself in Dersim (Tunceli) in 1996:

<i>Bi çi rengî bi çi rêkî</i>	No matter what color no matter what way
<i>Gulan bidin dest Zîlanê</i>	Give roses to Zîlan
<i>Parêzvana roja min tînê jina dilê min</i>	Defender of my day, my heart's warmth of life
<i>Parêzvana roja min mizgîna bihara min</i>	Defender of my day, the herald of my spring
<i>Zîlan ronîya reşka çave min</i>	Zîlan the divine light of my eye
<i>Duh ew zerî bû îro ji bo me bû perî</i>	Yesterday she was the beloved today she has become fairy for us
<i>Keç û kesa bihurin herdû biska ba bidin</i>	Girls and people pass by weave both two earlocks
<i>Taca azadîye bînin deynin serê Zilana min</i>	Bring the crown of freedom place on the head of Zîlan
<i>Zilan ronîya reşka çace min</i>	Zilan the divine light of my eye
<i>Şabûka serokê min</i>	The coy bride of my leader

As Harun Ataman was performing the song with audiences, various images of Delîla displaying on large screens provided visual contribution to the affecting atmosphere that song itself created. Representing younger generation of MKM musicians, Rûken

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<sup>119</sup> Along with Hozan Hogir and Hozan Serhat, Delîla Meyaser (Şenay Güçer), whose image basically personifies the aesthetic and virtuous side of Kurdish resistance movement, is probably one of the most admired musician guerrillas among Kurds in Turkey. She joined PKK's armed forces in 1997. She was killed in an armed conflict occurred with Turkey's army in 2007. Many performances of her reached Kurdish audiences through a number of videos made when she was in the mountains as a guerrilla. In addition to songs that she composed herself, her rendition of several songs are considered exceptional by Kurds. Kom Müzik released an album entitled *Jinên Azad* (Liberated Women) consisting of songs associated with her in 2008 (Url-14).

<sup>120</sup> The official music video of Delîla's song *Zilan* may be accessed on this link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=31C-3Ckg-6U>

performed the aforementioned song *Sarya* (translated below), the third in the series of songs that are somehow associated with a martyred artist:

<i>Sarya dûrî wek derya</i>	Sarya is far away like sea
<i>Ax bê te nabe</i>	Not without you
<i>Me govende Sarya</i>	Our dance Sarya
<i>Va Sarya dimeşe</i>	Here walks Sarya
<i>Va Sarya dilgeşe</i>	Here cheers Sarya
<i>Va Sarya rûgeşe</i>	Here is Sarya merry
<i>Gerîla dimeşe</i>	Gerilla is marching
<i>Sarya tu yî hey zerya</i>	Sarya you are the beloved one
<i>Ax bê te nabe</i>	Not without you
<i>Me govende Sarya</i>	Our dance Sarya

After Rûken's performance, MKM's dance collective Koma Serhildan, members of which were uniformly dressed in traditional style as the majority of performers did, performed a series of folk dances to the conventional accompaniment of *dahol* and *zirne*. The final stage of the concert was designed for consecutive performances of guests, Niyazi Koyuncu and Bandista. MKM officials traditionally invite non-Kurdish groups to events that they host to emphasize revolutionary alliances as well as to diversify, enrich, and expand the scope of these events. As many other elements of Kurdish liberation movement, in this regard, MKM works closely with entities that have similar political perspective and discourse. Addressing this issue in our conversation, Kobîn stated to me:

MKM exists with its own principles, with its own culture, with its own stance, with its own art, but there are also friends of it with whom it shared the same adventure. There are revolutionist organizations, revolutionist artists, and friends... They are in the same area. They attend MKM's events just as MKM attends theirs. (Kobîn, personal communication, November 28, 2013)<sup>121</sup>

After all, many songs that both Niyazi Koyuncu and Bandista performed were all easy to sing along for majority of audiences, who have already been closely related to prevailing non-Kurdish musical culture in Turkey.

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<sup>121</sup> The original conversation in Turkish was translated to English by the author.

The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary concert of MKM ended with a suggestive performance; all MKM musicians took the stage to collectively sing several songs from *Şahiya Stranan* Project, the third volume of the album series of which had been released about two months ago. As an attempt to retrieve Turkified Kurdish songs from the possession of hegemon, *Şahiya Stranan* Project seemed to have recapitulated the main argument of the entire concert; self-assertion.

The next section of this chapter explores another crucial entity for Kurds in Turkey along similar lines. Even though the connection between him and Kurdish national and cultural identity was established in a different way from that of MKM, Ahmet Kaya ended up in providing Turkey's Kurds' ethno-political struggle with powerful meanings as MKM has been doing for years. Mostly because of the tragic phase that he went through prior to his sudden death in 2000 as one of the most popular and controversial singers in Turkey, Kaya has been turned into a symbolic figure to which Kurds in Turkey customarily pay tribute. This section, therefore, intends to explore a concert organized in commemoration of him. First, I would like to turn to the background that shaped Ahmet Kaya as an important national imagery through which both victimization and dignity of Kurdishness in Turkey is developed and conducted.

### **5.3 The Conundrum of Kurdishness in Turkey: Ahmet Kaya**

The military coup of 12 September 1980 is commonly and justifiably regarded as a milestone in Turkey's recent socio-cultural and political history. The coup and the social upheaval caused by it had also a huge impact on the radical transformation of political music culture in Turkey, of which Ahmet Kaya, whose music was narrowly defined as *devrimci arabesk* (revolutionary *arabesk*), was arguably the most significant figure. This characterization that still, to a certain degree, represents an oxymoron even in cultural codes of today's Turkey was simply an artistic embodiment of social trauma generated by the coup. *Arabesk*, as Stokes (2010) points out, was and still is one of the busiest centers in the discussion of psychosocial aspects in post-coup Turkey (p. 73). Having been associated with the grief of uneducated and poor parts of the society formed by rapid urbanization that mass migration movements created, *Arabesk*, a hybrid popular music style of Turkish classical, folk, and western pop and rock developed under the great influence of

Arabic music (Stokes, 2010, p. 19), was basically seen by intelligentsia as a taint threatening to stain Turkey's cultural improvement toward Western values (Stokes, 2010, p. 73-74). Having combined customary leftist concepts with *arabesk* music style, Ahmet Kaya, after the mid-1980s in Turkey, simply disoriented many people who adopted leftist ideas shaped by similar views on *arabesk* music. With countless chart hits of Ahmet Kaya, which obviously indicates the most popular way for the musical expression of misery and desperation of the defeated revolution attempt, *arabesk* music revealed itself as the strongest musical style that have a potential to receive aesthetic appreciation from all parts of the society in Turkey.

In spite of his music intertwined with political struggle for social justice, and of his previous statements about his Kurdish identity that supports peace attempts and Kurdish cultural and political rights as a citizen of Turkey, the concrete connection between Ahmet Kaya and Kurdish political identity was not established until February 1999 when he spoke much less political and announced his simple intention to sing a Kurdish song and shoot a video for it during a music awards ceremony. Having started a short period concluding with his unexpected death in Paris to which he moved for extricating himself from a smear campaign and prosecution in Turkey, this event marked the iconization process of Ahmet Kaya by Kurdish people as well as the disclosure of ideology that shapes public rage against any kind of expression, or intent of expression that might be read as a challenge to the state ideology, of Kurdish identity in Turkey.

### **5.3.1 A brief biography<sup>122</sup>**

To interpret the event in which Kaya's speech took place, and to compare two different reactions emerged after it, I must first present a brief introduction to Kaya and his music mostly drawing on the official website run on behalf of Ahmet Kaya (Url-15).

Ahmet Kaya was born in 1957 in Malatya, a city in east-central Turkey, to a Zaza father and Turkish mother. Having had a family that had been traditionally enthusiastic about music, he began playing *bağlama* (long-necked folk lute) at the

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<sup>122</sup> For a more detailed version of Ahmet Kaya's biography in Kurdish, English, German, Turkish, and French, see the official website [www.ahmetkaya.com](http://www.ahmetkaya.com) (Url-15).

age of six. When he was 10, he began to work in a record shop where he found a chance to get acquainted with different musical categories, which would lead him to compromise between two seemingly conflicting genres represented namely by *arabesk* and revolutionary songs as he crafted his own style in the future (Dündar, 1996). In 1972, Kaya's family, moved to Istanbul, which was the main center of uncontrolled migration of people in search of prosperity in Turkey at the time. He started composing songs in Istanbul as he tried to get used to new cultural and social conditions by which he was surrounded, and as many political young musicians did at the time, he sought to satisfy his ambitions in both music and politics by involving himself in cultural activities. He actively took part and performed in activities organized by *Halk Bilimleri Derneği* (Association of People Sciences) as well as various events organized by different associations, unions, and student organizations. In 1977, Yalçın (2010) states, he served five months in prison for reading poems and making a speech on an occasion organized in commemoration of socialist Turkish poet Nazım Hikmet.

The coup d'état took place in 12 September 1980 initiated a traumatic period during which an intense repression framed by mass blacklistings and detentions, refugee outflows, denaturalizations, tortures, executions, and deaths prevailed under military regime. In spite of official statistics showing that 650,000 people, as Mavioglu (2006) points out, were taken into custody, this figure is assumed to be over one million (p. 21). Mavioglu adds that the number of people who were tried during this period was about 200,000 (p. 21). A report published by Amnesty International in 1986 on unfair trials of political convicts in Turkey (as cited in Mavioglu, 2006) indicates that 61,220 people were tried and sentenced for political reasons in military courts during military rule after the coup (pp. 21-22). Disciplinary implements of the new regime did not only ended political life but also drastically changed socio-cultural, and economic circumstances in Turkey. As for politically charged musical life, the coup that put all left-wing movements in Turkey to rout at a single stroke on the one hand marked a dramatic change in Turkey's protest music tradition on the other. Prison, which suddenly came into life of a significant part of the society, became a major source of artistic creation. Themes such as defeat, disappointment, and captivity replaced the assertive, defiant, and dignified protest musical style of pre-coup period. Having been remained in detention about eight months after the

coup as he noted in a documentary movie (Dündar, 1996), Ahmet Kaya personally experienced this sense of defeat that many left-wing prisoners felt. The first album of Ahmet Kaya, which was released in 1985, gained in popularity basically because it effectively discharged collective feelings of post-coup period during which the concept of imprisonment was centralized. Kaya, as Aksoy (2010) points out, was the first musician to pluck up enough courage to criticize conditions created by the coup of 1980. Many left-wing protest music groups emerged after in the late 1980s, accordingly, reflected resentful sentiments in their songs that recurrently dealt with concepts such as imprisonment, disheartenment, and injustice. Kaya's first album entitled "Ağlama Bebeğim" (Do not Cry My Baby), however, was the first outburst of objection to gain the agreement of a sizable proportion of the society after a long period of silence. Many describe Ahmet Kaya in this respect as the epitome of reaction against military coup, and the despotic regime it created after September 1980. According to Yalçın (2010), various appellations such as "oppositional music," "insurgent music<sup>123</sup>," "socialist music," "Eylülist<sup>124</sup> music," "populist music," "arabesk music" and "özgün<sup>125</sup> music," were given for his musical style. Even though he never accepted appellations such as *devrimci arabesk*, or protest music for his musical style, he always emphasized the importance of *arabesk* music as a key characteristic of socio-cultural life in Turkey.

In a short while after its release, the album was confiscated and Kaya was taken into custody. Kaya and his album were cleared after a short trial on the other hand, and Kaya's record company announced acquittal of the album with a newspaper advertisement, which according to the biography on his website (Url-15) increased the existing interest in the album. The first and the succeeding albums that mostly comprised songs telling the misery in prison turned Kaya into one of the most sought-after singers in Turkey. Kaya, according to Aksoy (2010), combined both "populist and rebellious" concepts in his lyrics, and articulated them with his distinctive style. With his musical style explicitly drawing on *arabesk*, Kaya, as

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<sup>123</sup> Kaya's album released in 1988, for instance, was entitled "Başkaldırıyorum" (I am Defying).

<sup>124</sup> *Eylülist* (literally "septemberist") is a term coined by socialist writer Yalçın Küçük to refer to period of oppression created by military regime after the coup taken place on 12 September 1980.

<sup>125</sup> *Özgün* (literally means distinctive, unique, and original) music is a category that has an ambiguous usage in Turkey. It roughly describes an alternative music style that fuses both western and local musical elements and instruments with political lyrics that are mostly associated with leftist concepts.

Dündar (1996) puts it, gave voice to the “tired rebellion of revolutionist” in his early albums. Dündar (1996) portrays the audience of Ahmet Kaya as follows:

Unhappy revolutionists, inhabitants of the squatter towns who were abandoned to poverty, wounded leftists who lost their hopes for revolution, youngsters who fell into loneliness in the late 1980s out of the fight in the late 1970s, and those who got out of jail where they left their youth were the listeners of Ahmet Kaya.<sup>126</sup>

Left-wingers were not the creator of this profile per se, right-wingers and apolitical groups were also contributed to it, yet Kaya attracted a lot of criticisms from all as well. Kaya released three more albums by the late 1986 and each of them further increased his popularity in spite of ongoing arrests, trials, interrogations, criticism, and prohibition and confiscation of his albums and concerts. In 1986, Kaya got married to Gülten Hayaloğlu, which led to a prolific collaboration between him and his brother-in-law, Yusuf Hayaloğlu, whose poems and lyrics became a significant source for his music for years. In the early 1990s, Yalçın (2010) points out, themes representing prison life were not as popular as before because many detainees were either released or put on probation in accordance with a law passed in 1991; left-wingers, in addition, perplexed by the collapse of Communist Bloc. Escalation of the conflict between PKK and Turkey’s army in the late 1980s, on the other hand, reached directly Kaya’s songs. The concept of mountain, which had always been a mystical force for leftist movements as well as Kurdish armed movement, predominantly found place in his songs.<sup>127</sup> His music was the admiration of Kurds living in metropolises as well in those years. Kaya was accused of being involved in separatist activities, for instance, because of a yellow-red-green kerchief wrapped around his neck by one of his audiences in a hectic concert in Istanbul in 1990. According to Dündar (1996), many also criticized him for turning revolutionism and poverty into business. The biography on his official website (Url-15) describes Ahmet Kaya as one of several people who courageously emphasized the necessity for government to recognize Kurds living in Turkey, to respect their language and culture, and to improve their living and educational conditions. “Ahmet Kaya,” according to Yalçın (2010), “was actually a person who thinks as he feels like many

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<sup>126</sup> English translation of the original Turkish text was made by the author.

<sup>127</sup> His album released in 1994, correspondingly, was entitled “Şarkılarım Dağlara” (My Songs are to Mountains).

leftists from Turkey. His theoretical side was weak. He always saw himself from Turkey. He was angry with acts committed against Kurds.”

Kaya’s political remarks and music disquieted mainstream political mindset on the one hand and they gave him a huge prominence on the other. Many musicians whose musical style was similar to that of Ahmet Kaya appeared from different political sides in the same years. His widespread media coverage in the early 1990s, accordingly, led up to a 13-episode run talk-show in 1995. In addition to singing songs, and chatting to celebrities invited, Ahmet Kaya frequently talked about peace, democracy, and fellowship in this program (Url-15). In the meanwhile he continued to make top-selling albums as well as the most demanded and aired music videos, and barely took a break from his packed concerts. According to Dündar (1996), in ten years after the release of his first album in 1985, during which he made 15 albums in total including the one entitled “Beni Bul” (Find Me), which was released in November 1995, Kaya’s albums sold more than 20 million copies. He received a number of awards from various institutions, television stations, journals, and newspapers; he was chosen as the artist of the year many times by them on popular vote and received many honor awards from a number of charitable foundations and non-governmental organizations. In a similar fashion, Kaya released his 17<sup>th</sup> album entitled “Dosta Düşmana Karşı” (In the Eyes of Friend and Foe) in March 1998 and was awarded the music star of the year by *Magazin Gazetecileri Derneği* (Association of Tabloid Journalists). This award, however, rapidly evolved into a fatal punishment that would never bring even his former politically controversial position back.

### **5.3.2 The destructive power of an award**

The 6<sup>th</sup> Golden Lens Award Ceremony of Association of Tabloid Journalists, in which many musicians, singers, actors and actresses, music producers, and many celebrities are invited, took place on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 1999 in the congress hall of a five-star hotel in Istanbul and broadcasted live on TV. Following the announcement of him as the music star of the year, Kaya got to the stage and made the following

speech,<sup>128</sup> which was going to be defined by general public in Turkey as the cause of his victimization only years later:

Thank you. I am receiving this award not only on my own behalf but also on behalves of Human Rights Association, Saturday Mothers, those who labors for tabloid press, and the entire people of Turkey. I also would like to say this: may they not ask “who has assigned this task to you?” History has assigned this task to me. I will say one more thing: Since I am of Kurdish origin I am making a Kurdish song in the forthcoming album, and also shooting a Kurdish music video. I also know that there are courageous people who will telecast this video. Should they not telecast, I also know [*sic*] how they will come to terms with the people of Turkey. Thank you.<sup>129</sup>

There were both hoots of disapproval and applause as he finished his speech, and yet he began singing his song “Giderim” (I will go) — a song from his latest album — among the hubbub. As soon as he finished his song, the live broadcast streaming was interrupted by a commercial break. Many video images<sup>130</sup> show that Ahmet Kaya, among protests elaborated by scornful yells and words of many guests, resumed his speech before he left the stage and said: “Thanks to friends who booed, too. We defended the indivisible unity of Turkey all through our lives but I will also not leave the necks of people who deny the reality of Kurdish people. This must be known like this.” Kaya left the stage and headed toward his table where he was going to experience the second stage of besetting protests. In addition to many people who aggressively walk up to the table with intention of attacking, and silverwares and

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<sup>128</sup> Kaya’s wife Gülten Kaya (Url-16) and Çetin Oraner (Url-17), Kaya’s longtime assistant and student, who were with him throughout the event, note that the speech was not a planned action.

<sup>129</sup> The original speech in Turkish was translated by the author.

<sup>130</sup> A number of documentary movies, which contain video images that had not been shown before, were made about Ahmet Kaya and the award ceremony towards the end of the first decade of the 2000s. *Uçurtmam tellere takıldı* (2010), a documentary by Ümit Kıvanç, was made on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> year of Ahmet Kaya’s death (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2dgy3APRY4>). An episode of Soner Yalçın’s documentary series entitled “Oradaydım” (I was there) investigated into the backstage of the award ceremony with detailed interview of Kaya’s wife Gülten Kaya. The episode was shown on CNN Türk TV in January 2009 (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQ6SgCHcjK0>). Another documentary series entitled “Keşke Olmasaydı” (If Only It did not Happen), which are produced by Okan Başara for broadcasting on 24 TV, reserved an episode for the same ceremony and Kaya’s life after it (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abjzli-abaY>). Roj TV also aired a documentary about the award ceremony based on the account of Çetin Oraner (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FTVUhSJyg0>). Habertürk TV televised another account of Ahmet Kaya’s life produced by Ecevit Kılıç and Gülnur Üykü in October 2013 (see <http://tv.haberturk.com/gundem/video/ahmet-kayanin-hic-bilinmeyen-sirlari/100906>).

coins thrown at the table, he was surrounded by a gaggle of reporters, photographers after he sat down, and made another statement to them:

I have tried to say in the name of kindness and friendship but no matter how people perceive it no one can take my identity away from inside of me. This must be known like this. I have said this for years; Kurdish and Turkish peoples are sisters and it will be remain like this for years. I have said for years that I defended the indivisible unity of Turkey. I maintain that it will not be divided thousands of years but this country has to embrace and accept Kurdish reality... (Url-16)<sup>131</sup>

According to Kaya's wife Gülten Kaya who was sitting next to him at that moment, some guests uttered several offensive words such as “uncircumcised pimp” “separatist,” and “traitor,” toward Kaya (Url-16). Today, it is also possible to hear phrases such as “there is no such thing as Kurd,” “you are being separatist,” “throw this man away,” and “go to hell” during the clamor in many video images circulating on YouTube. According to Çetin Oraner, who was sitting at the other side of him, several waiters and guests tried to protect him from physical and verbal attacks (Url-17).

In the meanwhile an immediate chauvinistic response emphasizing Turkishness from the stage, in addition to individual protests among guests, initiated by pop music singer Serdar Ortaç, who sang one of his songs that is very popular at the time by shifting its lyrics from “do not ever trust yourself that much, anybody is not shah, not padishah” to “the entire Turkey in Atatürk's footsteps, this country is ours, not strangers'.” Following the performance of this song that ramblingly aroused people, he created a collective behavior out of the crowd by having people sing “10. Yıl Marşı” (the 10<sup>th</sup> Year March), one of the most popular nationalist songs, the refrain of which goes “we are Turks, our chests are bronze shields of the republic. Standing still does not befit the Turk, the Turk is on the front, the Turk is advanced.” These two performances, however, were not satisfactory enough to cool down the crowd. Reha Muhtar, a popular anchorman known by his populist style at the time, had yet to finalize the patriotic show. He invited all singers and musicians in the hall to the stage to sing the song “Memleketim” (My Country),<sup>132</sup> another musical symbol of

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<sup>131</sup> Translated from Turkish by the author.

<sup>132</sup> “Memleketim” is originally a Klezmer style traditional song in Yiddish known as “Der Rebbe Elimelech.” Turkish singer Ayten Alpman performed the song with Turkish lyrics in her EP released

Turkish nationalism since the mid-1970s. Just then, with the help of several people, undercover police officers that suddenly appeared at the scene, Oraner says (Url-17), got Ahmet Kaya out of the building after a struggle.

The award ceremony, however, was just a striking introductory of the real case. The mainstream media of Turkey turned this incident into an aggressive smear campaign immediately after the following day. In addition to threatening phone calls and letters that Kaya received, Gülten Kaya (Url-16) remarks, Kaya's car and office were shot in the following days. Many reports mainly described Kaya's words as shameful and provocative. According to the article of Kütahyalı (2010), in which he compiled written accounts about Kaya after the award ceremony, several leading columnists denounced him as liar, disreputable, self-interested, dishonest, and his music as the proclamation of homosexuality.<sup>133</sup> It is also entirely possible that the capture of Abdullah Öcalan five days after Kaya's speech following a pursuit that had been occupying the political agenda for more than four months contributed to this chauvinistic atmosphere in Turkey. The first sensational news about Kaya, on the other hand, apart from those of biased accounts of the event, was published in *Hürriyet* (Liberty), one of the most circulated newspapers in Turkey, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 1999. The news (Url-18), which was entitled "You behaved shamefully 'my dear'<sup>134</sup>," had a photograph of Kaya with his *bağlama* in front of an image of Abdullah Öcalan with a map, which the media mostly regard as "the so-called map of Kurdistan," below it. The report claimed that the photograph was taken from a concert organized by the Association of Kurdish Businessmen in Berlin in November 1993.<sup>135</sup> The report accused Kaya's speeches of glorifying Abdullah Öcalan and Kurdish guerrillas. Having been invited by the police for his statement on the report, Ahmet Kaya proved, with the help of his passport records, that he was not in Germany on the date that report claimed. The photograph was never proved to be

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in 1972. The song was mainly popularized in 1974 by TRT (Radio and Television Corporation of Turkey) during Turkey's military operation in Cyprus.

<sup>133</sup> For a compilation of libelous reports, headlines, and columns about Kaya after the award ceremony, see <http://fotogaleri.ntvmsnbc.com/hayat-karartan-mansetler.html>

<sup>134</sup> My Dear (*Gözüm*, literally "my eye") is an expression that Kaya frequently used in his speeches as a friendly greeting.

<sup>135</sup> As Kaya's biography on his official website (Url-15) ironically notes, *Hürriyet* awarded Ahmet Kaya as the artist of the year in 1994.

authentic and reliable, and the department of legal affairs of *Hürriyet* declared a written statement on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 1999, at the request of officials, that the company did not have any video or sound recording regarding the report in question about Ahmet Kaya (Yükselir, 2010). Kaya, according to his biography (Url-15), was accused of treason in the first trial in which prosecutor requested his imprisonment for 13 and a half years.<sup>136</sup> Kaya was banned from living Turkey for a while by the court; later the ban was lifted at his request and he left Turkey for a concert tour in Europe on 16 June 1999. Mainstream media ignored Kaya's statements about the concert and photograph that never existed, and continued to mislead the public in Turkey throughout the year, which led to new court cases, about Kaya's concerts and statements in Europe.<sup>137</sup> *Hürriyet*, for instance, published another report (Url-19) on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1999 about him entitled "Whoa, dishonorable" as the banner headline of the paper. The report, based on the following speech of him in a concert in Munich, accused him of insulting the people of Turkey:

I cannot bear what I have been going through, living away from my country and suffering this situation in which I was put by a few dishonorable people. I want Kurdish reality to be accepted. I want to live as Kurdish Ahmet from Turkey (Url-15).<sup>138</sup>

Major difficulties he experienced with the fierce campaign led by media against him in addition to his overwhelming longing for his country put Kaya into great pain and distress during the period in exile (Url-15). It is quite noticeable today that this period was also significant in terms of the relationship between Kaya and Kurdish liberation movement. Europe had (and still has) a pivotal role in the organizational structure of PKK, which had a direct political interest in the appropriation of Kaya and his victimization through protecting and promoting him. It seems that Kaya was drawn inevitably to the only entity that embraced him during this painful period in which his Kurdish identity also provided him with a considerably secure shelter. His

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<sup>136</sup> As reported by *Hürriyet* on 18 March 1999 (Url-20), two different lawsuits, both over his alleged concert in Berlin and over his speech during the ceremony, were filed against Kaya by Public Prosecution Office in Istanbul State Security Court for aiding and abetting PKK, and for provoking people into hatred and hostility by discriminating race. The requested sentence was his imprisonment for 10 and half years in total.

<sup>137</sup> Kaya's many press statements and public speeches in order to express himself further were not reflected in the press during the period between the ceremony speech and his death in November 2000. For a compilation of some of his speeches during this period, see <http://video.ntvmsnbc.com/ahmet-kayanin-agzindan.html>

<sup>138</sup> Translated from Turkish by the author.

frequent performance of the song *Kürdüz Ölene Kadar* (We are Kurdish till Death), lyrics of which translated below, in addition to his several speeches in many concerts in Europe suggest this tendency of him toward his political, ethnic, and cultural identity:

*Kürdüz ölene kadar*      We are Kurdish till death  
*Kürdüz sonuna kadar*      We are Kurdish till the end  
*Vallahi biz dostu özledik*      We verily missed the friend  
*İnsanız biz ölene kadar*      We are human till death  
*İnsanız biz sonuna kadar*      We are human till the end  
*Vallahi barıştı özledik*      We verily missed the peace

In a concert that is assumed to be taken place in 1999 in Munich (Url-21), Kaya also greets Kurdish political movement by replacing one of the lines of the song with “We verily missed Apo,” which arouses immense enthusiasm among audiences. Various instances similarly show that Kaya sought to re-establish a bond of emotion with his Kurdishness in exile. In a program broadcast on Medya TV<sup>139</sup> (Url-22) after he left Turkey, in which he also noted — regarding his speech during the award ceremony — that he acted in good faith and never expected such an extreme reaction, he confidently says: “there is only one condition and only one requirement for living as a truthful and honorable human being; art, fame, money, shame, honor and everything are never more important than cultural, political, and national personality of a human being.” In his speech (Url-23) that finalizes his performance in the Festival of Peace, Democracy, and Freedom<sup>140</sup> that took place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 2000, he says: “I am saying this not to you but also to the Republic of Turkey: I have lived as Turkish for 40 years but after 40 years no one can turkify me any longer. This must be known like this.”

Kaya, alas, did not live long with the identity that he felt. In March 2000 (Url-24), having been acquitted on the charge of his speech during the ceremony, Kaya was sentenced to three years and nine months in prison in his absence for his uncorroborated concert in Berlin. He did not return to Turkey during the trial, and

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<sup>139</sup> Medya TV was the Kurdish satellite TV station based in Belgium at the time.

<sup>140</sup> Kurds living in Europe have been organizing a cultural festival every year (except 1995) since 1992. The name of the event, which took place on September 2, 2000 in Köln, was the Festival of Peace, Democracy, and Freedom (Url-25).

remained in Paris following the court decision because of the arrest warrant on him. He died of a heart attack on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2000 in Paris. Many compare him with Yılmaz Güney, the prominent Kurdish director who died in France while he was in exile, in this respect. Both, as Aksoy (2010) has indicated, were popular figures, although they both used Turkish language, because of their dissenting styles and artistic products dealing with the unjust treatment of Kurds as well as many other disadvantaged groups, and because of their popularity among similar parts of the society.

### **5.3.3 Supra-ideological antagonism toward Kurdishness**

The incident and its successive effects that dragged Kaya into this kind of end concretized both the growing tendency for Kurdishness to be expressed freely and the supra-ideological hostility against it in Turkey. The simple utterance of Kurdish music, maybe just as much as the armed resistance that had been continuing for 15 years, played a crucial role in revealing the historical pressure on Kurdish language and identity. Kaya's public expression of Kurdishness as a music idol was more difficult to marginalize for the media than the armed resistance, as a consequence of which many reports tried to connect him with the armed resistance (which is predominantly referred to as "separatist" or "terrorist" activity) following his speech. Having been significantly represented by the mainstream media, the domineering class of Turkey portrayed Kaya's speech as a presumptuous defiance of Turkey and Turkishness, thereby maintaining political, cultural, economic, and social authority over others. It was also quite significant in that this music-related incident uncovered the nationalistically constructed public in which the denial of Kurdish entity in Turkey was the common denominator regardless of many sociopolitical and cultural discrepancies.

As regards Ahmet Kaya's position, there was no satisfactory alternative to nationalist reaction for a long time in Turkey. Apart from general silence and expression of disappointment, his speech met with mixed reactions from leftists as well. In conversation with me, several friends and interviewees who used to listen to him with enthusiasm at the time because of their leftist ideas admitted their bewilderment by his speech during the ceremony. Considering him a revolutionary socialist and

ignoring his Kurdishness, some leftists in Turkey did not assume that he would bring his ethnic or national identity forward.

In spite of his singing in Turkish and his opinions that possibly seemed politically ambivalent to many of them, Kurds in Turkey followed Kaya for his musical style and political stance as well as his occasional articulation of unjust treatment of Kurds rather than his Kurdishness. To quote from Aksoy (2010), “[h]e was never fluent in Kurdish and wrote his lyrics almost exclusively in Turkish. However, he had managed to express the hardships that the Kurds in Turkey and elsewhere were experiencing over almost three decades through his emotional lyrics.” It is not difficult to estimate, in this regard, the influence of Kaya’s speech and ensuing victimization of him on Kurds in Turkey. In addition to many Kurds, a small number of people who also identify themselves as leftist or socialist on the other hand treated him with more respect, albeit in a low voice, after his fateful speech. Avcı (n.d.), on Kaya’s speech during the ceremony for instance, writes:

With these words, Ahmet Kaya clearly exposed his side by attaching himself to an existing political struggle. If he had died two years ago, he would not have been embraced by the left, and he would not have been remembered as a Kurdish artist.<sup>141</sup>

Kaya usually made a point of counterbalancing many political statements or professional decisions of him<sup>142</sup> that seemed unusual by placing stereotyped emphasis on the “indivisible unity of Turkey,” or being “from Turkey.” Similar statements that he made even immediately after his ceremony speech, to me, were never taken seriously mainly because of aforementioned class boundaries.

The situation surfaced after Kaya’s speech, in sum, was simply an intimidation and punishment of the oppressed for overtly attempting to ask for equal treatment outside of their sphere. With this act which seemed as transgression of the sociocultural and economic domain of prevailing class, Kaya stepped out of the limited frame that was allotted him for conducting his musical, political, or commercial activities. Having overlapped with the dominant ideology that was based firmly on Turkish nationalism, ruling class rapidly produced essential practices to avert the threat.

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<sup>141</sup> Translated from Turkish by the author.

<sup>142</sup> Ahmet Kaya, for example, gave a concert on Med TV, Kurdish satellite TV Station, in 1996 (Url-26).

### 5.3.4 The stream of apologetic gestures

Apart from remaining hatred, the general shock and silence that fell over the public of Turkey regarding Kaya's sudden death prevailed for years. The first sympathetic reaction to his victimization after years came from the government in 2009. Kaya, along with many other singers, was unbanned from TRT (Radio and Television Corporation of Turkey) within the scope of democratic initiative process initiated by the government of Turkey in the same year (Ateş, 2009). This governmental step triggered the revelation of the burden of guilt carried over Kaya's death within public. In addition to many people expressing their self-criticism and regret about Kaya in various channels, mainstream media's such attempts as biographical documentaries (as already mentioned) and posthumous awards in an effort to restore his honor increased after this date. Only 11 days after the government's announcement about Kaya, pop singer Serdar Ortaç, who started the chauvinistic performance after Kaya's speech during the award ceremony, offered expression of regret at his role in the defamation of Kaya (Çini, 2009). Many's the time Ortaç (Url-27, Url-28), mostly on account of angry reactions during some of his concerts, had to repeat his regret for rising to the bait during the ceremony, and confessed that the denial of Kurds and Kurdish language in Turkey was wrong. In 2011, Ertuğrul Özkök, the then chief editor of the newspaper *Hürriyet*, which was one of the main protagonists of the smear campaign conducted against Kaya after his speech, penned his visit to Kaya's grave in Paris in his column in the same newspaper. In his article entitled "Helalleşme" (Asking for blessing), which was enhanced by photographs showing him upon Kaya's grave, Özkök (2011) basically expressed his remorse and sadness for offensive headline about Kaya for which we felt responsible. According to report of Ekinci (2012), Association of Tabloid Journalist, the host of award ceremony in 1999, decided to give a special award to Kaya in 2012. Lastly, deceased Kaya (Url-29) was given the culture and art grand prix of Presidency of the Republic of Turkey in the area of music in October 2013 "on the grounds that he brought a great number of people from different views together with his music, interpretation, and discourse."

Kaya and the tragedy befell him still provide a practical basis for discussions of the issues such as nationalist lynch culture, hate speech, and jingoism in Turkey. In October 2013, accordingly, BDP made a motion for a parliamentary investigation,

with specific attention to Ahmet Kaya, “to reveal and prevent discrimination, marginalization, hate crime, and lynch culture that continue to exist within many parts of the society from media members to politicians” (Url-30).

Nevertheless, as Cömert (2010) states, “[t]oday many people still burn with hate for Ahmet Kaya because of statements he did not say, photographs designed through montage, and twisted information.” And the stream of apologetic gestures toward Kaya has not had a tangible influence on the careers of many Kurdish musicians who currently sing in Kurdish language. Being perceived as a sign of disobedience by the government as well as the large segment of the society, Kurdish music continues to meet with hostile reactions that are manifested either implicitly or explicitly. Many incidents such as the one experienced by Aynur Doğan, which is briefly mentioned in chapter 4, suggest that the established societal code and the domineering manner filled with intolerance toward the expression of Kurdish identity through music still remain unbreakable in Turkey. In addition to countless musicians living abroad, being jailed or killed (Url-31), or whose activities are precluded in various ways (Url-32), there have still been examples of cases in which people are prosecuted for exchanging Kurdish song online (Url-33), dancing to one (Url-34), or killed for demanding to hear one (Url-35).<sup>143</sup>

For many Kurds, as we will see in the details of his commemorative concert, on the other hand, the name Ahmet Kaya maintains its spiritual value as one of the most symbolic figures for Kurdish liberation movement.

#### **5.4 Commemoration Concert: “Art is an Action of Freedom”**

In October 2011, by means of a poster put up at the Istanbul Kurdish Institute where I had started taking Kurdish lessons within the same month, I was informed that a

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<sup>143</sup> Musicians continue to face with accusations of distributing “propaganda of terrorist organization” or “praising criminals and crime.” For a selection of censorial, criminal, and governmental cases about music, many of which are related to Kurdish singers and songs, occurred between December 2011 and October 2012, see *Silencing Music in Turkey: A briefing on the past 12 months published by the Initiative for Freedom of Expression* at <http://artsfreedom.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Silencing-Music-in-Turkey2012.pdf> (retrieved 11 November 2013). Another report entitled “Turkey: Artists engaged in Kurdish rights struggle face limits on the free expression,” which was released at the time of writing the current study, demonstrates the latest situation concerning Kurdish artists in Turkey, see *Index on Censorship’s official website* (<http://www.indexoncensorship.org/2014/02/freedom-of-expression-in-the-arts-and-censorship-in-kurdish-region-diyarbakir-batman/>)

concert was going to be held in commemoration of Ahmet Kaya on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 2011, one day after Kaya's death 11 years ago. Concert tickets, on which it says in Turkish "*Sanat bir özgürlük eylemidir*" (Art is an action of freedom), were available at the Institution as well.

I arrived at the wedding hall in Istanbul's Şişli district, in which the concert would take place, in the evening of 17 November before the start time of the concert in hope of chatting with some of my Kurdish classmates who had also been taking Kurdish lessons at the Institution.<sup>144</sup> A number of adscititious banners and images of important figures for the Kurdish liberation movement were offering a startling contrast to the unmodified seating chart, lightening, and decorative features of the hall that had been specifically designed for reflecting the typical glitter of wedding ceremonies. A large banner above the concert platform read in Turkish "*Sanat bir özgürlük eylemidir şiarıyla Ahmet Kaya'yı anıyoruz*" (We are commemorating Ahmet Kaya with the principle that art is an action of freedom). Two other banners in Turkish one of which read "*14 Temmuz direniş ruhunu selamlıyoruz*" (We are greeting the 14 July soul of resistance)<sup>145</sup> as the other addressing women's liberation movement read "*Genç kadın dinamizmiyle özgürlüğe yürüyoruz*" (We are walking toward freedom with the dynamism of young woman) were placed on the left side of the platform. Another banner, in addition, read "*Mazlum kibriti çaktı, dörtler kendilerini yaktı*" (Mazlum<sup>146</sup> lit the match, the fours<sup>147</sup> set themselves on fire). The wall on the right side of the platform, on the other hand, was draped by juxtaposed images (see figure 5.5) of Seyîd Rıza,<sup>148</sup> Vîyan Soran,<sup>149</sup> Kemal Pir,<sup>150</sup> Ekin Ceren Dogruak,<sup>151</sup> and Mahsum Korkmaz.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> It is quite ironic that Kurds who barely remember their native tongues form the vast majority of the students in Kurdish language courses that Istanbul Kurdish Institute runs all year round.

<sup>145</sup> On July 14, 1982, four PKK members started a hunger strike in Diyarbakır Prison to mistreatment and torture. The strike resulted in their deaths at different dayss. 14 July has been a symbolic date for Kurdish liberation movement ever since.

<sup>146</sup> Mazlum Doğan committed suicide in protest in Diyarbakır Prison on March 21, 1982.

<sup>147</sup> *Dörtler* (literally "Fours") is the four PKK detainees who immolated themselves, allegedly following Mazlum Doğan's suicide, on May 18, 1982.

<sup>148</sup> Seyîd Rıza (also known as Pirê Welat [the sage of homeland] among Kurds) was the Alevi Zaza religious leader of the political unrest known as Dersim rebellion during the 1937-1938. He was executed by the state in 1937 following his surrender.

<sup>149</sup> Vîyan Soran, birth name Leyla Wali Hüseyn, was a Kurdish guerrilla from Sulaymaniyah (Slêmanî), Iraq. She is known to have been a council member of PKK's armed wing HPG, and the



**Figure 5.5** : Images placed on the right side of the concert platform (Ahmet Kaya commemoration concert). Photo by the author.

Large tables and chairs placed on both sides of the hall to make room for dancing in front of the platform were mostly occupied by Kurdish youngsters who were waiting for the concert to start. Presumably due to the strong possibility of being marginalized as well as the reasoned insecurity felt in a Turkish-dominated metropolis, the number of audiences carrying symbols of Kurdish culture and politics such as red, green, and yellow-colored flags and black-checkered scarfs called *pûşî* were very few compared to those present at the events taking place in Kurdish cities.

Stand in silence, as in many events and activities in which Kurds come together, started the concert. The routine performance of anthemic march *Çerxa Şoreşê* (discussed in chapter 3) led by a young woman was followed by the collective chanting of *Şehîd namirin* (Martyrs won't die), one of the most predominant slogans, along with *Bijî serok Apo* (Long live leader Apo) of the Kurdish political movement.

With regard to two youth groups in the organization of the concert, the spokesman delivering the opening speech on behalf of the BDP's provincial chairmanship of Istanbul emphasized the role of iconic youngsters such as Mazlum Doğan, Mehmet Hayri Durmuş, Kemal Pir in the origin of Kurdish resistance and liberation

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commander of YJA STAR Yekîneyên Jinên Azad ên Star (Defender Unions of Free Women), another armed group formed by women within HPG. Viyan Soran, according to several reports on the Internet (Url-36), immolated herself on 1 February 2006 in protest at the isolation policy on Abdullah Öcalan. There are several reports claiming that she was executed by the PKK (Url-37).

<sup>150</sup> Kemal Pir, the founding member of PKK, is one of the most historical figures of Kurdish liberation movement in Turkey. He was among the four PKK detainees who died on hunger strike started on July 14, 1982 in Diyarbakır Prison.

<sup>151</sup> Ekin Ceren Doğruak, with her cryptonym Amara, was a Turkish HPG guerrilla who reportedly (Url-38) died in a traffic accident on 31 May 2005 in Autonomous Kurdistan Region in Federal Iraq.

<sup>152</sup> One of the most emblematic figures of Kurdish liberation movement, Mahsum Korkmaz, under the cryptonym of Agit (Agît) or Egit (Egît), was the first commander of PKK's armed forces. He died during an armed conflict occurred with Turkey's military forces in 1986. His name, also frequently mentioned in many resistance songs, was given to a PKK's military training facility in the Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley in Lebanon.

movement. The victimization of Ahmet Kaya, and his usual comparison with that of Yılmaz Güney in the speech as well as the mention of Abdullah Öcalan, which caused the speech to be interrupted by the slogan *Bijî Serok Apo*, as the architect and living symbol of peace and fellowship, and songs announced to be sung for Ahmet Kaya and comrades who were martyred for Kurdish liberation movement offered an expressive synopsis of the entire event. Another tempestuous expression of Kurdish resistance and liberation, this time through the commemoration of a musical figure, that attempts to embody the whole movement including its history, ideology, ongoing activism, leader, and martyrs was about to come into view.

Koma Gulên Xerzan, one of the most long-standing groups of MKM, first took the stage. The space left in front of the stage was promptly filled with audiences who want to form *govend* dance lines as soon as the first bouncy song started following a quasi-improvised, unmetered, and ornamented introductory called *uzun hava* (literally, “long air”) vocalization by one of the members of the group. The vocalist Hozan Çiya’s speech in Kurdish mainly emphasizing the importance of persistence in struggle for justice after the first song was followed by audiences’ collective chanting of *Bijî Serok Apo* slogan. Audiences chanted another common slogan *Şehîd namirin* after the second song. The third song *Rêzan* (Guide), a song from group’s second album (Koma Gulên Xerzan, 1998) entitled *Sonda Me* (Our Oath) released in 1998, in addition, was followed by *tilîlî*-s, another quasi-sloganic exclamation that turned into an expression of Kurdish rebellion and identity at a relatively recent time. The group sang another traditional tune *Elo Dîno*<sup>153</sup> before it performed a potpourri of several Kurdish tunes, with Turkish versions of which I had already been familiar, as an attempt to regain possession of cultural and historical assets that were seized and distorted by hegemonic power. This dissident and defiant behavior was taken to a more aggressive stage through incorporating three popular political songs, namely

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<sup>153</sup> *Elo Dîno* (Koma Gulên Xerzan, 2005), is a traditional Kurdish tune interpreted in group’s album entitled *Rûkenî Min* (Genial of Mine) released in 2005. As I was informed by one of my interviewees who is an active dancer, the song, which is thought to have originated in Botan district (the area comprising cities, according to today’s map, such as Cizre, Silopi, Şırnak, Hakkari, Siirt, Beytüşşebap, Çukurca in Turkey, Zakho in Iraq, and Al-Malikiyah in Syria) tells the story of Elo, who rebelled against the injustice of the ruler in the region back in the day (Sidar, personal communication, November 16, 2013). The song, which also has a particular *govend* (dance) style, is mainly performed in responsorial style by members of the *govend*. The song was also interpreted by Kardeş Türküler, a remarkable music group that widely acclaimed by its multilingual performances in Turkey, in its album *Hemâvâz* released in 2002.

*Apê Me*,<sup>154</sup> *Oremar*,<sup>155</sup> and *Reberê Gelê Me*,<sup>156</sup> into potpourri. Audiences enthused by all three of them (particularly by the frequent uttering of the word “guerrilla” in *Oremar*) actively participated in their performances through singing, and they smoothly linked the end of the last song of the potpourri to their chanting of *Bijî Serok Apo* slogan again. The group finished its performance with one of its most popular songs *Sonda Me* (Our Oath), the lyrics of which mainly portray suffering and misfortune of Kurdish lands as well as the commitment to struggle against the cause of them. They can be translated as follows:

<i>Botan, Behdînan şikaka ji hevdûr</i>	Mischief set Botan, Behdînan <sup>157</sup> apart
<i>kirin</i>	
<i>Kurdistan kirin çar perçe ji hev bela</i>	They divided Kurdistan into four pieces to
<i>kirin</i>	share
<i>Kuştin bav û dayikê me, ji xwîne sor</i>	They killed our mothers and fathers
<i>kirin</i>	reddened with blood
<i>Dil çakî u çalakî</i>	The soul is determined and undaunted
<i>Can bi gorî, egîdî</i>	Sacrificed soul, bravery
<i>Bi serkeftî bi hêzati</i>	With victory with power
<i>Sonda me, sonda me, axa me</i>	Our oath, our oath, our land
<i>Sê hezar sala Kurdistan li bin</i>	Kurdistan has been under the yoke for three
<i>destaye</i>	thousands years
<i>Xortê kurdan rabûne serxwe</i>	Kurdish youngsters have risen up and ready
<i>rawestaye</i>	
<i>Şikandin zincîra zor û zilma</i>	They have torn up colonialist’s chain of
<i>ketxwaran</i>	subjugation

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<sup>154</sup> Alluding to Abdullah Öcalan through the diminutive of his name Apo, the song *Apê Me* (Our uncle), originally performed by Peywan Arjîn, is a somewhat eulogy of Abdullah Öcalan and his leadership. There is a large number of songs dedicated to him in Kurdish popular music repertoire.

<sup>155</sup> The song *Oremar*, which was made and popularized by Koma Awazê Çiya, a music group formed by PKK’s musician guerrillas, is an account of the raid carried out by PKK’s armed wing HPG on a battalion of Turkey’s army in 2007. See the last section of chapter 6, where musical and visual analyses of the song and its video are provided.

<sup>156</sup> *Reberê Gelême* (The Guide of Our People) is another song written for Abdullah Öcalan by the music duo Zînê û Mem Botanî (sometimes Mem û Zînê Botani). The song became popular after the release of duo’s album entitled *Brindarbûm* (I was wounded) in 2010.

<sup>157</sup> Botan and Behdînan are two traditionally designated districts in Kurdish lands; the former mostly remains in Turkey whereas the latter remains in Iraq in today’s political map.

*Hatin qehremanê rêça sed hezar* Heroes of the cause of hundred thousand  
*salan* years have come  
*Wan Egîda, wan Ferhada dîsa xwe* Those Egîts,<sup>158</sup> those Ferhats poured  
*barand* themselves  
*Wan Haruna, Wan Egîda gurbet* Those Haruns those Egîts melted distance  
*helîyand*  
*Wan aşitî danîye li nava gela de* They brought peace among people

With the last song that emphasizes a symbolic action regarding future, and audiences' slogans *Bijî Serok Apo, Bê Serok Jiyan Nabe* (No life without leader) together with *tilîlî*-s followed it, the gradual political and militant intensification in addition to a contextual framework in the arrangement of songs during the performance of the group comes into focus at this point. The entire performance that started with traditional tunes and relatively moderate songs first intensified with traditional tunes that have political connotations, and then it reached its peak with military style songs that have confrontational and aggressive lyrics influenced directly by political movement before it concluded with a song that strongly represents determination and perseverance. V-signs, slogans,<sup>159</sup> singing, and dancing of audiences that proceed conformably with the stage, in addition, constituted an important part of this performative atmosphere. A rigorous planning is necessary here for overwhelming desire for expressing a great variety of intentions, demands, and concerns to fit into a limited time and space. The question of time management, calculated performance, entertainment, and protest, as I tried to discuss in chapter 3 dealing with Newroz celebrations, could manifest itself in narrower spans such as Koma Gulên Xerzan's 30-minute performance here. The audience's effort to direct and take part in performances is also quite explicit here as well as in many others. Having been carried away by Koma Gulên Xerzan's performance, for example, audiences delivered another collective performance of the march *Çerxa Şoreşê* performed at the beginning of the concert.

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<sup>158</sup> Egît (also means bravery) is the code name of Mahsum Korkmaz who was the first commander of PKK's armed forces.

<sup>159</sup> Kurds' instinctive but well-ordered practices of slogan chanting as a significant part of their performances is discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

The prevailing character of the event what had hitherto been composed mostly of the performances of mythical and abstract concepts turned considerably into practical, tangible, and current politics with the arrival of Istanbul's two BDP members of the parliament, Sırrı Süreyya Önder and Sebahat Tuncel, to the accompaniment of the slogan *Kürdistan sizinle gurur duyuyor* (Kurdistan is proud of you). Practices and figures of present-day politics in this sense promptly adjusted slogans (e.g., *Baskılar bizi yıldıramaz* [Oppressions cannot overawe us]) as well. After criticizing government's repressive policies against Kurdish activists and politicians, Önder indicated Ahmet Kaya as the typification of Kurds' commitment to peace, liberation, and cohesion. Audiences' slogan *Şehîd namirin* (Martyrs won't die) following his speech commemorating Ahmet Kaya together with deceased members of Kurdish liberation movement suggests that Kaya is also seen as a martyr to the cause. Praising Kurdish youngsters for their attempts at politically organizing themselves, Tuncel condemned the trial of members of BDP's youth organization *Demokratik Yurtsever Gençlik*, and sent her greetings to all Kurdish detainees. She also urged youngsters to coordinate their activities with people for the public demonstration that would take place three days later to protest mass detentions that had been carried out for months by the government against Kurdish activists.

The stage was left to the music group formed by young amateur musicians of *Ronî Gençlik Kültür Merkezi* after the speeches of two politicians. The first song (in Turkish) that the group performed was *Kemal Pir Yoldaş* (Comrade Kemal Pir). The song, which is full of praise for Kemal Pir, a prominent Turkish member of PKK in its early years, is originally performed by Kurdish MKM musician Kadir Çat. Kemal Pir, as the song suggests, is still seen as a symbol of revolutionist solidarity of Turkish and Kurdish peoples in this regard. The refrain of the song goes as follows:

<i>Kemal Pir yoldaş</i>	Comrade Kemal Pir
<i>Kardeşliğin yıkılmaz köprüsüsün sen</i>	You are the indestructible bridge of fraternity
<i>Susmayan namlu</i>	The barrel that will not quiet
<i>Zaferlerin yılmayan öncüsüsün sen</i>	You are the undaunted pioneer of victories
<i>Yaşanacaksa devrim seninle yaşanmalı</i>	If revolution will be lived it must be lived with you
<i>Güneşin ve ateşin yoldaşısın sen</i>	You are the comrade of sun and fire

This song was followed by another eulogistic ballad *Îmralî Sularîna* (To the waters of Îmralî<sup>160</sup>), a song popularized by a recently famed guerrilla music duo Argeş û Hêvî (sometimes Hêvî û Argeş). The group's following performance was a potpourri comprising several famous songs that are quite symbolic for Kurdish liberation movement, namely *Gever*, *Ha Gerilla* (see chapter 3 for its lyrics), and *Oremar* (analyzed in chapter 6), respectively. Having been driven by political emotionality that all these songs created, audiences, unsurprisingly, incorporated their slogans into this potpourri performance.

The concert was resumed, after a brief interval during which audiences independently formed a number of *govend*-s and danced to the accompaniment of music that they created themselves, with the performance of another MKM group, Koma Çiya. The group sang several popular songs by Ahmet Kaya such as *Ağladıkça* after starting its performance with one of their well-liked songs, *Berxwedan Xweş Doz e*,<sup>161</sup> an early popular resistance song by Koma Cûdî. The lyrics of the song unarguably resonate with many songs identified with the Kurdish liberation movement:

<i>Berxwedan xweş doz e</i>	Resistance is a glorious cause
<i>Berxwedana Mazlum e</i>	The resistance of Mazlum
<i>Li Botan dîlan e, Egîd û serhildan e</i>	Dance in Botan, Egîd and uprising
<i>Ev şer û ferman e</i>	This is war and edict
<i>Ser dijmin me danîye</i>	That we have massed against our enemy
<i>Li çiya û zindan e şoreşa me dijware</i>	In mountains and prisons, our revolution is arduous
<i>Himet e polad e ev şerê azadî ye</i>	Zeal and steel, this is war of freedom
<i>Raman e ronîye tev ilmê Marksîye</i>	Thought and enlightenment all are tenets of Marx <sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Îmralî is the name of the small island in Marmara Sea where Abdullah Öcalan is kept in prison.

<sup>161</sup> There is another rendition of the song *Berxwedan Xweş Doz e* on YouTube performed by *Koroya Netewe* (National Choir) and *Koma Berxwedan* (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZJGRuW8eLU>).

<sup>162</sup> The word “Marx” is replaced by “Öcalan” in *Koroya Netewe* (National Choir) and *Koma Berxwedan*'s collective rendition of the song.

<i>Hêvî ne em hêvî ne partîzan bime jin e</i>	We are hopeful we are hopeful Partisan <sup>163</sup> brings life
<i>Wê bîne wê bîne Kurdistan dewlet bîne</i>	It brings the state of Kurdistan

Grup Munzur, a Dersim-based protest music group, took the stage after Koma Çiya to finalize Ahmet Kaya commemoration concert. The popular song *Diren Diyarbekir* (Resist Diyarbekir) by Roj, the lyrics of which, to quote from Özgün (2012), “address[es] to Diyarbakır as a lover, the city considered as the center of Kurdish identity, as a capital touches the deep patriotic feelings” came over the loudspeakers throughout the unavoidable interval occurred during the exchange of stage between two groups (p. 105). Of all declamatory songs that Grup Munzur performed, *Yaşamak Direnmektir* (Living is Resisting), which is one of the most standard protest songs by Ferhat Tunç that also gave the name of his 1989 album, was particularly noticeable in terms of moral value attributed to life and death in the context of resistance.<sup>164</sup> The lyrics (in Turkish) of the song, also a considerable part of which features recitative singing as an important protest music tradition in Turkey, can be translated as follows:

<i>Yaşamak direnmektir ölmektir hem yaşamak</i>	Living is resisting living is dying
<i>Yaşamak zindanlarda inadına yaşamak</i>	Living in dungeons living perseveringly
<i>Yaşamak gecenin karanlığında</i>	Living in the darkness of the night
<i>Dişe diş inada inat yaşamak</i>	Living tooth for tooth spite for spite
<i>Yaşamak bir mavi çiçek gibi</i>	Living like a blue flower
<i>Bir nazlı bebek gibi</i>	Like a delicate baby
<i>Özgürlüğün tadında yaşamak</i>	Living in the savor of freedom
<i>Yaşamak dağların doruklarında</i>	Living on top of mountains

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<sup>163</sup> The word “Partisan” is replaced by “PKK” in *Koroya Netewe* (National Choir) and Koma Berxwedan’s collective rendition of the song.

<sup>164</sup> See also chapter 2 for brief information about Ferhat Tunç, another popular Dersim-based protest music singer, and Grup Munzur in addition to a comparative overview of performances they gave in the Munzur Festival of Culture and Nature in chapter 4.

<i>Yaralı bir serçenin çığlığında yaşamak</i>	Living in the scream of an injured sparrow
<i>Yaşamak denizde dalgalar gibi</i>	Living like waves in the sea
<i>Deli bir rüzgar gibi</i>	Like a mad wind
<i>Kavganın doruğunda yaşamak</i>	Living at the peak of fight

This song artfully articulates the emphasis on resistance and retaliation without using ordinary symbols of Kurdish resistance movement except mountain and prison. Romanticized reflection of a liberated life is juxtaposed with subtle praise for martyrdom and revenge-motivated struggle.

The decrease in the number of audience had already started due partly to the time approaching late night hours as well as to the group's musical style that is regarded unsuitable for *govend*. Grup Munzur's performance, in this regard, restfully brought the entire concert to an end with a potential question: How much of this concert that was held to commemorate Ahmet Kaya was about Ahmet Kaya?

## 5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined two of the most important key players of Kurdish liberation movement, MKM and Ahmet Kaya, particularly in relation to two different music-centered events prompted by each. Core to this has been a comparability of these with various music-related activities of Kurdish politics of resistance that other chapters of this study discuss. The main purpose of the chapter has been to pinpoint the role of concepts such as commemoration and anniversary in assertion of Kurdish identity. In describing the contents and progressions of concerts by reckoning with ways in which audiences express their feelings within the wider historical context of the self-assertion of Kurdish national identity in Turkey, this chapter has also attempted to show, particularly through Ahmet Kaya, how hostility to Kurdishness has been designed in Turkey as well as how challenges to dominant culture, language, and ideology are still constructed by Kurds through these musico-political events.

Taking place in Istanbul, a non-Kurdish city in which Kurdish movement has been notably shaped by the presence of a large number of Kurds, these events, along with

a temporal expression of Kurdishness, basically exemplifies both sides of music as clearly described by Kong (1995):

On the one hand, music is used by the ruling élite to perpetuate certain ideologies aimed at political socialization and the development of a sense of national identity or to inculcate a civil religion that directs favour and fervor toward the ‘nation’. On the other hand, music is form of cultural resistance both against state policies and certain socio-cultural norms. (p. 448)

It would be an overstatement to claim that Kurdish society has a ruling elite, but there certainly is a strong ideological formation that dominates Kurdish socio-political life, and it is as powerful as a ruling elite in shaping the practices of Kurdish resistance and nationalism in accordance with existing structures. Appadurai (1996, as cited in Sugarman 1999) notes that:

sentiments that link notions of nation to notions of self are not “primordial,”: they have arisen “not from the individual psyche or from the hoary mists of tradition but from the specific, historically situated play of public and group opinions about the past” (p. 445).

Together with the models of modern-day society these both politically and culturally grounded events, in this regard, provide resourceful means through which a certain concept of historical perception would be concreted. MKM represents an institutional success for Kurds as Ahmet Kaya represents the undeserved hostility toward Kurdish identity and righteousness of Kurds’ struggle for their cultural and political rights. Two music-centered events that take place for different reasons are quite similar in terms of contents, and the profile and behavior patterns of their audiences. There are numerous causes, in addition, in Kurdish political movement to motivate these kinds of musical organizations and activities but as long as the basic historical cause remains current, they all seem to be mentioned not by their own characteristics but as components of a larger structure.

It is more or less presumable that *Kom*-s and their repertoires that date back to the conflict-ridden years of 1990s still continue their dominance on the stage with the influence of political forces, but the fact remains that audiences express their assent to the stage through their intensive slogans, sing-alongs, and dances. These events also demonstrate that Kurds’ persistent desire for expressing themselves is as extensive as their desire for hearing something that belongs to them. Gaps that appear and grow because of the decrease of political and militant intensity during events are filled by audiences’ skillful use of political or politicized gestures such as

dance, slogans, or intervention in the stage. For audiences, dancing *govend*, as discussed in chapter 4, seems of the essence.

Political and military figures identified with the foundation of PKK as the most prevalent representative of Kurdish liberation movement are still meaningful for today's movement. The musical lexicon constructed by key concepts and figures of the movement is also heavily reinforced by visual symbols. Martyrdom, heroism of resistance, devotion to the cause, the fight that centers on the image of guerrilla, dissidence, the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan, and proud victimization are important notions that reinforce national sentiments and struggle in various ways. Emphasis on politically organized national as well as class struggle against denial and assimilation is embodied through various ways. It may seem superfluous to remember at this point but all of these happen in music-centered events.

Martyrdom, as discussed in this chapter, is an important resource for collective consciousness. Musician guerrillas, along with their status engendered by their martyrdom, are venerated as saintly images of the entire political and armed struggle. Political positioning of today's active musicians also reflects these strong intellectual and emotional bonds between Kurdish musicians and warriors. Considering MKM's emphasis on martyred musician guerrillas MKM, particularly with its music-centered activities, provided Kurdish people with ideology, heroic figures, legendary stories that are generally required for articulation of their politico-national identity. The image of Ahmet Kaya, in addition, provided them with the explicit suppression of Kurdish culture, music, language, and identity in Turkey.

Returning to the posed inquiry at the beginning of this chapter, it is now possible to state that Istanbul Kurds' music-centered organizations based on remembrance, commemoration, or annual celebrations do not seem to be compatible with these concepts. In my reading, even though both MKM and Ahmet Kaya are highly regarded as critically important in construction of a solid Kurdish national identity, both are overshadowed by past and current signifiers of Kurdish resistance even in events activated by their existence. That is to say, both events provide a solid ground for narrativization of insubordination through collective memories attached to the movement's past rather than commemorating or celebrating anniversaries as their titles specifically suggest. Concepts such as commemoration and anniversary, in this sense, function as pretexts on which routine musico-political activities are conducted.

Ethnic identity, as a structural factor, has a major impact on the construction of many Kurds' relationship with music. However, an approach from structural determinism might seem to have some limitations at this point because a significant portion of Kurdish popular music, in addition to ethnic liberation of Kurds, has been built around articulation of resistance culture, class struggle, women's right, and a particular vision of social order as a result of the reflection of the movement's ideological horizon. Fundamental similarities between two events discussed in this chapter — as well as their similarity to Newroz celebrations discussed in chapter 3 — in terms of basic discourse, musical repertory and audience's response to all suggest the existence of a powerful political entity that prevails over a significant part of Kurdish social and cultural life. Thus it could be concluded that this political countermovement and ideological design makes itself evident through modern practices and institutions as well as traditional and mythological ones.

In conclusion, Kurds, through the significant impact of constitutive power of the political movement, benefit differently from modern concepts such as commemoration and anniversary celebration than their ordinary way of applications; they simply transform and absorb these concepts into their politics of resistance and self-assertion. This is remarkably consistent with the incorporation of traditional concepts (as discussed in chapter 3), and with the employment of nation-state concepts such as national anthem, flag, capital, country, and leader (the last three to be discussed more fully in the next chapter). All in all, the picture revealed by all these performative details, I argue, seems quite suggestive of the conceptualization of music in the epigraph; making a connection between music and struggle for resistance has markedly become a Kurdish way of constructing the world.

Kurdish liberation movement and its followers, along with both modern and traditional patterns used as a guide in national mobilization, came across another pair of media to forge new practices of Kurdish musico-politics after mid-1990s: satellite television and Internet. How is the picture that has appeared so far represented in virtual life of Kurds? What kinds of roles have war, violence, and politics played in TV and Internet music culture of Kurds? Delving into music videos of two popular resistance songs in addition to the development of Kurdish satellite TV broadcasting, it is to TV and computer-generated musical life of Kurdish armed and political resistance that we will turn next.



## 6. FELLOWSHIP OF PARTISAN SOUNDS, MILITANT IMAGES, AND COMBATIVE LYRICS

<i>19 Mayıs kurtuluş günü</i>	May 19 is the day of liberation
<i>Haydi! Haydi! Yürü ileri</i>	Come on! Come on! Walk forward
<i>Vardı Samsun 'a Mustafa Kemal</i>	Mustafa Kemal arrived in Samsun
<i>Haydi! Haydi! Yürü ileri</i>	Come on! Come on! Walk forward
<i>Samsun'dan Anadolu'ya bir güneş doğdu</i>	A sun rose from Samsun towards Anatolia
<i>Şahlandı, ayaklandı halk, düşmanı boğdu</i>	People reared up, rose up, strangled the enemy
<i>Başladı büyük savaş, sen de katıl arkadaş</i>	The glorious war broke out, you too join my friend
<i>Bitmesin bu devrimler</i>	May these reforms not stop
<i>Dinmeden gözlerde yaş</i>	So long as tears in the eyes ceased

### 6.1 Two Songs One Paradox

As a member of a choir in a music high school located in one of the cities of central Anatolia, I used to be thrilled to sing songs a large number of which were in march style, and considering that I still remember it after 20 years, the song whose lyrics are above was one of the most frequently sung ones in the repertory. Even though almost a three-quarter century had passed after the war mentioned in the song, I was neither skeptical about deep pleasure I felt during its performance nor bothered chanting vaingloriously about concepts such as “call for war,” “rising up,” or “strangling one,” with which I had been ostensibly taught to disagree. Fortunately, semantic indeterminacy of music quickened the discovery of this irony as I got acquainted with another repertoire that is artistically similar but politically positioned in opposition, which indicates a thought-provoking paradoxical position.

This chapter first explores the music video of the song *Vur Gerilla* (Strike Guerrilla) — one of the most popular patriotic guerrilla songs among Kurdish people living in Turkey — in terms of its discourse, and its audio-visual, formal, and verbal features as they are related to concepts of armed resistance, violence, conflict, and war. Notwithstanding the similarity of two songs with regard to their subject matters, characters, and effects on listeners, political ideals that form the basis of moral

judgments in the society create the perception of former as a work of art and the latter as vulgar and offensive. In other words, the main authority of a state and the set of ideas it follows promote violence and war, and generate eagerness to fight by means of artistic products and activities on the one hand and they create fear and anger towards similar practices deemed to be threats on the other. This combination prevents individuals from seeing the similarities between two social phenomena and circumstances that create them. Another instrument that makes significant contribution to this process, of course, is the control over the means of mass communication. However, computer-centered improvements in communication technology in recent decades have changed in favor of counter-hegemonic movements, or to say the least, ruling powers have not managed to prevent dissident groups from organizing themselves into more durable and wider structures as much as they used to. Resistance movements have been able to share any kind of artistic or socio-political ideas within their virtual networks through which new kinds of cultural productions and practices are formed.

This chapter secondly and lastly will include a similar analysis of the music video of the song *Oremar*, another phenomenal resistance song for Kurds in Turkey, in order to provide an opportunity for comparison between two Kurdish resistance songs. But before turning to the analysis of the first song, I should mention the role of communication technologies in Kurdish liberation movement as a continuation of the subject started in chapter 1.

## **6.2 Kurdish Infrapolitics, Counterdiscourses, and Mass Media**

The spread and resurgence of nationalist sentiments regarding Kurdishness and Kurds' political and equal rights at international level in recent years have been effective enough to be discerned both in academia and public sphere; of course, the growth of Kurdish nationalist movement as well as its visibility correlates highly with the current century's information and communication society shaped by rapid advances in digital technology. Communication technologies have quickened the process in which Kurds' awareness of how values such as their language, culture, nature, and way of living came under threat, and of how to defend their and succeeding generations' existence are developed. The critical role of Kurdish diaspora in this process, on the other hand, is noteworthy in that it has provided

Kurdish political movement with confidence by demonstrating hitherto underestimated potential to withstand this threat. Growing realization of this transnational power has rendered another dimension of Kurdish identity constructed upon resistance more distinct. These would have been somewhat unattainable, of course, for the Kurdish diaspora if media technologies had not developed and integrated into modern societies in such a tremendous way after 1990s. As Sheyholislami (2011) suggests, “since the mid-1990s, satellite television and the Internet have facilitated a dialogic communication among the Kurds, a development that possibly has contributed to the emergence of a strong unprecedented cross-border Kurdish identity” (p. 79). YouTube statistics of the song *Vur Gerilla*<sup>165</sup> epitomize this cross-border Kurdish identity.

Today, there is not officially a state called “Kurdistan” but as McDowall (2004) points out, “Kurdistan exists within relatively well-defined limits in the minds of most Kurdish political groups” (p. 3), and these minds, as it will be recognized in the forthcoming analysis in the chapter, are materially constructed by “infrapolitics”<sup>166</sup> whose validity and functional capacity have expanded by the rapid grow of virtual world.<sup>167</sup> Before the usage of the Internet technology, to a large extent, it was music alone — albeit quite restrictedly — that played a vital role as a means of resistance in Kurdish society. Visual materials have provided music with a dramatic support after the expansion of satellite and Internet in that these two technologies made a great contribution toward proliferating music and video-sharing facilities. Replete with intensified political and governmental suppression, and contentious politics as they are, and the presence of an armed resistance, Kurdish-inhabited territories and the

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<sup>165</sup> A number of videos of the song *Vur Gerilla*, sung by Şewder, can be found on YouTube uploaded by different users some of which are produced by individuals employing different images or excerpts on the music of the song. YouTube statistics show that the most-watched original video of the song was viewed 377,976 times and it is mostly popular in Turkey and Germany. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDJiZpXotKY> (retrieved 16 May 2012).

<sup>166</sup> Infrapolitics, a term coined by James C. Scott, is a set of resistance methods developed by subordinate groups through which various implicit counterdiscourses are formed. Infrapolitics may be also embedded in cultural and artistic products and practices (see Scott 1990, p. 201).

<sup>167</sup> Piet Bakker, who provided one of the first studies on the Kurdish nationalistic activities on the Internet, did a search — using Hotbot search engine — for Web pages that have “Kurdistan” in their title, and it returned 1,800 results (2001, p. 2). Sheyholislami conducted the same search on May 22, 2007, and it returned 658,000 hits (2011, p. 90). When I did a similar search on Google Web Search exactly five years later (May 22, 2012), it returned about 1,550,000 websites.

collective memory of Kurdish people, fieldwork impressions of the current study also suggest, are more intimately involved with the idea of violence and war than many other cultures. A significant portion of songs and music videos, therefore, strengthens the perception and cognition of the inevitability of war, and concentrates on the idea that armed resistance is the only option to defend the Kurdish presence, and to respond to the denial of Kurdish identity.

### **6.3 Satellite TV, Internet, and Kurdish Music Culture**

No doubt satellite television technology had an immense impact both on reanimation of Kurdish identity and on vitalization of Kurdish political movement like nothing before. When the first international Kurdish satellite television channel MED-TV — licensed in Britain — began broadcasting in 1995, it suddenly became the most effective medium of Kurdish mass communication as it provided Kurdish community with “an experience of simultaneity” (Anderson, 1991, p. 145) until its press license was revoked in April 1999 based on the accusation of “breaching regulations on impartiality” (Wahlbeck, 2002, p. 226). Karim describes the establishment of MED-TV as “... a case of a diaspora within and without the divided homeland attempting to sustain itself and to counter forceful suppression with the use of communications technology” (2006, p. 274). Hassanpour (1998) makes the reason for MED-TV’s closure and Turkey’s pressure on the channel before it more intelligible:

MED-TV has disturbed Turkey’s constitutional blueprint for a pure, sovereign Turkish presence in the ‘southeast.’ It has established relations with Kurdish viewers not as members of an audience but rather as citizens of a Kurdish state, and, by doing so, it is exercising deterritorialized sovereignty. Every day, viewers experience the citizenship of a state with its national flag, national anthem, national television and national news agency. Indeed, everyday MED-TV raised the Kurdish flag in about two million homes. (p. 66)

After Med-TV had lost its license in the United Kingdom, on the other hand, it started broadcasting from studios in Belgium via a satellite uplink from France on July 31, 1999 as Medya TV, and the Kurdish diaspora’s struggle for mass communication . The French government on February 12, 2004 revoked Medya TV’s license (Özcan, 2006, p. 248). But it was not long before a new television channel Roj TV that started broadcasting on March 1, 2004 replaced Medya TV. Roj TV continued to broadcast until 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 2012 from Denmark despite Turkey’s

constant pressure on Denmark to revoke its license, and Stêrk TV another channel started broadcasting on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 2012 (Url-39). The first Kurdish news channel Nûçe TV, in addition, begun broadcasting on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2012 (Url-40). On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July 2013, on the other hand, a court in Denmark revoked all broadcast licenses of TV channels that belonged to Mesopotamia Broadcasting Company including Roj TV, Nûçe TV, and MMC (Mesopotamia Music Channel) (Url-41). Ending its broadcasting on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August 2013, Nûçe TV was replaced by Mednûçe TV, which started its test broadcasts on the 24<sup>th</sup> of November 2013 (Url-42). The new music channel Med Muzîk that had been continuing its test broadcasts for a while, in addition, started its regular broadcasting on the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2013 (Url-43). Today, in addition to many local stations in Turkey and Syria, there are a large number of large-scale radio and TV stations (including music channels such as KMC TV and Newroz TV) based in Europe as well as in the Autonomous Kurdistan Region in Federal Iraq that maintain their widespread popularity with Kurdish people in Turkey.<sup>168</sup> A number of lines for captions that are constantly displayed at the bottom of the screen to give political information or peoples' messages even in these music channels indicates how social, political, and cultural aspects of lives of Kurds are interwoven with each other. One of my interviewees, in this context, told me that the music channel MMC is always on at home during the day at the request of his mother because of the possibility for seeing her guerrilla niece who occasionally appears as one of the singers in a music video (Rêdan, personal communication, July 12, 2012).

The actual revolutionary phenomenon in the mid-1990s was undeniably the commercialization of Internet and the release of World Wide Web to the public, which caused a momentous change in communication technology that brought about far-reaching sociological implications throughout the world. As for Kurdish diaspora and nationalist movement, like many others, Internet had a completely different effect on the lives of ordinary people compared with that of Satellite TV by eliminating individuals' passive status and enabling a system of interactive communication. Kurds living both in the diaspora and in their homeland not only

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<sup>168</sup> Today, in addition to many radio stations, there are also a number of TV channels broadcasting via Internet such as Hawar TV, Kurdan TV, Efrîn TV, Gerilla TV, MK TV, Azad News, Ezîda TV, and Rojava TV (Url-44).

have had a chance to strengthen the bond between each other but also they both have had an opportunity to involve themselves in Kurdish political movement through Internet providing them with opportunity for a freer space for such activities. Given the simplification of audio-visual technology and its compatibility with the Internet, Kurds have been able to create and design new products or to modify existing ones with new approaches to share their ideas mostly about Kurdish language, history, art, literature, culture, and society. To sum up, Kurds, particularly the ones living in homeland, have been able to freely express their nationalist feelings and thoughts about their nation in various ways by means of Internet. According to Mills (2002), Internet makes possible for Kurds to establish their “logical state” or “cybernation” known as Kurdistan ... providing common points of contact and sources of instantaneous cultural and political information to its members around the world” (p. 82).

Kurdish political movement, Kurdish diaspora as an important leg of political movement, Kurdish armed resistance movement, and homeland constantly refresh and enhance their alliance by exchanging ideas, sharing inputs and activities via Internet, and they develop basic discourses to construct a virtual nation. It is an imperative political and cultural behavior for Kurdish political groups, social organizations, and individuals to keep the idea of reality of the threat, of being united martyrs alive, and to be grateful to armed resistance. Therefore, even though there are many elements such as overstatement and misleading information similar to those in propagandist activities, artistic, literary, or political practices and products of Kurdish memory — which is not very far from war, armed conflict, and resistance both emotionally and ideationally — are not to be regarded as pure propaganda. These kinds of products and practices are not superficially formed to promote political ideas; they are partly a corollary of the instinct for survival and partly a way of fighting to retrieve fundamental human rights and needs such as a proper homeland, self-determination, language, culture, and economy to cultivate that numerous communities on earth have. The manifestations of emotions and ideas about existential concerns, and about fighting for protecting existence by means of these activities — even if they may be considered to be political activities since they use similar instruments to communicate — indicate a necessity for coming up with a

term other than “propaganda.” Unjust treatment can cause vicious people, and people’s expression of unjust treatment and victimization can be violent and aggressive since it does not only include suffering, but also revenge; thus I briefly call “passive violence” for the former and “active violence” for the latter in the analysis.

Kurds’ music-related activities on the Internet, through which innumerable components of armed struggle, partisanship, politico-nationalist discourse are formed and interchanged, are one of the most important segments that embody Kurdish identity, counter-hegemonic movement, and nation. The expansion of Internet-based social space in parallel with new technologies of filmmaking, videography, and video editing has transformed practices of music production, performance, distribution, and consumption in the mainstream public sphere. Fast and easy declaration of ideas and emotions over visually supported music has become one of the most effectual and widely used social and cultural practices among Kurdish social and political groups, and individuals. Owing to its war-afflicted and resistance-related nature intertwined with armed activity, Kurdish society, as well as its cultural and political movement, incorporates a corpus of music and other music-related audio-visual products conveying a combative spirit by sound, lyrics, and images particularly influenced by guerrilla warfare. The popularity of nationalist and political songs is still widespread for a significant part of the Kurdish population in Turkey, and the Internet, which is the largest and the most practical realm of music sharing and listening activities of today’s world, is the most reliable for measuring musical tendencies. The table 6.1 shows the first 20 songs that had been listened to the most as of 27 April 2013 on Yekster ([www.yekster.com](http://www.yekster.com)), one of the largest online Kurdish music listening platforms on the Internet.

Considering its low-cost, abundant, and time-saving production and dissemination without any need for high-technology equipment or a TV station to broadcast, visually enhanced music is one of the most effective media used for inducing emotions the best examples of which may be seen in commercial life. Another domain in which the potency of this artistic, promotional, and technological phenomenon is appreciated is present-day nationalist and political movements. Music videos publicizing dissident and rebellious views have encouraged individuals to attract or stick to their cause by means of affective audio-visual atmosphere they

create. McDonald (2006) sums this up in the following manner: “Music, given its shared indexical associations of time and space, participatory character and group formative capacities, is demonstrably a particularly powerful means of fostering national sentiment in the service of nationalist projects” (p. 10).

**Table 6.1 :** The most popular 20 songs on Yekster as of 27 April 2013. The symbol (★) shows marches and/or songs with direct political lyrics or with political connotations.

Rating	The Name of the Performer and/or the Song	Number of Hearing
1	Ey Reqîb <sup>169</sup> ★	23838
2	Ey Av û Av - Feqiyê Teyran	23805
3	Aram Tigran - Serok Apo ★	14286
4	Ahmet Kaya - Kürdüz Ölene Kadar <sup>170</sup> ★	12284
5	Koma Berxwedan - Çerxa Şoreşe <sup>171</sup> ★	11530
6	Hemido Xirabo	8785
7	Awaza Çiya - Reber ★	8615
8	Zap Zap Zape ★	6579
9	Şehit Argeş Haftanin ★	5272
10	Evdilê Goyî - Mîro	4930
11	Koma Rewşen - Çiyaye Bezar	4364
12	Hemido - Le Le Dine	3988
13	Sevberka Dengbeja - Aydin - Here Le	3437
14	Hozan Serhat - Ax Kurdistan Kurdistan ★	3275
15	Heyranokên Botiyan Fadilê Cizîrî - Seydik	3099
16	Zap Oramar ★	2377
17	Dengbêj Şakiro - Rebenim	2300
18	Mihemed Şexo - Cana Şerin	2166
19	Awaze Çiya - Xezal ★	2075
20	Delila Koma Amara - Dil Dixwaze Cenge ★	1976

#### 6.4 Analysis of the Music Video of the Song *Vur Gerilla*

The song *Vur Gerilla*, whose lyrics, music, sound effects, and images of its video incorporate various bellicose expressions, is basically a call to arms for young Kurds in Turkish. The language of the song reveals one of the main causes of this bellicosity as it represents the long-lasting linguistic pressure on Kurdish people. Today, Kurdish people who speak both Kurdish and Turkish in Turkey outnumber

<sup>169</sup> *Ey Reqîb* (Hey Enemy) is the official national anthem of the Autonomous Kurdistan Region in Federal Iraq. The song was also the national anthem of the Republic of Kurdistan (also widely known as the Republic of Mahabad), an autonomous state that lived between January 1946 and December 1946 in northwestern Iran.

<sup>170</sup> Ahmet Kaya’s song *Kürdüz Ölene Kadar* has been discussed in chapter 5.

<sup>171</sup> The song *Çerxa Şoreşe* has been discussed more fully in chapter 3.

the ones who can only speak Kurdish. In addition, a large number of Kurdish people, particularly youngsters, who identify themselves as Kurdish cannot speak the Kurdish language. This elucidates the reason why a call to arms for young Kurds to fight political and military hegemony of Turkish Republic is in Turkish language.

Both the song and its video construct a Kurdish identity over the concepts of struggle and war by emphasizing the resilient and combatant side of Kurdishness. The video of the song, which lasts exactly four minutes and comprises 140 shots — 1,7 seconds per shot on average — including recurrences and the logo of the production company at the beginning and the end, seems to have been made in a highly professional way in terms of its masterfully processed scene progression, and subtle synchronization of its narrative with verbal, visual, and aural components. Changes between shots occur in quick succession, and they mostly fall on strong beats or rhythmic and verbal accents. Almost four-thirds (104 shots) of 140 shots that generate the video contain war-related images such as guerrillas holding or discharging firearms, military drills, ammunition, warplane, and explosions. In addition to sound effects of warplane, helicopter or machine guns — which are called “the belliphonic,” defined as “the spectrum of sounds produced by armed combats” by Daughtry (2012, p. 113) — and melodic and rhythmic formulas imitating them, all of which is described as verbal language such as the word “vur” — which can be translated as “strike” or simply “hit” — uttered 31 times intensify the combative mood in the video.

In terms of its visual features, the video of the song *Vur Gerilla* has a temporal and spatial accuracy to a certain degree, given that neither location nor time is specially designed to serve the purpose of the video. Images that constitute a great proportion of the video seem to have been filmed in an existent training camp or camps, the main environment of guerrillas who are the main subject of the video, and the people seen in the video are neither actresses nor actors, nor do they wear costumes made for the video, and most likely, they do not pretend to use those firearms. What they actually wear, what they mostly carry and use, what they usually do, and where they live would not probably very far from the images seen in the video. When lyrics, music, and soundscapes are taken into consideration together with images in a holistic manner, on the other hand, such as its metaphorical language, musical escalations, and intensified sound environment, the video turns into a reflection of a strong desire or hope for a different political picture.

Apart from its consistency with the lyrics and music most of the time, the sequential process of images tell a different story other than the one told by lyrics. Even though it is not completely unrelated to the story of the lyrics, the visual story is basically about a battle against a stronger enemy, a victorious return from the battle, and determination and solidarity to win upcoming battles. A large image of a Kurdish woman guerrilla behind snowy mountains at the very beginning and various images describing war activities of guerrillas at the opening section of the video are followed by various images of guerrillas who seem quite content and walk single file freely or guerrillas at meeting, and lastly, images about theoretical and practical training and military discipline that guerrillas receive, and socialization and solidarity among guerrillas take place at the end of the video. The last section, for instance, includes a number of images in which guerrillas are talking, shaking hands or singing together, or playing soccer, other than images about their training activities. These three different clusters of images that constitute the visual story of video are highlighted by different music and performing styles used in the video. A rock style intense and vigorous music reinforced by syncopated rhythmic and melodic pattern, and drumbeats characterize the gun battle environment seen at the beginning of the video. Images that describe the victorious return from the battle, on the other hand, are accompanied by instrumental folk song style festive music. The last section of the visual story that includes trainings and social activities of guerrillas is also based on the same music with the lyrics added. These three sections of the visual story of the video are indicated in the formal structure of the song shown in table 6.2 below.

*Vur Gerilla's* celebratory and enthusiastic folk tune indicating an ecstatic and buoyant atmosphere reflects the verbal language of the lyrics translated below. From the very beginning of the lyrics, the usage of pronouns, metaphors, personifications, and presumptions lead to the establishment of prevailing discourse of the song:

<i>Kürdistan bizim ülkemiz</i>	Kurdistan is our country
<i>Diyarbakır başkentimiz</i>	Diyarbakır is our capital
<i>Öcalan'dır önderimiz</i>	Öcalan is our leader
<i>Gerilla bizim canımız</i>	Guerrilla is our soul
<i>Vur vur vur</i>	Strike strike strike
<i>Vur Gerilla vur</i>	Strike guerrilla strike
<i>Kurban olurum sana</i>	I sacrifice myself for you

<i>Haydi gençler, haydi gençler</i>	Come on youngsters
<i>Gabar, Cudi sizi bekler</i>	Gabar, Cudi <sup>172</sup> are waiting for you
<i>Haydi gençler, haydi gençler</i>	Come on youngsters
<i>Xakurkê, Zap sizi bekler</i>	Hakurke, Zap <sup>173</sup> are waiting for you
<i>Vur vur vur</i>	Strike strike strike
<i>Vur gerilla vur</i>	Strike guerrilla strike
<i>Kurban olurum sana</i>	I sacrifice myself for you
<i>Vur vur</i>	Strike strike
<i>Anaların yüreğisin</i>	You are the heart of mothers
<i>Kürt halkının umudusun</i>	You are the hope of Kurdish people
<i>Dağlarda, kayalarda,</i>	In the mountains, on the crags,
<i>Şehirlerde, meydanlarda</i>	In the cities, in the squares
<i>Vur vur vur</i>	Strike strike strike
<i>Vur Gerilla vur</i>	Strike guerrilla strike
<i>Kurban olurum sana</i>	I sacrifice myself for you
<i>Haydi gençler, haydi gençler</i>	Come on youngsters
<i>Serhat, Botan sizi bekler</i>	Serhat, Botan <sup>174</sup> are waiting for you
<i>Haydi gençler, haydi gençler</i>	Come on youngsters
<i>Amed, Dersîm sizi bekler</i>	Amed, Dersim <sup>175</sup> are waiting for you
<i>Vur vur vur</i>	Strike strike strike
<i>Vur Gerilla vur</i>	Strike guerrilla stike

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<sup>172</sup> Gabar and Cudi (Cûdî in Kurdish), two mountains in Şırnak (Şirnex) province within the borders of today's Turkey, are known as strategic locations that provided Kurdish militias with shelter and recruitment.

<sup>173</sup> Xakurkê (Hakurk in Turkish) and Zap, which is also the name of the river flowing through today's Turkey and Iraq, are two geographical regions in the autonomous Kurdish region within the borders of today's Iraq. They are known as the names of PKK's training camps based in these regions.

<sup>174</sup> Serhat (also Serhed or Serxet) and Botan are two of the several historical regions that are mainly used by Kurdish political movement today to define Kurdish-inhabited areas. The large parts of both regions, which do not have fixed boundaries, remain within the borders of today's Turkey. Parts of provinces of Bingöl (Çewlik), Erzurum (Erzîrom), Muş (Mûş), Ağrı (Agirî), and Kars (Qers) are considered in Serhat, and parts of the provinces of Hakkâri (Colemêrg), Siirt (Sêrt), Şırnak (Şirnêx), Cizre (Cizîrê) are considered in Botan (see figure B.5 for the map showing the administrative provinces of Turkey).

<sup>175</sup> Amed (Diyarbakır) is the largest city and the name of the province in Turkey's Kurdish region. Most Kurds regard it the capital of "greater Kurdistan." Dersim, present-day Tunceli — as mentioned in chapter 4 in detail — is both the name of the province and the city within the borders of today's eastern Turkey. The region mostly inhabited by Zaza speaking Alevi who are considered to be ethnically Kurdish.

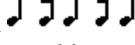
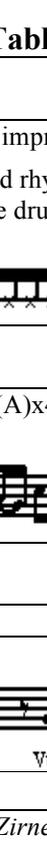
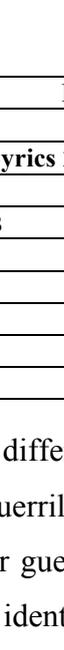
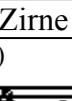
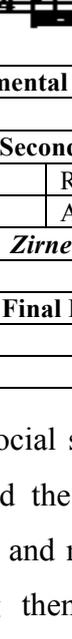
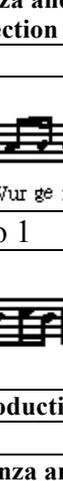
*Kurban olurum sana*

I sacrifice myself for you

*Vur vur*

Strike strike

**Table 6.2 :** The Formal Structure of the song *Vur Gerilla*.

<b>Opening</b> [Visual Story-Section 1]					
Electric guitar's improvisational short melodic passage. Music in 2/4. Improvisational electric guitar syncopated rhythmic and melodic pattern  in every four bar. Synthesized drumbeats (snare drum) imitating the sound of a machine gun links opening section with the main song.					
					
<b>Instrumental Introduction 1</b> [Visual Story-Section 2]					
One-bar phrase (A)x4 A)		One-bar transition (T) T)		Two-bar phrase (B)x2 B)	
					
<b>Lyrics 1 (The First Stanza and Refrain)</b> [Visual Story-Section 3]					
Verse			Refrain		
Ax6	T1)		B	Ax4	T1 B1)
					
Vur Vur Vur		Vur ge ril_la_vur kurban o lu ru_m sa na vurvur			
<b>Zirne Solo 1</b>					
One-bar phrase <i>Zirne</i> solo (Z)x4 Z)					
					
<b>Instrumental Introduction 2</b>					
Ax4		T		Bx2	
<b>Lyrics 2 (The Second Stanza and Refrain)</b>					
Verse			Refrain		
Ax6	T1	B	Ax4	T1	B1
<b>Zirne Solo 2</b>					
Zx4					
<b>Final Refrain</b>					
Refrain					
Ax4		T1		B1	

The song addresses two different social sections of the Kurdish population, one of which is the Kurdish guerrilla, and the other is the Kurdish youth. Aside from expressing admiration for guerrillas and metaphorical depiction of what they meant to Kurdish people by identifying them with the heart of mothers, the song straightforwardly asks Kurdish guerrillas to strike. The youth on the other hand, is invited to arms indirectly by mountains, rivers, cities, and regions of Kurdish lands. That is to say, personification of mountains in the song serves as a catalyst for the

Kurdish youth to equate herself with the guerrilla, and to be expected to join up by nature itself.

The first stanza of the lyrics, which plays a pivotal role in the song, is tasked with establishing and confirming several key facts concerning mentally liberated and unified Kurdish-inhabited areas — which indicates an example of presumption — and solidarity on which the use of first person plural as a personal pronoun has a major impact. As Billig (1995) suggests, “nationalism is, above all, an ideology of the first person plural. The crucial question relating to national identity is how the nation “we” is construed and what is meant by such construction” (p. 70). The use of first person plural leads to another metaphorical expression that associates the Kurdish guerrilla with Kurdish people (“Guerrilla is our soul”) subsequent to the specification of the name of the country, the capital, and the leader of the Kurdish community in the first three lines of the stanza. The use of second person singular in order to address guerrilla forces in the second stanza, therefore, is somewhat a continuance of the characterization of Kurdishness.

In view of being used as a symbol to refer to both heart of mothers and the hope of Kurdish people, the Kurdish guerrilla represents the existence and future of Kurdish people and “imagined Kurdistan” in the song. The figurative use of mothers in this line also gives an idea about the images of female guerrillas that start and finish the video. The only but frequent use of the first person singular in the song addresses the act of sacrifice, which could be interpreted as the abandonment of individuality for the sake of unity and solidarity. The sacrifice of “I” or killing ego for the service of togetherness is another message for Kurdish youth as to why they are invited to join the guerrilla forces. In summary, not only its audio-visual characteristics but also its verbal language does the song suggest the idea that Kurdish national identity is an entity whose *raison d’être* is the guerrilla, and vice versa. To provide a more detailed view of this argument, table A.1 shows a synchronized and sequential descriptive analysis of the lyrics, visuals, music and sounds, and narratives of the music video of the song. As demonstrated in table 6.3, in addition, the music and the visual images as well as the verbalization of the music video of the song *Vur Gerilla* feature various patterns of warlike, bellicose expressions.

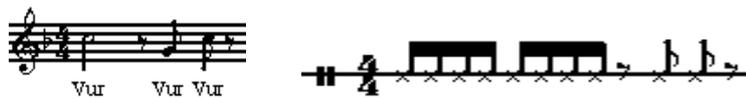
Based on the quantity of their occurrences, the variety of their contents, and the manner in which they are conveyed, visual images, to a great extent, determine the

character of the video. The number of repetitions of similar, or sometimes same, images in quick cuts synchronized with music and words increases the bellicosity, the status of aggressive assault or “active violence” as I call it, in the video. Musical elements and sound effects operating quite in the same manner, in addition, effectively sustain this intense visual atmosphere by designing an acoustic battle zone, and utterances of the words “*vur*” (strike) 31 times and its addressee “Guerrilla” heard six times throughout the song strengthen this acoustic environment. Another component of the violent war-related atmosphere of the video of the song, albeit overshadowed by active violence, is expressions of repression exposed or self-sacrifice. Passive violent images, sounds, and words are basically displayed to emphasize the determination of resistance notwithstanding the existence a stronger enemy.

**Table 6.3 :** Words, images, and sounds as evocation of violence and war in the video of the song *Vur Gerilla*.

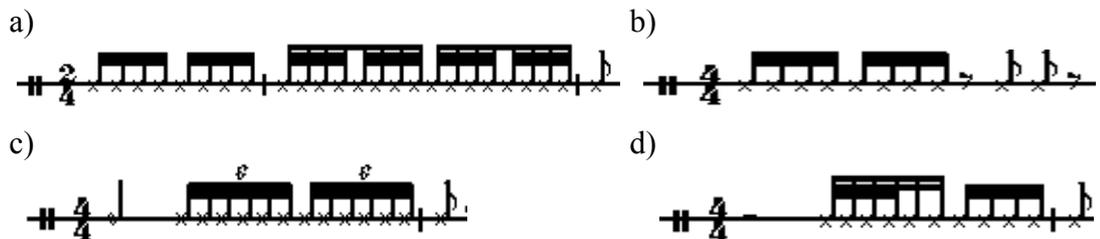
	<b>Visual</b>	<b>Aural-Melodic-Rhythmical</b>	<b>Verbal</b>
<b>Active Violence (Aggressive assault and bellicosity)</b>	Anti-aircraft gun firing or aiming x20 Mortar firing or aiming x5 Machine gun firing or aiming x14 Rifle firing x2 Explosions x4 Bazooka firing or aiming x3 Guerrillas attacking x2 Guerrillas carrying or preparing weapon or ammunition x18 Armed guerillas’ line formations, synchronous militaristic movements in military marching and drills x27 Weapons alone in the foreground	Synthesized drumbeats (snare drum) imitating the sound of a machine gun x12 Sounds of weapons, artilleries, bullets, and explosions Articulation of the three consecutive singing of the word “ <i>vur</i> ” (strike) resembling a rocket traveling through the air and hitting the target x5 Drum cadence imitating a walk in military manner x2	“Strike” x31 “Guerrilla” x6
<b>Passive Violence and Symbolic-Artistic Resistance (Repression exposed and self-sacrifice)</b>	Warplane x7 Coffin	Sounds of warplane and helicopter	“Sacrifice myself for you” x5 “Gabar, Cûdî are waiting for you” x2 “Xakurkê, Zap are waiting for you” x2 “Serhad, Botan are waiting for you” “Amed, Dêrsîm are waiting for you”

In the music video of the song *Vur Gerilla*, the most remarkable melodic pattern in terms of expressing violent emotions in musical way is the articulation of the three consecutive singing of the word “vur” (strike), shown in figure 6.1, which can be evaluated as a depiction of the sound of a rocket or another long-range projectile traveling through the air and hitting the target. This articulation is also synchronized with visual images that show guerrillas firing guns and bomb exploding at the target.



**Figure 6.1 :** Articulation of the three consecutive singing of the word “vur” (strike) in transition bars, and the rhythmic formula accompanying it.

Various rhythmic formulas used in the song, implicitly keep the gun battle environment seen at the beginning of the video alive in acoustic way by imitating the firing of a machine gun. In addition to electronically produced drum cadence resembling a military march in two *zirne* solos, short patterns of snare drum, which are similar to drum cadences are constantly perceived throughout the song even though it is in folk song style. When it is appropriately used, synthesized snare drum can maintain the warlike acoustic environment. Below are the four different types of rhythmic formulas, which are performed by synthesized snare drum, that sound akin to a machine gun.



**Figure 6.2 :** Rhythmic formulas made by synthesized snare drum used to imitate a machine gun in transition points of the song *Vur Gerilla*. The first (a) is presented before the first instrumental introduction, the second (b) occurs in transition bars (T) between A and B, the third (c) is heard in the second half of last bar of the instrumental introductions before two body sections, and the fourth (d) connects verses with refrains.

All this aggression and resistance taking part in the video, on the other hand, is framed by images of armless female guerrillas. Even though there are several images of female guerrillas running for attack, carrying or preparing weapons to discharge or standing in line formations with their rifles, only male guerrillas seem to be the ones who fight — the description of a battle in the first section of the video (between 0:16

and 1:01) that includes numerous shots of guerrillas aiming and firing weapons does not contain a single image of female guerrilla (see figure 6.3). Armless female guerrillas at the beginning and at the end of the battle can be interpreted in two ways. First, Kurds' only chance of survival is to fight, and woman, as a symbol of the rightfulness and innocence of this fight, shields the armed forces from brutal authority. Second, in spite of the ongoing violence, there is an overall aspiration to terminate the war that has created this violence and the existence of woman represents the security of the desire for peace.

Capture 1



Capture 2



Capture 3



Capture 4



**Figure 6.3** : Screen captures of female guerrillas taken from the very beginning (Capture 1), from the very end (Capture 2), and captures of male guerrillas taken from the first section (Captures 3 and 4) of the music video of the song *Vur Gerilla*.

## 6.5 A Comparison

“Nothing connects us all but imagined sound,” says Anderson (1991, p. 145), yet another powerful incentive that has great influence over the construction of connection among people has been the feeling of nationhood for more than two centuries. Few nations have been established without struggle throughout the course of this period in the world and the manifestation of violent efforts over music and sound, as Anderson noticed, has given one of the most euphoric emotional satisfactions to people. As the song *Vur Gerilla* illustrates, Kurdish people are not acting differently in their own nation-building process.

The march, whose lyrics form the epigraph of this chapter, is likely to sustain its popularity in primary or high school education in today's Turkey, and even though the song *Vur Gerilla* seem to be violent and offensive to many Turks there are numerous similarities in the way they manipulate concepts of nationalism, violence and war. Both songs explicitly invite people to fight and both of them use specific words in the imperative mood one of which is "walk forward" and the other is "strike." Both songs designate a leader to their cause and both of them attribute special value to cities and regions in their lands. Both songs use symbolism. The march describes its the leader as a sun and uses the word "tear" to denote suffering, whereas the song *Vur Gerilla* regards guerrilla as the heart of mothers and uses the image of coffin and the word "sacrifice" to express agony.

An important difference between two songs occurs in impressions they made. The song *Vur Gerilla* pretends to have an independent nation state, which implies a strong wish to have one. The march, on the other hand, pretends not to have a nation state, which implies a desire to protect the one that was acquired almost 90 years ago. Considering the excitement and satisfaction I felt twenty years ago as I sang about a war that I did not actually experience, it would not be difficult to imagine the emotional status of a Kurd as she sings or listens to the song *Vur Gerilla*, which is actually about an ongoing war that might give her an independent state.

## **6.6 Analysis of the Music Video of the Song *Oremar***

With its story telling the real-life raid carried out by PKK's armed wing HPG *Hêzên Parastina Gel* (People's Defence Forces) in 2007 on a battalion of Turkish Armed Forces located in Dağlıca (*Oremar* or sometimes *Oramar* in Kurdish), a village in Yüksekova (*Gever*) district in Hakkâri Province of Turkey, the song *Oremar*, along with its music video, is probably one of the most impressive artistic products of ongoing Kurdish armed and political resistance for many Kurds in Turkey.<sup>176</sup> What many Kurdish interviewees told me the very moment I talked to them about my study was the significance of *Oremar* both as a song and as a music video that should not be overlooked. "When it first appeared, we felt that it was the best song of the

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<sup>176</sup> The raid that made an overwhelming impact on the Turkish public at the time resulted in death of 12 soldiers of the Turkish Army according to the official figures.

entire movement that we had been waiting for years” said one of my interviewees during a conversation took place in Batman, a Kurdish-populated city in southeastern Turkey (Ertûş, personal communication, July 13, 2012). Many’s the time, therefore, I call on *Oremar* to briefly and quickly describe the scope of the study to many Kurds.

Having been composed by Awazê Çiya (Melody of Mountains), the music group formed by musician guerrillas, *Oremar*, the music video of which is still one of the most popular audio-visual media shared among the virtual communities of Kurdish people, epitomizes the close connection between Kurdish musical expression and Kurdish guerrilla fight as well as the role of *govend* dance line as a symbol of revolt against brutality. The song *Oremar* became so popular among large sections of Kurdish people in Turkey as soon as it was released that replacing the original Kurdish lyrics with new ones that are proper to the related context, DTP *Demokratik Toplum Partisi* (Democratic Society Party) — the predecessor of BDP — used melody of the song during the campaign for local government elections that took place on March 29, 2009. The song still retains its popularity today that it is not surprising to hear its melody in any music-related events such as wedding celebrations, concerts, or political gatherings of Kurds who live either in Kurdish-inhabited areas or in many cities that have large Kurdish population in western Turkey. Bearing many resemblances to those of the song *Vur Gerilla* in terms of various expressions of bellicosity, heroic deeds of the guerilla, and revenge, the lyrics of the song *Oremar* go as follows:

<i>Oremar e bilind e zozan û gelî gund e</i>	Oremar is high, upland, and valley village
<i>Gerîla lê bûne kom çar hawirdor govend e</i>	There gathered up guerrillas making <i>govend</i> all around
<i>Hevalan serî hildan</i>	Comrades rising up
<i>Zinar li ser govend e bejna zirav lewend e</i>	Zinar is the head of <i>govend</i> , brave and standing tall
<i>Şîyar li ser govend e çavbelek û lewend e</i>	Şîyar is the head of <i>govend</i> , standing bravely with his black eyes.
<i>Şer û ceng û dilane, req reqa mertalane</i>	War and battle and festivity, clang of spears

<i>Şûre destê gerila li neyaran</i>	Sword in the hand of guerrilla is
<i>ferman e</i>	order to enemies
<i>Gerila xweş tolhilda</i>	Guerrilla avenged well
<i>Sê roj sê şev berxwedan,</i>	Three days three nights they
<i>çember girtin bernedan</i>	resisted, surrounded, did not release
<i>Pergala turanîyan kirne dilo</i>	Brought Turanians' <sup>177</sup> order to ruin
<i>perîşan</i>	
<i>Govend geş bû li çîyan,</i>	<i>Govend</i> shouted in the mountains,
<i>Kurdistan bû serhildan</i>	Kurdistan became rebellion
<i>Bextê romê hejandin li</i>	They shook the fortune of the
<i>cihane deng vedan</i>	Rûm, <sup>178</sup> resounded in the world.

The figurative use of the word “*govend*” in various meanings in the lyrics such as militaristic surrounding of the target, uprising, and the attack per se is one of the basic elements of the song.<sup>179</sup> Characterizing guerrillas as members of the *govend* dance line, the song creates an analogy between military attack and *govend* that signifies a militaristic formation that is critical for the main story. The defiant and victorious narrative of the lyrics has taken the character of a dance-based celebratory occasion that is musically formulated by a repetitive motif and instruments such as *zirne* (see figures 6.4 and 6.5). The combative side of the song mainly articulated by images of the video as well as by the lyrics is reinforced sonically by belliphonic sounds, albeit to a lesser degree compared to those integrated into the song *Vur Gerilla*, and several vocalizations of *tililî* (*lilan*) synchronized with them.

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<sup>177</sup> Turanian denotes to the ideology of Pan-Turkism that aims for the political unification of Anatolian Turks with linguistically related Turkic peoples living in central Asia.

<sup>178</sup> Rûm, which historically and geographically signifies the political powers that were based in western and central Anatolia, mainly denotes the Turkish state.

<sup>179</sup> As mentioned in chapter 5, the name of the MKM’s folk dance group Koma Serhildan (Group Uprising) is another indicative of *govend*’s political connotations in Kurdish society.

♩ = 98

O re mar e bi lind e zo zan û ge lî gund e  
(Second time by chorus)

zo zan û ge lî gund e ge rî la lê bû ne kom  
(Second time by chorus)

çar ha wir dor go wend e çar ha wir dor go wend e

he va lan se rî hil dan *8va* Lîlan (ululation) and sound of a machine gun Zi nar li ser go wend e Şî yar li ser go wend e  
(Chorus resumes)

bej na zi rav le wend e bej na zi rav le wend e *Bilûr solo*  
çav be lek û le wend e çav be lek û le wend e

*Dûdûk (Balaban) solo*

*Bilûr solo*

**Figure 6.4 :** The first stanza (including the confirmatory repetitions of chorus), refrain (the unchanged music of the stanza sung only by chorus), and the transition between the first two stanzas of the song *Ore mar*. The first stanza and refrain repeat as the music of the other three stanzas.

♩ = 98

**Figure 6.5 :** *Zirne* solo of the song *Ore mar*

As shown in the table A.2 in detail, in addition, the music video of *Oremar*, similarly to the music video of *Vur Gerilla*, is an outcome of an adept combination of music, lyrics, story, and visual images. Much of the bellicosity of the video represented by images of real-life guerrillas in militarily ostentatious situations, and various types of guns and artilleries is akin, or even the same in several cases, to that of the video of the song *Vur Gerilla*.

In addition to many images that are pieced together to create the intended story, which is the main method for creating the entire video of *Vur Gerilla*, the video of *Oremar* includes guerrillas who were cast as themselves (musician guerrillas) to support the storyline. Acting and many other movie-shooting practices that are interwoven with the real life, in other words, are critical parts of the video, which seems to be an important factor in creating the aforementioned emotional impact of the song and its video on Kurdish people in Turkey. The role of music, in this sense, become more vital for the entire video compared to *Vur Gerilla* inasmuch as it is, along with dance, an important component not only of the narrative but also within the narrative. Both images and lyrics that consist largely of musicians, musical instruments, and dance-related acts that are identified with combatants tend to tell a narratively coherent story of a successful military attack as well as to describe a celebrative atmosphere following it. Perhaps most importantly, music making of guerrillas carrying musical instruments along with their rifles (see figure 6.6) as well as various images of dancing guerrillas that are mostly synchronized with the word *govend* (dance line) in the lyrics, pave the way for the designation of the concepts of music and dance as key attributes of the collective memory of Kurds in Turkey.



**Figure 6.6 :** Screen captures of musician guerrillas taken from the music video of the song *Oremar*.

## 6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has given an account of how TV-centered and online musical culture has had significance for the improvement of Kurdish political movement since the mid-1990s. First exploring the role of the means of mass communication that perceptibly gave rise to the enlargement of Kurdish musico-political culture, it argued that the Kurdish diaspora's capacity to produce and spread knowledge, discourse, symbols, ideology, and propaganda has become more efficient for Kurds living in the homeland thereafter. Including the analyses of two virtually circulated and highly rated nationalist music videos as exemplar of Kurdish musico-political and resistance movement, in addition, this chapter has assisted in our understanding of the role of violent resistance and violent components produced through visual, sonic, and musical means in the development of counter-hegemonic discourse as well as of the role of ocularcentric technological advancements in forcing Kurds' imagination toward a clearly defined Kurdish nation and its political sovereignty. The Kurdish musical culture shaped on and by the Internet and Satellite TV, in this context, has intensified the connection among the three important segments of Kurdish nationalist movement, namely, the diaspora's relatively influential theoretical and political capacity, armed wing's practical capacity, and the restricted but numerically operative political movement of Kurdish civilians living in Turkey. Both Internet and Satellite TV, therefore, provides freer space than any other cultural domain does for the expression of nationalist feelings.

As regards themes and contents, music videos seem to be the visually enhanced versions of many songs performed in many events described in the previous chapters. Drawing on various sources of bellicosity, music videos include basic themes regarding martyrdom, revenge, military power, revolutionist ideas as well as many references to an envisioned national state. Authenticity of images comprising videos, in addition, strengthens the emotional bond between the story of the video and the audience. Determined and irrevocable discourse of the lyrics, in addition to countless militarily aggressive images, equip the concept of music and musical products as a major socio-cultural and political power, which is one of the main arguments of this study. The space that is covered by the guerrilla-based imagery in both videos and in lyrics is an important point indicating the priority that combatants of the movement

have. Two analyzed music videos are of special examples suggesting that music in Kurdish society, accompanied by the global influence of popular culture developed particularly by means of communication technology, displays a high degree of competence in the construction of the imagery on nationality, national resistance, and rightfulness of the fight for liberation. A spontaneous comparison between the current online-centered chapter and the previous offline-centered chapters is suggestive of the argument of Lysloff at this point who claims, “on-line communities, such as the mod scene, are as “real” (or imagined) as those off line” (p. 236). Music is, in this respect, not only a cultural but also sociologically life-sustaining phenomenon that provides people with a strong bond with combatants fighting for their liberation. The music video of the song *Oremar* made up of real-life armed guerrillas playing instruments, singing, and dancing also shows that this bond is not one-sided and that armed movement also needs music, albeit for practical purposes such as calling to arms or announcing military success. Music here is not only an instrument but also a source and regulatory, and a discourse determiner on which a significant section of political Kurds in Turkey, to a certain extent, collectively agree.

Reflecting especially on the last four chapters of this study, the next chapter will present a final chapter for conclusion.



## 7. CONCLUSION

There are several ethnographic investigations launched into conflict-related and resistance-based musical cultures. Kurdish nationalism in Turkey has mostly been studied with reference to Kurdish history, culture, assimilation, and unitary nation-state versus the right to national self-determination. This study instead looks at the Kurdish population through an analysis of Kurdish expressive culture. Discussing that the emergent Kurdish musical culture as strongly intertwined with political and combative discourses, this study aimed to make a modest contribution to the literature on Kurdish nationalism by arguing the exceptional role of musico-politics in almost the last 40 years. One of the most frequent remarks that presuppose the exceptionally vital role of music in Kurdish culture and society in the small body of literature on Kurdish music, on the other hand, is rather deficient in anthropological approach in spite of many conflict-ridden years in Kurdish-populated areas.

Thomas Turino (2008) emphasized the significance of the connection between people's music-centered collective activities and their socio-political conditions; he writes, "Music, dance, festivals, and other public expressive cultural practices are a primary way that people articulate the collective identities that are fundamental to forming and sustaining social groups, which are, in turn, basic to survival" (p. 187). Adding close observation of the present-day's worldwide dominance of online culture to that of these public expressive cultural practices, I analyzed how a considerable number of Kurds living in Turkey conduct their political struggle within the sphere of musical activity aiming to reinterpret their cultural motives in line with the ongoing process of reconstruction of Kurdish national identity. This study adds more to Turino's argument that expressive cultural practices and articulation of collective identities are intertwined: the radical transformation of Kurds' expressive culture since the mid-1970s suggests that this emergent Kurdish symbolic space also lays the ground for the articulation of cultural and political identities. Thus, the flourishing Kurdish music, festivals, and dance connote more than expressive

culture, transforming itself into a political culture. In other words, expressive culture extends beyond expressing ethnic identities, but shifts to expressing political identities.

Ethnomusicological literature on issues of violence, war, and trauma has only been recently formed (Araujo, 2006, p. 289; McDonald, 2009, p. 58; Kartomi, 2010, p. 452). As an intention of contribution, this study has undertaken to pinpoint the position of these concepts in the processes of Kurdish music making. As mentioned above, the combination of socio-cultural and political practices aim to rearticulate Kurdish national consciousness, resistance, and self-determination which this study aimed to analyze via an ethnographic analysis of performative actions that took place in specific social spaces, and in protest media produced by the advocates of the Kurdish cause. My immediate aim in this study, in other words, has been to ethnographically explain the critical role of music in the transformation of Kurdish expressive culture beginning after the mid-1970s. In this context, I accepted expressive performance as a form of both cultural and political resistance and discussed the role of political conflict in the domain of music and dance performances. In the service of communicating meaning, expressive Kurdish performance becomes an important source for expressing reclaimed identity and acknowledgement of cultural and political rights along with the uniqueness of Kurdish history.

It seems necessary to highlight that what I had assumed based on my political and historical knowledge about the politicization of Kurdish society and culture before I began my field research has been largely less than what I have witnessed during my fieldwork. I have found more aggressive and methodical body of musical and political activities merged with each other in the field, which is why I needed to coin the compound term “musico-politics.” The very basic combination of findings of this study strongly suggests that the cumulative sentiment of victimhood and wrath of Turkey’s Kurds caused by long-lasting cultural, economic, and social blockages reached an extensive political outlet by the agency of music-centered practices particularly after the mid-1970s. The intensive process in which Kurdish political and armed resistance revived and fashioned its cultural life turned into an all-pervading schemata that ensured a substantial influence over Kurdish expressive culture by the late 1990s. Gallant endeavors of many Kurds to be culturally and

politically organized were also profound as much as ongoing violence, conflict, resistance, deep social anxiety and pain, national faith, and determination and cohesiveness throughout this period than ever before. This extraordinary momentum finds expression in the changing level of Kurds' national confidence when wording their claims for their cultural and political rights which finds expression in their emergent expressive performances. Their national confidence rests, on the other hand, on the shift in the style of identity-related expression which is as important as the shift of the style of political struggle in their armed movement. I basically claimed in this study that the shift in the style of expression is related more to a socio-psychological refraction than to the political movement's appropriation of martial practices.

Apart from historical and sociological insights, and countless interviews, conversations with musicians, intellectuals, and music enthusiasts, I have attended a large number of music-centered events, political demonstrations, and celebrations in addition to actively involving myself in the repertory of Kurdish political songs and music videos mostly through online activities throughout the research. Some of these musical products and events, in the final analysis, centered either on the idea of political and martial resistance or on Kurdishness, and the eternal existence, dignity and righteous struggle of Kurdish nation whereas others concentrated on either the agony and oppression that Kurds went through or on post-struggle social order considered to be ideal for the true emancipation of Kurds. Among all were flowing a good number of social facts of which we have been trying to make sense for ages such as power, violence, oppression, defiance, leadership, pain, war, victory, and festivity. That is to say, Kurds' long-standing struggle for liberation in the Middle East and its current status revealed a socio-political and artistic metamorphosis that has enabled a platform for discussion of music through the lenses of these and through the lens of music. Music, in other words, particularly after the second half of the 1970s, has been a strong repository of resistance in Kurdish culture and politics, and this study was set out to unearth socio-cultural reverberations of music-centered resistance in diverse Kurdish communities in Turkey.

As I outlined and emphasized in this study, it is certainly important to understand that music also has become a medium of socio-political organization if not institutionalization as well as of propaganda. In this respect it has played an

important role in the establishment of a national discourse since Kurdish political movement has not yet moved from mobilization to complete institutionalization movement. Practitioners of this musico-political movement, on the other hand, have been faced with violent repression, thereby leading to the development of a more aggressive musical culture shaped by a strong inclination to reciprocate. Ongoing belligerency also has been a key factor in the rapid growing of this high-handed type of musical culture. Music in Turkey's Kurdish society, in other words, has not only been a medium channeling out resistance, violence, and repression, but has also been a power that has shaped and has been shaped by these. Equally important, Kurdish resistance and liberation movement is, to a great extent, an ethno-nationalist movement. Abdullah Öcalan's leadership appears to have a strong symbolic significance in the context of Kurdish expressive performance reflecting the image and characterization of this leadership. Today, many powerful organizations directing Kurdish political and cultural movement adhere firmly to the tenet of this leadership. Thus, his posters used during many music-centered events seem rather compatible with the lyrics of many songs that praise him as a national leader. With similar concepts related to national mobilization such as martyrdom, national anthem, and flag, in addition, the type of musical production and products manifested as a result of hardships encountered both as Kurdish and as Kurdish musician per se seem to have had a considerable impact on Kurdish expressive performance.

Returning to the question posed at the beginning of this study, it is possible to argue that music and music-centered performances might not only represent resistance and war, but also the notions and practices related to resistance and war might intensely embody music and music-centered performances. There are many ways of combining music with protest, political and armed struggle, national resistance and liberation. This study has shown that because of the relative practicality and effectiveness of integrating these into music, Kurds are involved in music-centered activities and they also create resources for these activities for their basic social, political as well as cultural claims. Collective memory in Kurdish society has been shaped either by discovered traditional (or neo-traditional) concepts such as Newroz or by combative resistant concepts running counter to hegemony. Furthermore, political and politicized popular culture figures such as Ahmet Kaya, modern concepts such as commemoration and celebration, or visual-centered technological

resources such as Internet and TV, moves music to the forefront as one of the main channel in the socio-cultural and political configuration of the themes listed above.

Kurdish expressive culture employs concepts of mythology, history, modernity, leftism, and nationalism in various ways to establish a musico-political language. This language, in addition, in accordance with the current political position of Kurds, mediates between ongoing resistance movement and imagined model of freedom. Today, the concept of Newroz and Newroz celebrations, as discussed in chapter 3, predominantly promote mythological and historical side of Kurds' resistance-based liberation movement while ethno-political structure of Dersim and events such as its annually organized Munzur Festival of Culture and Nature, as discussed in chapter 4, strengthen its radical leftist and liberationist side. As emphasized in chapter 5, in addition, the relatively recent politico-cultural organizations such as MKM or musico-political imageries such as Ahmet Kaya as well as symbolic figures symbolizes and expresses the unjust treatment to which Kurdish identity has been exposed for years of its long term struggle for recognition and rights. Overpowering sentiments concerning anger, revenge, bellicose patriotism, combative attack, and victory, on the other hand, as chapter 6 finally explored, are manifested through less vulnerable platforms such as Internet and satellite TV. Still, music has a critical position in constructing the link between these conceptual zones and present-day politics, and interdependence among these cases is not distinct to any extent; on the contrary, they are very similar to each other in terms of their contents, setting, procedure, themes, and symbols both on the parts of audiences and performers. Music across Kurdish society, as also suggested by profile of musicians, discourse of songs, and the currency they gained through socio-political and cultural occasions, and its substantial impact on dance repertory, is tasked and empowered with an exceptional position both by public and executive branch of the armed and political movement. To put it another way, not only has been the aggressive discourse of political resistance in Kurdish music and dance, considering in turn the omnipresence of political discourse in every music-related expression today, triggered by politically organized practices and contentious politics but also political culture itself has been organized as music and dance practices.

Thus, I have not been trying simply to address the transformation of Kurdish musical culture in terms of resistance against hegemony. Rather, I have partly attempted to

draw attention to Kurdish musico-politics as a kind of testing ground for the discourse of inclusive Western nationalism apart from focusing on musico-politics as an effective area for Kurds in Turkey to create a “cultural inversion.” The challenge continues to be one of understanding all these music-centered activities investigated by the current study in the context of transculturation which is defined by Pratt (1992) as “instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer’s own terms” (1992, p. 7). As regards to relationship between Kurdish musico-political practices and Kurdish musical culture, on the other hand, the nationalist-based language and discourse motivated by protection of culture is so dominant that the culture itself is relegated to a secondary role. The culture and cultural elements basically are sources to reproduce resistance politics, and music is an effectively used medium in generating a certain type of cultural politics and transformation. Responses to stage and musical structuring of behavior do not deeply vary across events. Events present excuses for participation but the real motivation in both seems different. Considering the entire picture that contains songs, selection of performers, settings, venues, and the causes for all activities when discussing events, seemed particularly important for what this dissertation aimed to achieve. In this context, the question that needs addressing is how do societies construct the relationship between their nationalist or resistance-based discourses and the practices centered on the protection of culture?

This study has also encountered many other neighboring cases and phenomena as key factors in the transformation of Kurdish expressive culture in Turkey. As regards Kurdish musical culture, global influences and popular culture, the impact of diaspora, and the paradox of strictly disciplined festivities are worth studying in more detail. As far as performance studies are concerned, audiences’ behaviors as performers and their rivalry with the stage at this point is a highly intriguing topic into which this study has partly entered. Even though this study has briefly mentioned, accordingly, the impact of contentious politics on Kurdish dance practices and repertory is an intriguing area that might need further investigation. In addition to all these, this study has barely been able to acknowledge the role of music as catharsis in pursuance of the great influence of musical-related practices on Kurdish expressive culture and political resistance. A prospective ethnographic investigation into Kurdish musical culture particularly from this viewpoint as a

respond to the current study will make a meaningful contribution to the sociology of Kurdish music.

Ultimately, this study represents a preliminary account of the transformation of Kurdish expressive culture in Turkey within specific contexts of resistance, nationalism, violence, oppression, and contentious politics. It attempts to illustrate empirically the extension of the capacity of music on the one hand and treats the universality of music's such role with certain skepticism on the other. Investigating into the Kurd, a nation on which a satisfactory literature has yet to be developed, from the perspective of a growing body of ethnomusicological writings, this study will provide, I believe, two different nascent literatures with a humble service. Through this study, I have come to an understanding that the relationship between music and human condition, albeit under occasional socio-political circumstances, could reciprocally be reinvigorating.



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## **APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A:** Tables

**APPENDIX B:** Maps

**APPENDIX C:** Glossary



**APPENDIX A: Tables**

**Table A.1 :** The music video of the song *Vur Gerilla* in eight sections: Lyrics, music, narrative, and audio-visual descriptions in order of time.

<i>Lyrics</i>	<i>Visual</i>	<i>Music and Sound</i>	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Time</i>
	The logo ‘ROJGÜN <i>müzik yapım</i> ’ (Rojgün music production) appears on the black ground. The letter ‘O’ in ROJGÜN resembles a blazing sun disk with its six yellow rays		The sun is an ancient religious and cultural symbol among Kurds. Both the Kurdish word ‘roj’ and the Turkish word ‘gün’ mean day.	0:00 – 0:04
<b>Section 1 (Opening)</b>				
	Two flowers (Crown Imperial or Kaiser’s Crown) in the foreground. The one on the left is yellow and the one on the right is red. Snowy mountains in the background and a large image of a Kurdish woman guerrilla behind them. As it zooms in for a close up of the guerrilla’s face the name of the singer ‘Şewder’ with red fonts and green underline, and the name of the song ‘Vur Gerilla’ in yellow fonts appear. The caption expands and contracts rapidly with simultaneous →	Electric guitar solo presents a short melodic passage with an intense and tenacious tune.  Heartbeat sounds →	Both of the flowers have green leaves thereby completing the yellow-red-green combination. Mountain is a crucial concept that represents both Kurdish culture and Kurdish rebellious movement. The co-occurrence of colors yellow, red, and green is another expression of Kurdishness.  Allegiance and attachment to the colors, mountains, and Kurdish resistance movement	0:04 – 0:16

Continued

**Table A.1 (Continued):** The music video of the song *Vur Gerilla* in eight sections.

<i>Lyrics</i>	<i>Visual</i>	<i>Music and Sound</i>	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Time</i>
<b>Section 1 (continued)</b>				
	<p>Excerpts of male guerrillas preparing, aiming, and firing weapons such as anti-aircraft guns, rocket launchers, bazookas, mortars, machine guns, and rifles. Other visual images that show many aspects of the guerrilla warfare such as guerrillas moving forward with their guns attentively, or guerrillas talking on walkie-talkie, and warplanes targeted by anti-aircraft weapons, and smoke caused by explosions occur. Firing at night captured from different angles ends the section.</p>	<p>Improvisational rock style decisive and combative music produced by call and response of an electric guitar and rhythmic guitar's recurrent syncopated rhythmic and melodic pattern supported by electronically produced percussions and synthesizer. Additional sounds such as artillery, machinegun, bomb, helicopter, and warplane occur. Eight strokes of synthesized drumbeats doubling in speed, thereby imitating the sound of a machine gun.</p>	<p>Bravery, strong-mindedness, and well-organized war activities of Kurdish guerrillas during a fight, and their emotional involvement in the cause of Kurdish resistance movement. The rightfulness of the armed struggle is emphasized with the images of enemy's warplanes representing the brutal authority. Except one female guerrilla shot behind, all guerrillas are male in this section.</p>	0:16 – 1:01

Continued

**Table A.1 (Continued):** The music video of the song *Vur Gerilla* in eight sections.

<i>Lyrics</i>	<i>Visual</i>	<i>Music and Sound</i>	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Time</i>
<b>Section 2 (Instrumental Introduction 1)</b>				
	<p>Armed guerrillas (both male and female) walking single file freely with confidence.</p> <p>Ammunition and guns carried and prepared by guerrillas. Single images of armed female guerrillas. Excerpts taken from a gathering in which guerrillas listening to their team leader.</p>	<p>Cheerful and jovially celebratory tune played by <i>zirne</i> (double reed woodwind instrument) and <i>tembûr</i> (plucked string instrument) supported by electronically produced percussions and sound effects resembles a victory march. The section is composed of a one-bar phrase (A) played four times, one-bar transition, and a two-bar phrase (B) (developed from the one-bar phrase) played two times. The transition bar between A and B has another eight strokes (16<sup>th</sup> notes) of synthesized drumbeats and two (8<sup>th</sup> notes) synthesized drumbeats consecutively with electronic sound effects giving an impression of gunfire.</p>	<p>A victorious return from a recent clash. As the loudness of <i>zirne</i> represents the announcement of a recent victory the character of music signifies a festive mood. The occurrence of music with mostly local instruments in folk song style and the images of female guerrillas, unlike the first (previous) section, bespeaks the genuine nature of the Kurdish identity left with no option but to fight. Strategic, practical, and theoretical preparations led the recent victory.</p>	1:01 – 1:25

Continued

**Table A.1 (Continued):** The music video of the song *Vur Gerilla* in eight sections.

<i>Lyrics</i>	<i>Visual</i>	<i>Music and Sound</i>	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Time</i>
<b>Section 3 (First Stanza and Refrain)</b>				
<p>Kurdistan is our country Diyarbakır is our capital</p> <p>Kurdistan is our country Diyarbakır is our capital</p> <p>Öcalan is our leader Guerrilla is our soul Strike strike strike Strike guerrilla strike I sacrifice myself for you</p> <p>Come on youngsters Come on youngsters Gabar, Cûdî are waiting for you Come on youngsters Come on youngsters Xakurkê, Zap are waiting for you Strike strike strike Strike guerrilla strike I sacrifice myself for you Strike strike.</p>	<p>A green map on which the word “DIYARBAKIR” appears in red fonts and “KURDISTAN” appears in yellow fonts, which are bigger than the ones in “Diyarbakır,” formed by some parts of today’s Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. Shot of a moment of silence from an administrative staff’s meeting taking place in a covered area.</p> <p>Brief shots of hawks Still imagery of Abdullah Öcalan with the Ken Burns effect Female guerillas with rifles during a military marching Anti-aircraft weapon Male guerrilla firing his bazooka behind a machine gun Explosion on the target. A hawk. Male guerrilla firing his machine gun. Uniformed guerrillas whose faces are covered with <i>pûşî</i> walking single file. Guerrillas’ decisive moves to take the order arms position. Two hawks. Various Guerrillas groups waiting in present arms and taking order arms position Anti-aircraft Male guerrilla firing a mortar Machine gun with ammunition in the hand Female guerrilla placing an artillery shell into a mortar.</p>	<p>A male singer sings the same tune played in the previous section with embellished lyrics. The verse is composed of six stanzas each of which is sung to the one-bar phrase, and the two-bar phrase. A short succession of three notes presented by <i>tembûr</i> fills the gap between each one-bar phrase in the verse. The transition bar: in addition to the features in the previous section, a half note for the first “strike” and two eight notes for the two following “strike” occur. The two-bar phrase is sung only one time. Refrain (Ax4+B1) is sung at the end of the section (1:49 – 2:08). B1 is different from B with its two eight notes for “strike” at the end of the second bar.</p>	<p>Imagination of a unified Kurdish land together with the inseparable colors of yellow-red-green, and the administration. Solidarity, and singleness of purpose motivated by sacrifices of members of the movement. Hawk, as several informants stated, represents PKK. As a symbol to which qualities such as leadership, unification, energy, vision, and clarity are attributed, hawk might be representing both the Kurdish resistance movement and its leader Öcalan. Existence of female guerrillas marching like soldiers is another signifier of the legitimacy of resistance. Having uniformed outfits, guns, and synchronous militaristic movements, militia forces bear many similarities to a regular army in terms of their regimented military training. Imagination of an independent Kurdish state is preceded with a regular army. Images showing male and female guerrillas both in training and in fight support the call for participation in the militia forces.</p>	1:25 – 2:08

Continued

**Table A.1 (Continued):** The music video of the song *Vur Gerilla* in eight sections.

<i>Lyrics</i>	<i>Visual</i>	<i>Music and Sound</i>	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Time</i>
<b>Section 4 (Zirne Solo 1)</b>				
	<p>A male guerrilla standing and shaking hands with guerrillas walking single file.</p> <p>A group of guerrillas, both standing and sitting, are singing and clapping time, most likely, with the music.</p>	<p>A ceremonious tune, composed of four different variations of a one-bar motif, is played by <i>zirne</i> solo accompanied by electronically produced drum cadence resembling a military march</p>	<p>As an indication of concepts such as trust, respect, equality, and peace, handshaking images convey another message to people that guerrillas live in a peaceful environment based on mutual respect, trust, and equality. Character of music, which is mostly consistent with images, and guerrillas singing and clapping indicate hope, self-confidence, and content with life which implies a better life with a meaningful purpose.</p>	2:08 – 2:19
<b>Section 5 (Instrumental Introduction 2)</b>				
	<p>Guerrillas whose faces covered with <i>pûşî</i> are jogging with their rifles. Two hawks</p> <p>Neat regiments of guerrillas taking left shoulder arms position as one of them in front raising HPG flag.</p> <p>A number of regiments, one of which still being formed. A regiment formed by female guerrillas waiting present arm position with HPG flag in the foreground.</p> <p>Still imagery of two female guerrillas looking at the camera with smiling faces.</p> <p>Male guerrillas playing soccer.</p> <p>Guerrillas are exercising.</p>	<p>Repeat of Section 3 (1:01 – 1:25)</p>	<p>Excerpts from different kinds of regiments including the ones formed only by women intend to demonstrate great military capacity, energy, discipline, cohesion, and readiness for action that guerrilla forces have.</p> <p>Images about friendship and social life in training camps make them look inviting for young people called through lyrics.</p>	2:19 – 2:43

Continued

**Table A.1 (Continued):** The music video of the song *Vur Gerilla* in eight sections.

<i>Lyrics</i>	<i>Visual</i>	<i>Music and Sound</i>	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Time</i>
<b>Section 6 (Second Stanza and Refrain)</b>				
<p>You are the heart of mothers</p> <p>You are the hope of Kurdish people</p> <p>You are the heart of mothers</p> <p>You are the hope of Kurdish people</p> <p>In the mountains, on the crags, In the cities, in the squares</p> <p>Strike strike strike</p> <p>Strike guerrilla strike</p> <p>I sacrifice myself for you</p> <p>Come on youngsters Serhat, Botan are waiting for you</p> <p>Come on youngsters Amed, Dêrsîm are waiting for you</p> <p>Strike strike strike</p> <p>Strike guerrilla strike</p> <p>I sacrifice myself for you</p> <p>Strike strike</p>	<p>Shot of a guerrilla squad from behind under the poster of Öcalan as guerrillas taking left shoulder arms position.</p> <p>Seven female guerrillas taking oath by a coffin covered by a PKK flag on which a rifle was laid.</p> <p>Shots from Fehman Hûseyin aka Dr. Bahoz Erdal, the head of HPG, talking to a group of guerrilla waiting in order arms position.</p> <p>HPG flag and a poster of Öcalan hanging above them.</p> <p>Female guerrillas walking single file</p> <p>Hawk</p> <p>Troops taking left shoulder arms position with guerrillas holding PKK and HPG flags in front of them.</p> <p>Male and female guerrillas smiling and looking at one single direction with Bahoz Erdal among them as if they were being photographed.</p> <p>A male guerrilla sitting on a rock firing his rifle.</p> <p>Explosion at night.</p> <p>Handshakes</p> <p>Various shots from an inspection of a guerrilla regiment in present arms position behind two guerrillas holding HPG and PKK flags.</p> <p>Dismissal of the regiment as guerrillas are walking single file.</p>	<p>Repeat of Section 4 (1:25 – 2:08)</p>	<p>Basic principles of the resistance movement such as commitment to the leader and cause, and allegiance and loyalty to the cause and sacrifices.</p> <p>A few images such as gunfire, explosions, and attacks in the section suggest that the success of armed resistance is determined by importance of leadership and division of labor within the structure of armed forces on the one hand, and relationships based on egalitarian concepts and friendship on the other.</p>	<p>2:43 – 3:25</p>

Continued

**Table A.1 (Continued):** The music video of the song *Vur Gerilla* in eight sections.

<i>Lyrics</i>	<i>Visual</i>	<i>Music and Sound</i>	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Time</i>
<b>Section 6 (continued)</b>				
	Shot from behind two guerrillas one of whom is talking on walkie-talkie as another is aiming, firing at the target. Explosion at the target. Guerrillas moving forward between rocks with their guns attentively as a smoke caused by gunfire or explosion appears ahead of them. Three male guerrillas one of whom is Bahoz Erdal standing and chatting cheerfully. Öcalan image with zoom in effect			
<b>Section 7 (Zirne Solo 2)</b>				
	Guerrillas whose faces covered with <i>pûşî</i> are jogging with their rifles. Guerrillas running and exercising.	Repeat of Section 5 (2:08 – 2:19)	Special forces and military drills. Trainings in military discipline.	3:25 – 3:36
<b>Section 8 (Final Refrain)</b>				
Come on youngsters Come on youngsters Gabar, Cûdî are waiting for you  Come on youngsters Come on youngsters Xakurkê, Zap are waiting for you Strike strike strike Strike guerrilla strike I sacrifice myself for you Strike strike	A group of guerrillas singing and clapping time with the music.  Guerrillas whose faces covered with <i>pûşî</i> jogging. Same guerrillas walking.  Guerrillas walking single file freely with their guns.  A large number of guerrillas gathered together in line formation with two guerrillas holding PKK and HPG flags (Flowers in the foreground). Six female guerrilla three of whom holding flowers in their hands. ‘Şewder’ with red fonts and green underline, and the name of the song ‘Vur Gerilla’ in yellow fonts appear again.	Repeat of refrain in section 4 (1:49 – 2:08).	The synchronization of lyrics with images implies that youngsters are also invited by guerrillas to participate in militia forces. Following images also show where youngsters are invited. Similar to the beginning, the video ends with an image of female guerrillas as if the fight was embraced by innocence and virtue of woman. As a symbol of fertility and purity, woman, and thus image of female guerrillas, represents hope in Kurdish people’s pursuit of justice	3:36 – 3:54
	The logo “ROJGÛN <i>mûzik yapım</i> ” (Rojgün music production)			3:54 – 4:00

**Table A.2 :** The music video of the song *Oremar* in 10 sections: Lyrics, music, narrative, and audio-visual descriptions in order of time.

<i>Lyrics</i>	<i>Visual</i>	<i>Music and Sound</i>	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Time</i>
	The written text AWAZÊ ÇIYA “Oramar” appears before an image of a rock face.	<i>Dahol</i> strokes in free rhythm	Geography, nature, and two shafts of sunlight. <i>Dahol</i> imitates the battle sounds.	0:00 – 0:03
<b>Section 1 (Opening)</b>				
	A chain of mountains seen behind various kinds of wild herbs and wheat-like plants. A male guerrilla (Guerrilla 1) with a <i>pûşî</i> wrapped around his head lifting his head as if he heard something while he is writing on a small notebook before his rifle rested against a tree that is near him. Same guerrilla’s look from the opposite angle as well as his frontal view, this time with his <i>tembûr</i> case near him. Another male guerrilla (Guerrilla 2) with a <i>pûşî</i> wrapped around his neck is looking into the distance as his rifle is similarly rested against a tree near him. Same guerrilla’s frontal view. Guerrilla 2 wearing his cartridge belt, shouldering his rifle and setting out. The Guerrilla 1 taking his rifle as he is also carrying his <i>tembûr</i> on his shoulder. Three different shots of a female guerrilla (Guerrilla 3) walking as she is carrying a guitar and a rifle on her shoulders. Two different shots of another female guerrilla (Guerrilla 4) walking with her violin and rifle on her shoulders. Guerrilla 3 and Guerrilla 4 meeting up, shaking hands, hugging each other, and walking together with holding hands. Shots of the Guerrillas 1 and 2 walking; they are hugging each other as well, and going up a hill.	<i>Zirne</i> ’s solemn improvised solo with <i>dahol</i> and gentle guitar chords.	Mountains are the location in which the story takes place. Apart from being geographical characteristics of Kurdish inhabited areas, mountains are one of the most important socio-political symbols of Kurdish resistance. Musician guerrillas finding out about the accomplished raid, and getting ready for coming together to celebrate the victory. Gun and musical instrument are equated to each other. Music, musicians, and instruments are part of the war as much as the fight, fighters, and arms. Music and fight are interchangeable with each other. Collective life, unity, and solidarity are valued as much as armed resistance per se. Guerrillas seem mostly happy, proud, and excited about coming together, a situation that is basically caused by the recent military success. Both male and female guerrillas gradually increasing in numbers show the unity and equality between two sexes within the movement. <i>Zirne</i> portrays a proud victory.	0:03 – 0:46

Continued

**Table A.2 (Continued):** The music video of the song *Oremar* in 10 sections.

<i>Lyrics</i>	<i>Visual</i>	<i>Music and Sound</i>	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Time</i>
<b>Section 2 (Instrumental Introduction 1)</b>				
	<p>Guerrillas 1 and 2 going up a hill successively. Another shot of the Guerrillas 3 and 4 walking successively.</p> <p>A male guerrilla (Guerrilla 5) walking with his rifle and cartridge wrapped around it is seen behind branches of trees; he is carrying the rifle on his shoulder as he is holding onto its barrel.</p> <p>Silhouettes of three male guerrillas walking successively; the first two are carrying rifles similarly to Guerrilla 5 as the third is carrying a mortar on his shoulder.</p> <p>A male guerrilla (Guerrilla 6) carrying brushwood.</p> <p>A female guerrilla (Guerrilla 7) tossing brushwood onto ground.</p> <p>Organized brushwood and two guerrillas, whose legs and hands are partly seen, around it. A guerrilla, whose hands can only be seen, is piling rifles as the other, whose hand and leg can only be seen is (probably) watching. Six guerrillas, two in the background and four in the foreground (three females and a male) preparing firewood. A male guerrilla (Guerrilla 8) holding a long and thick bough, over the middle of which an iron kettle is hanging below a fire.</p> <p>Another male guerrilla (Guerrilla 9) holding the other side of the bough holding the iron kettle; a female guerrilla near him.</p> <p>A male guerrilla (Guerrilla 10) tuning his <i>tembûr</i> behind the fire.</p> <p>Guerrillas holding the iron kettle from a different angle; other guerrillas around the fire are partly seen.</p> <p>Guerrilla 1 and Guerrilla 2 coming down to meet up with the guerrilla group; Guerrilla 9 in the foreground; they are shaking hands with others in the group. Guerrilla 3 and Guerrilla 4 coming down from the other side; they are also shaking hands with others already waiting.</p> <p>Guerrilla 1 and Guerrilla 10 with his <i>tembûr</i> are behind the fire; some other guerrillas seen around.</p>	<p>Background music of <i>dahol</i> with guitar (four-bar), gentle chords of which become distinctive only right before <i>zirne</i>'s solo ends, is followed by two-bar <i>tembûr</i> strokes in higher register introducing the main theme (figure 6.4). Two-bar strokes of another <i>tembûr</i> in lower register are followed by four-bar <i>zirne</i>'s solo of the main theme (figure 6.5).</p>	<p>Hard living conditions of guerrillas emphasize their braveness. Guerrillas (non-musicians) returning from the raid, which is the main subject of the song, is another representation of the intertwinement of war and music. Shots representing guerrilla solidarity have many attractions for those in civil life about the hard but happy commune life in the mountains. Guns, fire, and music are the three important symbols of the collective life and struggle of guerrillas. Guerrillas care about being whole and complete to start the celebration, which indicates an emphasis on cohesiveness. Guerrillas 1, 2, 3, and 4 are the solo singers of the song, by whom each stanza of the song is sung.</p>	0:46 – 1:14

Continued

**Table A.2 (Continued):** The music video of the song *Oremar* in 10 sections.

<i>Lyrics</i>	<i>Visual</i>	<i>Music and Sound</i>	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Time</i>
<b>Section 3 (First Stanza and Refrain)</b>				
Oremar is high, upland, and valley village	Guerrilla 1 sings the song; Guerrillas 3 and 8 are near him. Three rifles in the background. Two male guerrillas with rifles climbing up a steep heel. A low angle shot of two male guerrillas, first of which has a rifle on his shoulder, walking successively. Back view of a female guerrilla with rifle near her looking at a chain of mountains. A male guerrilla walking.	Joyful vocal music with guitar accompaniment, which is composed basically of constant repetitions of a one-bar musical phrase. Same music makes the next three stanzas of the song (figure 6.4 shows the notated version of the music).	Celebration starts with the song. The lyrics eloquently give the account of what was achieved by guerrilla as the images vividly show the discipline, self-confidence, and determination of guerrillas. Images support the story narrated by the lyrics. Various guerrilla images depict the location, military preparations, and the moment of attack.	1:14 – 1:48
There gathered up guerrillas making dance line all around	Guerrilla 1 continuing to sing; Guerrillas 3 and 8 near him. A high angle shot of all guerrillas (12 in total) who come together for singing the song.			
Comrades rising up	Half of the entire guerrilla group (4 females and 2 males) singing the song. A guerrilla firing a bazooka behind the barrel of a machine gun. <sup>180</sup>	The sound of a machine gun occurs with the accompaniment of <i>tilili</i> ( <i>lilan</i> or <i>zilgit</i> ).		
Zinar is the head of <i>govend</i> , brave and standing tall	Four different shots of guerrillas dancing in <i>govend</i> .		Correlation between dancing in <i>govend</i> and rising in rebellion.	
Şîyar is the head of <i>govend</i> , standing bravely with her black eyes.				

Continued

<sup>180</sup> This is the same shot as the one that appears in the (1:43) music video of the song *Vur Gerilla*.

**Table A.2 (Continued):** The music video of the song *Oremar* in 10 sections.

<i>Lyrics</i>	<i>Visual</i>	<i>Music and Sound</i>	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Time</i>
<b>Section 4 (Transition 1)</b>				
	<p>Two different shots of armed guerrillas walking single file.<sup>181</sup></p> <p>A male guerrilla walking with his rifle on his shoulder (holding onto the barrel).</p> <p>Back view of guerrillas walking single file.</p> <p>A high angle shot of guerrillas (some holding flags) walking single file from different directions come together.</p> <p>Left turn of a neat brigade of guerrillas formed by four lines in left shoulder arms position.</p> <p>A brigade of male guerrillas marching in left shoulder arms position. A machine strapped gun to a guerrilla's shoulder.</p> <p>A grenade fixed to a guerrilla's belt.</p> <p>A sniper rifle in a guerrilla's hand.</p> <p>A guerrilla turning an anti-aircraft.</p>	<p><i>Bilûr</i> and <i>dûdûk</i> shares the lighthearted tune by playing alternately (see figure 6.4 for notation).</p>	<p>Guerrillas in <i>govend</i> are both an aestheticized version of the unity of Kurdish armed insurrection and the celebration of martial triumphs.</p> <p>Intensive military trainings, well-organized individuals, and military equipment are the key components of victories.</p> <p>Military capacity of guerrilla forces.</p>	1:48 – 2:08

Continued

<sup>181</sup> The first of these shots also appears in the video of *Vur Gerilla* between 1:09 and 1:12.

**Table A.2 (Continued):** The music video of the song *Oremar* in 10 sections.

<i>Lyrics</i>	<i>Visual</i>	<i>Music and Sound</i>	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Time</i>
<b>Section 5 (Second Stanza and Refrain)</b>				
War and battle and festivity, clang of spears	Guerrilla 4 singing the song (rifles in the background) A guerrilla firing her machine gun.	Repeat of Section 3 with different lyrics (1:14 – 1:48)	Battle images (mostly guerrillas within various positions of attacking) continue to support the storyline from the guerrillas' point of view.	2:08 – 2:43
Sword in the hand of guerrilla is order to enemies	Back view of a group of guerrillas moving forward carefully with their guns. <sup>182</sup> Guerrilla 4 continues to sing. Two shots of other guerrillas singing together.			
Guerrilla avenged well	Machine gun being fired by two guerrillas seen from the back view. Two different shots of guerrillas continuing to sing.	The sounds of two different machine guns (high and low) replace the machine gun sound and <i>tillil</i> duet occurred in the first stanza		
Zinar is the head of <i>govend</i> , brave and standing tall			The sounds of machine guns are reminiscent of <i>tillil</i> , to strengthen the existing association between political implications of the former and cultural implications of the latter.	
Şîyar is the head of <i>govend</i> , standing bravely with her black eyes.				

Continued

<sup>182</sup> The same shot appears in the video of *Vur Gerilla* between 0:45 and 0:48.

**Table A.2 (Continued):** The music video of the song *Oremar* in 10 sections.

<i>Lyrics</i>	<i>Visual</i>	<i>Music and Sound</i>	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Time</i>
<b>Section 6 (Transition 2)</b>				
	Two different shots of performer guerrillas rhythmically accompanying the song. A male guerrilla looking through binoculars. A male guerrilla getting ready to fire his machine gun. Three male guerrillas aiming with their rifles. Three different shots of guerrillas dancing in <i>govend</i> .	<i>Tembûr</i> 's quasi improvised solo performance of the main theme to the accompaniment of <i>dahol</i> and guitar is followed by <i>zirne</i> 's solo (figure 6.5).	Images of guerrillas singing the song are counterpoised by images of guerrillas in action. Cautiousness, readiness, and seriousness of guerrillas.	2:43 – 3:03
<b>Section 7 (Third Stanza and Refrain)</b>				
Three days three nights they resisted, surrounded, did not release  Brought Turanians' order to ruin  Guerrilla avenged well  Zinar is the head of <i>govend</i> , brave and standing tall Şîyar is the head of <i>govend</i> , standing bravely with her black eyes.	Guerrilla 2 singing the song. Front view of four male guerrillas whose faces covered with <i>pûşî</i> aiming with their rifles on their knees. Exercising guerrillas such as crawling and walking on ropes, running with their guns and aiming in different styles. Guerrilla 2 continuing to sing; four female guerrillas seen next to him. High angle shot of the part of guerrillas singing. Three guerrillas singing (rifles in the background). Shots of guerrillas training. Female guerrillas dancing in <i>govend</i> with yellow-red-green kerchiefs in their hands.	Repeat of Section 3 with different lyrics (1:14 – 1:48)	Special training sessions of guerrillas. Individual capacity, ability, and endurance of guerrillas under harsh conditions, to make people feel secure. The involvement of Kurdish national and cultural identity in the fight is emphasized with <i>pûşî</i> and yellow-red-green colors.  Dancing in <i>govend</i> is both a result of hard work, and fight as a celebration and a cause to fight	3:03 – 3:37

Continued

**Table A.2 (Continued):** The music video of the song *Oremar* in 10 sections.

<i>Lyrics</i>	<i>Visual</i>	<i>Music and Sound</i>	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Time</i>
<b>Section 8 (Transition 3)</b>				
	<p>A guerrilla playing <i>bilûr</i> (only his hands seen).            Guerrilla 10 playing <i>tembûr</i> and Guerrilla 1 next to him (A few other guerrillas partly seen)            A male guerrilla playing <i>bilûr</i>.            Guerrilla 10 playing <i>tembûr</i>, Guerrilla 1 and another male guerrilla tapping out.            Cartridges wrapped around a machine gun carried by a guerrilla whose hands are only seen.            Two shots of guerrillas preparing cartridge belt of machine gun.            A male guerrilla carrying ammunition.            Three male guerrillas preparing mortar rounds.            Two male guerrillas talking next to a machine gun with cartridges wrapped around it.            A male guerrilla playing <i>bilûr</i> on a hill (mountains in the background).            Guerrillas tapping out for the song (the neck of the <i>tembûr</i> in the foreground).</p>	<p><i>Bilûr</i> and <i>tembûr</i> improvise in call and response style to the accompaniment of <i>dahol</i> and guitar. <i>Tembûr</i> is replaced by synthesized flute after the 6<sup>th</sup> bar. <i>Bilûr</i> and <i>tembûr</i> plays the main theme together as of the 9<sup>th</sup> bar and continue for another 3 bar.</p>	<p>Climax of the celebration.            Improvised music and guerrilla musicians' manner of performance indicate a relative comfort, freedom, and relief among guerrillas after severe trainings and full-scale attacks.</p> <p>Military activities are slowing down. The feeling of liberty dominates guerrilla life. Military actions are limited to simple overview of the equipment. Military images containing arms and ammunition as well as guerrillas with them constantly suggest the real ideal and effort behind this temporary relief.</p>	3:37 – 4:07

Continued

**Table A.2 (Continued):** The music video of the song *Oremar* in 10 sections.

<i>Lyrics</i>	<i>Visual</i>	<i>Music and Sound</i>	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Time</i>
<b>Section 9 (Fourth Stanza and Refrain)</b>				
<p><i>Govend</i> shouted in the mountains Kurdistan became rebellion</p> <p>They shook the fortune of the Rûm, resounded in the world.</p> <p>Guerrilla avenged well</p> <p>Zinar is the head of <i>govend</i>, brave and standing tall</p> <p>Şîyar is the head of <i>govend</i>, standing bravely with her black eyes.</p>	<p>Guerrilla 3 singing the song (rifles in the background and a male guerrilla next to her). Another high angle shot of all guerrillas coming together for singing the song (with the Ken Burns effect). Guerrillas dancing in <i>govend</i>. A crowd of civilians in a protest march (some flags and posters seen). Guerrilla 3 continues to sing (rifles in the background). Nine civilians on a roof of a small building with a large poster of Abdullah Öcalan. Another crowd of civilians in a protest march presumably in an urban area. Half of the entire guerrilla group (4 females and 2 males) singing the song (similar to the shot occurring between 1:31 and 1:36). Guerrillas shaking each others' hands in a long line. Five guerrillas walking. Guerrillas shaking hands and hugging. Guerrillas taking parade rest position with their rifles (Only their legs and rifles can be seen). Armed guerrillas walking single file. Back view of armed guerrillas walking single file. A low angle shot of guerrillas walking single file on a snowy ground (Mountains in the background). Another back view of armed guerrillas walking single file. Armed guerrillas climbing up a hill in single file. A neat brigade of guerrillas (mostly female). A group of female guerrillas in the first front of the same regiment. Various shots of guerrillas singing the song from different angles.</p>	<p>Repeat of Section 3 with different lyrics (1:14 – 1:48). Refrain is performed twice.</p>	<p>Weapons and guerrillas singing the song are frequently seen together within the same frame throughout the entire song; guerrillas in <i>govend</i>-s, as in visual combination of weapons and singing, is another way to aestheticize the violent struggle. Emotional, political, and ideological bond between Kurdish people (civilians) and Kurdish armed movement under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan. Single file marching signifies the perfect military order among guerrillas as well as trust, and friendship. The existence of female guerrillas as masses in guerrilla forces.</p>	<p>4:07 – 4:52</p>

Continued

**Table A.2 (Continued):** The music video of the song *Oremar* in 10 sections.

<i>Lyrics</i>	<i>Visual</i>	<i>Music and Sound</i>	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Time</i>
<b>Section 10 (Closing)</b>				
	Five different shots of all guerrillas coming together to sing the song are walking single file. The written texts (AWAZÊ ÇIYA “Oramar,” Amadekar <sup>183</sup> Êrîş Qoser, and Dibistana Ş. Sefkan <sup>184</sup> ) appear consecutively after the third shot.	<i>Zirne</i> ’s improvised solo to the accompaniment of guitar, <i>dahol</i> , and <i>dûdûk</i> within the character of the entire song. Music ends with fade-out.	Celebration ends and guerrillas return to their self-discipline as warriors.	4:52 – 5:19

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<sup>183</sup> *Amadekar* (Producer)

<sup>184</sup> *Dibistana Ş. Sefkan* (The School of Ş. [*Şehîd*] Sefkan), a martyred guerrilla.

APPENDIX B: Maps



Figure B.1 : Political map of the Middle East

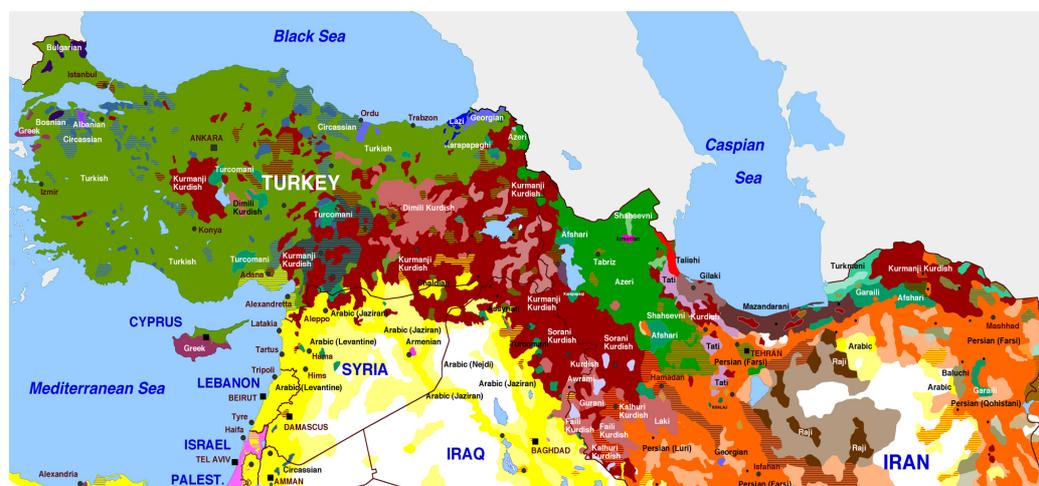


Figure B.2 : Kurdish language within the linguistic map of the Middle East (Izady, 2013)

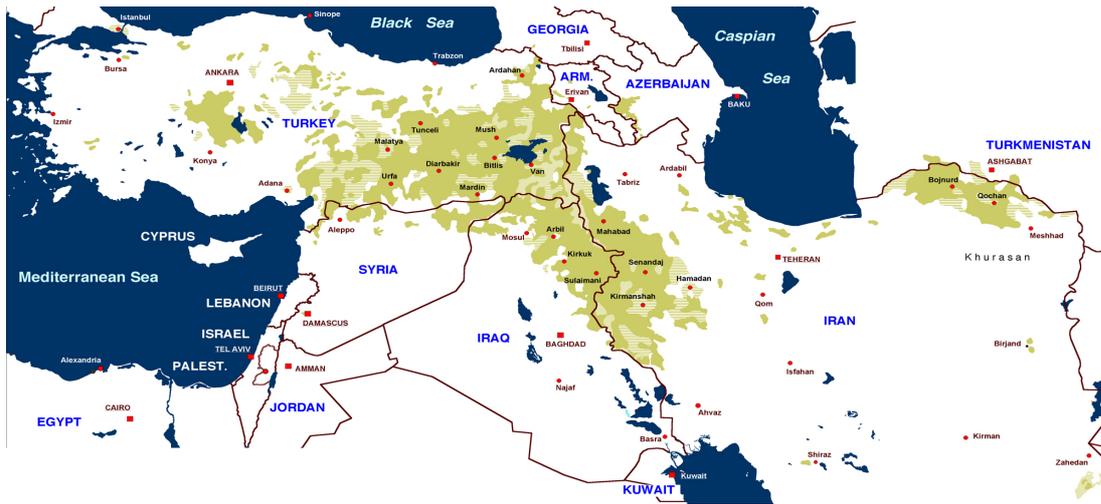


Figure B.3 : Demographic distribution of Kurds across the Middle East (Izady, 2013)

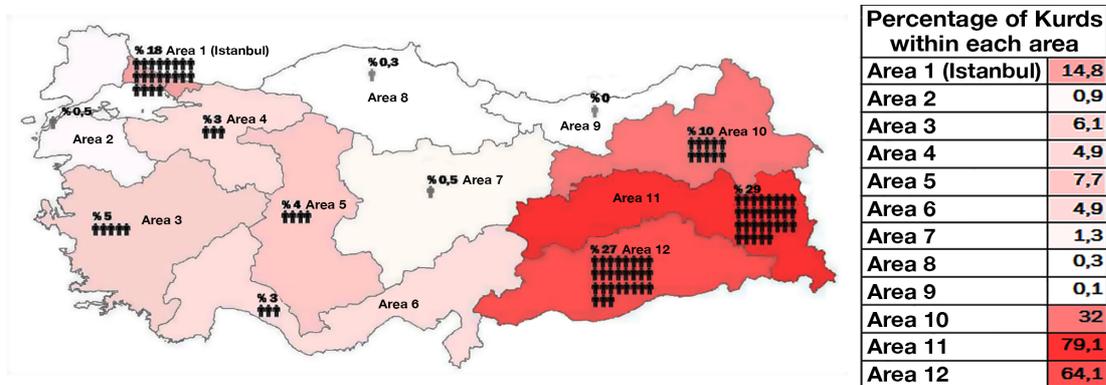


Figure B.4 : Distribution of Kurds across Turkey (Konda Araştırma ve Danışmanlık, 2011, p. 20)



Figure B.5 : Administrative provinces of Turkey. The symbol (📍) shows the provinces in which fieldwork for the current study was conducted.

## APPENDIX C: Glossary (Kottak, 2002)

**Assimilation:** The process of change that a minority group may experience when it moves to a country where another culture dominates; the minority is incorporated into the dominant culture to the point that it no longer exists as a separate cultural unit.

**Catharsis:** Intense emotional release.

**Colonialism:** The political, social, economic, and cultural domination of a territory and its people by a foreign power for an extended time.

**Communitas:** Intense community spirit, a feeling of great social solidarity, equality, and togetherness; characteristic of people experiencing liminality together.

**Cultural rights:** Doctrine that certain rights are vested not in individuals but in identifiable groups, such as religious and ethnic minorities and indigenous societies. Cultural rights include a group's ability to preserve its culture, to raise its children in the ways of its forebears, to continue its language, and not to be deprived of its economic base by the nation-state in which it is located.

**Daughter languages:** Languages developing out of the same parent language; for example, French and Spanish are daughter languages of Latin.

**Ethnic group:** Group distinguished by cultural similarities (shared among members of that group) and differences (between that group and others); ethnic group members share beliefs, values, habits, customs, and norms, and a common language, religion, history, geography, kinship, and/or race.

**Ethnicity:** Identification with, and feeling part of, an ethnic group, and exclusion from certain other groups because of this affiliation.

**Expressive culture:** The arts; people express themselves creatively in dance, music, song, painting, sculpture, pottery, cloth, storytelling, verse, prose, drama, and comedy.

**Hegemony:** As used by Antonio Gramsci, a stratified social order in which subordinates comply with domination by internalizing its values and accepting its "naturalness."

**Human Rights:** Doctrine that invokes a realm of justice and morality beyond and superior to particular countries, cultures, and religions. Human rights, usually seen as vested in individuals, would include the right to speak freely, to hold religious beliefs without persecution, and to not be enslaved, or imprisoned without charge.

**Nation:** Once a synonym for "ethnic group," designating a single culture sharing a language, religion, history, territory, ancestry, and kinship; now usually a synonym for state or nation-state.

**National culture:** Cultural experiences, beliefs, learned behavior patterns, and values shared by citizens of the same nation.

**Nationalities:** Ethnic groups that once had, or wish to have or regain, autonomous political status (their own country).

**Hidden transcript:** As used by James Scott, the critique of power by the oppressed that goes on offstage-in private-where the power holders can't see it.

**Public transcript:** As used by James Scott, the open, public interactions between dominators and oppressed-the outer shell of power relations.

**Symbol:** Something, verbal or nonverbal, that arbitrarily and by convention stands for something else, with which it has no necessary or natural connection.

**Text:** Something that is creatively “read,” interpreted, and assigned meaning by each person who receives it; includes any media-borne image, such as Carnival.

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