The Shared Political Production of 'the East' as a 'Resistant' Territory and Cultural Sphere in the Kemalist Era, 1923-1938

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1   Scholars have traditionally underlined the power of symbolic imposition by states on their citizens and dissident groups. Analyzing 'the Vendée'[1] (1793) as a symbol of the counter-revolution in France, Charles Suaud, for instance, argues that popular cultures, even the most 'rebellious,' possess a low degree of autonomy relative to the work of symbolic imposition by the state (Suaud 1997: 3-23). Though Suaud admits a degree of interaction between the symbolic production of the dissident groups and that of the state, he gives primacy to the latter. For this author, along the same line of thought as Pierre Bourdieu (1993: 571-625), the state uses various means to organize visions of society and forms of conduct that 'individuals internalize imperceptibly as a political "*unthought*" (impensée) which applies to everyone, even those who had thought they could escape it' (Suaud 1997: 4).

2   Without neglecting the state's symbolic strength, this paper suggests that in particular historical circumstances, the interaction between the state and anti-establishment actors in the symbolic field can be much more balanced than typically represented. I suggest that, following Bernard Lahire's invitation, we must historicize the validity of sociological concepts and not 'generalize the theoretical approaches interpreted in a relatively restricted context' (Lahire 1998: 249). In this sense, the Kemalist period (1923-1938), which was marked by high levels of international pressure (peace negotiations) and several internal rebellions (Kurdish revolts, the Menemen incident), is a useful case study due to the great fluidity of parallel ideological productions and the mutual interaction between the Turkish state and Kurdish nationalists in the creation of collective social representations.

3　Contrary to many classic works (Davison 1981; Lewis 1968) that analyze the Kemalist period in light of the state reforms that aimed to create 'new citizens' (İrem 2002), this article claims both that the Turkish elites interacted with society –including dissident groups– and thus were not members of an 'autonomous' entity (*i.e.*, the state), and that Turkish society was capable of articulating dissent challenging the hegemonic designs of the state. In particular, some Kurdish segments *within* and *outside* Turkey were able to challenge Turkish state authority in the international arena.

4　Concretely, the article first deals with the dynamics that limited the autonomy of the Turkish state, in particular in the 1920s. It then suggests that the Turkish regime's response to these constraints was to put in place extremely violent policies concerning the inhabitants of the Eastern provinces. In so doing, it contributed in a paradoxical and progressive manner to the creation of a specific 'territorial' and 'cultural' entity: 'the East' or 'Eastern Anatolia,' understood, beyond the geographic reality, at once as the location of actual armed resistance and the representation of a region intrinsically conservative and counter-revolutionary. Indeed, while the Kemalist regime was affirming the ethnic homogeneity of Turkey and the equal treatment of its 'Turkish citizens,' it was contributing, with these very practices, to the creation of non-physical 'borders' separating the West and the East of the country.

5　I show that at the same time, in spite of the strong ideological commitment of the Kemalist elites, Turkish authorities were obliged to take into consideration the dissenting discourses elaborated by Kurdish intellectuals who were in exile in Syria and Lebanon after the establishment of the Turkish republic. Using archival material, newspapers, pamphlets and other materials published during the 1920s and 1930s, it is possible to see that the Kurdish intellectuals who organized around the Khoybun committee (1927-1943) became "legitimate" representatives of the Kurdish opposition to the Kemalists, in part due to the relative freedom of action in the Levant under French mandate.

6　The paper thus demonstrates that dissident actors challenge the so-called 'autonomous status' of states in the international arena. Contemporary history tell us that different dissident movements have succeeded both in challenging the legitimacy of the states or regimes concerned by way of the increased diasporization of their groups, and in gaining legitimacy, both in their respective countries and internationally. The Kurdish experience in Syria and Lebanon is in that sense one of the first instances of diasporization in the twentieth century.[2]

7　Through the analysis of Kurdish pamphlets and journals I note, however, that the opposite is also true. Kurdish intellectuals lacking ideological tools such as schools or a 'national' army were often constrained in their response to Turkish state propaganda. In other words, though carrying a message concerning an 'us' –the 'Kurdish national community'– Kurdish intellectuals were not independent of state categories: the research of an ancient and golden age, the 'purity' of language, the 'homogeneity' of society, the 'civilized' *we-group* as opposed to the 'Barbarian' *other*, among others. In so doing, both groups of actors contributed, albeit with different goals, to a 'shared' political production of 'the East' as a sphere of 'resistant' culture.

8　More generally, studying the Kemalist period through the lens of the interaction between the Turkish state and the Kurdish movement provides a means to extend the 'state-in-society' framework developed by Joel S. Migdal (2001) in order to answer the question of *how* cultural, political, and religious spaces are constructed, reshaped, and

eventually politicized as an outcome of the struggle between the state and some segments of a given society for symbolic imposition. Indeed, the politicization[3] of the 'East,' which resulted from the activities and intellectual endeavors of both the Turkish state and the Kurdish elites, has had a long-term impact. As the contemporary history of Turkey has shown, the construction of the 'East' as a politicized space has persisted remarkably well both in state discourse and within Kurdish activist circles.

9   True, the Kurdish dissident movement failed to achieve Kurdish independence or political autonomy in Turkey. However, the Turkish state did not obtain a complete victory over the movement. After the Second World War, former Kurdish activists wrote memoirs, and thus projected 'a point of reference in a long "national" temporality and transmitted the "flame" to future generations' (Bozarslan 2007: 431). It is was the end of the 1960s that the works of these 'elders' allowed a new generation lacking points of reference to find a historic lineage (Bozarslan 2007: 431; Gündoğan 2005: 37-74; Watts 2007: 52-77). The young militants plunged into this 'revolutionary library' to find answers to their new questions: the myths of a rich past (Medes, Saladin), a history marked by resistance to power –be it Ottoman or Turkish– and a 'homogenous' cultural identity (Strohmeier 2003: 199-203).

10   Some elements of the 'doctrine' produced by the 'elders' were then re-used to legitimize a 'national' struggle with a strong Marxist accent. Whereas the Westernized intellectuals organized around the Khoybun committee in the 1920s and 1930s asserted that Kurds were 'civilized' and more 'modern' than Turks, the new generation claimed the contrary: Kurds lived in a 'backward' region, the 'East,' and were victims of 'traditional exploitation' (*e.g.* landowners and religious chiefs) and, particularly, of state policies. Interestingly, state discourse did not change, for Turkish officials continued to perceive the Kurdish question as a matter of regional backwardness. As they had in the 1920s and 1930s, state elites and Kurdish activists in the 1960s and 1970s contributed to a shared production of the 'East' as a particular political entity. The present article sheds light on this entity by looking at both the historical context and the dynamics that led to the politicization of the 'East' during the Kemalist era.

I. The *Relative* Autonomy of the Kemalist State

11   The creation of the modern Turkish state in the 1920s has often been described as a 'race to reform' (Dumont 1997: 155), with the abolition of the caliphate, banning of the fez, emancipation of women and the adoption of the Latin alphabet, all of which aimed to bury the Ottoman past and bring about a new Turkey. In the end –so the narrative goes– Turkey emerged victorious on the international level after having managed to replace the treaty of Sèvres (1920),[4] which was heavily constraining for Turkey, with the treaty of Lausanne (1923). In doing this, the Turkish leaders became their own masters, and masters of their national unity. Guided by an iron fist and legitimized internationally, Kemalist Turkey could, as of then, follow its unstoppable march towards 'modernity.' The true picture is somewhat more blurred.

12   First, the Sèvres treaty, and in particular the clauses relating to the creation of Armenian and Kurdish states in the oriental provinces of Anatolia, imposed political and psychological 'boundaries' to which the Kemalist leaders had to adapt. Hence, the series of treaties and international accords signed by Turkey after 1919 had important repercussions for the definition of Turkish national identity (İçduygu & Kaygusuz 2004:

26-50). Indeed, the foreign affairs of a state do not only decide the conventions and accords that delineate the 'community inside' as opposed to 'foreigners,' they also secure the boundaries of a particular national identity 'through a specific concept of "national" security which domesticates a particular identity to be secured' (İçduygu & Kaygusuz 2004: 29). The Sèvres Treaty was in this sense a decisive turning point; it buried both the Ottomanist and Pan-Turanian projects and limited the new Turkey to a territory where the Turkish and Muslim elements would dominate.

13   Nevertheless, the 'East' became the 'fortress' of the new Turkish state. As a borderline, the Eastern provinces had to be fully integrated into the state framework in order to face external threats, namely the establishment of an 'enemy' Armenian state as well as a Kurdish state 'at the orders' of foreign powers (*i.e.*, Great Britain, due to its presence in Iraq as a Mandatory power). These concerns led the Kemalists to try to 'win' the Eastern provinces of Anatolia, and at the same time it led to the emergence of a security-based vision of the 'Eastern' provinces (Yerasimos 1991: 31).

14   In this sense, the acquisition of the *vilayet* of Mosul –where Kurds formed the main 'minority' group– was essential. If Turkey succeeded in controlling former Ottoman territories where significant Kurdish populations lived, the threat of a Kurdish state would disappear. In the tense context of the Turko-British negotiations over the status of the *vilayet* of Mosul, the Turkish National Assembly tried to win the hearts of the Kurdish populations by issuing a decree providing for the creation of a local Kurdish Assembly on 7 July 1923. This Turkish initiative also sought to convince the League of Nations of the 'traditional' good relations between Turks and Kurds. Although the autonomy suggested for the provinces with Kurdish majorities was limited, the decree nevertheless called for the use of the Kurdish language (Ali 2001-2002: 37). However, once the treaty of Lausanne was signed on 24 July 1923, with sovereignty over the Eastern provinces of Anatolia thus assured, Kemalist leaders set aside all projects for Kurdish autonomy. During the diplomatic negotiations on the future of the *vilayet* of Mosul, the Turkish representatives emphasized the idea of 'sameness,' the 'shared origin' of Turks and Kurds, as a pretext to secure Turkish control over this area.

15   In spite of the weakness of the Kurdish nationalist movement in the early 1920s, the threat of Kurdish separatism began to impose itself on the minds of Turkish leaders. The revolt of Sheikh Said of Piran in 1925 (Olson 1989) further fed these fears and nurtured the view of the East as 'other,' as simultaneously 'door' and 'fortress' of the Turkish 'nation.'[5] If the Lausanne Treaty brought a certain stability to Turkey's borders, the 'Eastern' question, seen in a security perspective, was present in Turkish foreign policy throughout the 1920s and 1930s, sometimes creating diplomatic tensions with neighboring states: from Iraq under British Mandate between 1922-1925 (Edmonds 1957: 386-435) to Syria under French mandate between 1920-33 (Mizrahi 2003: 115-149; Tatchjian 2004: 307-347), including Iran during the Kurdish revolt of Ağrı-Dağ between 1927-31 (Olson 1998: 93-95; Tejel Gorgas 2007: 244-261).

16   In addition, the Kemalist regime of the 1920s and 1930s was far from capable of monopolizing the symbolic capital of legitimacy or recognition (Bourdieu 1991: 230). The national culture (Bourdieu 1994: 115), created by legal and linguistic norms and promoted by the new elites, was not shared by all citizens. If Mustafa Kemal did regulate formal political participation effectively, he was less successful in putting an end to alternative bonds (local, ethnic and religious) that engendered competitive

channels of collective action, and therefore identity, which partly escaped state control (Brockett 1998: 47).

17　Indeed, Mustafa Kemal's Turkey had to face non-violent resistance from its own 'citizens' in Kayseri, Erzurum, Maraş (1925) and Bursa (1933), and violent dissent in Rize, Elazığ-Diyarbakır (1925), Ağrı-Dağ (1927-1931), Menemen (1930), and in the region of Dersim (1936-1938).[6] In the Eastern provinces the Turkish military was forced to intervene in order to put down no less than 16 uprisings between 1923 and 1938. However, only three revolts (Sheikh Said, Ağrı-Dağ and Dersim) had explicitly Kurdish nationalist claims and were organized by Kurdist committees or individuals. More significantly, the latter three revolts obliged the Turkish state to mobilize thousands of soldiers as well as to spend a significant part of the national budget in order to stamp out the dissent emanating from the Eastern provinces of the country. Still, even these "nationalist" uprisings were interlinked with other motivations, in particular religious and tribal (Bozarslan 1988: 121-136; Bozarslan 1991: 61-80; Bruinessen 1992: 278-305; Kieser 1998: 279-316; Olson 1989; Watts 2000: 5-30).

II. Making the 'East'

18　Indeed, the Kemalist regime officially labeled these revolts 'reactionary,' 'obscurantist' and 'feudal'[7] (Bruinessen 1992: 298-299; Bruinessen 1994: 141-170; Jwaideh 2006: 203-211; Olson 1989: 124) Watts 2000: 5-30) resulting from the actions of a few tribal chiefs who were motivated by irrational forces. Turkish elites considered the opposition movements originating from the Eastern provinces illegitimate, as they were seen as representing obstacles to 'civilization' and 'progress' and thus were open to severe punishment: 'dissent was to leave; to leave was to betray' (Salamé 1994: 23).

19　The Turkish regime's reaction to the rebellion was brutal. The destruction of hundreds of villages[8] and the deportation of hundreds of Kurdish nobility towards the Western provinces of Turkey was legitimized by the press loyal to the regime, which presented Sheikh Said as a 'bandit' and his followers as 'dogs,' 'jackals' or even 'convinced valets of [British] imperialism' (Erdoğan 2001-2002: 49-56).[9] Furthermore, a campaign of 'Turkifying' the Kurdish regions was organized (Aslan 2007: 245-272). The Kurdish language was targeted from 1924 onward with a ban on Kurdish schools, associations and publications (Seal 1995: 238), and use of the terms 'Kurd' and 'Kurdistan' in scientific discourse was prohibited the same year (Akin 1998-2000: 52). In the linguistic arena, the Kurdish names of villages, mountains and towns were also 'Turkified' (Öktem 2004: 7-21; 2009). The suppression of the Kurdish language and culture became, in fact, one of the integral components of the strategy for constructing a Turkish national identity based on uniformity and indivisibility (Beşikçi 1990: 132; Vali 1998: 84; İçduygu, Yılmaz & Soyarık 1999: 194-195).

20　In 1928, the Kemalist regime established the position of General Inspectorate under the leadership of İbrahim Tali, and gave this *vali* exceptional administrative, political and military power in the Eastern provinces. In the same vein, following the Ağrı-Dağ or Ararat revolt, the regime in Ankara created two new general inspectorates as well as pro-governmental militias, and promulgated a new law (No. 2237, 5 May 1932) which provided for the deportation of parts of the Kurdish population of the Eastern vilayets to the western *vilayets* (Azizan 1934).

21   The virulence of Kemalist policies in the Eastern provinces contrasts, however, with the relatively moderate positions held by the 'dissidents' at the time. For example, after the uprising of 1925, Ankara sent a delegate to the rebel chiefs to discuss their demands. Despite state propaganda about the 'obscurantist' character of the insurgents, the demands put forth did not present any serious danger to the foundations of the young republic: general amnesty for the prisoners engaged in the uprising of 1925, the right of return to their homes, exemption from taxes of the agricultural populations, and the cancellation of the decree imposing disarmament on the Kurds who, in the case of war, would be forced to provide voluntary corps not exceeding 40 percent of the population.[10] It is worth mentioning that the nationalist committee *Azadî*, which was responsible for the organization of the Kurdish uprising, had presented moderate grievances to the Kemalist authorities before the revolt erupted, such as minority rights that already applied to Christians and the nomination of government officials of Kurdish origin in the Eastern provinces (Olson 1989: 43-45).

22   It should also be noted at the same time that within the Turkish administration, the Kemalist cadres did not all believe in the same approach for resolving the question of the 'Eastern *vilayets.*' Indeed, after having tried to 'pacify' Eastern Turkey through coercion, the Inspector General İbrahim Tali came to the conclusion, in accord with certain Kurdish deputies, that a change of attitude was needed to obtain the definite appeasement of these regions. At the end of October 1928, Tali traveled to Ankara to explain his program. He advocated putting in place a system of administrative autonomy and decentralization that was to rely on the collaboration of the Kurdish leadership. Thus, the Inspector General considered it possible to promote a purely regional military recruitment and to give the majority of public service jobs to inhabitants of the regions concerned. Finally, Tali argued for 'sensitivity' in assimilating the Kurds, levying taxes on them, and applying 'republican' laws.[11]

23   In order to justify this reversal in Ankara's policies towards the Eastern provinces, İbrahim Tali pointed out that, either way, taxes were being collected 'only with great difficulty from the centers and the countryside refused to pay them.' Moreover, conscription only fed the ranks of deserters who, incidentally, went to join the rebels in the mountains, thus increasing their technical expertise. Finally, far from growing closer to the government of Ankara, it was to neighboring countries (Iraq, Iran and Syria) that 'the Kurds of Turkey were turning and it is abroad that they asked for help.'[12] İbrahim Tali's appeals were not listened to. What is more, a robust program of 'Turkification' was adopted and, 'to help and maybe oversee the Inspector General, whose liberalism seemed excessive, General Ali Fuat Paşa, who had the full trust of Gazi and the General Staff, was named at the head of the Army Corps of Diyarbakır.'[13]

24   The collection of exceptional measures implemented against thousands of Kurds, whether or not they were directly implicated in the armed movements,[14] contributed to the delimitation of a non-physical 'border' separating the West from the East, which from then on was seen from both sides of the 'border' as a specific region portrayed as possessing a homogeneity that did not really exist. The 'East' became a territory of refuge for an intrinsically counter-revolutionary popular culture. In this respect, Kurdish identity (language, social structures, attachment to religious brotherhoods) was held forth as a symbol of otherness and politicized by the state itself.[15] In other words, following Suaud's analysis of the Vendée, the 'East' and 'its'' overlapping

'Kurdishness' began to symbolize what the Turkish elites deemed 'illegitimate on the political, economic, social and cultural levels' (Suaud 1997: 8).

25 The inhabitants of the 'East' were henceforth perceived by the Kemalist cadres and the officials on the ground through a double prism: on the one hand, Kurds were stigmatized as 'backward,' having remained on the sidelines of civilization; on the other hand, they were also seen as 'Turkish' citizens who, with a bit of help, could rejoin the path of progress (Yeğen 1996: 216-229). Thus, the Turkish Hearths[16] [*Türk Ocakları*] were given the mission, after the Sheikh Said revolt, to 'make Turkish'[17] the inhabitants of the Eastern provinces (Aslan 2008).

26 To do this, the cadres of the Hearths thought that one first had to 'know' the population; they took an interest in the Kurdish question and had works concerning the Kurds translated. Some 'researchers' went further, and wrote reports on the Kurds without digging deeper to get to know the Eastern populations. However, the Turkish officials posted to the Eastern provinces organized what Suaud, writing on the expertise of French officials sent to Vendée, calls a 'unified, stigmatized and naturalized image' (Suaud 1997: 9) of 'the Kurd.' In so doing, state elites contributed to the construction of a collective social representation of the Kurdish identity. For example, in a declaration to the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* in 1930, Othman Mazhar (Kansu) emphasized the impossibility of the government's civilizing task in the 'East' as he was convinced that it was impossible 'to destroy the black soul, that crass sensibility, that blood-thirsty instinct, among the Kurdish masses.'[18]

III. Contradictions within the State

27 Othman Mazhar's declarations suggest that despite the regime's official attachment to 'revolutionism' –in other words, the desire to pursue reforms regardless of the costs– a portion of the Turkish officials considered, at least unconsciously, the 'East' and its inhabitants as intrinsically refractory and difficult to drive towards 'civilization.' Faced with these 'insurmountable' obstacles, certain segments of the Turkish state distanced themselves from the Kemalist regime's 'modernization' program for the Eastern provinces, this 'other' territory. Put in other words, in some cases state employees and representatives in Eastern provinces 'betrayed' the ideological commitment and sought an accommodation to the prevailing [backward] social 'reality.' The Kemalist state was thus, as are most states, a site of contradiction between the two elements that shaped its *image* (of a dominant and autonomous entity) and *practices* (or the routine performance of state actors and agencies) (Migdal 2001: 16-23).

28 In this respect, the official report signed by Abeddin Özmen, the Interior Ministry's inspector posted to the Eastern provinces during the Dersim revolt (1936-1938), sheds some light on the contradictions in the state's administration between the openly expressed objectives and the means it gave itself to achieve them. Abeddin Özmen suggested that the Kurd, 'whatever the reason may be, is not used to regular government, neither the reality nor the concept.' For a Kurd, he argued, 'the most powerful person is the chief of the tribe, the village chief, the man who owns the fields in which he works and the cattle which he rears.'[19] In this brief 'ethnographic' description, we again find the elements mentioned above: the backward Kurd associated with the rural world, and the 'mountain Turk,' a neologism invented to designate the Kurds in the 1930s and linked 'naturally' to reactionary [*irtica*] chiefs

(Akin 1998/2000: 51-60; Nezan 1978: 104-105; Olson 1989: 123-125). In this way, the inspector affirms that the region he administers 'has no resemblance to other parts of the country' and that the regime should therefore energetically apply itself to finding a 'solution to the problem of assimilation.'

29   However, Abbedin Özmen 'painfully' regrets Ankara's policy towards the officials sent to the 'East.' Firstly, officials in the Western *vilayets*, 'whose removal would be necessary [due to their poor engagement and even some irregular activities], are sent to the Eastern *vilayets*.'[20] The result of this lack of rigor on behalf of the government was that the Eastern citizens did not trust the state. Secondly, for Özmen, the state was not really interested in the mission on which the agents of the state work. State officials were obliged to work in very difficult conditions in the Eastern provinces: lack of offices or official buildings; lack of housing and schools for the children of officials.[21] In the face of this 'hard situation,' some state employees showed little enthusiasm in their job. In summary, the consequence of this negligence on the part of the government in Ankara was that the 'civilizational' mission of the Kemalist project in the Eastern provinces could not be fully accomplished.

30   The concerns of this zealous Turkish official are confirmed by other data. Indeed, the geographical spread of the *Millet Mektepleri* [Schools of the Nation], which were designed to diffuse the new Latin alphabet to the Turkish population, illustrates the disinvestment of the state in the Eastern provinces with effects –such as the failure of the cultural assimilation policy in the years 1920-1930– that contradict the official Turkish government propaganda. Between 1928 and 1935, the best equipped administrative region was Marmara, which was home to 31.1 percent of the schools between 1928 and 1935 (a third of which were in the *vilayet* of Istanbul), whilst southeast Anatolia comes in last with 2.8 percent. As Birol Çaymaz and Emmanuel Szurek deduce, this imbalance draws 'the political territory of access to knowledge –a territory which marginalizes Eastern Anatolia and the Southeast, the location of the Kurdish revolts in the 1920s and the areas most reluctant to accept the imposition of the republican order' (Çaymaz and Szurek 2007: § 71).

31   This state of affairs confirms Reşat Kasaba's accounts of the single-party period. According to Kasaba, in the 1920-1930s, the Turkish state was still in the making, and although it tried to deal with all social and political challenges that emerged, its policies were not always 'coherent or consistent' (Kasaba 2000: 4). To make things more complicated, some of these challenges did not arise in Turkey itself but abroad. During the 1920s-1940s, Kurdish rights were pursued not only in Turkey but also in consulates and offices in Germany, France, Great Britain, Iran, Italy, Switzerland, the United States of America, and especially in Syria and Lebanon (Rondot 1946; 1949; Tejel Gorgas: 148-166). In spite of the limited results of this activity, the Turkish state was obliged to react to those challenges and take into consideration an alternative discourse on the 'Eastern question.'

IV. Voices of Dissent

32   Social scientists have underlined that the state is not only embodied in the 'objective' form of structures but also in the 'subjective' form of mental structures, 'schemes of perception and thought' (Bourdieu 1994: 107). As portrayed in a wide range of analyses, the state –often depicted as one monolithic entity– creates mental structures and

imposes fundamental visions, contributing to the construction of what is designated as 'national identity' through institutions such as school and the army. The state is also seen as powerful enough to construct identities in order to attain certain objectives: return national identity to the forefront, reconfigure national identity, nationalize national identity, and assimilate 'minorities' (Norman 2004: 133-135). In the end, in these analyses, we again find the idea that the state is autonomous from society and is situated in the 'center' of the system, whereas society, a passive receptor, is situated on its 'periphery' (Shils 1975).

33 In contrast to this vision, I suggest that if the state can count on a whole range of institutional tools to achieve the 'nationalization of citizens,' dissenting groups can also work to create an antagonistic social representation (Moscovici 1996), and thus begin to compete on the symbolic level as well. The fight for hegemony between the state and dissident movements (ethnic, feminist, ecologist, etc.) can be more or less equal, despite an inequity in the distribution of resources clearly favoring the former (Aslan 2008; Belge 2008; Watts 2004: 121-147). The present case demonstrates that some movements can participate in *shaping* a political space in spite of their relative 'weakness' in a particular moment.

34 After the Sheikh Said insurrection was crushed in 1925, members of Kurdish clubs based in Istanbul were forced into exile, fleeing repression by the new Turkish regime. While some of them found refuge in Iraq, others looked for the protection of France in the Levant. Some exiled Kurdish intellectuals worked to reorganize the Kurdish associations in the Lebanese town Bihamdun in 1927.[22] The result of these efforts, the Khoybun League, represented the realization of the 'unnatural marriage' between, on the one hand, a westernized intelligentsia, and on the other hand, the representatives of the Kurdish nobility: *aghas*, sheikhs and tribal chiefs.[23]

35 The Khoybun League especially invested in political propaganda[24] and political contacts, for the most part unofficial, both with state actors (Iran, France, Great Britain, Italy, USSR), and non-state actors (the Armenian movements, and Turkish opposition members[25]). In doing so, the Khoybun managed to insert itself, with the help of France, into the system of politico-military alliances, and thanks to this became an important regional actor during, for example, the revolt of Ararat.

36 At the same time, as Hamit Bozarslan emphasizes, due to the limitation of their forces, the Kurdish elites in exile were forced to be 'at the same time the political and the military leadership of the nationalist revolts and the producer of their political and ideological discourse' (Bozarslan 2001: 58). The Khoybun's propaganda was principally aimed at Kurdish refugees in Syria to dissuade them from listening to the Turkish promises of amnesty; it varied, however, as the themes put forth and the language used changed depending on the audience.

37 The early Kurdish nationalists' background was not very different from the Turkish one. Like their Turkish counterparts, the leaders of the Khoybun had been educated in modern Ottoman schools and associations in Istanbul, where they expressed their wish to lead the Kurds toward western civilization and declared the necessity of modernizing Kurdish society 'from the top-down.' However, once the Kurds failed to obtain their independence in the aftermath of the First World War, Kurdish activists were forced to adapt their political and ideological discourse to different targets.

38   This is well illustrated by a letter by Sureya Bedir Khan to Kamuran Bedir Khan and intercepted by the General Security as Sureya Bedir Khan was preparing the publication of a brochure entitled 'The Kurdish question, its origins and its causes.' He explains to his brother that 'the brochure in the Persian language will deal with the weakening of the Aryan race [...].' In order to counter this danger, there should be an 'Aryan Confederation' uniting the Kurds, Armenians and Persians, presided by Iran. However, the Arab brochure was to deal with 'our numerous services rendered to the Islamic and Arab causes.' Finally, the French brochure would deal with 'the history of our revolutions and insurrections [...] foreigners' opinions of us and the duties incumbent on civilized Europe.'[26]

39   Likewise, and despite the intellectual baggage heavily saturated with the ideals of modernization and secularization, the Khoybun didn't hesitate to use religious terminology to mobilize tribes and brotherhoods from the Eastern provinces in their call for revolution against the Turkish regime, which they depicted as endangering 'our religion and the honor of the Kurdish nation.' Thus, the Khoybun looked to the Qur'an to justify the revolution: 'God, source of glory, did he not say to us in the Qur'an: *Walk for Justice, you will find me with you*? Let us not fear the spilling of our blood for the religion, the nation and the safeguard of our honor, with the firm conviction that God is on our side.'[27] Clearly, the Kurdish nationalist movement was not operating in a vacuum. As the *Azadî* committee did during the Sheikh Said revolt, Khoybun leaders attempted to mobilize followers and exercise power in arenas in which other social forces (sheikhs, aghas and tribal chiefs) were doing the same.

V. The Interactive Shaping of Social Representations

40   The Khoybun League's discourse did not build itself autonomously. It also thought of itself as an opposition to the exterior enemies and became part of a mirror effect, in a dynamic relationship with the *other,* the Turk.

41   If at the beginning of the Turkish Republic Kemalist policies regarding the Kurdish populations caused little reaction on the part of the Kurdish elites,[28] the physical and symbolic violence[29] that followed the Sheikh Said revolt in 1925 changed things. In a complex interaction with the physical and symbolic violence of the Turkish state, Kurdish nationalists started to elaborate an equally virulent discourse: 'We repeat, the struggle will be hard, bloody; but IT WILL END ONLY WITH THE LAST BULLET AND THE LAST KURD' (Hoyboun 1928: 41).

42   While Kemalism qualified Kurdism as 'feudal' and 'reactionary,' Kurdish intellectuals affirmed that the Kurdish nation was civilized, and that it was the Turks, 'Mongols,' who belonged to the 'barbaric' nations (Bozarslan 2001: 60). In the same way, while the Kurdish periodicals of the Ottoman Empire lamented the backwardness of the Kurds, deploring in particular the plight of Kurdish women (Klein 2001: 25-51), Khoybun activists claimed that Kurdish women had more freedom than their female counterparts in the Middle East.

43   Khoybun members worked hard to paint the Turks as 'barbarians' and 'assassins of Christians,' and also to demonstrate that the Kurds under Turkish rule found themselves in the role of victim, becoming a 'martyr nation,' with statistics to prove it (Hoyboun 1928: 62-68; Chirguh 1930: 49-52). In the face of Turkish policy, the Khoybun's

discourse clearly aimed to create boundaries between 'us' (the Kurds) and 'them' (the Turks); a necessary step in any conflict before being able to construct a 'political entity.' The elaboration of boundaries between two groups is a complex process, but once they exist, they become part of the usual arsenal for political actors. While the boundary is 'activated,' it constitutes, 'coupled with the relations that are attached to it, a social identity' (Tilly & Tarrow 2008: 138).

44   Nevertheless, if these Kurdish intellectuals were responding to a certain extent to the civilizational syntax elaborated by the Turkish elite in the 1930s, 'Turkishness' was also constructed in relation to the 'others' by state elites. In other words, the image of the 'backward' Kurd helped to construct Turkish identity as the 'new Turk,' civilized and modern. The opposition between Turkish and Kurdish nationalism compelled both elites to continually adapt their discourse in contrast to their 'enemy.' Hence, a kind of mimicry, in a double sense, was established between the 'dominant' (the Turkish state) and the 'oppressed' (the Kurdish dissent movement).

VI. The Struggle for Discursive Legitimacy

45   Anatolian people's resistance to state policies, along with the cultural diversity of Turkey and the dissenting voices of the Kurdish nationalists, drove Turkish elites to look for a 'scientific' legitimacy for their project of homogenizing and civilizing the nation. Like their European and Eastern counterparts, Turkish ideologues turned in particular to the past to nourish the new state discourse. The 'reform' of history in Turkey began in 1930 with the publication of *The General Themes of Turkish History*, a work that looks in particular at prehistory and ancient history, and was aimed at school children. In 1931, the History Commission was replaced by the Committee for the Study on Turkish History, controlled by Mustafa Kemal's followers, who organized the first Congress on Turkish History in Ankara in July 1932. The aim of the congress was indeed to legitimize the new thesis on the 'Turkish' origin of all civilizations, and therefore, all languages and peoples, including the Kurds. In order to support the Kemalist ideologues' claims with 'scientific proof,' the historical theses were accompanied by linguistic arguments between 1932-35. These arguments later became part of the 'Sun-Language Theory' (1936) which reaffirmed the claims of the new Turkish history: the Turkish origin of all languages and all civilizations in the world (Aytürk 2004: 1-25). The 'Sun-Language Theory' did not gain the sympathy of all Turkish scholars. However, the real criticism arose not in Turkey, but in Syria, where the Khoybun's members pursued their 'international advocacy.'

46   While part of the nationalist propaganda of the Khoybun League addressed the Kurds in Syria and Turkey, the larger effort was directed towards the *superrecipient* (Copeaux 1997: 34): the potential political and military allies –Great Britain, France, Iran and to a lesser extent the Arabs– and the political *enemy* par excellence, Kemalist Turkey. The intellectual work of Khoybun, however, changed from the early 1930s onward for two reasons. First, the failure of the Ağrı-Dağ revolt (1927-1931) demonstrated the uselessness of sporadic revolts against Turkey without the support of either Great Britain or France. Second, the Kemalist projects for the reform of Turkish history and language posed new challenges for Kurdish identity, whose very existence in Turkey was denied.

47   These two factors drove the Bedir Khan brothers to change their strategy, abandoning the 'sword' for the 'pen.' The leaders of the Khoybun, in particular the two Bedir Khan brothers Celadet and Kamuran, argued that there was an urgent need to consolidate the feeling of belongingness in the Kurdish community, by restoring the Kurdish language, developing teaching in Kurdish, and ensuring the rebirth of popular literature. Supported by French officers, the Bedir Khan brothers invested in the publication of cultural journals[30] in order to create 'real Kurds' who knew their language and past (Tejel Gorgas 2007: 267-307). This strategic reversal of the Kurdish ideologues also brought about a change in the tone and objectives of the brochures elaborated after the defeat of the Ağrı-Dağ revolt. The warrior discourse developed between 1928 and 1931 by the Khoybun was replaced by 'scientific' arguments looking to refute the 'scientific' theses produced by the government in Ankara and the projects of cultural assimilation regarding the Kurds. Hence, the Kurdish intellectuals worked to 'prove' the existence of Kurds as a specific ethno-linguistic group, and to present the Kurdish inhabitants of the 'East' as a culturally homogenous region.

48   The best example of a response to Kemalist arguments on Turkish history and language is a 1933 document of some fifty pages by Celadet Bedir Khan entitled 'Open letter to Mustafa Kemal, President of the Republic of Turkey.' The document is presented as a warning to Kurds who accept the offer of amnesty by the Turkish government in 1932, but in fact the largest part of the text is dedicated to refuting the Kemalist theses on the Kurdish language. Celadet Bedir Khan states that the Kurdish language is not a dialect of Turkish, and compares grammars in order to demonstrate that Kurdish is indeed an Indo-European language. Bedir Khan even goes so far as to try to demonstrate the proximity between German and Kurdish to affirm the 'superiority' of the latter in comparison with Turkish (Bedir Khan 1973: 32-41).

49   But Kurdish intellectuals did not just invest in the linguistic debate with the purpose of claiming Kurdish uniqueness; they also became 'explorers of the imaginary' in order to provide to the Kurdish 'nation' myths and symbols that would allow it, on the one hand, to resemble other nations in the world, and on the other hand, to create internal cohesion. Among the founding myths, we can highlight those of Newroz (Kurdish new year, which corresponds to the beginning of Spring, 21 March),[31] the 'national' character of the story *Mem û Zîn* written by Ahmedê Khanî in the 17th Century (Bruinessen 2003: 40-57), and the drawing of historical lines between the Kurds and their 'ancestors' the Medes, founders of an empire in the West of present-day Iran.

VII. Dealing with Dissenting Voices

50   The amnesty offered by the Turkish government to the Kurdish dissidents in 1932 came as surprise. Hamit Bozarslan (2006: 123) highlights the apparent paradox that the openings came at a time when the Kemalist regime seemed to be consolidating its position following the long period of turbulence that began with the effects of the world economic crisis in 1929 and the demonstrations in favor of the outlawed Liberal Party, continuing with the 'incident' of Menemen in 1930 and the final phase of the Kurdish revolt around Ağrı-Dağ between 1930-31 (Nouri Pacha 1986).

51   But can we consider the amnesty of 1932 a real opening towards the Kurdish nationalist movement? The violent repression of the last holdouts of the Kurdish rebels around the region of Ağrı-Dağ in 1932, the deportation law of May 1932 which particularly affected

the population of Eastern Turkey, and the nationalist theses defended during the first history congress that same year do not make it seem like the Kemalist regime was seriously interested in changing its policy towards the 'East.' Rather, the Turkish representatives' overtures towards Kurdish elites between 1932 and 1935 can be understood as Ankara's desire to quiet or co-opt dissenting voices that had made themselves heard abroad, preventing the consolidation of the Turkish nationalist claims as a hegemonic ideology as much with the *recipients* as with *superrecipients*: embassies, consulates, and Orientalist libraries.[32] In this sense, Ankara's new policy was quite successful.

52   Born in Maden, şükrü Mehmed Sekban (1881-1960) taught medicine in Istanbul and joined the association *Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti*. In the Ottoman capital, Sekban became a brilliant orator and was appreciated by the young Kurdish students there (Silopi 1991: 34). With the arrival of the Turkish Republic, he took refuge in Iraq and became the representative of the Khoybun in Baghdad. In a radical reversal, Sekban later left Iraq and published a piece in which he criticized his former companions and attacked the basis of the Kurdish nationalist doctrine. In it, Sekban disputes the Aryan origins of the Kurds, stating that Turks and Kurds are of the 'same race,' the 'Turanian' family (Sekban 1933: 27, 36), and invites the Kurds to follow the path Mustafa Kemal traced for them in order to find 'peace of mind and material prosperity' (Sekban 1933: 38). Shortly after the publication of his work 'The Kurdish Question' (1933), Ankara gave him an amnesty.

53   Another case of the Kemalist regime co-opting members of the Kurdish opposition was that of Massoud Fany. Originally from Sulaymaniya, Massoud Fany was an Ottoman official in the province of Adana. Anti-Kemalist until the end of the 1920s, he found protection in Syria, where he applied for a government grant to study in France. In spite of his links with the Kurdish movement in Syria,[33] he wrote a doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne in 1933 where he used arguments similar to those put forward by Mehmed Sekban the same year. Whilst reaffirming several times that the origins of the Kurds were not clear, Fany came to the conclusion that the Kurds were Turanian like the Turks (Fany 1933: 91). The author also showed himself to be heavily critical of the Kurdish movement, who were, according to Fany, controlled by the British, and dedicated the last chapter of his thesis to openly attacking the Khoybun League. Like Sekban, Massoud Fany received an amnesty and returned to Turkey.

54   The two motors of the Kurdish nationalist movement in the Levant, Celadet and Kamuran Bedir Khan, were also contacted by Turkish representatives. In 1932, the Turkish Consul in Beirut met Kamuran Bedir Khan in private in a 'friend's house,' after six 'urgent invitations.'[34] Despite the failed first attempt, Turkish officials remained particularly interested in the intellectual work of the Bedir Khan brothers and tried to contact them again several times in order to neutralize their symbolic dissent.[35]

55   Thus, through the intermediary of the Turkish consul in Beirut, şükri Bey –head of General Security in Ankara and president of the Turkish delegation on the Permanent mission of borders based in Damascus– met Celadet Bedir Khan in 1935. Significantly, during their confidential meeting at the General Consulate of Turkey, şükrü Mehmed Sekban's and Massoud Fany's theses were among the central themes of the discussion. After şükri Bey lauded the works of şükrü Mehmed Sekban, Celadet curtly responded: 'If you are counting on these people you are going down the wrong road; furthermore, if you really thought they were useful and disinterested, you would be speaking to

them and not to me.'[36] Despite the various impasses in a rather tense discussion, numerous propositions for a return to Turkey were apparently made to Celadet Bedir Khan.

56   After this meeting, amnesty offers by the Turkish representatives to the Bedir Khan brothers stopped, probably for two reasons. First, thanks to the violent suppression of the Dersim revolt (1936-1938), Turkey was not confronted with an organized movement of dissent in the Eastern *vilayets* until the 1960s and 1970s (Gündoğan 2005; Watts 2007: 52-77). Secondly, the journal *Hawar* ceased publication between 1935 and 1941 due to financial reasons. Kurdish intellectuals' *polemical* interpretations (Licata, Klein & Van der Linden 2006: 56-57) of the language and history of the Eastern *vilayets* thus ceased to impair the hegemonic paradigm of the Kemalist elites.

Conclusions

57   While traditional accounts on Atatürk's Turkey approach the state as a powerful and centralized apparatus, this article suggests, on the contrary, that Turkey was still a state in the making and lacked a consistent policy in the face of the multiple social and political challenges that emerged in the 1920 and 1930s. While the Kemalist regime presented itself as highly ideological and committed to 'revolutionism,' the reality was more complex.

58   First, the international conjuncture of the interwar years led Turkish authorities to seek accommodation between their principles and the diplomatic necessity of accepting the 'loss' of the Turanian territories. Second, if the state elites aspired to cultural hegemony through nationalizing the bodies and perceptions of the 'Turkish' populations, this goal was jeopardized both by the everyday practices of the state apparatus and by the construction, albeit unconscious, of 'areas of dissidence,' namely the 'East,' by the regime itself. In other words, whilst Kemalist ideologists considered the Kurds as ethnic Turks and the East as a part of the motherland, they also viewed the Eastern populations as anomalous and naturally resistant to modernity and civilization. In so doing, they played a decisive role in the formation of a distinct cultural sphere that overlapped imperfectly with a geographical space.

59   Thirdly, not only did the Turkish state have to face different styles of everyday resistance (survival of religious brotherhoods and tribal bonds, armed revolts, and use of Kurdish language) within its borders; it also had to face challenges from places such as Syria and Lebanon, where some Kurdish intellectuals had found protection. Thus, the advantages of the contemporary transnational activism that offers ethnic groups and diasporas important opportunities to become actors in the international arena are not a completely new phenomenon. The French Mandate in the Levant allowed Kurdish activists to maintain relations with their 'home': Kemalist authorities and Kurdish communities in Turkey. The Kurdish movement in Syria succeeded in creating a transnational web of relations with different actors, including foreign governments, opposition groups, missionaries, journalists and Western scholars. In so doing, Kurdish activists in Syria challenged not only Turkish state authority but also its legitimacy.

60   Kurdish discourse was, nonetheless, not built autonomously. It developed in opposition to the *other*, the Turk, and became part of a mirror effect, in a dynamic relationship where both sides contributed, albeit with different goals, to a shared political production of 'the East' as a unique social and cultural sphere. All in all, the study of the

Kemalist period through the lens of the 'state-society' approach advanced by scholars like Joel Migdal (2001), Timothy Mitchell (1991: 77-96) or Tamir Moustafa (2000: 3-22) proves to be extremely useful in accounting for the dynamic shaping and inter-shaping of different social and political actors on the one hand, and the question of how spaces become politicized as the result of the struggle of those actors, on the other.

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NOTES

1. Between 1793-1796, the region of Vendée in Western France saw the emergence of several counter-revolutionary movements in which 'conservative' elements (catholic church representatives and local nobility) played an important part. The cause was the decision of the Convention of 23 February 1793 to conscript 300,000 men.

2. For a similar argument, but applied to Kurdish activism in Western countries since the 1980s, see Watts 2004: 121-147.

3. Politicization is understood here as the social production of politics, of its stakes, rules, and representations (Lagroye 2003).

4. The Treaty of Sèvres provided for, *inter alia*, the creation of an Armenian State in what is now north-east Turkey, as well as the establishment of a Kurdish state in the south-east of Turkey, which could later join the former *vilayet* [province] of Mosul in northern Iraq. The treaty also imposed the loss of Ottoman sovereignty over the Straits.

5. Preface by the President of the Turkish Republic, Cemal Gürsel, to the work of M. Şerif Firat, *Doğu Illeri ve Varto Tarihi* (1961). Quoted by Bozarslan 1988: 124.

6. For an analysis of collective public protests during the Kemalist period, in particular those with religious characteristics, see Brockett 1998: 44-65.

7. Terms used by Ali Fuat Cebesoy in his political memoires, *Siyasi Hatıralar* (1952). Quoted by Bozarslan 1988: 124.

8. The very official Turkish newspaper, *Milliyet*, in 1930 reported that '200 villages around Ercish have been destroyed. Particularly in Pantos, no village remains.' *Milliyet*, 16 July 1930.

9. For an analysis of the process of 'animalization' of certain groups or individuals in order to legitimize physical violence, see Burgat 1999: 49-62.

10. *CADN, Fonds Ankara,* n° 92. Consulate of France (Tauris) to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Paris). Tauris, 28 May 1926.

11. *CADN, Fonds Beyrouth,* n° 1055. Consulate of France (Adana) to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Paris). Adana, 30 June 1930.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. An 'unhappy Kurdish chief' apparently told the French authorities: 'If the government had only punished those guilty after the Sheikh Said affair, the Kurds would have submitted, but the men in Ankara massacred innocent people; it's now a fight to the death between them and us.' *CADN, Fonds Beyrouth, Cabinet Politique,* n° 1054. Information n° 881/51. Beirut, 6 October 1927.

15. For a similar argument, see the study of the Palestinian case in Israel (Kemp 2004: 73-98).

16. Students from the Military Medical School and Civil Service School, as well as some intellectuals, established the first Turkish Hearths in 1912. Their aim was to advance the cultural, educational and economical level of Turks and to strengthen their Turkish 'common identity'. During the Kemalist period, a great number of branches were opened in Turkey and abroad where lectures and courses about Turkish nationalism were organized (Üstel 1997).

17. PRO, FO 371/14579/E2678/44. Travel notes taken by W.S. Edmonds to A. Henderson, Istanbul, 21 May 1930.

18. Cited by Bozarslan 2006:125.

19. *PRO, FO 371/34977/E3090/65.* Report annexed to the call of the National Khoybun League to his Excellency Churchill, President of the Council of Ministers of his British Majesty. Damascus, 12 March 1943.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Among the participants to this congress were: Celadet Bedir Khan, Kamuran Bedir Khan, Memduh Selim, Mustafa Şahin of Barazi, Fehmi Licî, Sheikh Mehdi (the brother of Sheikh Said), Karim Suleymani, Emin Agha of Raman, Haco Agha of Heverkan and Khurşid bey (Soran 1992: 18).

23. For analyses of Kurdish nationalism in the late Ottoman era, see Janet Klein (2002) and Hakan Özoğlu (2004).

24. In addition to written propaganda (pamphlets, posters, etc.) in several languages, the members of the Khoybun used techniques such as short propaganda films and records with songs calling for anti-Kemalist revolution. *CADN, Fonds Beyrouth, Cabinet Politique*, n° 1055. General Security. Beirut, 12 April 1930; *CADN, Fonds Beyrouth, Cabinet Politique*, n° 571. General Security. Beirut, 25 November 1936; respectively.

25. The Committee of the Holy Revolution, which aimed to restore the caliphate in Turkey, and the Armenian party Tashnak, created links to the Khoybun committee between 1927-1928. The former minister of the interior Muhammad Ali Bey declared himself in favor of giving autonomy to the Kurds and the Armenians in the framework of a confederation reuniting the three people. However, the alliance between the three groups failed. *CADN, Fonds Beyrouth, Cabinet Politique*, n° 1055. Letter by Muhammad Ali Bey to Radi Azmi Bey. Paris, 11 February 1928.

26. *CADN, Fonds Beyrouth, Cabinet Politique*, n° 1055. General Security. Information n° 1985. Beirut, 22 August 1930.

27. *CADN, Fonds Beyrouth, Cabinet Politique*, n° 1055. Pamphlet from the Khoybun committee (16 June 1932). Civil service. Aleppo, 23 May 1933.

28. An exception is şükrü Mehmed Sekban, a member of the Kurdish Committee of Istanbul, exiled in Iraq until the end of the 1920s, as evidenced by a letter titled 'What do the Kurds want from the Turks?' (*Kürdler Türkler'den ne istiyorlar*), which sent to the (ethnic Kurdish) minister Fevzi Pirinççizade of Diyarbakır in 1923. See the letter edited by Bayrak 1994: 26-39.

29. Mahmut Esat Bozkurt, Justice Minister in 1930, asserted that 'Turks are the only masters and owners of this country. Those who are not of pure Turkish stock have only one right in this country, the right to be servants and slaves.' *Milliyet*, 19 September 1930.

30. Between 1932 and 1946, Celadet and Kamuran Bedir Khan edited two bilingual French-Kurdish revues (*Hawar*, 1932-1943, and *Roja Nû*, 1943-1946) each with a supplement in Kurdish (*Ronahî*, 1942-1945, and *Stêr*, 1944-1945, respectively). The two brothers also wrote 17 workbooks on topics such as the Kurdish alphabet and religious lessons in Kurdish.

31. Created by the *Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti* at the end of the 1910s, the Khoybun renewed this myth of Persian origin, especially during the 1930s.

32. See the members' list of *Hawar* in 1933 in *CADN, Fonds Beyrouth, Cabinet Politique*, 1055. Note on *Hawar*. Damascus, 4 April 1933.

33. It's worth noting that even during his scholarship in France, he continued to receive the Kurdish journal *Hawar*, edited by Celadet Bedir Khan. Ibid.

34. *IKP, FONDS RONDOT*, Meeting between the Turkish Consul and Kamuran Bedir Khan. Beirut, 8 December 1932.

35. Giving in a second time to the requests by the Consul of Turkey, Kamuran Bedir Khan accepted to meet this official again on 5 January 1933. After this meeting, the 'Turks spread the news in the eastern provinces that' the Bedir Khan Brothers had rallied to Turkey and would be returning to the country. *CADN, Fonds Beyrouth, Cabinet Politique*. General Security. Beirut, 18 January 1933.

36. *IKP, FONDS RONDOT*, Conversation between Celadet Bedir Khan and the Turks. Damascus, 3 July 1935.

ABSTRACTS

While traditional accounts of Atatürk's Turkey approach the state as a powerful and centralized apparatus, this article suggests, on the contrary, that Turkey was still a state in the making and lacked a consistent policy in the face of the multiple social and political challenges that emerged in the 1920 and 1930s. Concretely, the article suggests that the Turkish regime's response to contestation was to put in place extremely violent policies concerning the inhabitants of the Eastern provinces, in particular. In so doing, it paradoxically contributed to the creation of a specific 'territorial' and 'cultural' entity: 'the East.' It also argues that despite Kemalist elites' strong ideological commitment, Turkish authorities were obliged to take into consideration the dissenting discourses elaborated by Kurdish intellectuals who claimed the existence of a Kurdish region in Eastern Anatolia. In that respect, and based on a historical approach, the article analyzes the Kemalist period through the lens of the interaction between the Turkish state and the Kurdish movement in order show *how* cultural, political, and religious spaces are constructed, reshaped, and eventually politicized as an outcome of the struggle between the state and some segments of a given society.

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