Death as Victory, Victory as Death

Violence, Martyrdom, and the Cosmology of Revolution in the Kurdish
Freedom Movement

Axel Rudi

Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)
University of Bergen, Norway
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Abstract

The central investigation of the thesis concerns the nature of revolution in the Kurdish freedom movement, i.e. the social movement affiliated with the guerilla organization, the PKK. The main argument forwarded is that revolution in the Kurdish movement should be understood as intimately connected with and defined by martyrdom. The thesis argues that martyrdom not only informs participants in the movement about what counts as revolutionary practice and discourse, but also that the martyrs structure the very hierarchies and social order of the movement itself, both in present reality and in its utopian project. Shortly summarized, the thesis sets out to prove that revolution and martyrdom are two sides of the same coin in Kurdish freedom movement. The thesis makes its argument in nine chapters, and builds on 21 months of fieldwork in Iraq, Turkey, and Germany from 2015 to 2017.

The first chapter summarizes the main argument of the thesis, and argues for the importance of examining the Kurdish freedom movement on its own terms, taking its 'otherness' seriously. It argues against placing the Kurdish movement in matrices for measurement that are already pre-defined prior to the investigation. The chapter claims that pre-ordained frameworks for analysis not only over-write what the people in the movement say and do, but also that the perspectives might actually do harm to the movement it has set out to study; by already having a definition of revolution ready before the movement is examined, it precludes an attentiveness to 'the new' that the movement strives to achieve. Moreover, the chapter argues, such pre-defined notions also preclude an attentiveness to the emic categories in the movement that make up its cosmology, which the thesis sees as the locus for how the movement is driven forward.

In chapter 2, the thesis explores how revolutions may be conceptualized analytically, and how one may figure out *where* a revolution may be said to take place. The thesis contends that contrary to certain perspectives on multi-sited fieldwork, it would be fortuitous to consider revolution as an open-ended and mutable logic, which is located both everywhere and nowhere, emerging rather than available. Such a perspective, the

thesis contends, opens up for examining revolution ethnographically, since it encourages attentiveness to practices (or modalities of practices) as they unfold in time, and may also draw attention away from *place* towards *time* as the prime mover in conceptualizing a field.

From this methodological consideration, chapter 3 concerns the conditions for the Kurdish movement's 'otherness.' The chapter charts a history of the state's logic of violence in Turkey, and explores what ramifications this has had for different Kurdish movements (particularly, the PKK). Despite various economic reforms and governmental changes, the chapter argues that the Turkish state's relationship to the Kurdish population has been characterized by an *eradicative logic*, originating with the Şêx Saîd rebellion of 1925. The chapter shows that although the technologies and organization of violence has changed, the logic by which it has been exerted cannot be said to derive from any particular economic configuration, but rather from the state's particular identitarian constitution.

In chapter 4, the historical perspective is continued, but considers the formation of the PKK specifically. The chapter shows how the history of the PKK's formation is intimately linked not only with the Turkish left, but also with a particular configuration of martyrdom. In the PKK's period of party formation, the chapter argues that the martyrs were central figures for creating an 'inversionary logic of violence,' namely a means of turning relationships of violent exchange into interactions generative of a cosmological alterity. The revolutionary project of the PKK and its incipient cosmology must be seen as departing from and being built upon a commitment to the martyrs, the chapter argues, which has previously been partially under-examined.

Chapter 5 considers what utopian order the martyrs structure, as exemplified and embodied in the cemetery of the PKK's high-seat, the Qandil mountains. Through examining the structure of the cemetery as well as its context, the chapter argues that three types of martyrdoms may be distinguished, which all serve different purposes in assisting PKK affiliates in relating to the world. The chapter shows how the martyrs

generate a complex set of sacrificial gift and debt relations both to each other and to the venerating PKK affiliates, which it argues impels speech and action in the world, in the places where the logic is actualized.

Chapter 6 goes on to examine the order of the martyrs as a mediator in social life. It charts the places where the 'mythical' world of the martyrs becomes mapped onto the everyday and how; where the revolutionary cosmology is brought to bear on the lived structures and lives of people. Taking the revolutionary PKK refugee camp 'Maxmur' in Iraqi Kurdistan as a point of departure, researched in 2016, the chapter illustrates how the martyrs intercede and govern aspects of private and public life. The chapter contends that the people become 'martyrial' in their practices and outlook, and that measuring and enacting 'martyrdom' becomes the measure of hierarchy, and the foundation for Abdullah Öcalan's utopian 'new life.'

Chapter 7 concerns itself with the role of the martyrs in producing and reproducing revolutionary time, as exemplified in the Newroz festival in the Qandil mountains and Maxmur in 2017. Considering the festival's ritual and historical properties, the chapter forwards the argument that the martyrs are central to (re)creating the new time of the revolution as well as the new time of the Kurds. It argues that the martyrs are the instigators and perpetuators of a revolutionary time where movement is premised upon a cycle of self-abnegating sacrifice.

Chapter 8 provides an ethnographic description of the anatomy of the Kurdish movement as it existed and worked in Wan, Turkish Kurdistan, in 2015. Under conditions of violent repression, the chapter shows, the effects that the martyrs had on people were more ambiguous and subject to contention. Although people felt committed to the martyrs, the chapter contends, they were left in a state of aporia where, on the one hand, they negotiated personal safety and risk-taking, and on other, they felt committed to not 'shame' the martyrs.

Chapter 9 examines what the limits of this martyrial system are. In the diasporic PKK-affiliated community in Berlin in 2016, the chapter contends that maintaining the

efficacy and meaning of the martyrs became a difficult task for the PKK-affiliated leadership. As young refugees from Kurdistan with PKK affiliations attempted to create a life in Germany, the chapter shows that what the martyrs were understood as a testifying to, and how efficacious they were in directing action, became gradually diluted. As the martyrs were both territorial and de-territorial figures, the chapter contends they were re-shaped to such a degree that they transcended the PKK's ideological frame for them, and in some cases, transcended the very frame of martyrdom itself.

The purchase of the thesis is threefold. Firstly, the thesis is an ethnographic study of revolution, which is arguably a novel anthropological challenge in itself. Secondly, the thesis engages with other social movement literature in a way so as to encourage an attentiveness to the cosmology of revolution. Thirdly, the thesis seeks to supplement both a popular and academic discourse on the nature and the people of the Kurdish struggle, by adding a comparative, multi-sited perspective.

Preface: The Co-Sovereignty of the Martyrs

The guiding idea of this thesis has come to me gradually. When taking a step back and thinking about what it was that had characterized my stay in the movement, it seemed to me that the role of the martyrs was an indisputable focal point. It was not until I arrived back in Bergen in early 2017, I think, that it became clear to me that the central question was this: How does death guide life in the Kurdish movement? While in 'the thick' of it, it was hard for this idea to take on a full form, since so much of life was seemingly lived beyond these influences. Nonetheless, the way in which life *was* lived, at home, at neighbors,' at work and in public, was so often, and indeed so closely, connected with those who had died too early or those who had circled around death's precipice. Although I was primarily interested in revolution, I increasingly felt that to think of the martyrial dead as only memory, only as trauma, or only as coping, became more and more difficult, and indeed, more and more disrespectful. The dead, I felt, needed to be taken seriously.

For, the martyrs were, as I saw it, a force of their own. As both dead and alive, they were both absent and present. They were strong, yet soft; inspiring, yet sorrowful; distant, yet close; public, yet private; revolutionary, yet familiar – but through and through, necessary. They were, as I saw it, at the heart of the revolution.

Nonetheless, I highly doubt that thinking about the Kurdish movement as being constituted and driven by its relationship with the martyrial dead would be accepted at face value by many of the comrades in the region, and likewise, that it would not be accepted at face value by academics who would happen to read only the title. Both sides would perhaps like to emphasize other aspects of the struggle as its focal point; the gender liberation, the ecological ideology, or the direct-democratic mode of governance – pushing sacrifice to the side. But, as the anthropological task is to interrogate the innate perceptions people have about themselves and others, as well as one's own presuppositions, I hope that this thesis does that task justice, and shows the centrality of martyrdom in the revolution's dynamics.

My claim is at one level not *that* controversial. It could be argued that the dead are always a part of the legitimacy and constitution of any given social order. For a state to be sovereign, for instance, and thereby adduce a national ethos, it needs to claim its *ursprung* from some primordial sacrifice, be that the people, the soldiers, a king, a god, etc. As Bruce Kapferer has documented, the dead and how death is imagined is integral to the constitution of the social order in not only Sri Lanka, but also in more 'modern,' 'secular' social orders, such as Australia (Kapferer, 2012). Indeed, the same centrality of the martyrial dead could arguably be seen in *Arc de Triomphe* in Paris, as a memorial of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. But what all of these cosmologies of and for governing share, at least at the level of the state, is that the dead are considered to be immobile, fixed figures, which to a large degree do not intervene in popular social life. As opposed to Kurdistan, these political figures can hardly be imagined as integral to labor, valuation, personhood, marriage, and the democratic process.

Upon my return to Bergen, in other words, it gradually dawned on me the depth of what people have told me throughout my fieldwork. "Without the martyrs, we would be nothing." "Everything we have, we owe to the martyrs." "The martyrs light our path." "The PKK is the Party of martyrs." For me, this emerging insight meddled with what I had planned to research when I departed. If the martyrs live on and become parts of peoples' lives, both at home and in public, institutionally and informally, personally and socially, what happens, then, to the Kurdish revolution? What becomes of a revolution in places where the dead are not confined to monuments testifying to the myth of state formation or the coming into being of a social order, but are central to the very production and reproduction a given form of life? Eventually it seemed to me that revolution was characterized by a situation where life and death itself was trapped in liminality. A time and place where the living and the dead were co-sovereigns together.

Acknowledgements

Unfortunately, the people who I would like to thank the most are the very people who I cannot name. I am saddened that their contributions must remain unacknowledged, as I fear that naming them might result in harm. Insofar as thanks may be given, I would like to say that the generosity I was extended in Amed, in Wan and in Culemerg, rivals no other. From the assistance in procuring visas, to the endless amounts of tea, honest conversations, food and lodging, generous trust, and the warmth and concern, I have truly not encountered more hospitable and more respectable people. I am very happy that I was permitted to enter your lives, and I sincerely hope you know who you are.

There are of course many others, others who can and must be mentioned by name. First and foremost, I would like to thank Bruce Kapferer for the opportunity to participate in his ERC-project "Egalitarianism: Forms, Processes, Comparisons" in the first place, and the ever-critical, ever-insightful feedback that he provided, and indeed insistence upon anthropology as an ever-critical (dare I say revolutionary?) endeavor in itself. In addition to Bruce Kapferer, my two other advisors, Bjørn Enge Bertelsen and Knut Rio, have been invaluable in providing me with excellent comments and critique, and have gone above and beyond what could be expected with regards to engaging with my work and making me feel welcome and appreciated, both socially and intellectually. Better advisors could not be found. My colleagues have also been as good as they get, and, although it is cliché, I would like to say that I feel very lucky to have had such fantastic compatriots – Alessandro Zagato, and Theodoros Rakopoulos, and in particular Jacob Hjortsberg, Maria Dyveke Styve, Tareq Hasan, and Mari Korsbrekke. When something was bad, wrong or dumb, I could always count on them to tell me so, in a direct, honest and compassionate way. The same goes for the department of anthropology in Bergen, which has provided insightful critique, support and criticism on multiple occasions, as well as provided an intellectually rich collegiate milieu. My fellow PhD candidates at the department have also been very kind, insightful, and fun to hang out and commiserate with. The department's administration and faculty also deserve the highest praise for guiding me through the

Note on Language

As will become quickly apparent, I use the term 'Kurdistan' uncritically in the thesis, as well as the designations of 'Bakûr,' 'Başûr,' 'Rojava' and 'Rojhîlat' to differentiate between the respectively North (Turkish), South (Iraqi), West (Syrian), and East (Iranian) parts of Kurdistan. Although it would perhaps be fruitful to initiate a discussion on the ethics of using these labels and where it would situate the thesis and indeed myself as a researcher politically, I find justification for this usage in that they are the emic, local, and colloquial terms used by my interlocutors. Hence, I see using these terms as bringing the thesis closer to the local environment, or 'world,' that I was (a part of and) studied. If the task is to comprehend what revolution is for the Kurdish movement, an anthropological approach, as I see it, should attempt to embed itself and make visible this world as best as possible.

Keeping with this sentiment, I have also elected to use Kurdish (Kurmanjî) script and orthography for the various Kurdish expressions, quotes and persons in the text. This means that, for instance, Sheikh Sayid, as it is spelled in English, becomes 'Şêx Saîd,' Ahmed Khani becomes 'Ehmdê Xanî,' and Bedirkhan becomes 'Bedirxan.' This spelling reflects more closely the contemporary phonetic pronunciation among my informants. Furthermore, non-English phrases, things and terms are italicized, while names of people and places are not. Behind every Kurdish word, however, I have placed a parenthesis or a footnote defining the given word or phrase in English, i.e. 'Amed' (or Diyarbakir as it is known in English). Authors' names are nonetheless recounted in their original spelling, so that, for instance, 'Üstündağ' will remain 'Üstündağ,' and not be changed to the more Anglofied 'Ustundag,' as I find this more respectful vis-à-vis authors' own language and region of origin. For people, places, things, and expressions in Arabic, I have merely employed the common English way of spelling them.

I should say that I used English translations of Kurdish where appropriate, in other words, where someone else has translated a Kurdish article, poem or text before me,

but where there is no English translation, I translate myself. At important junctures I also provide the original Kurdish quote for comparison.

Glossary

Apocî – Followers of Apo. Similar to the difference between being, say, a Trotskyist and a Trotskyite, the latter being the corollary of *Apocî.* In the text translated as *Apoist.* The community of followers who subscribe to the Abdullah Öcalan's philosophy.

Berxwedan – 'Resistance.'

Fermandar – 'Commander,' a term used mostly in the guerilla for those who are the leading officers of a given contingent.

Govend – Traditional Kurdish ring dance, with variations from different regions and territories of Kurdistan, as well as some general dances that are used across borders. Can also be called *Dîlan*, Halay (Turkish), or Helperkê, which supposedly technical denotations for the specific regional dances, but are used as catch-all terms, like *Govend.*

Heval – 'Comrade,' the common mode of address among *Apocî.*

Hevaltî – Similar to 'comradeship,' used as a short-hand for the group of people who are sworn-in members of the guerilla.

Hêz – 'Energy' or 'power,' but used in the sense of inspiring passion for the movement.

Îrade – 'Will,' similar to the term used in Turkish, but here taken to connote devotion, discipline, and revolutionary force.

Kadro – The sworn-in members of the PKK, both in civilian and guerilla capacity.

Kefiye – The black-and-white shawl most commonly associated with the Palestinian struggle used in Kurdistan as well, although the color variation and the design would vary.

Komîn – The street-level council of the movement which was supposed to aggregate into the *tax.*

Jor – Literally 'up' or 'above,' used as a term to denote the generalized militant space and institutions of the movement, but also carrying certain references to Qandil, considered as the locus of 'jor.'

Perwerde – 'Education,' most often used in connection with ideological schooling.

Rexne – 'Criticism,' often used in connection with revolutionary criticism and self-

criticism. Corollary of *tekmîl*, among the guerilla.

Partî – A general label for the militant, leading institutions of the struggle, but often without a concrete denotative meaning. The usage of this term would differ in Iraqi Kurdistan, where *Partî* would be used to denote the KDP (see the list of abbreviations).

Pêkhat – Can be used both as a verb and a noun, but is most often used as the noun 'component,' in relation to the various ethnic and ethnic groups living in Kurdistan.

Pîroz – Can both be used as a verb, as in to 'celebrate,' 'praise,' or 'honor,' but also as an adjective denoting 'sacred,' or exceptionally valuable.

Şehîd – The colloquial term for martyr. Derived from Arabic, meaning 'witness.'

Serok – 'Leader,' almost exclusively used for Abdullah Öcalan.

Serhildan – 'Uprising,' used about the popular mobilizations in and around 1993 in Turkish Kurdistan, but also a general term for rebellion. The Kurdish *intifada*, to use Palestinian verbiage.

Serkeftin – 'Victory,' the conventional 'good-bye' among the guerilla, often used by civilians as well, and also the last thing to be said before an 'operation' is to be initiated.

Tax – The neighborhood-level council which was supposed to aggregate into the *semt*.

Tevlîbûn – Literally 'becoming part of,' it is taken as a short-hand for those who have joined the guerilla *hevaltî*.

Welat – 'Homeland,' used as a term to denote the geographic regions of Kurdistan where a person traces his or her origin.

Xizmet – Literally 'servant,' a term used to indicate a deference towards others, and a highly esteemed value.

List of Acronyms

AKP – *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* in Turkish, or the 'Justice and Development Party.' The ruling party in Turkey, to whom President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan belongs.

Apo – Short-hand for Abdullah Öcalan. Although not too much weight should be put on this, it is a term of endearment for father's brother in Kurdish, *Ap* + 'o.'

BDP – *Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi in* Turkish*,* or the 'Democratic Regions Party.' The *Apoist* local election Kurdish party.

DFLP – *Al-Jabhah al-Dimuqratiyah Li-Tahrir Filastin* in Arabic, or the 'Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine,' an armed Marxist-Leninist-Maoist sub-group of the PLO.

DTK – *Demokratik Toplum Kongresi, or* 'The Demokratic Soceity Congress.' The umbrella organization for the civilian parts of the project, responsible for coordinating and constructing the various councils, cooperatives, centers, and academies for the movement.

Grey Wolves – *Ülkü Ocakları* in Turkish, or the 'Idealist Clubs.' A Turkish far-right, ultranationalist paramilitary organization, closely associated with the electoral party, the MHP, as its youth wing.

HDP – *Halkların Demokratik Partisi* in Turkish, or the 'Peoples' Democratic Party.' The pro-minority left-wing and Apoist general election party in Turkey.

HPG – *Hêzên Parastina Gel* in Kurdish*, or* the 'People's Protection Forces.' The armed wing of the PKK.

JITEM – *Jandarma İstihbarat ve Terörle Mücadele* in Turkish, or the 'Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism.' A violent, secretive wing of Turkish intelligence, operating in allegiance to what is colloquially known as the 'deep state.'

KDP – *Partîya Demokrat a Kurdistanê, or* the 'Democratic Kurdish Party.' Nationalist Kurdish party in Iraqi Kurdistan, which controls the northernmost regions of the Kurdish autonomous zones.

MHP – *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* in Turkish, or the 'Nationalist Movement Party.' Far-right ultranationalist electoral party in Turkey.

PKK – *Partîya Karkerên Kurdistan* in Kurdish, or the 'Kurdish Workers Party.' Technically denoting a particular guerilla organization in Turkish Kurdistan, but often used as a short-hand for the movement writ-large, with all its associations, affiliated parties, organizations, and leadership. In the text employed as the latter definition, unless stated otherwise.

PLO – *Munazzamatu t-tahrîri filistînîya* in Arabic, or the 'Palestinian Liberation Organization.'

PYD – *Partîya Yekîtîya Demokrat* in Kurdish, or the 'Democratic Union Party.' The main political party in Northern Syria, founded on Apoist principles.

SDF – *Hêzên Sûriya Demokrat* in Kurdish, or the 'Syrian Democratic Forces.' An alliance of various ethnic and religious militias, devoted to the realizing the *Apoist* program.

YDG-H - *Yurtsever Devrimci Genclik Haraket* in Turkish, or 'the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement.' The self-defence units created by local youth in Kurdish cities, who later received training and assistance from the HPG.

YJA-Star – *Yekîneyên Jinên Azad ên Star* in Kurdish, or the 'Free Women's Units.' The armed, women exclusive, wing of the PKK.

YPJ – *Yekîneyên Parastina Jin* in Kurdish, or the 'Women's Protection Units.' The women's militia/army operating in Northern Syria, which together with the YPG constitute the major forces in the SDF. Designed and operating after *Apoist* principles.

YPG – Yekîneyên *Parastina Gel* in Kurdish, or the 'People's Protection Units.' The YPJ's counterpart, composed only of men, serving as the major bulk of the SDF, and although predominantly Kurdish, includes Assyrians, Turkmen, Arab, and foreign fighters. Also follows an *Apoist* design and constitution.

YPS – *Yekîneyên Parastina Sivîl* in Kurdish, or the 'Civil Protection Units.' The name of the YDG-H on a later occasion.

TKHP-C, and its political wing THKP – *Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi* in Turkish, or the 'People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey.' Armed Marxist-Leninist Party.

TKP-ML – *Türkiye Komünist Partisi/Marksist-Leninist* in Turkish, or the 'Turkish Communist Party/Marksist-Leninist. Maoist revolutionary party.

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1: Moving away from Pre-Conceptions of Revolution

Introduction

Liberation, revolution and emancipation. These are words that are often used to describe great social changes, transformations, and transitions in a given society. Most recently, these terms have been used to describe the Kurdish struggle in Syria and Turkey, both in the popular discourse and within the academic sphere.[1] For instance, the Kurdish Movement, in its various guises and institutions, has been hailed as the heir of the revolutionary beacon from the Spanish Revolution of 1936-37.[2] Many different authors have also attempted to answer what the Kurdish revolution is, how it is constituted, what its central dynamics are, and how it works, using these labels.[3]

However, labels such as liberation, emancipation and revolution often hide certain preconceptions that smuggle restrictive frameworks into the analysis. The terms are, for instance, most often applied when the situation displays what are deemed positive values, as evaluated from an external point of view. Instead of being seen as 'revolutionaries,' other violent forces within transformative situations may often be called 'terrorists.' This selective labeling relies upon the attitude that revolutions, liberations, and emancipations, at some level, index what the onlookers recognize (from their perspective) as a 'betterment' or 'progress' for the human condition, while terrorism does not. At least in the West – which surely is a hegemonic starting point for such processes of selective labelling – a distribution of wealth, land, or 'increased

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[1] A quick google search will validate this claim, but it is for credibility's sake worth mentioning a few of the more prominent public opiners. David Graeber was one of the first academics to bring public notice to the revolution in 2014: Graeber, D. (2014, October 8). 'Why is the world ignoring the revolutionary Kurds?.' *The Guardian.* Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/oct/08/why-world-ignoring-revolutionary-kurds-syria-isis. He was followed by many various publications in various journals, books and magazines (Ali, 2016; Dirik, et al. 2016; Knapp, Flach & Ayboğa, 2016; Stanchev, 2016; Üstündağ, 2016), some also paying attention to the PKK's revolutionary program more specifically (Yarkın, 2015).

[2] David Graber draws this connection explicitly (see previous footnote), as do other leftist revolutionaries. For a foreign fighter's view on the matter see, Sarah LeDuc's interviews: LeDuc, S. (2018, February 23). 'Far-Left on the Front Lines: The Westerners Joining the Kurds' Fight in Syria.' *France 24.* Retrieved from https://www.france24.com/en/20180223-syria-afrin-foreigners-westerners-far-left-join-kurdish-revolution-fight-turkey.

[3] For an academic take on the struggle relying these labels, see Joost Jongerden (2016b), Ahmet Akkaya & Joost Jongerden (2012a), for example, and for an activist take, see Eliza Egret and Tom Anderson (2016).

democracy' seem to be the revolutionary markers *de jure*: not hierarchy, aristocracy or Islamic Law. Indeed, all too commonly, laypeople and academics alike project their own values of what is positive, of 'betterment' – of revolution, in short – upon a situation that is in reality extremely volatile, ambiguous, polysemic. As a perfect example, the Norwegian academic Jon Nordenson spells this out to its fullest when he in his book on the revolutionary Arab Spring ends his introduction with the moral outcry: "There are differences between right and wrong, there are decisions that are wiser than others, and it is actually the case that sometimes there really *are* idealistic and peaceful activists for democracy who stand up to egotistical and brutal regimes" (Nordenson, 2018, p. 33, my translation).

Following from this external compartmentalization of revolution also comes a search for the 'revolutionary subject' (Thomassen, 2018). If one decides that a certain situation qualifies as a revolution, on the background of the seeming 'progress' being made, the next step is to identify who is committing the revolution and for whom. This was very much the case in the Syrian context, where international supporters from all over the West joined the ranks of the YPG/J (*Yekîneyên Parastina Gel* or the 'People's Protection Units,' *Yekîneyên Parastina Jinan* or the 'Women's Protection Units') in their heroic fight against ISIS. Speaking from personal experience, many of the people who came to Iraq to join the revolution truly flew all colors; some of the people were committed anarchists and communists, others were liberals concerned with human rights, and again some were far-right activists, seeing Syria as the threshold for stopping radical Islam. At a waiting house for those who were standing by to cross the Iraqi-Syrian border, where I spent much of my day-to-day in Iraq in 2016, I witnessed many foreign acolytes engaged in furious debates in English about the nature and the importance of the struggle, up until their departure. Regardless of their personal convictions or interpretations of the volatile war, common for all the people who had joined in or voiced their support, was a conviction that the revolutionary subjects – the Kurds – were motivated by a desire to create a 'better life' in a way that was intuitively recognizable. For the ideologically motivated would-be-revolutionaries, as well as in Western popular mass-media, the Kurds were either creating an anarchist, communist gender-equal utopia, or they were defending the secular women and

children against the barbarism of Islam – 'better' for both ends of the ideological scale.[4]

Writing an anthropological thesis about the Kurdish revolution is thus also quite challenging, as my arguments and observations will undeniably be formulated in the midst of this ideological debate. I will therefore not merely present my own arguments, but also place them in relation to these debates since they too are very much part of the ethnography of revolution. My intention in doing this is to, by way of contrast, convey some sense of what the Kurdish movement looks like on the ground, for itself and in itself.

Liberation and Universalism

The perspective of those who identify 'progress' or 'betterment' among the Kurds, and consequently distinguishes the revolutionary subject, comes in (roughly) two variations. The first may be called the 'imperial liberal' approach. This approach often posits an innate desire to become Westernized as universally applicable for all actors (see Žižek, 2005, for a similar assessment). This sentiment was perhaps best exemplified by American democracy expert sent to Iraq in 2003, who, in a meeting with a provincial governing council said: "Welcome to your new democracy"; "I have met you before. I have met you in Cambodia. I have met you in Russia. I have met you in Nigeria," upon which two of the council leaders immediately left the room (Stewart, 2006, p. 280-281).[5] Dilar Dirik has pointed out how this perspective saturates the Western media coverage of the Kurdish revolution. In the portrayal of female guerillas in Western women's magazines, for instance, instead of expounding the revolutionary ideology of the movement, their immediately recognizable 'feminist' aspirations are

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[4] For a mass-media example of a fitting reality into a pre-conceived liberal category, see Wes Ezinna of the New York Times' piece: Ezinna, W. (2015, November 24). 'A Dream of Utopia in Hell.' *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/29/magazine/a-dream-of-utopia-in-hell.html. For a mass-media example fitting reality into a pre-conceived 'conservative' category, see Alan Dershowitz's commentary at FOX News: Dershowitz, A. (2017, October 4). 'The case for a Kurdish state (and the hypocrisy behind opposition to it).' *Fox News.* Retrieved from https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/alan-dershowitz-the-case-for-a-kurdish-state-and-the-hypocrisy-behind-opposition-to-it. Although they would not necessarily say explicitly that they through of the Kurdish struggle as revolutionary, implicit in both narratives is turning a condition around in a dramatic and positive way, that represents a break with an older, perhaps tyrannical regime.

[5] Stanley Kubrick summarized this sentiment beautifully when, in his masterpiece *Full Metal Jacket,* he wrote facetiously*:* "Inside every Gook there is an American trying to get out".

accentuated through representations of their exotic but non-Islamic beauty.[6] Through images of beautiful women without hijabs, carrying rudimentary weapons, popular imagery of the struggle glosses over the stringent and revolutionary Kurdish ideology, in favor of a more generalized, sexualized feminist one (Dirik, 2015).

Besides being the official perspective and narrative of the Euro-American state departments, this perspective also finds resonance within much of political science and social movement theory, although in a more watered-out and less abrasive form. David Romano, for instance, posits implicitly that recognition, rights and representation, were some of the core motivators for the Kurds' historical mobilization (Romano, 2006, p. 92, 34). It was through rational calculus, based on intuitively and universally recognizable values, albeit locally adapted, that the Kurdish movement had developed their struggles and revolutions. The presupposition that all subjects think of struggle through variables fixed in the West, and that they are intuitively available to analysts, permeates much of the social movement theory (see McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, 1996, for an example), not to mention political science.[7] As of late, researchers have become more interested in the cultural values 'framing' a struggle, but still see culture and affect as camouflaging or reflecting some underlying and near-universal desires (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2001).[8] Somehow, human rights (Stammers, 1999), state formation (Romano, 2006), minority recognition (McAdam, 1999), democracy (Nordenson, 2018), and economic redistribution (Castells, 1983), are always the 'native' values in the center for analysis.

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[6] Dirik, D. (2014, October 10) 'Western fascination with 'badass' Kurdish women,' *Al Jazeera.* Retrieved from https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/10/western-fascination-with-badas-2014102112410527736.html

[7] Romano takes as his project to apply this social movement theory system developed in the US and on the US and Europe (McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, 1996), to Kurdistan, to assess its "utility" (Romano, 2006, p. 24). Arturo Escobar and Sonia Alvarez (2018) engage with this dearth, however, and seek to supplement social movement studies with non-northern perspectives on social movements.

[8] In their edited volume devoted to the role of emotion in protest, for instance, contributors contend that: " (…) moral outrage was a logical emotional response to information about human rights abuses and atrocities in Central America" (Nepstad & Smith 2001: 158), and that emotions can be treated as "'folk constructs'" that "activists use (…) to negotiate situations they face in the movement" in opposition to "patriarchy" (Groves 2001, p. 213), and that, generally, "emotional displays that emerge in different contexts are shaped by three factors: the *oppositional emotions* activists construct in internal movement organizations; *emotional labor* in the public display of emotion; and the *emotional opportunities* afforded by the external context" (Whittier 2001, p. 234). In all of the aforementioned examples, what the phenomenon they are studying *is*, has been taken for granted.

The other approach to finding 'the better' and the revolutionary subject may be called the 'imperial leftist' perspective. This perspective may be found more in left-leaning circles and in what is commonly labelled 'radical philosophy.' Building on an idea of the dialectic – in some form, be it Marxist (Ciccariello-Maher, 2017) or psychoanalytic (see de Kesel, 2004, on Žižek and Lacan) – the followers of this paradigm see revolutions, 'true revolutions' that is, as always tending towards freedom or resolving some of the contradictions of capital and/or the psyche. While most present within the Marxist-Leninist movements in the 1970's, this perspective has lately found resonance with a revitalization of Hegel (Badiou, 2015, 2005; Žižek, 2012) and in de-colonial theory (Grosfoguel, 2012; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Quijano, 2007). That is not to say that Hegel and the dialectic is not problematized – which it is, rather profoundly – but rather that there is a lingering sense that the idea of 'progress towards Freedom' (with a big 'F') should not be abandoned, because the hegemony of cultural relativism arguably leaves us with an unjust and static global condition. For this reason, the idea of liberation and of the universal – while critiqued and deconstructed – is often quite explicitly necessary for its theorizing; a new universal *needs* to be found.

This perspective has led to several commenters debating whether the conflict in Syria is or is not a manifestation of the universal class struggle – or a struggle by different means (Graeber & Öğünç, 2016; Knapp & Jongerden, 2016). Other commenters have attempted to chart out a new universal arising from within the Syrian civil war, one which – contrary to the Hegelian universal – is not teleologically directed but rather multiple and open-ended (Hosseini, 2016). In the search for freedom and liberation, the universal does not arrive through a hierarchical dialectic, they argue, but rather through de-centralized, co-operative dialogue (see Grosfoguel, 2012, for an explication of a particular program). Although couched in different verbiage, it is hard for this perspective not to recall the 1970's head-over-heels fascination with the *Khmer Rouge*, which was also seen as a local instantiation of the universal class struggle at the time.[9] Although the idea of the universal must have changed, the idea

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[9] As a liberal corollary to finding such universalized liberation, one might think of Robert Fisk's article from 1993 in *The Independent*, concerning Osama Bin Laden, titled: 'Anti-Soviet Warrior Puts His Army of the Road to Peace.' Retrieved from: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/anti-

that the local can transcend itself dialectically with the global, still seems to be in place, and very much operative in leftist analysis.

The Dangers of Overplaying Similarity

In my view, both of these perspectives undermine an analysis which 'takes alterity seriously' (see Paolo Heywood, 2012, for a recent discussion on what this might entail). An uncritical use of terms such as 'freedom,' 'liberation,' and 'democracy,' for analysis may even harbor a potential for obviating difference altogether. In both of these perspectives, once deemed 'revolution,' the phenomenon is immediately placed within different matrices for measurement and signification; how it progresses (dialectically [leftist] or evolutionary [liberal]), what the goals are (overturning capitalism [leftist] or defending human rights [liberal]), and who its agents are (anarchists or freedom-lovers). Once it is labeled as 'revolutionary,' the label seems almost self-generating in terms of what this is supposed to entail.

Even though the intentions on both sides of the spectrum might be noble – finding allies through seeing them as acting with 'good' intentions – it assumes several things that should not be assumed in an anthropological analysis. Using these perspectives is destined to leave any classifier disappointed by reality. First of all, finding the 'good subjects' of a revolution implicitly entails extending one's own preconceptions of 'the good' to people who might not share them entirely, if at all. This would go for the far-right fighters, who would expect a strong climate of Islamophobia, which the movement, to a large degree, does not embrace, and sees as counter-productive to winning what they define as the revolution. But the same would also go for the anarchists or communists, who would feel betrayed when they saw that the grassroots democracy was, in fact, very much directed by the Kurdish armed forces. For many people – both participating in and observing the struggle – this outlook counter-acted the possibility of opening oneself up to creating a new understanding of the 'good' emerging from within the context of the transformation itself. Instead, many people were disappointed and de-motivated when the revolution did not fit the desired mold

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soviet-warrior-puts-his-army-on-the-road-to-peace-the-saudi-businessman-who-recruited-mujahedin-1465715.html

for revolution (i.e. communists being disappointed when the Kurds received weapons from the US), and joyous and full of hope when it did (i.e. officially dissolving the Kurdish 'nationalist' term 'Rojava' in favor of the internationalist 'Northern Syria')[10] – all depending on which signals emerged for them to interpret within their own pre-ordained frameworks.

As Bjørn Thomassen (2012) and Peter Worsley (1961) have pointed out, anthropological perspectives have not been of much help with regards to nuancing these approaches. In fact, they both document that an anthropological attentiveness to revolution has also been lacking – especially perspectives which take revolution's 'otherness' seriously. Whereas rebellions, resistance and insurgencies have received their fair share of analysis, revolution has been a relatively underexamined topic.[11] Worsley remarked as early as in 1961 that this has been a lacuna in anthropological research (Worsley, 1961), and Thomassen bemoans the persistence of this lack in 2012, calling it "a genuine blind spot" (Thomassen, 2012, p. 682).[12] According to Thomassen, anthropology can usefully be deployed in the study of revolutions, but has not been so previously due to anthropology's particular history. Due to revolutions' associations with modern, 'complex,' societies, and early anthropology's preoccupation with the primitive and rural, Thomassen argues it seemed to be a bad fit from the start. Moreover, since anthropology was in its early days in large part associated with colonial regimes, epistemological assumptions of stability and

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[10] See Hisham Arafat's 2016 report on the co-chairs of "Northern Syria's Federal System Organizing council'"s decision to drop 'Rojava' from the name of the region in the territory's constitution: Arafat, H. (2016, December 28).'"Rojava" no longer exists, "Northern Syria" adopted instead.' *Kurdistan 24*. Retrieved from https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/51940fb9-3aff-4e51-bcf8-b1629af00299/-rojava--no-longer-exists---northern-syria--adopted-instead-.

[11] Thomasson mentions a few works which, with the right lens, *might* be seen as concerning themselves with revolution, most notably Evans-Pritchard's *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica* (1949)*,* which examines the Sanusi's iterative attempts at freeing themselves from foreign rule, and the re-constitution of society in the process, and Mauss' examination of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 (Mauss, 1984). Here, I might add Lan's eminent *Guns and Rain* (1985), dealing with the de-colonial revolution in Zimbabwe.

[12] Whether this is considered true or not depends of course upon the definition of revolution, and what is considered literature that is concerned with revolution. Shah & Pettigrew expand their definition of revolution to include ethnographies produced 'amidst' such situations (Shah & Pettigrew, 2009, p. 229), and therefore list a host of authors they see as contributing, Shah herself having contributed greatly in this way (Feuchtwang & Shah, 2015; Shah 2014; 2013; 2009). Much of what Shah & Judith Pettigrew list would fall under what Thomassen describes as literature dealing with resistance, rebellion and war – see for instance Charles Hale (1994), Michael Jackson (2004), and Terence Ranger (1985).

reproduction were often deemed more fitting for a concordant analysis, as this would provide better indicators for how to govern efficiently (Thomassen, 2012). Lastly, Thomassen argues, revolutions have been difficult to study because anthropology's methods demand that one be present, observing and participating – a point also made by Alpa Shah & Judith Pettigrew (2009). In contexts of revolution, participation might be difficult because it is hard to foresee the timing of a revolution, access may be strictly limited, and conducting the research may be hazardous – both for the researcher and his or her interlocutors. Although challenging, Thomassen concludes, he believes anthropology could be fortuitously be applied to an analysis of revolution.

Taking up this challenge, Martin Holbraad attempts to remedy anthropology's oversight by engaging directly with the question in his writings on the Cuban revolution (2014). Considering othernesss in depth, Holbraad argues that in an anthropological analysis, not only should one not assume that one knows what 'good' is for the people who are the revolutionary subjects, but one should also not assume that one knows what 'human' means in such a context (Holbraad, Pedersen & Viveiros de Castro, 2014; Holbraad, 2012; Holbraad & Pedersen, 2012, have discussed this at length in other contexts). What outsiders take for granted with regards to what being human entails, and how human life should be valued, is often radically different from what people in the revolutionary context themselves think, Holbraad argues (2014). For Holbraad, the subject in the Cuban revolutionary paradigm was marked by a non-elective relationship to politics, where one's life and readiness to die was both the condition for, and site of enactment of, the revolution. Similarities to Kurdistan can be easily found at the surface. Both in Kurdistan and in Cuba, for instance, at all times carrying a grenade meant for oneself and being constantly prepared to 'die for the revolution' was a part of ethos expected to be shown by the guerilla revolutionaries, and an ethos through which prestige and social power could be assessed, as I was shown and witnessed in a PKK-camp in the Iraqi-Kurdish mountains. The sacrifice bombings of the PKK, like that of Zilan in 1996 which I will discuss in chapter 5, are considered to be one of the noblest actions one can undertake—comparable to the actions Cuban revolutionaries undertook knowing that they would be murdered. Particular to revolution, Holbraad contends, is that it should be examined as a distinct

'ontological form' (Holbraad, 2014, p. 380), where the normal dichotomies of politics and civil life, for instance, could not be separated in ways that would be common to think of in non-revolutionary circumstances. Concluding his article, Holbraad argues that not considering revolution as an ontological form, precludes an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon itself, leaving analysts to their own preconceptions.

Holbraad's insistence upon the importance of difference also carries ramifications in other registers. Not considering a revolution's 'ontological form' – the internal logics and self-construction of concepts, human life, social interactions, etc. – could be seen as feeding into a reification, damaging to the situation or revolution in question. This can happen at several levels. At the macro-level, there is a structural homology between how 'revolution' is constructed and how its counterpart, 'terrorism,' is constructed. A prime example of this was the escalation of the terrorism discourse in Turkey when the US started providing military aid for the Kurdish 'freedom fighters' in Syria. Coupled with this escalation in discourse, a (perhaps unintended) consequence was the ethnized assault on several Kurdish cities in Turkey, an extra-legal closing of an elected parliamentary party, as well as a power centralization in the hands of the people using the terrorism discourse. Through 'terrorism,' people disappeared, both literally and figuratively. Although it is unlikely that the Turkish state would have reacted in any other way to Kurdish opposition, it is safe to say that the discursive reductionism of terrorism/revolution exacerbated both the conflictual relationship with the Turkish state and solidified dichotomies revolution/terrorism within the Turkish political discourse.

However, on a level closer to the situation in question, reifying revolution and not considering it as an 'ontological form' might preclude grasping the very openness that revolution often presupposes, similar to what Badiou describes as its core characteristics (Badiou, 2015, 2005).[13] If the qualifiers for a revolution are that they already fit with preconceived notions of what the good, or the human being, are, then

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[13] Although Badiou does not employ the term 'openness' as such, without going much into much of his theoretical superstructure, a revolutionary event for him is characterized by going beyond the boundaries of what was previously thought possible. It is, in a sense, the revolution against, albeit within the revolution, that is the true revolutionary event (see Badiou 2012: 41-45 and Badiou 2005: 504-508 for a more in-depth explanation). Put in other terms, it is both an openness and a closure.

the revolution's potential for illustrating and embodying something new is undermined. The new must initially be seen with lenses that do not sort good or bad, otherwise the revolution's potential to point 'outwards' is circumscribed (Badiou 2015). This in essence 'ideological point' for Alain Badiou, finds resonance with an anthropological point on methodology derived from Pierre Clastres (2010a). Clastres, going against the hegemonic Marxist anthropology in France, claimed that in order to truly get at the 'anthropological' in the discipline, one needed to retain an idea of 'radical difference' (Clastres, 2010a; Moyn, 2004). This implied, he argued, that in order to actually make any forms of comparative assessments, the preceding idea of similitude – in any register—should be abandoned, and rather be inductively worked towards. Assuming people in an anthropological research situation as radically different was actually the proper and most respectful way of approaching the other, Clastres argued, since preconceptions of similitude or likeness might in fact prove more ethnocentric and patronizing than supposing the radical otherness (Clastres 2010b, 2007). The starting point of radical difference is, in other words, not a claim about the quality or state of the people in question; it is merely a heuristic for not assuming or taking for granted any such quality in anthropological research, and rather attempting to work towards an understanding of their universe in its own right, regardless of whether it may or may not fit with preconceived notions of likeness. This methodological-theoretical position will structure much of the coming discussion on the actual practices and lives of people in the Kurdish movement's revolution, which is the topic of this thesis.

Following Holbraad (2014), Clastres (2010) and Thomassen (2012), then, I will hold on to the notion of revolution as pertaining to a particular historically and socially non-reducible situation, which can be fruitfully examined by anthropology. I will attempt to examine revolution as an emic term, that is, as a notion that is confined to particular locations where people who profess to subscribe to the Kurdish movement's ideology use it and contextualize it. I will think of revolution as a social logic, intimately tied to the circumstances of its usage and circulation. This does not mean that I think 'revolution' means only one thing, that the Kurdish movement's revolution only takes place in *one* location, or that it cannot be compared, but rather that it must be

examined in relation to the particular places in which it emerges, and that nothing should be taken for granted about it. This has been my approach in the three major sites of my fieldwork, namely Turkish Kurdistan, Iraqi Kurdistan and in the diaspora in Germany, where I spent approximately 7 months each.

It is worth mentioning at this juncture, however, that the debate concerning what is, and what is not, 'ontological' is not central to the thrust of the thesis. I have used this term rather frivolously in the previous paragraphs to illustrate the extent and depth of difference, rather than to make a concise point concerning the existence of 'other worlds.' Although there is much to be said on the purchase of such an approach (see Carrithers, et. al, 2010, and Handelman, 2008, for a discussion of the relation between the two), in the thesis I prefer to use 'cosmology' as an analytic term for approaching alterity.[14]

Using 'cosmology' as an analytic term has several benefits. The first is that it intuitively encompasses a larger segment of the organization of human experience than, for instance, 'ideology' does, by to a certain degree removing it from the solely 'political' realm (Rio & Eriksen, 2014). Secondly, it is more specific than for instance 'sociality,' because it delimits the field of interest to the constitution and movement of socially imagined and lived-in universes, instead of the un-ending openness that

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[14] What the relationship of cosmology to ontology is will not discussed in depth here, but it is so in Holbraad and Allen Abramson's edited volume *Framing Cosmologies* (2014), which sets out to reinvigorate the study of cosmology in a new way. Holbraad and Abramson make several critical points, most of which I have attempted to take aboard. Following Holbraad and Abramson, the usage of cosmology here is not intended as an effect to be explained by some superseding frame of the *really* real, and also not intended as a reflection of a totality of a thought pattern enclosed in and by a particular place and ethnic group, as the multi-sited approach will hopefully make clear. I attempt to avoid positing a causal or mimetic relation between the state's violence and the PKK's martyrial cosmology, rather considering the state's violent denial of Kurdishness as a certain backdrop upon which cosmological creativity has been employed. Moreover, as will be quickly become apparent, the thesis does consider the PKK's cosmology as a 'whole' to a certain extent. I am not certain whether this holism is subject to Holbraad and Abramson's critique. Since they direct their critique towards the *a priori* assumption of cosmology as totality, my intended meaning is of revolutionary cosmology as *a posteriori* re-compiled world. In terms of definition however, I rely upon Bruce Kapferer's conceptualization of cosmology (2012), where it is taken for granted as a partially shared understanding of how the social world, both metaphysical and practical (and both at the same time), is organized and effectuated/effectuating. Following Kapferer, political cosmology may be seen as denoting the way in which a non-bounded group of people believe that the universe coheres and may be acted in and upon, in terms of time, space, and being – in this case, in the political realm. I consider cosmology as a force *sui generis*, that people act within, on and through (Rio & Eriksen, 2014).

'sociality' might entail. Thirdly, and most importantly, using 'cosmology' as an analytic term also points to the constitution of a world, wherein ideas of time, death, movement and agency might play an intuitively more important role. It is, in other words, not the other-worldliness as such which is the central focus of the thesis, but rather 'the universe' of the revolution.

With this in mind, the thesis will attempt to answer the questions asked at the outset – what the Kurdish revolution is, how it is constituted, what are its central dynamics, and how it works – but by taking the position that one does not as an outsider necessarily have tools ready-at-hand to answer them. Rather, the thesis will depart from the assumption that one has to work inductively towards making these tools, and create them while assuming that they function within a non-reducible socio-political universe marked by alterity. What a 'free Kurdistan' is, what it means, and how it is to take form, are questions which are best approached with a sensitivity towards the depth of difference, and a questioning attitude towards the validity and use-value of concepts and sentiments imported from outside. As we shall see, I approach these questions as centrally revolving around the role and place of martyrs, but before we continue with this argument, we need to briefly clarify the historical backdrop from which the coming analysis will depart.

Violence and the Kurdish Condition

For a substantive analysis, an appreciation of the *longue durée* nature of state violence and marginalization of the Kurds in the region is crucial. For, much of the Kurdish world has been embroiled in violence and repression, almost continuously from the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 until today. In my one and a half years of fieldwork in Turkish-Kurdistan and Iraqi-Kurdistan, it seemed to me that literally every person I encountered in the movement had either themselves experienced violence from the state,[15] or had a family member which had been killed or tortured by

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[15] Although a general denomination here, 'the state' in question in the thesis is very much considered as the Turkish state. As to the definition of the state, I take it to be a monolithic entity, when in reality, in might not function as such. Speaking of the state's exertion violence, for instance, I also encompass the secret paramilitary groups, militias and the like who received covert funding and support from segments of the state apparatus. With regards to Syria, for instance, even before it's invasion of Afrîn in 2018, the Turkish state provided tacit assistance to both ISIS and other jihadist groups (Phillips,

the state, independent of age, gender, and territorial location. This may not be surprising, considering the history of uprisings in Kurdistan – from Şêx Saîd ('Sheik Sayid' in English) in 1924 to the PKK in 1978, and the war in Syria in 2012 – where massacres have frequently punctuated its unfolding (Olson, 2013; McDowall, 2004; Olson, 1996; Gürbey, 1996).[16] However, this does not necessarily entail that people have been killed all the time, in a sort of 'theater of war' (Clausewitz, 2007), but rather, as Bjørn Enge Bertelsen (2016) claims in the case of Mozambique, that violence becomes embroiled in the potentialities of everyday life; it has become a backdrop for how social life is enacted and thought about in much of Kurdistan. Violence is here defined in a very quotidian sense of unwanted physical violence or threats of physical violence. The effects of violence on everyday life, both the direct experience of violence and the vivid memories and stories passed down, rather have a quality of *longue durée*, with few or no generations not having experiences or memories of state violence. In this way, violence may be seen integral to the social, i.e. a part of everyday life, related to, and emanating from, the state.

Additionally, this near-perpetual state of violence, either in the process of being committed or expecting to be committed, has been coupled with an essentializing othering of Kurdishness by the patron state (Gunes & Zeydanlıoğlu, 2014; Ercan 2013, Özsoy 2010). Kurds have been denied claims to history and language in all four parts of Kurdistan – that is, Iraqi Kurdistan ('Başûr'), Iranian Kurdistan ('Rojhîlat'), Syrian Kurdistan ('Rojava'), and Turkish ('Bakûr') Kurdistan – at various intervals, which have put Kurds in an awkward position, but especially so in Turkey. For many of my informants from Turkish Kurdistan, either they or their parents grew up learning Kurdish as their mother tongue; a language they were told by the state did not exist. Speaking Kurdish in public spaces could in Turkey, until very recently, lead to imprisonment, torture, and even murder (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2012; Ergil, 2000). People

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2014). This is not meant to discount the violence exerted by the Syrian state of that or militias funded by other countries, but rather to focus on the Turkish state's role, which is the major preoccupation in the first 3 chapters. In this way, although the state is presented as a whole its cohesiveness and totality can be very much disputed.

[16] This does not mean that I have forgotten about the Anfal massacres, committed in and around 1988 in Iraq killing upwards of 150 000 people, or the Iraqi Kurdish uprisings, but rather as this thesis revolves around 'the Kurdish movement,' and the Kurdish movement has its *ursprung* in Turkish Kurdistan, it is the Turkish state, and the rebellions relating to it, that is at the center of this examination.

were told that Kurdish was not a real language but a bastardization of Turkish, Arabic, or Farsi, although it was remarkably distinct, with little or no value of transference. Being brought up in essentialized conditions beyond the informants choosing – which had profound ramifications for how life could be lived in relation to the state – shaped the fundamental conditions for the Kurdish experience in Turkey (Ercan, 2013). Growing up with Kurdish as a mother tongue immediately encroached upon the opportunities accorded to the individual and the way in which one would be seen by others, both the majority population and the representatives of the state. Harun Ercan has therefore gone so far as to argue that the denial of Kurdishness was paradoxically not only an 'ontological condition' for Kurds, but also the ontological foundation upon which Turkishness was created (Ercan, 2013), which we shall discuss on in chapter 4. This same point, I believe, could arguably be made about the Kurds living in Iraq, Iran or Syria, with some modifications (see Allsopp, 2015, for an explication of the conditions in Syria).

It was under these conditions that the 'Kurdish Freedom Movement,' as it is commonly known in English (Knapp, Flach & Ayboğa, 2016),[17] emerged and gained traction. At the outset of the struggle, the 'Kurdish Freedom Movement' was not truly a 'movement.' The Kurdish Freedom Movement's struggle first started with the foundation of a small guerilla organization, the PKK, in Turkey 1978, according to its own historiography. At the time, it was only one of many parties adhering to a de-colonial Marxist-Leninist ideology, with a relatively small membership core. This changed quickly, however, after the Turkish *coup d'etat* in 1980. The reasons why its popularity surged in the aftermath has been widely debated (see for instance, Akkaya & Jongerden, 2011b; Bozarslan, 2004; Van Bruinessen, 1988), but the discussion touched upon such facts as the PKK being one of the few organizations not decimated by the coup's crackdown, its territorial dispersion, and the organization's willingness to use violence.

The PKK was the first Kurdish party to aim its violence directly at the Turkish state in a contest for territory (McDowall, 2004), and promising to free all of Kurdistan

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[17] There is no exact equivalent term in Kurdish, as activists will usually name it *tekoşîn* (struggle), *doz* (process) or *şoreş* (revolution).

through a violent revolution waged from both within and outside the borders. Since its first attacks on the state in 1984, which the PKK called a 'self-defense action,' more than 40 000 people have been killed (White, 2015, 2000), by conservative estimates, and another million people to one and a half million internally displaced (Kurban, 2012). With the escalation of the insurgency, the struggle spread to the surrounding Kurdish areas in Iraq, Iran and Syria, as well as to the diaspora, where now more than a million Kurds live. The Kurdish Freedom Movement gradually became the dominant platform for millions of Kurds who sought a profound social, political and economic transformation (Akkaya & Jongerden, 2011a, 2012a). Although still militant in its outlook, the PKK changed its political philosophy in roughly between 2001 and 2005 after the imprisoned leader, Abdullah Öcalan, was permitted to disseminate his prison writings to his followers.[18] Various movement-affiliated organizations took up adapting this philosophy to practical circumstances and setting it into action, generating and advocating for much more popular participation and engagement (Jongderden, 2016b; Knapp & Jongerden, 2016; Özsoy 2013b, 2010; Akkaya & Jongderden 2012a). With the advent of the Syrian civil war in 2011-2012, the PKK found an opportunity to put this system into practice, and structured what has now become known as the 'Rojava revolution,' where popular participation in social ecology, women's liberation and ethnic, religious and regional autonomy are core values (Knapp, Flach & Ayboğa, 2016). As the war in Syria progressed, and it seemed that the Kurds there were on the verge of establishing a zone of self-determination, the Kurds in Turkey sought to achieve the same, much to the Turkish state's alarm.[19]

It was during this time, between 2015-2017, in what was perhaps the most violent few years in recent Kurdish history, that I conducted my fieldwork in Turkey, Germany and Iraq. As such, and as a point of self-reflection, it must be noted that my perspective is conditioned by this both direct and indirect experience of violence, and

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[18] Whether or not the PKK changed in any significant way, or whether it was in fact in a process of perpetually change and adaptation has been a hotly debated topic, with camps crystallizing at each extreme. See Akkaya & Jongerden (2011a) and Cengiz Gunes (2009) for a position that argues the PKK was always adaptive, and Svante Cornell (2001) and Aliza Marcus (2007) for a position who argues the PKK is, and has always been, essentially Stalinist in its policies. In addition, there is reasonable evidence to suggest that the 'hard line,' changed already in the late 1990's, prior to Öcalan's capture in 1999 (Yarkin, 2015).
[19] The history of the PKK and its 'mass-ification,' is more thoroughly explored in chapter 3 and 4.

that this has – perhaps more than I realize – influenced the tenor of this work. Additionally, although I did not spend time in Syria (meaning that direct ethnographic material on the Rojava revolution lies outside the purview of this thesis), many of my informants and friends, especially in Germany, were refugees from this struggle, telling me stories about it and describing the situation there. My fieldwork was, in other words, situated in a particular time and several more or less arbitrary places, which were perhaps particularly violent, greatly informing my perspective and how I see the cohesiveness of the movement's revolution. This shall be further explored in the next chapter, but first we should briefly discuss how the conditions described above have, I argue, shaped the movement more concretely.

A consequence of these conditions has been that the movement, the ideology, and the struggle is considered to be international in scope, and to a large degree acted upon as such. For instance, my interlocutors would confess that they see Öcalan's project as a model for the world, but at the same time that the 'heart' of the struggle, both in terms of where it was imagined to be the *best* solution, and where the struggle mattered most to people, was in the Middle East.[20] Nonetheless, the movement is seen as being united across the borders between Syria, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and even in the diaspora. People in all the different places, who were engaged in their local struggle, saw their struggle as intimately connected with all of the other locations. In practical terms, this was apparent in the international coordination of the struggle. Many important leadership figures' networks extended across these borders, and they would often visit and consult with other organizations, particularly in the diaspora. Additionally, prior to 2014, when movement across borders was relatively easy from Turkey, many laypeople as well, would pass back and forth to collect information, inspiration or instruction, as well as visit their families. Due to both the awkward borders drawn across the Kurdish territory, as well as the PKK's internationalist ideology, the movement was very much internationally oriented.

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[20] This was by and large true, but depending on who one spoke to, where the emphasis was placed could vary – the foreign fighters, for instance, and the people working in the various diplomacy committees and foreign outreach programs, as well as the leadership in the many of the most important institutions, would emphasize its universal applicability and scope as the 'heart' of the matter.

The international character of the struggle is to a large degree made manifest in the self-ascribed label of *Apocî*. *Apocî* translates into 'followers of Apo,' which is the nickname used for Abdullah Öcalan, the imprisoned founder and Chairman of the PKK. Although specifically tied to the PKK as an organizational figure, Abdullah Öcalan, or *Apo,*[21] has become a non-sectarian label for everyone who adheres to his ideological project, regardless of organizational, religious, or ethnic affiliation. Whether one is affiliated with the civilian, Turkish-based, parliamentary party, the HDP,[22] with the actual guerilla of the PKK, with a supporting diasporic football association, or a Syrian self-governing body, you are nonetheless *Apocî*, and relate to other sympathizers or members as *Apocî*. The identity of 'Apoists' is 'Apoist' regardless of the place, time, and organizational affiliation, and various other identities, in other words. *Apocî* is the emic master-signifier for what is otherwise called 'the Kurdish Freedom Movement' (Knapp, Flach & Ayboğa, 2016).[23]

In sum, the condition of being denied a separate ethnic-linguistic status, as well living with a permeating presence of violence, has been profoundly influential upon how the movement has originated, moved, and seen itself. There are also factors whose effects might be hard for observers 'outside' of the Kurdish revolution to fathom or conceptualize intuitively. As mentioned, these conditions, albeit with significant variation in intensity, have been more or less consistent for several decades across the various Kurdish territories. Returning to our initial point, it is within this context that

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[21] My fluency in the language is discussed more thoroughly in chapter 2, but for the sake of continuity, I will merely mention that I studied *Kurmanjî* intensely for the first 4-5 months of my stay in the movement-provided Kurdish academy as well as with a private tutor. If I were to self-assess, I would estimate that towards the end of fieldwork I reached a B-2 level in the 'Common European Framework of Reference for Languages,' although this depended very much on region, sociolect and 'domain' of conversation.

[22] *Halkların Demokratik Partisi* in Turkish, or the 'Peoples' Democratic Party.' The pro-minority left-wing and Apoist general election party in Turkey, made up of members from the local election Kurdish party, the BDP (*Demokratik Bölgeler Partisi,* the 'Democratic Regions Party') and the smaller radical-left parties in Turkey.

[23] See note in the glossary. Although I will use 'Apoist' (taken from *Apocî*) as a denotive term for the community/communities I will be describing, I will also be using the PKK as a catch-all term, since *Apocî* is not used in scholarship and the PKK may be seen as the originator of the ideology and the 'organizer' of the cosmology. Despite its propagandistic valence, the common chant in demonstrations, and the PKK leader Cemil Bayik's denomination "The PKK are the people", rings true: 'Bayik: The PKK is a people, not a movement, is the soul of Kurds.' (2018, December 12). *ANF News.* Retrieved from https://anfenglishmobile.com/news/bayik-pkk-is-a-people-not-a-movement-it-is-the-soul-of-kurds-31344.

the ideas of the 'human,' 'progress' and 'betterment' have emerged as ontological form. It is hence also within this world, a world at least potentiating a 'radical otherness' for many people, that our subject matter should be approached analytically. Elaborating these conditions is the central focus of chapters 3 and 4, where I hope I render plausible an explanation for how the PKK's revolutionary universe evolved as it did,[24] after having clarified the methodological approach. The aforementioned chapters will move away from the PKK's ideology and 'superstructure,' so to speak, to the practical and political conditions for the movement's mobilization.

To be clear: this is not to say that ideals of freedom, liberation, the human, democracy, etc., are irrelevant to Kurdish revolution. The point is rather that what the content of these concepts must necessarily be transformed by the conditions under which their advocates live, which in the Kurdish case have been marked by denial and violence. In a situation where life does not necessarily have a predictable trajectory, as it has been for the generation born in Turkish Kurdistan around 1980-1990, for instance - experiencing both the massacres and displacement of the 1990's, and then later the same in 2015-2017 - this will naturally transform what the content of a 'better' or 'freer' life is or can be imagined to be. The point is this: although the *words* used by the movement might be recognizable to us as outsiders, we have little to assure ourselves that we intuitively know what they entail.

Hence, although it is tempting to assume that people everywhere want and work towards the same 'good' – be it food, security or social reproduction – as the goal and endpoint of the revolution, as the 'imperialist' perspectives are prone to do, this is a dangerous notion. It is dangerous not only because it assumes a rather homogenous and fixed vision of what freedom and goodness entails, but also because such a perspective overlooks the obscure unfolding of historically influenced practices in times of transformation – in revolutionary time, to be precise – and rather ascribes them exterior motivations. Such perspectives obfuscate examining how the human

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[24] More precisely, I hope to render plausible an image of the *background* upon which the PKK's political cosmology was generated, since I do not wish to posit any isomorphic or teleologically evolutionary account – many other ways of 'dealing' with and 'understanding' these conditions could have arisen.

itself, as well as 'the good life,' might transform, and become unrecognizable from the outside, within situations of great and often violent upheaval.

At one level, then, due to its specificity, this thesis will concern the Kurdish revolution at a singular, crucial moment, and on another level, the fact that this was a singular moment has profoundly influenced what I see as the central dynamics and structures of the struggle, which outlast my particular fieldwork period. This tension is treated more in depth in chapter 2, which discusses methods and delimitations, but what follows here is a general consideration of the cosmology of the Kurdish revolution, seen from within this quite delimited, and perhaps exceptional, timeframe. I will in the next section delineate the structure that I see emerging from this perspective – from within the cosmology of the Kurdish revolution, so to speak. The next section will, in other words, attempt to provide a sketch of the main argument of the thesis in a somewhat simplified and different verbiage, which the following chapters will seek to elaborate and substantiate.

Revolutionary Logic

During my fieldwork period in and around Wan, Turkey (7 months in 2015),[25] close to the South-Eastern border, I was part of a commission tasked by our revolutionary neighborhood council with establishing more direct-democratic assemblies at the street level.[26] In addition to the council representing the neighborhood, the council had decided upon an edict from a section of the leadership, that more councils closer to the people were needed. This was one of the common activities I would participate with in my council in the evenings, and oftentimes assigning a responsible committee for the street-level assemblies would be easy and fun. Other times, it was more difficult, as it was in November of 2015. At the time, the Turkish state forces attacked multiple Kurdish party locations and had been accused by the UN of killing hundreds of

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[25] Wan is the Kurdish denomination of the city, while it is called 'Van' in Turkish. Staying true to the local vernacular, I employ the terms my informants would use for places, things, and organizations.
[26] Creating local neighborhood assemblies was a central tenet of Abdullah Öcalan's political philosophy. They would serve as vessels for peoples' autonomous self-organization, which through aggregation would eventually permit Kurdistan to free itself from the nation state and re-build a democratic, natural, gender liberated and ecological society.

Kurdish protestors and civilians across the country.[27] Only two months earlier a youth had been killed at a barricade in Wan, trying to keep the police out of his district.[28] This of course generated a certain trepidation on the part of the would-be street representatives – a fear for their lives, even – which was palpable when we convened at one of their houses in order to set up their revolutionary assembly. When it became clear to our neighborhood council leader that they were hesitant to sign up and take on the responsibility, he went into a harsh diatribe. To the shameful would-be representatives, he admonished them: "Is your happiness really more important than that of your fellow brothers and sisters?", "can you live your life freely if your comrades and fellow countrymen are being killed?", "what would the martyrs say of your actions?". Telling by the humiliated looks on their faces, not daring to meet the eye of the neighborhood council leader, it was clear that these words had effect, and by the end of the meeting a handful of representatives had been elected.

The core complaint the neighborhood council leader lodged against the would-be representatives was that their mode of living was individualizing in that they put the desire and well-being of the individual before the collective. Phrased differently, the neighborhood council leader argued that they needed to set their individual selves aside as an instrument for measuring the 'good.' The collectivity emerged as the ideological instrument through which one should judge oneself and others. Instead of acting in a way where their individual selves were the most important, he, as a representative of the movement, sought to create a climate where the individual was supposed to embody and enact the collective. By behaving as if embodying the collective, the council leader sought to create a person that would both be enacting the revolution, as well as providing the conditions for its survival in a new social system.

That is not to say that this was a sentiment or attitude towards life that permeated all contexts everywhere – people would still find means of enjoyment that would be

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[27] Cumming-Bruce, N. (2017, March 10). 'U.N accuses Turkey of Killing Hundreds of Kurds.' *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/10/world/europe/un-turkey-kurds-human-rights-abuses.html

[28] 'One youth killed, another wounded by police in Van.' (2015, September 15). *ANF News.* Retrieved from https://anfenglishmobile.com/kurdistan/one-youth-killed-another-wounded-by-police-in-van-12723

private, individual or exclusionary. It was not a constant feature that people should 'put the collective first,' as the leader above so desired. Rather, this mode of reasoning and directing action existed as a potential to be drawn upon by political actors in everyday life; they *could* shame (or comport) people into thinking of others first. It was something that an actor could bring up in public if one desired to motivate or create behavior. When it was brought up in conversation, it functioned almost as a way of reminding the offenders of what the *doxa* should be (Bourdieu, 1990), that is, what *should be* the mode of normal social interaction.

People who were subjected to these tirades or reminders, would often feel profoundly ashamed when it was directed towards them, and in fact, whenever it was brought up in a public setting the people who were merely listening in, would also exhibit emotions of contrition. The intensity of this logic and how much this was lived and put into the public, varied greatly from person to person and situation to situation. Some of my closer informants, which I will elaborate in the coming chapters, would exhibit this attitude in public life or in the work-place, but in the evening retire to the living room and drink a few beers while watching Turkish soap operas – behavior that was very much considered contrary to the revolutionary ideology. Other people however, took this perspective more profoundly to heart, to such a degree that re-creational activities should be performed as a collectivity. Drinking beer, chatting about intimate relations, and personal hopes and dreams, were examples of activities that were substituted with dancing and singing revolutionary songs, preparing food, or talking about the joy of the struggle together. As such, the prioritization of the collectivity over the individual in personal ways of living was not so much a constant feature of living in the struggle, but rather a *logic* that could be actualized more or less often, or taken more or less to heart.[29]

What this vignette shows, is not merely that revolution entails subsuming an individual to a collective in a novel fashion (Holbraad, 2014; Sorel, 2004; Fanon, 2004), but also to direct attention to the *way* that this takes place. Of course, this kind of appeal to

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[29] I here follow Handelman's terminology, who argues that in the case of cosmology (which is inherently ontological), "the [ontological] 'principles' refer less to the content of a cosmos than to logic or logics of connectedness and separation that organize cosmos" (Handelman 2008, p. 182).

collective responsibility is part of moral discourse of the social everywhere in the world, but, as it will be my point in the coming chapters, under the violent conditions of Kurdish life it takes on a particular meaning. As was apparent in the meeting, how the neighborhood council leader employed a mode of speech, references and encouragement to practice, relied upon a certain logic. And it is this logic that I want to highlight. It is not a constant feature that people are or are not revolutionaries; it is an effect of when and how a certain revolutionary dynamic is actualized, framed and put into (social) play. To become revolutionary here, it was necessary to frame and activate a revolutionary *logic of interaction.* For the Kurdish movement, as we saw briefly in the speech that the council leader gave to the would-be representatives, this logic hinged profoundly on the role and usage of death and the dead.[30] In my experience with the Apoist movement, the particularity of its collective morality was tied to its configuration of death and martyrdom as part and parcel of that collectivity. Without the martyrs serving both as an incarnation of the fulfilled responsibility to the collectivity in a revolutionary frame, and simultaneously as figures who were venerated and appreciated, the social logic the leader employed to shame people into taking responsibility would not have worked.

For me, the discovery that the logic of manifesting a political collectivity was very much directed by *the dead* was really what opened the social situation into context of radical alterity. As the neighborhood council representative argued, the collectivity towards which one should act as a person – to those one owed a revolutionary debt – also revolved around the martyrial dead. The logic which sought to subjugate the individual to the collective, to whom one is made to feel responsible to as an individual person also *included* the dead, in other words. Hence, without the violently deceased family members, comrades and countrymen, not only would his speech have had less effect, it would also have changed the shape of the collective the individuals held a duty towards and how they were to act towards it. *Doing right by the dead,* was

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[30] It should be remarked here that I am entirely inconsistent in using the label 'martyrs,' or *Şehîd* in Kurdish, which is the common parlance. I often oscillate between calling the martyrs 'the dead,' or 'the living dead,' and so forth. I have kept this ambiguity in the terminology because I have found it ambiguous in Kurdistan as well; most of the time the dead are martyrs, but sometimes that are also just 'dead.' In fact, I would claim, it is this inherent ambiguity that makes them generative in the first place. They are indeed both dead and not, and the oscillating usage is intended to reflect this double position.

in fact the Kurdish movement's core organizing principle, as I will endeavor to prove in this thesis, directing action away from the individual in towards the collectivity – the collectivity of which, paradoxically, the dead were part.

Victory or Victory

In some ways, this is of course not a novel point. Disregarding the revolutionary quality of the dead, many anthropologists writing from disparate corners of the world have documented how the dead (re-)structure and regenerate social orders (see, for instance, Desjarlais, 2016; Lambek, 2009; Verdery, 1999; Scheper-Hughes, 1998; Seremetakis, 1991; Lan, 1985; Bloch & Parry, 1982; Bloch, 1971).[31] Kathrine Verdery, for instance, examines how the contestation of where bodies are to be buried has been an integral part of re-shaping an understanding of a nation in a process of state dissolution (Verdery 1999). In a similar vein, Bruce Kapferer (2012) shows how the re-constitution of the nationalist state in Sri Lanka was built upon a Buddhist myth of purification, demanding the violent expulsion of the 'demonic' Tamils – an argument akin to what Christopher Taylor argues with regards to the Tutsi in the Rwandan genocide (1999). Contrary to the idea of the dead re-constituting a prior social organization, newer scholarship has also illustrated how death may generate new and unforeseen social formations (Conklin, 2018; Mueggler, 2018). Beth Conklin (2018) shows, for instance, that among the Wari in the Amazon, cannibalizing dead members of kin was a way of removing the deceased from their prior social relationships, and in the process of collectively consuming them, the village created novel kinship relations. Scholarship, has, in other words, shown in various fashions the centrality of death, death management, and the different ways dead bodies in (re)constitute social orders.[32]

The term 'social order' is, hence, intended here to carry a specific, yet expansive, meaning. It derives from a conjunctive reading of Marshall Sahlins' and David

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[31] See Robert Hertz (2018) for an originary point of discussion, and Antonius Robben (2018) for a critical re-consideration.

[32] A subtopic of the discussion of the relationship of death to the (re-)creation of a social order, is the topic of suicide-attacks in relation to terrorism which has a much more expansive literature pertaining to it. I will not place my work within this scholarship here, but this topic explored in chapter 4. Instead, I would think of the discussion of martyrdom to revolution, as a more suitable 'sub-heading' for the perspective I am attempting to forward.

Graeber's book *On Kings* (2017) and Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry's work on death (1982). Sahlins and Graeber argue that purely secularist understandings of social order may be inattentive to the 'spiritual' dimension of social life, which they see humans as always-already being imbricated in. Speaking rather of a 'cosmic polity', Sahlins and Graeber (2017, p. 2) make the argument that any social order is necessarily a spiritual order simultaneously. Even in historical literature on statecraft, as exemplified by Hobbes and Rousseau who have provided much of the foundation for modern constitutional democracies, their points of departure often concern the 'Natural Order' given by God, or indeed the concept of 'Divine Right,' as they point out (Sahlins & Graeber, 2017).

Bloch and Parry may be seen as elaborating on this condition of the social being always-already imbricated in a structuring, spiritual order. They posit that death is never 'nothingness,' but rather merely transformation; the dead are inevitably re-embedded in the social order, but in a different place. For them, death is "the transfer of the soul from one social order to another (albeit imagined) social order…" (Bloch & Parry, 1982, p. 4), so that rather than disappearing, the dead are re-integrated in a different, spiritual register, where they continue to 'live on' and exert social force. Indeed, as Rane Willerslev, Dorthe Christensen and Lotte Meinert state, "the deceased are often assigned a permanently superior status vis-à-vis the living…" (Willerslev, Christensen & Meinert, 2016, p. 8), and, thereby, exert power over them. As Özsoy has argued, such a social order can also be recognized in the Kurdish context:

> killings (…) by the Turkish state are met by the symbolic construction of a superior death: the overcoming of biological murder through martyrdom, the relocation of the dead into the symbolic realms of regeneration and immortality (Özsoy, 2010, p. 44).

By thinking of the social order as including the martyrial dead as inhering, structuring elements, we may in fact be better equipped to (partially) delineate what the PKK envisions for the struggle and for Kurdistan.

With regards to death's relationship to revolution, however, the anthropological literature becomes more scarce, even though it is not all together lacking (see, for instance, Bargu, 2014; Hatina 2014; Allen 2009, 2008, 2006a, 2006b; Lecomte-Tilouine, 2006; Degregori, 1997). Lori Allen (2009, 2008, 2006a) for example, in describing the Palestinian *Intifada* of 2000, notes how when the dead become revolutionary martyrs, they become signifiers of resistance to the Israeli occupation and national icons. Simultaneously, however, she points to how claiming and commemorating martyrs becomes a strategic practice, both with regards to power struggles internal to the movement and appeals to the international community, fostering a fatigue and cynicism on the part of the bereft. At a different theoretical level, other scholars have argued that martyrdom, in fact, is *the* core characteristic of a revolutionary cosmology (see Hatina, 2014; Holbraad, 2014; Apter, 1997, for different examples). Without a re-configuration of people's relationship to death, they argue, a revolution would be perpetually beyond grasp; the value of death would always need to supersede the value of life in a revolution, under certain circumstances (Holbraad, 2014; Apter, 1997).[33] David Apter, for instance, contends that if a revolutionary movement does not incarnate or encourage a reconfiguration of life's relationship to death, the hegemonic and oppressive structures of society would (more easily) reproduce themselves, or sublate themselves within the movement itself (Apter, 1997). Martyrdom is indeed often a measure of depth and extent of popular revolutionary commitment (Hatina, 2014). Even though this point has been made at a very general level, I would still contend that the Kurdish case presents a partially novel configuration of revolution's necessary relationship to death.[34]

In Kurdistan, as in other places then (Bargu, 2014, 2009; Degregori, 1997; Fenech, 1997; Pettigrew, 1991), revolution as a value may supersede the individual life, hence

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[33] This point has a strong resonance with George Sorel's and Franz Fanon's description of the necessity of violence in revolution (Fanon, 2018, 2004; Sorel 2004), although Sorel is more 'romantic' in his approach.

[34] A common slogan of the movement is '*serkeftin an serkeftin*,' meaning 'victory or victory,' a modification of the more customary slogan in other movements, namely 'victory or death,' indicating that even if death would be awaiting, they would still win. To me, this slogan indicated that the revolution had 'no outside,' so to speak. Whereas other movements might think of death as the stake of victory, in the Kurdish case death was itself a victory, and, conversely, victory itself was death. In the cosmology that the movement had constructed it was literally impossible to lose, in other words; the struggle could not be measured in such terms.

rendering a martyrial death the highest signifier of a commitment to revolutionary life, which I will expand upon in chapter 4 and 5. Instead of abandoning *living* (both for and in) the revolution, through martyrial action, one proves that one is willing to abandon oneself in order to *further* the revolution. But whereas the dead are often thought of as *external* to the revolutionary situation – working as exemplars, or great individuals – invoking sentimental memories and nostalgia (Hobraad, 2014; Ercan, 2013), the dead in the Kurdish context seemed more to work as social mediators, similar to the Zimbabwean revolutionaries' oracles, described by David Lan (1985). They were not so much distant figures, testifying to a certain epochal period in which the revolution was threatened, but rather imbricated within the very workings of the social world. Indeed, similar to the Hyolmo Buddhists in Nepal, the dead did not belong to one realm or the other, and by virtue of their co-population with the living, they vested the world with importance, mediating interaction through punctuated social rituals, speech-act invocations, and commemorative practices (Desjarlais, 2018).

At the outset of my fieldwork in 2015 in Turkish Kurdistan, this was intuitively hard to grasp for me, since I, as an outsider, was prone to think that death, to a certain extent, signified a void. That once one is dead, there is no life left, so to speak; that the dead have no social life in any regulatory fashion. In a sense, it was intuitive for me to think about death as a form of double negation; death as the opposite of life, but also as pure nothingness. There was little to encompass and order the dead across territories, families and time-periods. They were exemplars of nothing except their own, individual achievements. This notion of the dead I did not find to extend to the Kurdish struggle. In the Kurdish struggle, the dead did not become void – as others have documented (Ercan, 2013; Özsoy, 2010) – but integrated into another order, a supra-individual order of resistance, extending from beginning of time, until today.

1.1 This image of the monument dedicated to the martyrs of the Kobanê battle, the central turning point in the struggle against ISIS in Syria, illustrates the point concisely. The female guerilla soldier (profoundly mythologized in herself), Arîn Mîrkan, is both a living person, but at the same time an incarnation of a divine ideal. At the same time as the soldier is a person, the person is also an incarnation of the revolution as a transcendental ideal, exemplified most clearly in/by his or her martyrdom. Death does not fall into 'conventional' categories here.[35]

As a starting point to how death is different, we might say that the social role that the martyrs filled in the Kurdish struggle is roughly twofold. Departing from Gunes' (2013) and Özsoy's (2010) observations – who have documented the importance of the martyrs for the struggle – the dead were not only symbols of inspiration and 'great people,' exceptional or unique individuals (like Che Guevara), but also integrated within an *order of the dead.* As in the council meeting in Wan, the effect that the martyrs had on the would-be street representatives, depended the on representatives recognizing a general category of martyrs as pertaining to their situation; 'the martyrs' were a nameless whole that could be invoked to spur action. Although the most famous martyrs in the movement might have had certain peculiar traits they had

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[35] Image retrieved from the 'Kurdish Solidarity Campaign,' on twitter,
https://twitter.com/kurdscampaign/status/971673606085332992

exhibited during their lifetime (Gunes, 2013; Özsoy, 2010), they too were initially important as martyrs because of the generalized manner in which they died, and where and when. As such, martyrs were not distinct entities which could be remembered separately, but integrated in an order where a totalizing logic subsumed them. They were all – not only the famous ones – carriers or incarnations of "the spirit of resistance" (*Berxwedan* March 1994, cited in Gunes, 2013, p. 261).[36] Through their martyrdom they had elevated themselves into a pantheon, where they still existed as a fixed totality by virtue of the generalized character of their death. As such, the constituted a paradox: They were all the same, although they were also different. In this way, as a supra-individual force, they were not only 'examples' or 'individuals for inspiration,' but together indexed a total moral order. The dead do not stand as individual exemplars of inspiring revolutionary conduct, but are rather merged into an aggregated order, which *as an order* impels and directs actions, thoughts and feelings. To put it in more abstract terms, instead of serving as 'motivational speakers,' they were more a 'school' – with all the bio-political connotations that term carries (Foucault, 1995). They provided, as a unit, a totalizing image of which ways of living, and, more importantly, dying, were venerated and valorized by the movement.

The second part of the martyrs' social role was that they, in addition to pointing to a totalizing organization of moral life, also indexed the continuous injustice committed by the world order. Interestingly, this was not only tied to people who had been guerillas and soldiers and killed in action, but also to other people who had devoted their lives to 'bettering the world,' or struggled against oppression. Even civilians murdered by the state, with no particular individual achievements, could become martyrs, meaning that the hundreds of thousands of Kurds who had been killed by the different patron nation states could be martyrs, depending on the context and the people you asked. Furthermore, the people who were considered and venerated as martyrs, did not even have to be Kurds. In fact, in many of the locations where I worked there were also martyr-icons of Rosa Luxemburg, Che Guevara, and different social workers or civilian contributors, of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. As such, there was a certain internationalism imbricated in the order of martyrs,

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[36] *Berxwedan* is the name of the Kurdish language newspaper distributed by the PKK.

indicating that the movement did not see itself as confined to merely ethno-nationalist boundaries. The history and struggle of Kurdistan was a part of a longer, global historical continuum, namely the 'undeterrable struggle towards freedom' (Öcalan, 2017), which, according to the leader Abdullah Öcalan and the movement's sociology books,[37] had been present ever since the founding of the first state in Mesopotamia some 3000 years ago (Öcalan, 2015, 2009). As such, not only reflecting a moral order, the martyrs also indexed the ongoing injustice committed in the world.

Living the Dead

However, the 'undeterrable struggle towards freedom,' driven by the *ruhê berxwedan,* literally 'spirit of resistance,' should not therefore be interpreted as solely belonging to the domain of the dead, I argue. I devote chapters 5, 6, and 7, to showing that the 'spirit of resistance' – as suggested by the ongoing historical hermeneutic – was ongoing and living. Both the living and dead had a place within it, I argue – the dead were merely the people who had brought the spirit of resistance to its natural and furthermost conclusion.[38] Everyone could take hold of and enjoin with the 'spirit of resistance,' if they so desired; what was needed was merely to relinquish oneself as an individual in favor of the collective in life, like the martyrs had done in death. The theme of abnegation, either by denying the value individual life in living, or by denying the value of individual life in dying, was what brought the two temporal horizons together, as I contend in chapter 7. The chasm between the living and the dead could be transversed by virtue of a common mode of self-denying praxis. If the moral order of the dead was assimilated, so to speak, the dead would continue their life through the living.

In this way the Kurdish movement's cosmology, encouraged, to some degree, living as though one was dead. One's potential death, instead of it being imagined as a distant coda beyond the foreseeable horizon, could through this logic be brought into

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[37] I was fortunate enough at the Maxmur refugee camp to be given a sociology book used in their school system to teach young adults, very much informed by Abdullah Öcalan's writings. Unfortunately, it is hard to cite this work correctly since there is no author, year of production, or accessibility outside of the material books of the camp.
[38] This point is extensively elaborated in chapter 5.

immanence in the way one structured one's life.[39] This is not then meant in the Heideggerian or Nietzschean fashion, namely that realizing the finitude of death and 'grasping hold of it' provides the individual with the capacity to make 'authentic' choices as a subject (Nietzsche, 2005; Heidegger, 1996), but rather that 'living as if one is dead,' means that one should direct one's actions towards the mode of living exemplified in the collective order of the dead (Willerslev, Christensen & Meinert 2016; Bloch & Parry, 1982). In a sense, contrary to Heidegger, through grasping hold of death, *Das Man* was formulated rather than overcome. Whereas Heidegger saw death as a means of liberating oneself from the inauthentic, conformist directives of the 'the They' (Heidegger, 1996), authenticity for the Kurdish movement resided precisely in attaining an absorption in 'the They.' Expanding on Gunes' and Özsoy's assessment then – since the aggregated dead in Kurdistan are the ultimate signifiers for commitment to the collectivity – this also results in a hierarchy among the living, as is elaborated in chapter 8. More than serving as a personal object of reflection and adoration (see also Holbraad, 2014), the dead come in force when they speak; they are all manifestations of the same logic of resistance that, in fact, can be approximated or lived (more or less well) by the living.

The people who were better at approximating this way of living, who had proved that they may live as vessels for the dead, were paradoxically the people who gained more social traction and power in the living world, as we shall see in chapter 6. Throughout the regions in which I worked, the people who commanded the most respect, and were most often accorded high formal positions, were the people who had shown that they themselves signified nothing. They were the people who had proven that they to a large degree had extinguished themselves as individuals, or more precisely that their value as a desiring, autonomous individual took a definite backseat to the value of the collective, and in fact became determined by the collective. In fact, as we shall see in chapter 8, the search for people who exhibited these characteristics took on an institutional form in Turkish Kurdistan, and was seen as a guarantee against corruption and de-mobilization of the struggle. Large institutional mechanisms were put in place to sort through the candidates in order of self-abnegating virtue. On a superficial level,

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[39] How this works is a general theme of the thesis and will be explored in chapter 5, 6, 7 and 8, in various contexts and at various levels.

support for this argument can be seen in the top leadership in all the major Kurdish parties in Syria and Turkey. Last time Selahattin Demirtaş was seen at the time of writing, the former leader of the HDP in Turkey, he was smiling and giving the victory sign while awaiting a 143-year prison sentence, after having lived through several assassination attempts. Likewise, the leader of the PYD in Syria,[40] Salih Muslim had 'given' one of his sons to the struggle – as the vernacular is – and upon his martyrdom claimed: "He is not only our martyr, with honor and dignity he protected his people. That's why he is the martyr of his people."[41]

Aside from gaining position in civil society and status from one's peers, the international spread of such a logic – accepting that the dead and their living spokesmen have such power over the individual person – lies in the fact that the 'objective conditions' for living in Kurdistan might support such prospects, as will be shown in chapter 3. At certain times in Kurdistan, when the repression from the state is at its hardest and there is an immanent possibility of imprisonment, torture, or murder – it is perhaps more easy to accept that dying in a 'good way' is better than being killed at happenstance at the hand of a policeman (or an ISIS fighter, in other cases). It could also be that such a perspective is eschewed due to the assumption that people would have this calculus of reasoning in the first place; instead people might merely feel compelled to sacrifice themselves, or put oneself in situations where self-sacrifice might be necessary, without much prior thought behind it, seeing it as merely fulfilling a dutiful obligation. Nonetheless, among the people who support and work for the movement, this superscription of one's own individual life, is still an appealing potential for many. This logic thrives under violent and unjust conditions.

Revolution as Martyrdom

If this perspective is correct, I would say that this holds profound consequences for the pre-suppositions of both the leftist and liberal imperial perspectives on revolution, as well as anthropological approaches to revolutionary politics. The traditional idea

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[40] The 'Democratic Union Party' or *Partîya Yekîtîya Demokrat* in Kurdish. The governing party in Syrian Kurdistan, or Northern Syria, which is a close affiliate of the PKK.
[41] 'Salih Muslim: Gelê Kurd li Pişt me ye.' (2013, October 14). *ANF News.* Retrieved from https://anfkurdi.com/cihan/salih-muslim-gele-kurd-li-pist-me-ye-24641 (My translation).

imbricated in both the liberal and the leftist suppositions of revolution, namely that death is necessary for a better life, becomes turned on its head. In the Kurdish revolution, it seems that life is in fact necessary for a better death. Paradoxically, since the dead, when they are killed, are integrated in the totalizing order of the martyrs, they themselves contribute to a force which compels people to become dead in life. Two profound consequences for the study of the Kurdish revolution can be drawn from this conclusion.

The first concerns sovereignty. Sovereignty is often considered the end-goal of revolutionary struggles, almost always vested in a state formation (as critiqued in Shah & Pettigrew, 2009, and Della Porta and Diani, 2009). But if sovereignty is taken to be the power to decide who lives and who dies (Agamben, 2005, 1998; Mbembe 2003), in the Kurdish case, the dead have already to a certain extent become the sovereign.[42] The movement's idea of the dead, in fact argues that the state under which the Kurds live, does not have the power to decide who lives and who dies – and nor should it. While it is true that the state may take away the biological life of the person, the 'spirit' of the person in martyrdom – what the person *really* is – continues living. This spirit life of the person, defined by its 'resistance,' takes on a life of its own when integrated into a moral order. The order, both personal and impersonal, speaks in force and affect. It demands retribution, and compels action and fidelity. It demands, in short, more death and a certain abnegating way of life. For the people who believe and follow this logic, it is neither the state nor the Kurdish leadership who possess sovereignty; it is in fact the dead, speaking through them and for them, that decide who may live and who may die.

The second consequence of the dead integrating with the living (creating and maintaining a social order as a consequence), is that the conventional ideas of progress are reshaped. If it is such that the dead constitute a composite sovereign force in

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[42] An interesting conjunction can here be made with Stepputat's recent argument that it is in fact the process of controlling *dying,* not as in 'death,' but as in the process of cessation and post-mortem control, that the state manifests its sovereignty (Stepputat, 2018). In this way, he places his analysis beyond the confines of both biopower and necropower, rather seeing them as coming together in decentralized state apparatus, where controlling *living-dying* is the central mode of exercising sovereign power. This will be more thoroughly discussed in chapter 5 and slightly in chapter 9, where it is also brought to bear on other necropolitical definitions (Bargu, 2016, 2014).

Kurdistan, and may compel the living to die – either by virtue of killing the enemy or sacrificing oneself – how is one to imagine transition, change, or 'the radically new?' Since the dead demand more dead, and index both continuation and injustice simultaneously, time seems to have more of a cyclical nature than a linear one. In this way, the possibility of arriving at a place where the living alone can decide how the living should live becomes pushed beyond the ideological and temporal horizon of the movement. That is, instead of the logic of resistance pointing to the 'unknown new,' the logic is rather both creating the conditions and enacting the new order within the struggle as it progresses. Its reproductive logic (death begets more death), indicates a cyclical nature of the struggle, as it now stands. There is no progress in the conventional understanding of the term, just a continuous manifestation of the order of the dead in life. Hence, in the Kurdish movement, one might say that the order of the dead is always utopia already realized.

How should we characterize such an organization and logic of a revolution, supposing that my initial assertions are correct? If the idea of the dead serving as the core organizing principle for the Kurdish revolution, as a logic shaping both people and social formations – as will be elaborated in the coming chapters – is correct, what should it be called? To me, it seems like a fitting theoretical heading could be that the Kurdish struggle should be deemed a struggle for a *Necropolis*. Indeed, if the dead testify to the best that one can strive for, and embody a community of the people who have provided and lived the conditions for utopia, they in a certain sense both exemplify and compel people to live 'in a community of the dead.' Although not a 'community' in the strictest sense, the connotations that 'polis' have with sovereignty and a regulated moral and social order, fits well with the use of the term. Literally, 'city of the dead,' a necropolis, may be taken to exemplify a place where the dead decide and accord rights, duties, powers, and representation, within a political and social order – which, strangely enough, seems to resonate with the Kurdish context. What I will argue in following chapters, then, is that free Kurdistan is in fact a necropolis, and furthermore, that a free Kurdistan is constantly being enacted by virtue of bringing the moral order of the dead into a lived system of life. It is a utopian logic which is hard for us as outsiders to grasp, or perhaps even to appreciate, and riddled

with contradictions and varied enactments (as we shall see in chapter 9). But within this moment of history, when the war raged on in its extreme, this was the core of the Kurdish revolution.

Chapter Overview

The thesis is structured in the following manner. Firstly, in Chapter 2, I discuss how we may conceptualize revolutions analytically, and how we determine *where* a revolution may be said to take place. I argue that contrary to perspectives on multi-sited fieldwork (Marcus, 1995), where the site is often taken as a unitary configuration regardless of its attempted evasion and circumscription (see Candea's critique from 2007), it would be fortuitous to consider revolution as an open-ended and mutable logic, which is located both everywhere and nowhere. Rather than considering revolution as a static entity, afforded by certain overarching conditions (as Skocpol, 1999, would have it), in other words, I suggest considering it as a structured yet open-ended means of relating to the world, which may or may not be manifested in particular situations. Such a perspective, I argue, opens up for examining revolution ethnographically, as has been called for by Shah & Pettigrew (2009) and Thomassen (2012), since it encourages attentiveness to practices (or modalities of practices) as they unfold in time, and may also draw attention away from *place* towards *time* as the prime mover in conceptualizing a field. Forwarding this way of approaching revolution also encourages moving away from an 'objectivist' perspective – which, as Matei Candea (2007) and others have shown, still permeates certain methodologies of multi-sited fieldwork – in favor of an attentiveness to the imaginative endeavors the fieldworker necessarily engages with in creating a field/topic.

From this methodological consideration, in chapter 3 I move into what I have briefly sketched here as the conditions for the 'otherness,' as sketched above. Here I provide a history of the state's logic of violence in Turkey, and explore what ramifications this has had for the development of the Kurdish movement (particularly, the PKK). I argue that despite various economic reforms and governmental changes, the Turkish state's relationship to the Kurdish population has been one characterized by an *eradicative logic*. I trace the genesis of this eradicative logic to the Şêx Saîd rebellion of 1925,

where this mode of 'dealing with' the Kurds was (arguably) first enacted, and later became the foundation for the emergent Turkish (state's) identity. As opposed to more recent perspectives' emphasis on neoliberalism as an agent for violence in itself, I illustrate that although the technologies and organization of violence have changed, the logic by which it has been exerted cannot be said to derive from this particular economic configuration, but rather from the state's particular identitarian constitution. As such, in addition to charting a particular history of the Kurds in Turkey, the chapter also serves as a rejoinder to perspectives which emphasize the historical socio-cultural imbrications of violence as a primary – not secondary – determinant of its exertion.

In chapter 4, I continue with a historical perspective, but consider the formation of the PKK specifically. I show how its formation is intimately linked not only with the Turkish left, but also with a particular configuration of martyrdom. As opposed to seeing the PKK drawing on a Kurdish nationalist or Islamic heritage, I follow Marlies Casier, Jongerden and Akkaya in suggesting that the PKK's organizational and ideological roots can be more fruitfully considered as emerging with the revolutionary left both in Turkey and abroad (Casier & Jongerden, 2012; Akkaya & Jongerden, 2011b), but focus my attention specifically upon the development of its martyrology. In the PKK's period of party formation, I argue that martyrs were central figures for creating what Apter has called an "inversionary logic of violence" (Apter, 1997, p. 10), namely a means of turning relationships of violent exchange into interactions generative of a cosmological alterity. I claim that the particular revolutionary project of the PKK, and its incipient cosmology, must be seen as departing from and built upon a commitment to the martyrs, which has remained previously partially under-examined. I argue that in addition to the necessity of sustaining reciprocal violence for a revolutionary project, in other words, the violence's meaning must simultaneously be transformed into a vehicle for cosmological alterity which, I argue, the martyrs facilitate with regards to the PKK.

Building on the argued prominence of the martyrs, I go on in chapter 5 to consider what utopian order the martyrs structure, as exemplified and embodied in the cemetery

of the PKK's high-seat, the Qandil mountains.[43] Through examining the structure of the cemetery as well as its context, I argue that we may distinguish between three types of martyrdoms, which serve different purposes in assisting *Apocî* in relating to the world. I argue that the martyrs generate a complex set of sacrificial gift and debt relations both to each other and to the venerating *Apocî,* which impels speech and action in the world (in the places where the logic is actualized). The order of the martyrs, I claim, structures the utopian order of the revolution, and provides an anatomical framework for people to refer to and translate into action.

In chapter 6, I move on to consider the order of the martyrs less as an ideal system, and more as a mediator in social life. I attempt to chart the places where the 'mythical' world of the previous chapter becomes mapped onto the everyday and how; where the revolutionary cosmology is brought to bear on the lived structures and lives people had. Taking the revolutionary PKK refugee camp Maxmur in 2016 as a point of departure, I show how the martyrs intercede and govern much of the private and political life. Maxmur is a particularly suited location for this inquiry, I argue, since it is often thought of as a utopian place, in some regards, incarnating what Öcalan had described as 'the new life.' In line with the chapter 2 and, further, Apter's theoretical claims, I contend that the people, in a sense, become 'martyrial' in their practices and outlook, and that measuring and enacting 'martyrdom' becomes the measure of hierarchy, and the foundation of what Abdullah Öcalan's called the 'new life.' I examine this in both the ritual context of the democratic meetings surrounding the *şehîdlik* (or 'martyr house*'* in English),[44] but also outside of the ritual confines. Here, in other words, we get a full image of what martyrdom as a logic of interaction means, as derived from the previously described order of the martyrs. We see how the martyrs in a direct way structure the practice of PKK's revolutionary program.

From this examination of the concrete, we advance into an examination of the (re)production of revolutionary time, as exemplified in the Newroz festival in chapter

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[43] I here think of the order as a 'synchronic' one, that is, as an image of a social order, frozen and lifted out of time; a description of a 'snapshot' of social structures at a given time, rather than a description of its movement in time. See David Jenkins (1995) for an analytical usage of the term.
[44] Can also be used as 'graveyard' in Turkish, but is in the Kurdish vernacular taken to denominate the 'house of martyrs,' or the *Mala Şehîdên* in Kurdish, often located within graveyards.

7. Considering the festival's ritual and historical properties, I forward the argument that the martyrs are central to (re)creating the new time of the revolution and of the Kurds and, further, that the martyrs are the instigators and perpetuators of a revolutionary time where movement is premised upon a cycle of abnegating sacrifice. The martyrs, in other words, condition how movement in time is seen, and what actions are demanded to bring the struggle toward an eventual (and continually present) freedom.

In chapter 8, I provide an ethnographic anatomy of the Kurdish movement as it existed when I worked in Wan in 2015. I leave this a description of how the system worked when I was there and how, and as a testament to how I see the previously expounded values imbricated in the revolutionary practices. I attempt to show, under conditions of violent repression, the effects that the martyrs had on the people were more ambiguous and subject to contention. As my material shows, although people felt committed to the martyrs, they were left in a certain state of aporia where, on the one hand, they negotiated personal safety and risk-taking, and on other, they felt committed to not 'shame' the martyrs. For the activists, I show, the central task was 'properly' framing what the martyrs had died for in terms of ideology and commitment through education, and simultaneously reminding the hesitant public of *how important they actually were*.

From an examination of the ambiguities of the martyrial logic, we shall in chapter 9 attempt to examine what the limits of this system are. We examine various 'escapes' from the system, how the martyrial logic becomes malleable to the point of non-efficacy, and how the martyrs are, in a sense, moved out of the system itself. By visiting Berlin and the diasporic *Apocî* community, we shall see that maintaining the efficacy and meaning of the martyrs becomes a difficult task for the Apoist leadership in situations removed from the homeland. As young refugees from Kurdistan with Apoist affiliations attempt to live in Germany, both what the martyrs are understood as a testifying to and how efficacious they are in directing action becomes diluted. Simultaneously, however, we shall suggest that the term 'limit' might imply a false spatialization of the struggle, since the diaspora is seen, and acted upon, as a central

component in the struggle. In this way, we concern ourselves with the process of territorializing and de-territorializing the martyrs in the diaspora, and the multifariousness this entails.

In the conclusion of the same chapter, I shall attempt to summarize the martyrs' role in structuring the PKK's cosmology, and relate this cosmology to a potential study of sovereignty. I indicate how the argument of the thesis can be developed further in future research by considering it in relation to notions of sovereignty. I suggest that the PKK's revolution can be thought of as doubling a necropolis, where the order of the dead is always already imbricated in life, thereby potentially contesting a state-issued notion of sovereignty. I submit that Luc de Heusch's term 'co-sovereignty' (1985), a term used to describe how sovereignty is both vested in the divine and the vernacular, may be fitting for analyzing the Kurdish resistance, and revolution more generally. Like sovereignty founded on biopower, I suggest, the Kurdish martyr-sovereignty which may be seen as resisting it, should be considered more in-depth as an ambiguous, contextual and continually unfolding practice.

Limitations

The thesis should not be read as an endeavor to pigeonhole the totality of the Kurdish revolution, however. There are lacunae in the thesis that for various reasons have not been addressed in depth, and which undermine any comprehensive grasp this thesis has on what the Kurdish revolution may be said to be. Perhaps the greatest limitation of the thesis is that it is 'gender blind.' A strong argument could be formulated that the thesis does not examine the specificity of gender relations in relation to the topic in question, namely revolution, and that therefore a major dimension of the process has been overlooked. In fact, the charge is arguably particularly pertinent with regards to the Kurdish movement, since the importance of women and their liberation is systematically emphasized in myth, organization and everyday life. As Öcalan himself argues, the path which set humanity on its course towards the nation state, capitalism, and oppression more generally, initially started with the oppression of women (Öcalan, 2017). Patriarchy is at the root of the current global predicament, he argues, and concordantly, the liberation of women is the center-point of resistance (Öcalan, 2013).

In fact, according to fighters in the guerilla, Öcalan dubbed the PKK a "women's party" in 1998 (Bengio, 2016, p. 35).

The reason I have not examined this in any detail has been mostly pragmatic. Since the movement in large part structures itself along lines of gender separation, meaning that the (often literal) spaces of men and women are usually divorced, gaining access to the 'female sphere,' so to speak, was difficult for me. The relationships I could build with men were in many cases not possible to build with women. This does not of course mean that women are absent from the thesis, as friends and comrades and informants, as will hopefully become apparent, but rather that their role—or the dimension of gender in general—in the struggle is not examined specifically.

Other authors have undertaken this work and conducted it more brilliantly than I could ever have been able to do, given my positionality and my research strategy of participant observation; I would here point to Isabel Käser's outstanding thesis (2018), examining the double-binds of the women's resistance in the movement, Nadje Al-Ali and Latif Tas' (2017) inquiries into the possibilities for and obstacles to the permanence of women's liberation in the Kurdish areas, and Handan Çağlayan's (2012) analysis of the role of women in the PKK's revolutionary mythology. Nazan Üstündağ (2016) and Dilar Dirik (2015) have shown how the Kurdish movement has made women's positionalities and experiences the focal point of the revolution,[45] which Ofra Bengio (2016, p. 31) deems a "double revolution" in her own writings. Metin Yüksel (2006) Üstündağ (2005) and Ayşe Altınay (2004) have also examined how various forms of historic oppression and dispossession have both specifically targeted women, and more generally had significantly gendered ramifications, both within various Kurdish communities and in relation to the Turkish state.[46] Assenting to Nerina Weiss' (2010) call to more closely examine gender in the Kurdish movement,

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[45] See also Arat & Altınay (2015) for a perspective on the civilian, local struggle in Turkish Kurdistan, Düzgün (2016) for a very short introduction to *jineolojî* (the PKK's literal science of 'womanology') and its place in the movement, and Diane King's (2008) reading of how women's bodies have become markers of sovereignty in traditional Kurdish family structures.

[46] See for instance the *Hürriyet's* report on the disproportionate amount of violence exerted against women in the "southeastern provinces", taking place during my stay in Turkish Kurdistan: '413 women killed across Turkey since start of 2015 according to media association.' (2016, February 17). *Hürriyet Daily News.* Retrieved from http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/413-women-killed-across-turkey-since-start-of-2015-according-to-media-association-95308.

with the research strategy I chose, this avenue for inquiry was unfortunately not open to me in the way that I would have liked it to have been.

Another valid critique of the work, would be the lack of attentiveness to agency in the movement. In a somewhat strict reading of the thesis, it might seem that what people do is always already pre-framed and constricted. And this is also not untrue. I believe, however, that how much of a problem this poses needs to considered in light of what the task of anthropology is taken to be, and what subject matter is to be studied. Although balance is necessary, it is not so much the individual stories that are to be lifted out in anthropology in my view, but rather the means by which a collective coheres, fragments, moves, re-assembles and dissolves. Put differently, rather than focusing on the individual as the locus for research and truth, in some situations (and perhaps particularly so with the Kurdish movement as it intentionally seeks to act collectively), the aggregate considered as an aggregate may reveal insights that are not accessible through the individual. Additionally, I see the amount of agency accorded and focused upon as necessarily depending on the nature of the research goals in question. With regards to the relationship between death and revolution, I did not find it pertinent to stay with individuals' choices and reflections. Revolution, I would (and will argue), is a phenomenon that needs to be considered in the aggregate, as it is, per definition, a mass phenomenon. But even though it is a mass phenomenon, this does not help us understand 'where' it takes place, or who I am in studying it. That is what the next chapter aims to explore.

2: Sites and Events of Fieldwork: Revolution as Everywhere and Nowhere

Introduction

Claiming that the Kurdish revolution is structured by the dead opens up a series of questions that need to be answered before one can even begin to formulate the argument itself. Where and when is the revolution, and who is it a revolution for? What position am I in to make this claim, and how does one study a revolution? To examine these questions, it is necessary to expound how I conceptualize my fieldwork speaking to the subject matter. Having conducted research in Turkey, Iraq and Germany, in three different 'sites,' and a host of different locations – from a guerilla camp in the mountains, to the foreign office of the PYD – the answer is not obvious. As what the fieldwork is taken to be able to speak on necessarily shapes what the thesis may be said to examine, delimiting what the fieldwork may speak on will in other words also delimit what revolution in this context may be understood as. Hence, this chapter is about the parameters for placing and understanding what the previous chapter introduced; it will concern how I see my conducted fieldwork as speaking to the subject matter.

Although I have perceived my fieldwork as a multi-sited endeavor, I have also in the process been uncomfortable with what that concept commonly connotes. While this chapter is not intended as a critique of multi-sited fieldwork, I hope it may shed light upon some of the less-examined aspects of multi-sitedness. My starting point was that revolution was a phenomenon that was simultaneously placed and non-placed at the same time, and that an attempt at a synoptic or totalized account or representation would fail to capture this central dynamic. As such, in this chapter I try to explain why I think this is the case, and what sort of understanding of sites and connections between them would be beneficial to understanding what I saw as the revolution.

I start by going through the progression of my completed fieldwork, and showing how my epistemological and methodological issues evolved along with it, before then

moving on to an examination of the more theoretical ramifications. As I attempt to highlight the ways in which I saw my fieldwork as fitting into the multi-sited framework, I also draw attention to some of the key aspects of why I saw it as a problematic fit. Without aiming to offer any incisive critique of 'multi-sitedness,' I use my fieldwork to highlight some of this position's epistemological ambiguities, for instance with regards to 'representation' (Marcus, 2011, 1995, 1986), the role of the researcher in 'creating' the field (Cook, Laidlaw & Mair, 2016; Candea, 2007), and, finally, the relationship between the global and the local. Towards the end, I suggest that a stronger attentiveness to temporality in multi-sited fieldwork might assist in resolving some of these ambiguities, or at least bring them to the fore. Intended as a supplement to the debate on the purchase and constitution of multi-sited fieldwork, I therefore end the section by suggesting that incorporating a perspective on events might bolster such a sensitivity to temporality.

Departing from an empirical analysis of two cases – one in Berlin, Germany, and another in Amed (or 'Diyarbakir' in English and Turkish) – I argue that by thinking in terms of events one may see how space becomes intertwined with time, which may, I will show, resolve issues concerning the relationship between the global and the local, by opening a way of seeing them as 'territorializing' and 'de-territorializing' factors rather than static units. Seeing events as emergent 'sites' that territorialize and simultaneously de-territorialize the global and the local, assists in thinking through the issues of 'representation' and the role of the researcher in 'creating' the field. At the very least, I conclude, thinking in terms of events might be seen as a fortuitous approach with regards to the study of revolution. To round off the chapter, I also explain how I see an 'eventive' approach fitting with the logic of martyrdom, as I approach this as the central structuring phenomenon in the movement's revolutionary discourse and practice.

In sum, the aim of the chapter is to show how a study of revolution can be sensitive to temporality, and how temporality might be more thoroughly imbricated in a multi-sited methodology. Even though a revolutionary movement needs both material and imaginative infrastructure to sustain itself across borders, the ways in which the

revolution becomes *revolutionary*, so to speak, are through series of events that dissolve time and place in certain ways. Instead of time and place working as given factors, both in the field and for the ethnographer, in a revolution they become relative and contingent factors, consequently simultaneously shaping where sites may be said to be 'found' and what they may be said to consist in. As such, I hope to illustrate that revolution cannot be conceptualized as belonging only to a specific group of people or delimited to a specific geographic location, but rather that it emerges in a 'space' where time and place is contingent and consubstantial (Dalsgaard & Nielsen, 2013). Despite examining sites as emerging contemporaneously with events in a revolution, at the end of the chapter I suggest that this does not pose an issue for the logic of martyrdom. The logic of martyrdom, I claim, transverses the different sites of the revolution as a structuring yet open-ended frame and generator of action, centrally imbricated in how given events unfold. To end up with this conclusion, however, we have to start at the beginning – or more precisely, with the beginning of my fieldwork.

From Turkey to Germany through Iraq

In a condition bemoaned by Matei Candea (2007, 2010) and Ghassan Hage (2005), among others, I found myself not being quite certain what I had studied upon the completion of fieldwork. I was unsure what my material was about, and what it could speak to. I had not conducted a so-called 'Malinowskian' fieldwork (Marcus, 1995), where a single village complex or kinship group provided a holistic ethnographic foundation for theoretical work.[47] Instead, my fieldwork took place in three different countries, spanning multiple locations in each place. This research strategy was not planned from the beginning. Instead of the different sites being part of an over-arching multi-sited research strategy (Marcus, 2011), I had sometimes been forced to move from place to place, and had at other times elected to do so in the belief that a different place would yield better data, be more predictable, or be safer. Moreover, I also did not necessarily think of the different places as different 'sites.' Despite not being planned ahead, in other words, I think that my fieldwork can be used to discuss some of the epistemological presuppositions and problematics imbricated in the multi-sited

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[47] This is of course a reductionist assessment, and should not be taken as a statement about the value or depth about 'Malinowksian' fieldwork, but merely as a brief comment for consideration, departing from Marcus' description (1995).

fieldwork's methodology, without necessarily offering any clear answers. Before expounding how my fieldwork may contribute to discussion on multi-sitedness, however, a brief chronology of the development of my research is necessary, as well as how I related to central theories of multi-sitedness throughout the process.

Turkish Kurdistan, Bakûr

I initiated my fieldwork in Amed (or Diyarbakir as it is called in Turkish and English) in South-Eastern Turkey on the first of June, 2015. In January of that year I had started as PhD fellow at the University of Bergen, Norway working in the ERC project "Egalitarianism: Forms, Processes, Comparisons", led by Bruce Kapferer. When I first became part of the project, I initially had a growing interest in the Kurdish movement. What piqued my interested at the outset were reports about the grass-roots council movement there, which I had read was the foundation for a popular social revolution (TATORT, 2013), aiming at overturning capitalism and the nation-state in favor of an egalitarian, direct-democratic mode of governance. The contradictions and development of this process fit well with a general theme of 'egalitarianism,' which the project was dedicated to exploring; as Bruce Kapferer suggested in the beginning of the project, drawing on Louis Dumont (1980): Every move towards egalitarianism would bring with it a re-hierarchization in a different register. What processes of egalitarianism and re-hierarchization were involved in the Kurdish revolution was a question that stayed with me throughout the fieldwork.

Starting my fieldwork from this point of departure, when I arrived in Amed, I had few contacts. I had arranged a meeting with Ercan Ayboga and fellow PhD candidate, Mino Koefoed, through contacts in Norway, but that was approximately it. Fortunately, however, among the handful of profiles in the entire city of Amed, I had found an AirBnB host who was willing to take me in. After I had stayed there for a couple weeks, trying to find my foothold, doing interviews and attempting to form lasting relations, she invited me to live there with her, and became one of my best friends there - and one of my closest interlocutors. Working as an architect enlisted by

the municipality run by the pro-Kurdish BDP,[48] she had many contacts and friends in politics, art, literature and generally the Kurdish cultural middle-class, from whose contact I benefitted immensely. Approximately two weeks after I had arrived, I started taking Kurdish courses at a movement-run institution, Kurdî-Der ('Kurdish Language Association' in English)*,* where they taught Kurdish-to-Kurdish for free, in addition to taking private classes from a Kurdish tutor. At the same time, my interviews were not bearing much fruit, both because I had little knowledge and had to rely on a translator, and because every interview I conducted with any leadership figure seemed incredibly formal and stiff – mere iterations of Abdullah Öcalan's ideology with aversion to go into practical detail. Finally, however, through a friend from the language courses who also worked in the movement, I was introduced to a local council in the old-city, Sur, the supposed bedrock of the revolution, close to where I lived. The research with these councils is detailed more thoroughly in the empirical section towards the end of the chapter.

After I had been introduced, I started frequenting the council three-four times a week, while still going to the Kurdish classes and building relations with friends of my host, and fellow Kurdish students. At the same time as I was beginning to gain rapport with people in the local council after a few months, however, the state's repression started escalating brutally. In the general election on the seventh of June of 2015, the pro-Kurdish HDP surpassed the ten percent electoral threshold, thereby usurping Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's dream of parliamentary hegemony, which initially inspired a massive joyous celebration in the Kurdish areas. Quickly after, however, this resulted in a stalemate where none of the elected parties were willing to create a coalition, encouraging President Erdoğan to call for a re-election in November the same year. Between June and November (and continuing afterwards), Erdoğan and his AKP,[49] realizing they could not cajole the Kurdish vote, sought to terrify it.[50] Although the

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[48] *Bölgesi Demokrat Partisi* in Turkish, the 'Democratic Regions Party' in English, was the main 'Kurdish' party involved in the alliance that made up the HDP, and also the largest constituent party in the Kurdish regions, which would run independently in local elections.
[49] *Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi* in Turkish, or 'Justice and Development Party,' in English. A supposedly moderate Islamic party, enjoying major electoral successes since 2002.
[50] Several political commenters have pointed out that when Erdoğan could no longer rely on a Kurdish vote under the guise of Muslim unity, he sought to find a new electorate by appealing to the ultra-nationalist (fascist) far-right (Bardakçi, 2016; Önis, 2016; Sayari, 2016). See Jon Henley, Kareem

repression had been heavy previously, going to my council became unfeasible due to a several neighborhoods being closed off as 'zones of exception' with shoot-outs taking place all day, every day, and strictly enforced curfews.[51] From my window a few hundred meters away from one of these zones, I could smell the tear-gas, hear the artillery fire, and see the fires and smoke rising, which gradually became more intense. Both fearing for my physical safety, and feeling as though it was impossible to get 'deep' into a community (Geertz 2008; Muecke, 1994),[52] I decided to move to Wan in the beginning of August, which at the time was significantly calmer, and where I had received contacts in the movement.

In Wan, through a contact from the Kurdish language course, I was put in contact with a local council where I was able work and 'hang out,' for several months (see chapter 8). My contact in Wan, Dilgeş,[53] asked me to come and live with him, since his wife and two children were still in his hometown preparing to move. Accepting his offer, I stayed there until I rented a flat of my own in late October. Very much involved with the day-to-day of the council, he became my primary informant there, and I followed him around in most of his errands, and when I did not, I mostly sat around in the council and continued with my Kurdish classes. We would get up at approximately nine in the morning, have a light breakfast together, and then we would go to the council to check up on affairs that needed doing – for instance informing the municipality about the state of the roads and electricity, collecting money for the

Shaheen, and Constanze Letsch's article for a journalistic account of the process: Henley, J., Shaheen, K. & Letsch, C. (2015, November 2). 'Turkey Election: Erdoğan and the AKP return to power with outright majority.' *The Guardian.* Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/01/turkish-election-akp-set-for-majority-with-90-of-vote-counted.

[51] Although the continuous curfew in Sur started in December 2015 and lifted in 2018 (the longest in the world by the time it was lifted), there were many other times where a curfew was enforced merely for a few days before it was lifted, prior to this. Moreover, large sections of Sur were periodically sectioned off with tanks and barbed wire, and the same was the case in the much of the Baglar district and the neighborhoods there. Nightly raids were also conducted into these districts by the *gendarmerie* and military, which developed into day-time raids. Baglar and Sur were two of the poorest districts in Amed, which had received much of the Kurdish internal refugees from the 1990's.

[52] An issue that plagued me throughout my fieldwork, was the notion of 'depth.' I never felt that I came 'deep' enough into a community, and understood what this 'depth' actually consisted of. This is often spoken about in a taken-for-granted fashion in anthropological literature, and in lieu of a comprehensive discussion of its usage, I cite Muecke (1994) to illustrate its axiomatic status, and Geertz (2008) to indicate a possible origin of the term. As Vigh states, 'thick-description,' the corollary of 'depth,' has become a *sine qua non* in anthropology (2011: 95).

[53] All interlocutors are anonymized unless otherwise stated.

martyr fund, conducting neighborhood conflict-resolution, informing people about events and weddings, and deliver mysterious (to me at the time) hand-written messages to the right people – have lunch, and then return to the council in the evening, before we either visited some representatives for dinner, went to demonstrations, events and the like – or just headed home. But even in Wan the situation became gradually more dangerous. Similar to what has been described by Allen Feldman (1991), Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1993) and Michael Taussig (2004, 1989), I felt increasingly paranoid and unable to sort 'facts' from 'truth' in this volatile situation. Rumors abounded, and I felt an intense insecurity for both my life and that of others. At certain points, walking home in the evening, I would stick my coded notebook in my underwear, so that the police would have a more difficult time finding it if they stopped or arrested me. Being a tall, white foreigner made me stand out to everyone like a sore thumb. At the time I still continued with the idea that I should attempt to get a lay of the land, and map which institutions were involved in this ideological project and how. I still, in other words, kept the idea of a 'traditional fieldwork' in mind, where I would be able to give a relatively 'complete' picture of a particular place and people (see Otto & Bubandt, 2010, for a discussion on the contemporary purchase of holism). When I left for home at winter break, I felt that I was well on my way to being able to produce this.

When I tried to get back to my field-site in Wan in January 2016, i.e. after having done seven months of fieldwork in Turkey already, this plan changed: At the Turkish airport in Istanbul I was stopped by customs officers. They saw that my visa had been issued in Amed, which at the time was at its height of resistance (and destruction), and called me in for interrogation. The police went through my baggage, and although they did not find any field-notes, they found several academic books on Kurds and the PKK. This led them to tell me "I was the enemy of the state and the Turkish people," and deported me as a threat to national security - a fate shared by many academics and journalists.[54] Upon my return to Norway, after a day in the airport prison in Istanbul

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[54]'Turkey: Events of 2018.' (N.D.). *Human Rights Watch*. Retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/turkey. Zeynalov, M. (2017, April 24). 'Is Turkey Safe For Foreign Journalists?.' *The Globe Post*. Retrieved from https://theglobepost.com/2017/02/27/is-turkey-safe-for-foreign-journalists/. Pamuk, H. & Afanasieva, D. (2014, February 7). 'Turkish paper says journalist

with suspected ISIS fighters, I decided that I wanted to pursue researching the local democratic councils, but this time in Iraqi Kurdistan, focusing on the movement's international connections.[55] I imagined that there would be a similar movement in Iraqi Kurdistan, since this was autonomously governed by a Kurdish parliament, and this was a place where the PKK had its main training camps, for both military and ideological purposes. Additionally, many of my friends from Wan had extended family, belonging to the same tribe, living in Iraqi Kurdistan, who I thought would be similarly ideologically predisposed as my friends were.[56] I was completely mistaken.

Iraqi Kurdistan, Başûr

The overall sense of Turkish Kurdistan, was an encompassing feeling of 'us against them.' One felt fairly certain that a vast majority of people one encountered on the street shared the same ideological convictions as oneself, if one was an Apoist. The police were the enemy, and had to live in special gated communities with armed guards, and later wear masks when the conflict escalated so that they would not be assaulted, shot or attacked off-duty. Pictures of Öcalan and martyrs abounded in personal homes and the movement's spaces, as well as the forbidden flags of the PKK (and its affiliates), and later the prohibited red-green-and-yellow garments, and a 'fetishization' of Kurdish music and culture.[57] The atmosphere was one of passion, hatred, anger, zealotry and resistance (if that counts as a mood). In Iraqi Kurdistan, it was quite the opposite.

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expelled for criticizing Erdoğan.' *Reuters*. Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-media/turkish-paper-says-journalist-expelled-for-criticizing-Erdoğan -idUSBREA1614520140207.

[55] On a personal note; when I was expelled from Turkey, I felt both a profound shame and joy at the same time. I was at some level happy that I could not go back, but at the same time ashamed that I was feeling this way, and ashamed that I could so easily leave a situation that they were stuck in.

[56] In this thesis, sadly, I do not truly engage with the tribal structures still at play in the most south-eastern regions of Turkish Kurdistan. Suffice to say here, without differentiating between the tiers and configurations of tribal membership, that tribal alliances are also partially defined through their ideological affiliation. A tribe and a tribal member will define itself partially through the tribe's affiliation with a particular political movement. For instance, the *Gewdan* and *Goyî* tribes, who were strong in numbers in Wan and Sirnax (Sirnak in English and Turkish), prided themselves with being loyal PKK supporters, while others (even at different levels within the same tribal configuration) would owe 'allegiance' to the Iraqi-Kurdish KDP (*Partîya Demokrat a Kurdistanê* in Kurdish) which governed in Iraqi Kurdistan – in fact, some tribes would even pride themselves as being in support of the Turkish state, such as the *Jirkî,* derogatorily called *Jaşt*, or donkeys, by my friends.

[57] These are the colors of the Kurdish flag, where, according to my language teacher in Amed, the red stands for the blood of the martyrs, the green for the Kurdish nature, and yellow for the (Zoroastrian) Sun. In Iraqi Kurdistan, they have a different flag, which also includes white, for peace.

When I arrived in Iraqi Kurdistan in the beginning of February in 2016, the mood was rather one of alienation, irritation, and ennui. Initially I was surprised over how spread out the cities were, where the distances were enormous and one needed a car to get from one's house to the grocery store. Equally surprising was the presence of malls, massive shopping centers serving as social hubs, that I had only witnessed in the same scale in the USA, contrary to the manifold tea houses, bars, and squares in Bakûr. As Michiel Leezenberg has argued, there was no real 'public sphere' in Iraqi Kurdistan.[58] I had asked several of my friends in both Amed and Wan to provide me with contacts in Iraq who were affiliated or knew the Apoist movement, but I quickly realized that there was no Apoist movement in Iraqi Kurdistan. Abdullah Öcalan and his political philosophy was not even remotely as hegemonic as it was in Turkish Kurdistan. The political scene in Iraqi-Kurdistan was much more fragmented, and similar to 'normal' electoral politics, with different parties competing for votes and support, and otherwise disengaging with the population. In short, my first impression was this: I found that there was no mass movement, no councils, no ideological training – no popular revolutionary movement, in short.

Nonetheless, the people I had been put in touch with were quite sympathetic to Abdullah Öcalan, and particularly the project being implemented in Northern Syria. Through my host in Amed's friends, I was put in touch with a Kurdish actress who had married an Iraqi Kurdish journalist, and who now lived in Slemanî (Suleymanie in English). They invited me to stay with them, and I lived together with them and their two-year old son, until May of 2016, when I found an apartment close by. Fortunately, both the actress and her husband (whom I became the closest friends with) spoke very good Kurmanjî,[59] and a good bit of English, making it easy for me to communicate with them. Through the husband's connections as a journalist, he put me in touch with

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[58] This is of course not entirely true; as Leezenberg has documented (2007; 2006, N.D.), the public-private sphere and people's relationship to politics is not non-existent in Iraqi Kurdistan, but rather very differently constituted. Tribalism, patronage, and a certain neoliberal 'corruption' abound in the everyday business of the political world. This is however, not the topic of the thesis, and not what I first experienced when I arrived.

[59] There are two major dialects in Kurdish, discounting the debate on how many dialects are actually a part of Kurdish, where I spoke Kurmanjî – the largest one, spoken in Turkish and Syrian Kurdistan – and most people in Başûr spoke Sorani, which has a different vocabulary, grammar, and intonation.

relatively high-ranking officials in the PKK, which made it possible for me to form connections to guerilla soldiers in the city, and eventually travel to the Qandil mountains to stay with the guerillas in the training camps. In the day-to-day, however, I spent most of my time hanging around a youth-center run by the PKK, in the middle of the city. As they were from Bakûr, they too spoke Kurmanjî, which I was gradually becoming proficient in. I would get up in the morning, have breakfast with the family, and then take off for the youth-center, spend a few hours there, go for a coffee or an interview with an interlocutor, return to my hosts, have dinner and attend any evening events the youth-center organized.

In addition, after being 'granted access' or invited by my host's friend's friends, I was introduced to the Maxmur refugee camp, close to the Syrian border, half an hour from Mosul, and thirty or so kilometers from the ISIS frontlines. The refugee camp was a political refugee camp of Kurds from Bakûr, mostly of the *Goyî* tribe, who had fled the bloody fighting in the 1990's (see chapter 4 and 6), but had been recalcitrant about abandoning their Apoist ideology in favor of an Iraqi Kurdish parliamentary one. Due to their unwillingness (and/or inability) to assimilate into Iraqi Kurdish society, they had formed their own political and social order, where they had their own school system, municipality, local council organization, and even a burgeoning university, modeled on Abdullah Öcalan's philosophy. In addition to all of the approximately 2000 people being staunchly *Apocî*, this was also a central base and transit point for guerillas and soldiers coming and going to Qandil or Syrian Kurdistan. As such, it was also famous in *Bakûr* for being a mini-utopia, already realized – an incarnation of the system that the movement wanted to spread to all of the Middle East (and eventually, the world). Although they did not allow foreigners to live in the camp, through various visits – from a couple weeks to a few days – I spent in total close to one and a half months in the camp, invited by and staying with the youth commission, who were connected to my youth center in Slemanî.

Although I spent 7 months attempting to build relations with people in the different research sites in Iraq, I nonetheless felt somewhat frustrated. Insofar as the situation permitted, I sought to build stable and predictable relations, but guerilla soldiers would

move around quite frequently and disappear, certain zones could become very dangerous very quickly, movement to certain places was restricted or forbidden, and the refugee camp only accepted 'visitors,' not long-time 'residents.' Coupled with the insecurities surrounding the research process, it started to dawn on me that it was impossible to think of the revolution as being 'centralized' in a particular location, most often thought of as being in Bakûr and Rojava. It seemed to me instead, that the revolution was differently configured depending on where it took place, and that each location filled a certain site-specific 'role,' both radically unique and strangely the same. The shape of the revolution in Başûr was not the same as the revolution in Bakûr, but they were nonetheless revolutionary spaces (at various places and times)*. Hence, I thought that what would supplement my understanding of the Kurdish revolution and its organization, and the fieldwork I had previously undertaken, was a consideration of the diasporic Kurdish movement, since it had started to dawn on me how transnational the movement was, not only in its constitution but in imagination also (Marcus, 1995). Since my research had gradually become about 'the revolution in different places,' in addition to *the* revolution, it seemed a befitting choice to consider the diasporic community as well to get a fuller, and more nuanced picture.

Germany, Derve

Hence, a little more than a year into my fieldwork I decided I would go to Berlin in Germany, to work with Syrian Kurdish refugees. In the diaspora or *derve* (literally 'outside,' in English), I had a sense that it would be easier to build more stable and predictable relations, and get closer to the community in question. Asking both my friends in Başûr and in Bakûr*,* I was put on a semi-private mailing list for a part of the movement in Berlin, where they sent out notifications about demonstrations, events and the like. After I had attended a few events, and been 'vetted,' I was invited to a youth-center close to where I lived, where I started to get to know the people who attended. In the diaspora, the vetting process was much more salient, either because people were more open about that they were in fact vetting, or because there was merely more vetting needed when solidarity could not be presupposed in the same way

by virtue of mere presence and the potential for 'equal' retribution.[60] In Germany, some people in the movement called my acquaintances in Başur to confirm my story, but as Vigh has documented (2011), the ongoing everyday-vetting done by my interlocutors, trying to figure out how much 'negative potentiality' I carried, i.e. how much harm I could hypothetically do, was very much intersected by the positive fact that I only spoke Kurdish, a 'pure' Kurdish as taught in/by the guerilla, and not Turkish, Arabic, or even German that well.

For the next seven months, I spent much of my time in the youth-center in Berlin and hanging out with the young Kurdish refugees who populated it. There was a community of approximately thirty to forty people who frequented the youth center where I became a member, predominantly young men who had arrived (at most) two years before. The center, however, was connected with other larger Kurdish institutions, organizations and centers with hundreds of attendants. I rented an apartment close by the youth center and would go there every day, sit and drink tea, attend the meetings, make food, hold lectures, attend events and demonstrations, and give English/German classes for people there, as well as more generally hang out with the people there on a private basis.

In the youth center I was given a more prominent role than I had previously been accorded. I became a member of the PYD, and was considered a member of the youth center. I held rally speeches in public, and was enlisted to do translations of both internal documents, and work for a news bulletin the PYD's foreign commission sent out that I compiled every week. Through this position in the foreign commission, I came into (albeit brief) contact with the leadership structures in Rojava and in Bakûr. I was permitted to sit in on meetings with leadership from the various parts of Kurdistan

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[60] What I mean here is not that the punishment doled out by the Turkish state or ISIS would be the same for me as for my interlocutors, but rather that my mere association with these institutions would surely hold negative repercussions for me that could not be escaped unless I was actually an agent. Mere presence and association would be enough to ensure harsh repercussions, as was not necessarily the case in Germany. Moreover, as described in chapter 8, in Turkish Kurdistan, the movement had its own way of dealing with agents that, to a certain degree, rendered them irrelevant to the struggle by virtue of sheer numbers. As the movement truly operated as a collective endeavor, where the ethos was that the one's individual person was not of particular significance, the 'hyper-vigilance,' seemingly dependent on 'hyper-individualism' (I would suggest), described by Vigh in Guinea-Bissau was arguably not as present (2011).

and at the same time had a role with the 'unimportant' Kurdish refugees. At the end of my stay, I was awarded a letter of appreciation from the youth center and central members of the German PYD.

In Germany, I found a more ambiguous situation than in Başur and Bakûr. Although the people who would frequent the youth center had often been soldiers in either the PYD's or the PKK's other affiliate armed organizations, coming to Germany seemed to impose new insecurities about how a commitment to the struggle could be upheld. It seemed to me that the youth either attempted to re-create the revolution in Rojava in Turkey, re-interpret what the meaning of revolution in Germany would be, or attempt to abandon certain of its commitments. In Germany, the atmosphere surrounding the Kurdish movement was very different than that in Başûr or Bakûr. Whereas Başûr was characterized by pockets of devout Apoists attempting to separate themselves from 'mainstream' Kurdish society, and Bakûr was characterized by passion, fear, hatred and mass mobilization, Germany seemed characterized by a stronger sense of ambiguity. Although the PKK was considered a terrorist organization, and prosecuted as such at certain levels (see chapter 9), the German state's relation to the movement seemed more pragmatic and less violent than in Bakûr. As opposed to Başûr, where state infrastructure was essentially fragmented, partisan and more or less 'irrelevant' to the movement,[61] the state structure in Germany seemed preoccupied with containing, controlling and surveilling the movement. At the same time as the state could curtail a demonstration, stop it, or arrest its members, it simultaneously prevented attacks by fascists and did not kill its protestors.[62] The ambiguous face of the German state and society was noticed by the refugees who sought ways of reconciling, abandoning, or implementing the revolution in this different circumstance.

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[61] When I say irrelevant here, it is not to say that the Iraqi Kurdish government was not important, but rather that the government was only one of many factors, which did not hold power over the movement to the degree that it did in Germany. The power division between the Iraqi Kurdish government and the PKK was more or less split equally, meaning that it would be impossible for it to exert the control over it as the state could in Germany.

[62] Although I would not disagree personally, the usage of 'fascists' in the thesis is an emic term. It is a term used to describe Erdoğan 's forces (which overlap with the state's), and also the gangs and para-military units associated with the far-right ultra-nationalist MHP (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* in Turkish, 'Nationalist Movement Party', in English).

The state-to-movement configuration also had ramifications for how I was perceived by the movement in the various places. Due to the circumstances in *Bakûr*, I think that I was perceived more as an ally than anything else. Although I was always very clear on my own position as a researcher, as someone who came to learn about the revolution for an academic endeavor, this was often seen as an activist or supportive endeavor in itself. To put it tritely, in Bakûr my work as seen as assisting in spreading 'the good word' to Europe and beyond the Kurdish borders; merely participating and showing interest in the movement was taken as a token of support.[63] Contrary to the hostility experienced in other conflict areas (see, for instance, June Nash's experiences doing research in Bolivia, 2012), the Kurdish movement, perhaps due to the internationalist ideology or mere strategic considerations, saw Europe and Europeans as being potential allies against the oppressive powers in the Middle East, and had an interest in sharing their perspectives.

The same perception more or less extended to Başûr. In Başûr, however, due to the more militarized and fragmented character of the movement, participation was more regulated, and there were certain facets of the movement that were more explicitly closed off to me; as many journalists would venture to Başûr for interviews with the PKK (affiliated) leadership, I was often placed in this category of a supposedly 'neutral' investigator, whom could be used as a mouth-piece for the struggle, but should not be included in the every-day workings of the movement – in particular the sensitive, and militant ones. This position gradually became less categorical, however, the longer I spent in Maxmur and the youth-center.[64] In Berlin suspicion was more widespread, which is not in any way to say that it was unfriendly. As the movement, and in particular the leadership, had experience with working with the German left, and the state worked more as an infiltrating and secretive power rather than brutally oppressive *qua* Bakûr, or non-hegemonic *qua* Başûr, who I was and what my intentions were, was more thoroughly scrutinized. The leadership in particular was

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[63] Not discounting the aforementioned vetting process in footnote 46.
[64] Whereas journalists would be confined to the guest house in Maxmur, for instance, I was permitted to walk around freely and sometimes slept in the guerilla quarters, as well as played soccer and volleyball with the residents on a few occasions. Likewise, the people in the youth center gradually became accustomed to me 'hanging out,' and did not feel the impetus to formally prepare tea, and 'host' me, as other visitors.

concerned that I was kind of a 'fifth column' activist, surreptitiously attempting to spread anarchist, Marxist or leftist dogma into a movement that already had its own ideology, or a spy reporting to the German secret service (see Christopher Kovats-Bernat, 2002, for a discussion on obstacles in relation to doing 'dangerous' fieldwork). Between all the different locations, I had to navigate between different ways of being supportive of the movement, which was a prerequisite for studying it, and being dis-attached, which was important being able to pursue the avenues for research I found productive. When I was lucky, these two approaches overlapped.[65]

Despite these shifting perceptions of my role as a researcher, at the end of my fieldwork I had nonetheless gathered a sense of the Apoist revolution as implemented and actualized in three places central to the imagination and practical organization of the movement (Marcus, 2011). That is not to say that I saw the revolution unfolding according to a program that extended un-contextualized across the different locations, but rather that regardless what practices were considered revolutionary, I saw the commitment to and awareness of revolution as a central value extending across them – at different times, at different locations. From the revolution as mass mobilization, to guerilla warfare, to its diasporic support network, the revolution seemed an expansive, global phenomenon at the end of my twenty-one months of fieldwork. What took place in *Bakûr* influenced what took place in *Başûr*, both of which would influence the diaspora and vice versa. Nonetheless, upon returning to Norway and engaging with literature concerning multi-sited fieldwork (Marcus, 2011, 1986; Hannerz, 2003; Fortun 2001), I did not see my fieldwork as fitting the multi-sited frame

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[65] This is not to say that it was easy. There were several occasions when people wanted me to do things that I was not comfortable with from a position as a researcher. There were, for instance, times where I was asked to write an article about something the movement wanted without me wanting it, which I found to be attempts at instrumentalizing my position and research – and did not accept. When I spoke about things that the movement found beneficial, I always thought of this as being capacitated by the research I had conducted (perhaps self-delusionally since the movement's interests and understandings necessarily influenced my own – as is both the object and consequence of ethnographic research). When I spoke in favor of freedom for Öcalan in Berlin, for instance, which I also did in Oslo on a later occasion, I saw this warranted by the research I had conducted; based on my experience, without involving Öcalan in negotiations, I could not see a lasting peace being achieved in Turkish Kurdistan, which I saw not so much as an activist statement, but rather as a statement made on the background of ethnographic research. Moreover, besides these few episodes, I always attempted to position myself in such a way that I would not be perceived as a public spokesperson for the movement. Carolyn Nordstrom and Antonius Robben's edited volume (1995) highlights such ambiguities very well, in many different contexts – but perhaps particularly Ted Swedenburg's musings on being attracted to, infatuated with, but *not* necessarily part of the field (1995).

unproblematically. The theories of multi-sited fieldwork did not correspond well to what I had researched and how I conceptualized it. Whereas all the different places could be deemed integral parts of the revolution, they were not revolutionary all the time or in the same ways. Contrary to George Marcus' proposition, I therefore did not find revolution to be a singular imaginary that could be efficiently traced across boundaries and mapped (Marcus, 2011), nor did I see myself as conceptually re-constructing revolution through my own imaginative endeavors, *qua* Candea (2007). I saw revolution as manifesting *as* a place, and then, concordantly, disappearing as a place. Without necessarily offering a categorical re-assessment of the strategy here, the next section will therefore attempt to delineate the reasons why I saw my fieldwork deviating from the pre-ordained theoretical framework of multisitedness, before moving into a better description of how I *did* conceptualize it. We will first have to start with a brief summary of the variations and development of the multi-sited methodologies, however.

Different Multi-Sitednesses

George Marcus brought the term 'multi-sited fieldwork' to the fore in his article from 1986, where he advocated for multi-sited fieldwork's ability to keep anthropology relevant in the twenty-first century (Marcus, 1986). He saw a reconfiguration of anthropology's traditional methods as a necessity to keep up with global developments, such as globalization of communication devices, movements of capital, and cultural dissemination. Considering a fieldwork space as self-contained, singular and unitary, were presuppositions that could no longer hold, Marcus argued. With global interconnectedness emerging – within media, capital, and communication – anthropology had to change as well, he argued (Marcus, 2011, 1999, 1995, 1986).

The multi-sited method was intended to capture these 'new' developments.[66] Its advocates argued that a field-site, even a village or neighborhood, could not be considered spatially or culturally bounded or totally representable, and in fact, *should* be 'followed' and 'traced' internationally in order to arrive at a better and more

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[66] Whether or not the global interconnectedness of the world is a modern, or indeed a post-modern phenomenon has of course been subject to certain debate (Hannerz 2003).

complete understanding (Coleman & Hellerman 2011; Appadurai, 2005; Hannerz, 2003; Marcus, 1995). In a volume on the state-of-the-art of multi-sited fieldwork from 2011, Marcus founds the normative quality of this argument on the assumption that some phenomena are more important than others with regards to their explanatory potential and relation to research goals (Marcus 2011). Although always incomplete, Marcus argued, if ethnography does not consider that transnational and global interconnectedness of 'the field,' research will be *more* incomplete. The priority of what things are more important and less important relies on what he calls the configuration of 'distributed knowledge systems.' Distributed knowledge systems are partially shared conceptions by the fieldworker and the informant about how the world is constituted and interlinked. He argues:

> In contemporary settings, what is shared [by the anthropologist and the informant] is the perception that local realities are produced elsewhere (…) generating a multi-sited imaginary, one that is practical for the subject and that is a *found design* of a mobile ethnography for the anthropologist (Marcus, 2011, p. 19-20, my emphasis).

Ethnography should therefore, in other words, be shaped in relation to these subjects' own "para-ethnography", their understanding of themselves in extended networks, providing a "subject" and "frame" for the research (Marcus, 2011, p. 23). By following the "para-ethnography" of people in a place, he argues – i.e. the ongoing self-observation and analysis of the informants – the "found" field may emerge, which is inherently multi-sited in its practical and imaginary constitution, and has variable degrees of "thickness" and "depth" (Marcus, 2011, p. 25). This, he argued, would lead to fuller and better representations of the world, which would account for the already existing (and increasing) global influence.

Marcus' proposition was embraced by many contemporary anthropologists of globalization (Hannerz, 2003, 2001; Appadurai, 2005; Gupta & Ferguson, 1997), who found much use in thinking beyond national borders as demarcations for research - although they re-molded the concept to fit their specific purposes. The proposition that

ethnography should be related to processes extending outwards beyond the fallaciously delimited site in order to better capture the workings of the world has exerted a strong influence on much of contemporary research strategies and topics (see Coleman & Hellerman, 2011, for an assessment, and Mand, 2011, for an example).

This is not to say that multi-sited fieldwork is a homogenous methodology, however, nor that it is a ready-made schema applicable to various contexts. It has been explored by many anthropologists who have expanded upon the project. Applications of the methodological framework have ranged from the relatively traditional undertaking of following people across borders (see, for instance, Mand, 2011), to more experimental projects of examining trans-local people-animal relations (Krauss, 2011). Fortun, for instance, fortuitously used multi-sited fieldwork to explore the Bhopal disaster as a central node in a nexus of distending economic, social, and personal ramifications across time and space (Fortun, 2001), and Gupta and Ferguson questioned the hierarchical workings of the nation-state by connecting it to transnational global flows of capital and people by virtue of multi-sitedness (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997).

Several critical re-considerations have also been appended to this methodology (see Cook, Laidlaw & Muir, 2016; Candea, 2007; Hage, 2005; Sissons, 1999), forming its own investigative tradition. Critical contributors have suggested that all fieldwork is in actuality multi-sited since one is necessarily looking at things from different perspectives and different locations (Candea, 2007), that fieldwork is therefore necessarily single-sited (Hage, 2005), or that it should be thought of as site-less (Sissons, 1999) or un-sited (Cook, Laidlaw & Muir, 2016) – to mention a few. Candea launched a particularly incisive critique in 2007, where he forwarded that multi-sitedness often presupposed a certain holism tacitly borrowed from the 'Malinowskian' tradition, which multi-sitedness had paradoxically set out to amend. For Candea, the previously presupposed holism of the local seemed to be transplanted to a holism of the global, where the generalized 'global' seemed to be considered as holding the 'true' explanatory potential for any given local phenomenon. To move away from this understanding, Candea suggests, one should re-consider the role of the fieldworker in *constructing* the field, thereby moving the purchase of multi-sitedness

(and ethnography in general) from representing a given reality, to a means by which one may shed light upon the heterogeneity of the world – a "window onto complexity" (Candea, 2007, p. 179), as he himself puts it. In a similar but simultaneously contrary critique, Hage pointed out that in order for something to be multi-sited one needed to posit the fragmentation of a phenomenon that could be (perhaps also in reality) non-reducible. To think of his research on kinship structures across borders as a multi-sited endeavor would be fallacious, he argued, since for his informants (and for him) family was a singular site (Hage, 2005), and was acted upon as such. Even though not physically present with each other at all times (which he also questions whether any other families are), they would often come and visit each other across borders and keep in touch over social media daily; for Hage's informants the site of family was not subdivided or fragmented, but unitary and singular.

The discussion concerning what multi-sited fieldwork can achieve, and what it indeed *is*, seemed to me to rely on several different foundational understandings of the method's epistemology. While Marcus, for example, posits that truthful representation may be achieved by branching out from the delimited field site (although not representable in its entirety), Candea seems to argue that representational truth is *created* by the fieldworker. As opposed to creating the consubstantial imaginary – or as Marcus would put it, discovering the "found" field (Marcus, 2011, p. 23) – Candea suggests the researcher must be contented with the solitude of his research decisions. For Candea, bounding a field, or finding out where it ends and thereby what it can speak to 'truthfully,' is a project that is undertaken in a creative manner by the fieldworker himself or herself. Taking an arguably more 'humanistic' line over Marcus' 'scientific' approach, both positions – as I see it – grapple with the question of how various places can be incorporated in their respective research strategies in order to best 'capture' the world. As I think Candea correctly points out, it seems that Marcus' writing does presuppose a static, representable world 'out there,' which can be more or less accurately captured by the ethnographer by visiting more fragments of the 'whole.' Not in its entirety, of course (Marcus, 2011), but a symmetrical mirroring of the 'real things in the world' – be they material, ideational, or social – nonetheless

seems to be an underlying premise in Marcus' research strategy.[67] Candea seems more hesitant to accept this position, rather placing his emphasis on the researcher's often under communicated acts of bounding the field that therefore partially *create* it. Despite this nuancing of how a field-site becomes a field-site, Candea seems to posit the fieldworker as a monolithic entity, however. For Candea, it seems, the researcher possesses a subjectivity that can be extracted from the field, opening up for a singularized process of dis-attached reflection – a subjectivity which has the capacity (or perhaps the obligation) to override local concerns. Both of these perspectives, in other words, seem to rely on different understandings of what multi-sited fieldwork *is*, how it is to be conducted, and what it may have the potential to achieve.

For my part, after I had completed my fieldwork, the question quickly became how I could adapt my 'multi-sited' ethnography to the study of revolution, given the amount of dissension. Multi-sited research seemed to be an ambiguous project. One could, in my case, say with Candea that revolution was only a revolution insofar as it was created as a concept by the researcher in the field, for instance, with Hage that differentiating between the different parts of the movement eviscerates the necessary non-reducibility of the revolution, or, as Joanna Cook, James Laidlaw and Jonathan Muir suggest, that any revolutionary phenomenon will necessarily be 'ontologically' different depending on who sees and where. Following Marcus' earlier writings, my fieldwork could even be conceptualized as tracing parts of the 'total' material and imaginary connections of the Kurdish movement, as means to better elucidate its functioning (Marcus, 1986). None of these propositions seemed entirely incorrect; they were, in their own frames, what I saw myself as having done. Nonetheless, I was hesitant to categorically classify it as multi-sited, non-sited, single sited and so on; I saw my fieldwork as both placed and non-placed, but not in a way that had been exhaustively explained by scholars of multi-sitedness. The central issue I saw with regards to uncritically dubbing my fieldwork 'multi-sited' had to do with temporality,

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[67] This is especially apparent in Marcus' earliest writings on the subject, as he remarks himself (Marcus, 2010, p. 28). In an edited volume from 2010, Marcus suggests that anthropology's holism has migrated from being concerned with representationality to being concerned with proper methodological practices: "Holism is less of a problem of the form of the argument than a question of technique, of accumulating the range and kinds of material that will support critical arguments that are more than exceptions (…)" (Marcus, 2010, p. 33).

which I also see as underpinning much of the problematics in the aforementioned discussion.

While it is not my intention to delve deep into the intricacies of multi-sitedness' foundational epistemology, I think that an attentiveness to temporality may supplement these divergent perspectives on what multi-sited research achieves and how it is to be conceptualized. Attentiveness to temporality may assist in a more malleable understanding of how sites become sites, and what role the researcher is in its constitution and representation. Whether the site is there to be found *qua* Marcus, or whether the site is created *qua* Candea, I think that an increased attentiveness to temporality might enrich both perspectives – or at least I found it so in the study of revolution.

In this, I find support in Dalsgaard & Nielsen's work, who suggest that "the field might be understood not solely as a spatial concept but equally as a temporal one (…)" (Dalsgaard & Nielsen, 2013, p. 2). But whereas Dalsgaard and Nielsen's inquiry is directed more at the nature of time(s) within, outside, or across the field(s), I would like to, more simply, supplement their investigation by suggesting that thinking in terms of *events* may be an apt heuristic for collapsing the distinction between researcher and researched, and situating 'the field' in time as well as in space.[68] Instead of the global/local dichotomy I suggest that a way of approaching the field-sites, at least with regards to revolution, is to think of them as contingent upon events that both territorialize and simultaneously de-territorialize various parts of the world.[69] More precisely put, I contend that prioritizing time collapses the division between various sites, seeing them as emerging contemporaneously with the event in question; I suggest that the issue of bounding the field(s) may take place through an

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[68] Dalsgaard and Nielsen's account has a certain polemic quality, in that it encourages authors to dissolve the primacy of spatiality in ethnographic research, and rather "explore the analytic potentials of conjoining time and field in a conceptual assemblage" (Dalsgaard & Nielsen 2013, p. 9), since they are "each other's ontological condition" (Dalsgaard & Nielsen 2013, p. 11). My project here is less ambitious; it is, as I stated at the outset, merely intended as an exploration of some of the epistemological ambiguities in theories of multi-sited fieldwork, and, at best, suggest a way of heuristically configuring a time-sensitive research approach.

[69] I mean 'the world' here in a very general sense, i.e. the existing material, imaginary, social connections and experiences that de-territorialization and re-territorialization may bring to bear on a given happening, and simultaneously transform in the process.

operationalization of time. To do so empirically, I shall turn to an event from my research in Germany which illustrates the difficulties of applying the multi-sited 'frameworks' and which formative for me in the attempt to bring temporality into my multi-sited research.

Öcalan Speaking as Event

In September of 2016, Abdullah Öcalan, the chairman of the PKK and the revolution's undisputed origo, was permitted to communicate to the public for the first time in several years.[70] When it was announced it caused a furor in the diasporic community, as well as in all parts of Kurdistan, generating demonstrations attended by thousands of people. After major concerns about the health of the leader, his brother and MP of the pro-Kurdish HDP in Turkey, Mehmet Öcalan, was finally allowed to pay him a visit on Imrali Island on eleventh of September 2016, the prison created specifically for him, after months and years of protest. Leading up to the visit, there was an atmosphere of anticipation in Germany about what the leader would say about the struggle in Bakûr since the uprising had seemed to fail due to the thousands in prison and the hundreds murdered, and the persistence, if not triumph, of Erdoğan 's regime in Turkey.

The days leading up to his speech and the days following were energized and full of activity, with more events taking place than usual and with more people attending. Two days before the meeting, for instance, large demonstrations in Berlin denouncing the Turkish state's fascism took place, protesting Abdullah Öcalan's incarceration, and five days after the meeting another demonstration took place with a similar outrage and message. Simultaneous demonstrations took place across various different European cities, and in multiple cities in Bakûr and even Başur. Following his communication to the public, a coordinating diaspora organization took it upon itself a few days after to organize a Europe-wide panel discussion on Abdullah Öcalan's

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[70] 'Imprisoned PKK leader Öcalan meets with brother for first time since 2016.' (2019, January 19). *Ahval News.* Retrieved from https://ahvalnews.com/abdullah-ocalan/imprisoned-pkk-leader-ocalan-meets-brother-first-time-2016

writings, their meaning and their development, spanning fifty or so locations.[71] It seemed to me that him speaking electrified the movement, and made it swell in numbers and sound.

During this time of effervescence, I was sitting in the youth center in Berlin with two Kurdish friends and a German, when a young woman in a leadership position (having been educated in the guerilla and sworn the oath, thereby being a *kadro,* or 'cadre' in English),[72] clearly enthused, came over to the table and started talking about the news about Öcalan. She sat down and said that it was really interesting. A transcript of the conversation had been made available to her, and she had found it astonishing. Öcalan had said, she re-told, that he had no more advice to give; he had given everything to the struggle, and that the fulfillment of the project that he had sketched was in the hands of the people and the movement. Aside from arguing that the Turkish state was not receptive to the peace process, he had offered a harsh critique of the movement. How this was to be interpreted, she was unsure of, but said that she had received a guide for interpretation from 'up-high', (*jor*). There would be reading groups in all different parts of Kurdistan, she said, that would interpret the meaning of the statement, and try to figure out what they should do next. Throughout the conversation my Kurdish friends seemed elated to hear that he was in good physical health, exclaiming *hamdull'ah*, and *mashallah* during her story. The German with us also nodded and added *sehr gut* or *schön* on several occasions, even though he spoke Kurdish. She left by saying *bi rûhê şehîdên emê serkevin,* meaning 'with the spirit of the martyrs we will be victorious,' which my friends all responded enthusiastically to – *her bijî,* 'long live' – and raised their tea-glasses.

I was interested in what Öcalan had said, more concretely. I attempted to find a transcript of the conversation in the different news outlets, and asked around with my interlocutors. I only found mere snippets of the speech passed through his brother, however, and I did not hear anything more about the interpretation in meetings that

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[71] 'Peyama Ocalan wê li Ewropayê di panelan de bê nirxandin.' (2016 October 20). *ANF News.* Retrieved from https://anfkurdi.com/rojane/peyama-ocalan-we-li-ewropaye-di-panelan-de-be-nirxandin-68803

[72] For a more thorough description of this process, see chapter 5.

were said to take place, although I asked the *kadro* on several occasions. Gradually, this made me wonder whether these meetings of the leadership really took place, if she had better information about what he had said, and even if there was a transcript that had been passed down, not to mention a guide for interpretation. Maybe I had misunderstood, but I did not see a way for me to find out. I could not call her on the phone for security reasons – having a guerilla soldier's contact on your phone is a possible indictment in Germany – and the custom was such that if one was *asked* one could participate, but one did not ask on one's own account. Asking insistently about it would only have fueled suspicion; 'why do you want to know?' is a very good question when working with/in a 'terrorist' organization.

This sentiment also applied elsewhere. In the case of the PKK and the Apoist movement, attempting to trace the connections in any over-arching way, 'mapping out' the movement so to speak, was practically impossible. Due to the manifold of people switching hats, the secrecy, the constant physical movement, and the perpetual security threat, any attempt at a 'total' (or even totalizing) image of the organization of the movement was impossible. As is characteristic of guerilla/illegal political organizations, the credo revolved around knowing what to know, and simultaneously knowing *what not to know* (Taussig, 1999, p. 2). Likewise, I was also in a position where I was potentially culpable; my research was not detached from the movement's structures and how the German government persecuted it. If I knew something that I should not have known, I would, as they, be liable for persecution, making their concerns about security and secrecy very much my own. With the information from the *kadro,* it was little for me to trace or follow up on; the pathways for verifying or mapping these relations were closed, which was a sentiment I was happy to abide by due to my non-autonomous status as a researcher and the desires of my informants.

In light of these hindrances, and to better study the revolution as such, I saw the need for a different perspective. A totalizing representation was impossible for me to attain (if it was even there in the first place, as Candea (2007) and Hage (2010) suggest it might not be). But at the same time, it felt dishonest to consider it as a phenomenon that I had imaginatively delimited myself (Candea, 2007). I felt that following Marcus'

line of providing a purposefully incomplete representation of the organizational and ideational structure of the movement was taking the research in the wrong direction. Likewise, I felt that Candea's injunction to creatively piece it together myself was a 'cop-out' since I was so imbricated in the movement, and the happening of Öcalan speaking was such an important event for my informants; I did not feel that I could neglect pursing a revolutionary framing of this happening. Although the event of Öcalan speaking was 'multi-sited,' I did not see how the multi-sited frameworks were adapted to studying it.

To me it seemed better to start with the *event itself*, as a means to understand its connections and international scope, i.e. to switch the priority of where one is to depart from as a researcher.[73] This, I thought, would obviate not only the practical issues of 'mapping' a movement that would be hesitant to be mapped in the first place (with good reason), and it would also move attention to the *expression* of the movement rather than its (in)complete and (presumably) static 'form,'[74] in addition to alleviating the risk I would be putting myself and my informants in. As I saw it, the connections between the Kurdish movement in Turkey and the Kurdish movement in Germany were indubitably there – which I do not seek to contest – but took on a coordinated political form *through* a situated event, not merely by virtue of the connections being there. There were a host of elements that were irreducible with regards to the international consubstantiality of the Kurdish movement – such as language, self-professed Kurdish and Apoist identity, everyday communications, common symbols and understandings of historical trajectories – but the use-value of these connections, in a public political form, seemed only to manifest through interceding (external) events. For these pre-existing commonalities to manifest politically and publicly, they needed a catalyzation. As such, I thought that a means of situating multi-sitedness in time, as opposed to considering it as an exercise in mapping static structures (which I was unable and also averse to do), was to consider sites as emerging

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[73] Thinking in terms of events is also implicit in chapter 7 on the Newroz celebration, and in chapter 6 considering the usage of the *şehîdlik* in the Maxmur refugee camp.

[74] Here it might be better to say its 'formal structures,' but this would point only to institutional arrangements. I also wanted to capture that I did not desire to study its ideology in this way either, since 'formal structures' (and form) presupposes that the movement has an ideology that can be pinned down in one place and then transposed to all of the movement's other locations. By saying that I did not want to study the 'form,' I mean both the former and the latter examples.

contemporaneously with events. By taking this perspective, what characterized the event of Öcalan speaking was its simultaneous political *territorialization* and *de-territorialization*. When Öcalan spoke, it created a political public that was both located in Germany particularly, but at the same time inextricably interwoven with the globality of the movement.

The term 'event' has been used in a variety of different ways (see for instance, Heidegger, 2012; Kapferer, 2010a, 2005; Badiou, 2007; Sewell, 2005), but for my purposes here it is merely intended as a heuristic for moving the analytical focus away from people as individually connected actors to situations instead. Whether the "events may be defined as a rare subclass of happenings that significantly transforms structures" (Sewell, 2005, p. 100), or whether "Being essentially occurs as the event", radically excising previous modes of being in the world (Heidegger, 2012, p. 25), is not our major concern. By way of provisional definition to move us forwards, however, we may take Kapferer's designation of "the event as a singularity in which critical dimensions can be conceived of as opening new potentialities in the formation of social realities (…)" (Kapferer, 2010a, p. 1), which also "reveal the social and political forces engaged in the generation or production of social life" (Kapferer, 2010a, p. 2). The event, in other words, broadly speaking, encompasses a break or rupture with social life heretofore, that radically re-organizes the social while at the same time illustrates to its affiliates the ways in which it is different. In this way, an event presupposes, to a certain degree, that it is a phenomenon that cannot be reduced to the sum of its (interconnected) parts, meaning that the analytical focus is not so much centered on the individual people involved, but rather on what that situation 'does,' as an open whole, when it occurs (Kapferer, 2005). Moreover, it implies that as the time of the event re-organizes not only the future but also the past, any clear spatial boundaries that can be apprehended in a 'sociological' frame, are suspended. It works both in, across, and beyond a given temporality, meaning that where and when the ramifications of an event may be bounded, becomes difficult to pin down analytically. In our case, the fact that more people came to the demonstrations for Öcalan when they anticipated hearing from him, for instance, could more easily be explained by the event of him speaking having a compelling effect on people, rather than by the

'networks of mobilization' as such (Romano, 2006). The event of him speaking opened up a potentiality for action, and for a spatial-temporal re-organization of the struggle as it was previously seen. Even if the vast amount of people partially knew each other from before, what generated their connection at this place and time, was not their previous affiliation and interconnectedness, but rather the situation itself, which I found to be a better lens for analysis and categorization.[75]

The concrete example of the meeting between the *kadro* and my friends shows this: The fact that my friends knew the *kadro* and had relations to her, was in this case only made relevant *through* the event of Öcalan speaking, i.e. only made relevant through an event (that took place somewhere else as well as with us). If there had not been an issue occurring, like for instance Öcalan speaking – but in other cases planning a demonstration, receiving ideological education, or commemorating martyrs – they would not necessarily have spoken to each other. There would have been no 'reason to.' This was, as I mentioned, because people were encouraged to keep some distance to the *kadros* for security reasons, but also at a different level, because certain situations were needed both for the 'permission' to talk together. Although greetings, and perhaps a gesture would have been in order outside of a given event, it would not have been 'normal' for a *kadro* to sit down and have a conversation in this way. These intervening 'reasons' for communication is what I think of as events, and to me they seem to be simultaneously territorialized and de-territorialized.

Thus, while the event 'catalyzing' the connection between the *kadro* and my friends was de-territorialized to a certain extent – taking place 'elsewhere' (Marcus, 1999), or more precisely in Turkey – the manifestation of these connections was highly territorialized. What turned the *kadro's* and my friends' pre-existing connection into a

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[75] It is worth noting here that the following analysis may fall *partially* prey to what Kapferer designates as 'the event as illustration' (Kapferer, 2005). The radically new, emergent properties deriving from and in the event may be overshadowed in the following analysis. Similar to what Badiou deems a 'false event,' where the scale and the depth of the transformation does not relate to humanity expressing itself as a novel and unordered 'supernumerary' humanity (Badiou, 2007), the analysis may fall prey to what Kapferer negatively characterizes as an understanding of an event which signifies reproduction and continuity of a given community rather than radical fissure and germination of transformation (Kapferer, 2010a, p. 8-9). Nonetheless, as Kapferer concedes –also provides me with solace: "What counts as an event for analysis is highly problematic (…)" (Kapferer 2010a, p. 11).

used and lived connection was the intervention of a certain 'external' event.[76] As Öcalan spoke to the Kurdish community in general from a universal vantage point, the ways in which connections were formed with regards to his statements, were highly contingent and situated. Imagining a tour of Turkish Kurdistan where Öcalan's philosophy would be spread to the public through seminars was impossible, for instance, as was to be done in Europe. The event of Öcalan speaking created a social site where people would enact (or use or actualize) the connections that they had, or indeed form new ones. Returning to Marcus then, although the connections might be there to be 'found' and duly represented (Marcus, 2011), they were not there as connections that were in use outside of their particular, temporally situated, social context. One could in fact say the connections were not 'there' to be studied, but rather that they were 'there' when they were actualized, instantiated and temporally bound – perhaps even as a 'whole.' It is this approach to connections and events that I saw as having purchase with regards to the study of revolution.

This small example from Germany is not enough to make this point convincingly, however. To create a somewhat larger scale for thinking of events and to further illustrate its importance and heuristic value, I want to turn to Amed, Turkey, and the development of the war there from the middle of 2015 to the beginning of 2016.

The Battle for Amed

When I stayed in Amed in 2015, the revolutionary fervor had swept across the Kurdish parts of the country. With the aforementioned election of the pro-Kurdish HDP to parliament, the successes in Rojava, Syria, and the ascension of the Kurds to the world stage in the media, it seemed like the revolution had momentum and was spreading rapidly. Place and time were being remolded for the people who were living in the various parts of Kurdistan. The revolutionary process in Amed was both a local phenomenon and, at the same time, a global (or at least pan-Apoist) phenomenon.

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[76] This is not an entirely orthodox usage of the term 'event,' as I have indicated above. Verbiage such as 'external' and 'elsewhere' do not conform to the outline of the event as described by Kapferer (2010a, 2005), and Badiou (2007), and neither does an unrefined notion of the 'whole,' but I think the terms fits the purpose here by highlighting an event's potential for capturing spatio-temporal re-configurations with regards to multi-sited research.

At the start of my fieldwork, when I was still conducting interviews and attempting to get 'a lay of the land' in the movement's organization, much of what I heard about Abdullah Öcalan's project was the necessity of 'democratic confederalism' and 'democratic autonomy.' Leadership figures in the major institutions, like the aforementioned HDP and the civilian umbrella organization the DTK (*Demokratik Toplum Kongresi* in Turkish, and 'Democratic Society Congress' in English), told me that was essential to create an aggregated council-movement which could take over the functions of the state and ensure a more equitable and just private (and eventually collective) economy.[77] To do so, however, demanded that the councils would be self-governing which demanded a certain amount protecting from intervening forces. To create an autonomy for the councils, in other words, it was necessary to have some form of self-protection. As Hatip Dicle, the then leader of the DTK, told me, and as was the general sentiment in the population, this what the PKK's guerilla was attempting to secure for them. Through their assaults on military outposts and compounds, they were creating the grounds for the movement to expand unhindered. The goal, he said, was to make the state 'irrelevant' to the functioning of local social organizations across the Syrian-Turkish and Iraqi-Turkish borders.

In Amed, an interlocutor working with the DTK estimated that there were approximately forty councils operating, although he did not know the total number, and his bosses were reluctant to share this information. He took me to one of the councils close to where I lived in the old city of Sur, near the massive *Dag Kapi* square, in the middle of city. After he introduced me to two of the local councils there, I started going there three or four times a week to get acquainted with what was supposed to be the grass-roots of the 'revolution in Bakûr.' In the district of approximately 100 000 people which had a labyrinthine layout, enclosed by the ancient city walls, it was hard to navigate in the beginning without the assistance of a local compatriot.

While it initially started out as an enthusiastic and open environment, where the people attending the councils were more than happy to drink tea, talk about the organization,

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[77] For a more in-depth examination of the role of the DTK and its relationship to the PKK and the popular movement, see (Gunter, 2013b)

and eat the various pastries and dishes the local women had brought, it soon became a more strenuous and difficult affair after the election. As the movement leadership and the people living in Amed started to realize that there would be no power-sharing situation, and that Erdoğan would rather ramp up his attacks on the Kurdish population instead of negotiating with them, the fronts hardened even more than they had. Responding to the increasing violence and oppression, a host of municipal party branches, NGO's, mayors' offices, and elected officials held a conference in Amed in August of 2015 where they declared 'democratic autonomy' in the region, further outraging Erdoğan (Leezenberg, 2016a). A new *serhildan* ('uprising,' in English) was brewing.[78] Although the omnipresent PKK-graffiti on the walls of Sur was still there, it started to take on a different significance, and names of martyrs started appearing more frequently on the walls.

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[78] *Serhildan,* a compound noun of 'head' (*ser*) and 'raising' (hilde), 'raising one's head,' is a Kurdish term used for 'uprising,' similar to the Palestinian *intifada*. The first modern *serhildan* after the rebellions connected with Şêx Saîd in 1925 (see chapter 3), occurred on March 14th 1990 when 5000-10 000 people gathered at a funeral for a PKK guerilla martyr in the city of Nusaybin, next to the Syrian border (Marcus, 2007). A general strike took place in the city, 700 people were arrested and two people were killed in the protest. In the following days, the protests spread to multiple major Kurdish cities drawing hundreds of thousands of protestors (Plakoudas, 2014).

2.1 An image from inside Sur in November 2015. On the wall an image of a martyr on the background of Amed's old city walls.[79]

Following from the election on the 1st of November 2015, masked Turkish police contingents armed with machine guns would make nightly incursions into Sur's backstreets. These gradually became daily invasions, and the people attending the council were regularly terrorized; everything from being beaten in the council, to being indeterminately detained, to being threatened on their lives, the councils were gradually torn apart. The atmosphere of a public meeting-place disappeared, and the commissions dealing with neighborhood democracy, education, economy, conflict resolution, and care for the families of martyrs dissolved. It became more and more dangerous to enter Sur, and after a while the police imposed a curfew and literally walled in certain sections of the district.[80] I sometimes managed to visit during the day time, before the police started raiding again, although the attacks became more unpredictable. To get into the councils you had to pass through several make-shift barricades with masked armed guards (who were very friendly), and step over hundreds of bullet casings, rocket shafts, and blood stains, with PKK music thundering from various partially destroyed houses. Towards the end of when it was possible to enter, I visited one of my councils. There were no older people there, no women and no children. The only people who were there were some 15 members of the YGD-H (*Yurtsever Devrimci Genclik Haraket* in Turkish, or 'the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement' in English), later to be re-dubbed the YPS (*Yekîneyên Parastina Sivil* in Kurdish, or the 'Civil Protection Units' in English), wearing make-shift balaclavas and donning AK47s. After a few minutes conversation some of them took off their masks, and I could recognize a couple of my peripheral *hevals* ('comrades' in English)[81] from the council, and although the conversation was short, it was pleasant to see them again.

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[79] Image from Steele, J. (2017, April 20). 'Turkey and the Kurds.' *The New York Review of Books*. Retrieved from https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2017/04/20/turkey-and-the-kurds-a-chance-for-peace/.

[80] After the escalation in early 2016, the entire district was put under permanent curfew for more than 3 years.

[81] The use of the term *heval* is an interesting feature of the movement which warrants its own chapter, but will not be dealt with here. Suffice to say, it is a common mode of address among everyone in the

One of the two people I recognized from the YDG-H were quite young, barely turned seventeen. After exchanging pleasantries, he told me, unsurprisingly, but in a very aggressively revolutionary tone, that as the people's uprising in Rojava had beaten back ISIS, so too did they need to beat back the Turkish state. They were, as everyone nodded and agreed, one and the same. In order for the revolution to progress, Bakûr needed to be liberated, he told me; the democratic autonomy implemented in Rojava hinged upon creating democratic autonomy in Bakûr, or the project would wither and die. They had taken it upon themselves, he said, to do what the PKK-guerilla had done from their bases in Iraqi Kurdistan, namely providing a breathing room for the project to be implemented. They were the defense structures in the cities, just as the PKK were the defense structures in the countryside, and the YPG/J were the defense structures against foreign powers. One without the other would not work, he said, intertwining his fingers; *Serok Apo's* revolution is the solution for all of the Middle East, and also for the world.[82] After we had spoken some more, drinking some tea that a YDG-H member had made for us, and I was about to leave, he jokingly asked me: "*Heval* Rodî," which was my *nom de guerre*, "how are the mountains in Norway?".[83]

Kurdish movement as a suffix to a person's first name, or given/taken *nom de guerre,* but also demarcates the community of people who have joined the PKK (*hevaltî* in Kurdish).

[82] See glossary for 'Apo.' A term of endearment for the leader of the movement, Abdullah Öcalan, coupled with the Kurdish word for 'Leader,' *Serok.*

[83] As everyone received a nom de guerre who was associated with the movement, I received one that was similar to my last name, Rudi, namely 'Rodî,' which is a contraction of '*Roj*' (sun) and 'dît' (saw), meaning 'he who saw the sun.'

2.2 One of the most famous images from this time in Sur. From November 2015, this barricade was close to one of the councils that I had often visited.[84]

Of course, what the YDG-H hope to achieve did not come to fruition. Although PKK guerillas slipped into Sur and started to provide the local self-started militias with weapons training (which must be said I did not witness myself), the Turkish state rolled in with literal artillery and tanks and destroyed more than fifty percent of the buildings in the district – including a recently restored Chaldean church, paid for by the HDP municipality[85] – tagging over the PKK-graffiti with fascist slogans and chauvinist messages. "How happy is he who can call himself a Turk," I remember seeing on my way out. Between the skirmishes, which gradually increased in intensity, the enclosures were sometimes opened for a few hours, at which point thousands of residents fled from the war zone. Without the people, of course, there was little left for the YDG-H to protect. The uprising intended to unify Rojava and Bakûr in and through Abdullah Öcalan's philosophy for a new middle east 'had been postponed,' as I was later told by a leadership figure.

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[84] Image from the article: 'Dozen PKK militants killed as Turkish jets hit SE Turkey, N Iraq.' (2016, July 8). *PressTV*. Retrieved from https://www.presstv.com/DetailFr/2016/07/08/474183/Turkish-jets-airstrikes-Kurdish-PKK-Hakkari-Semdinli-Avasin-Basyan

[85] Spencer, R. (2016, February 5), 'One of the world's oldest churches damaged in Turkey's renewed violence.' *The Telegraph.* Retrieved from https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey/12142552/One-of-the-worlds-oldest-churches-damaged-in-Turkeys-renewed-violence.html

2.3 An image from 2016, this was the road that I had normally taken to get to the local council, two blocks behind the rubble.[86]

The declaration of autonomy and the attempted self-defense to maintain this autonomy, I was later told in Iraqi Kurdistan, had been poorly planned. According the leadership figure I spoke to, they had not anticipated the brutality of the Turkish state's reactions; they had not imagined that the state would be willing to engage in a full-on battle with its residents, and had imagined that the international community would have been more pro-active in stopping the Turkish state. Moreover, the leadership figure admitted, the people in the cities were poorly trained, not prepared for urban guerilla warfare. Nonetheless, in his explanation to me, he argued: "we did not start this; the people rose up, they were the ones who decided they would protect their communities. What are we to do? Of course, we have to help them."[87] This was also

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[86] Image from: Lepeska, D. (2016, February 9). 'The Destruction of Sur: Is this historic district target for gentrification?'. *The Guardian.* Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/feb/09/destruction-sur-turkey-historic-district-gentrification-kurdish

[87] Whether or not this is entirely believable, was subject to much debate among my civilian interlocutors in both Turkish and Iraqi Kurdistan, as many others had heard similar explanations from leadership. It would be strange, a few of them argued, if the PKK did not know how brutal the Turkish state was, given that they had struggled almost continuously against it for thirty odd years. Likewise,

coupled, he admitted, with what was seen as an opportunity to 'tear out' the borders between the struggle taking place in Rojava, and the struggle taking place in Bakûr and in the Başûr mountains.

The Battle for Amed as the Battle for Rojava

Looking back, the uprising and destruction of Amed was hard for me to think of as both a single-sited happening and as a multi-sited happening. In one way, it became impossible to think this event not being connected to what was happening in Rojava and in the mountains of Başur, but at the same time, this truly happened in Amed. The one was not reducible to the other, and neither superseded the other in importance. If the Rojava revolution had not been so well underway, and the PKK guerillas in their bases in Iraq had not provided the inspiration and the training, it would probably not have turned out as it did. Likewise, Amed – the 'capital of Kurdistan,' as it is known – with its securing walls, byzantine street organization, symbolic centrality, and tight-knit community connections with the councils were certainly also site-specific capacitators. However, just as the event had manifested these interlinkages, these interlinkages also passed, changed, or lost their relevance. The guerillas and youth were killed, the houses destroyed, the community displaced, and the comparison to Rojava more and more far-fetched. The event, the irreducible social situation, both territorialized and not, withered away and did not manage to overcome the force of the Turkish army.

Before leaving from Norway at the end of 2015, coming back from Wan for a visit (see chapter 8), I met with one the *heval*s who had been a part of defending Sur, and used to frequent the council. A father of two, he had been shot in the arm and since he not been able (or wanted) to be taken to the hospital, he had lost some function. Although he seemed depressed to me, the mood when we met was still somewhat light. I asked him what he thought of the revolution now that the *serhildan* of Amed had seemingly been brought to an end. Although the fighting was still going hard, the community had by and large left Sur by then and the heavy artillery had been rolled in.

how much of this was pure civilian participation and how much of the uprising was 'guided' by the PKK was also a topic of debate. To be clear, this did not mean that the PKK was categorically disowned by people because of their actions, however.

Partially recognizing the currently hopeless situation, he said that it was not over yet. This was merely a stage in the revolution, he told me. Perhaps they would not win now, but they had learned more, and even though the resistance would perhaps be dormant after Sur had been destroyed, it would assuredly come back in force again later. The liberation of Bakûr would perhaps not come now, he said, but it will come – "I am sure of it."

After talking to him, it seemed that everything had changed, but at the same time that nothing had changed. That which had been a part of the same liberation struggle as Rojava, was still thought of as part of Rojava, but not in the same way. They were still a part of the same process, but the process still had to be better 'adapted' to Amed as it did not pan out successfully in this turn. During the height of the *serhildan* the struggle in Amed was seen as developing co-spatially and co-temporally with the struggle in in Rojava, rendering the particularities of the place non-significant in relation to conceptualizing the revolution; it was one of the battles that needed to be fought to free Kurdistan and the Middle East. When it seemed as though the uprising was failing however, as my maimed *heval* would have it, the particularities of the struggle in Amed resurfaced; then, it was important to consider the lack of preparation, the particular nature of the Turkish state and its violent logic, and so forth. For him, as for many others, this did not indicate that Amed somehow had been taken out of the struggle, but rather that it was not developing in the same revolutionary time-space as Rojava. Next time, as they now knew the brutality of the state better, they would be better prepared, he told me, so they could 'raise the level of the resistance to a higher level,' re-embedding it with Rojava. It seemed to me that what had been *the* revolution across borders, had become time-capsule of the *serhildan* of Amed, and what had been the leading star in the process of 'liberating the world,' once again became the experiment of Rojava, both for me and my informants.

With regards to multi-sitedness, I saw the event in Amed as complicating my received perspectives. The local had become global and the global had become local, but in the process, they had both changed what they meant. The connections that emerged from the event (and therefore contributed to making it into an event), were not there in the

same way before the event had taken place as they were when it was ongoing, or there when it was finished. At the same time however, the presence and salience of these connections when they were there, were so strong and so omnipresent in people's material and imaginative lives, that they would be impossible to ignore, or to write myself out of. The revolution was, for a short time, the 'whole' through which the totality of their circumstance could be explained, as I could see it. Both being so 'materially' imbricated with the movement (i.e. that my very association with the movement put me in danger with the state), and emotionally connected to what they found to be important, it would have felt like a deceit for me to overwrite these connections. Rather, what appeared to me was that the central value of revolution territorialized certain places, like Amed, which for a time was seen as the pinnacle of resistance in a grander frame, and at the same time de-territorialized others, so that Rojava, for instance, was lifted up and out of a particular space and time. Amed was in the process of becoming the same as Rojava, or was at a certain point experienced as 'the same place' in many ways. The 'site' that I found myself in, was simultaneously in many places and one, and the relationship between them was continuously moving and changing. In every place I traveled, I felt the same thing; the revolution could not be contained or placed, but rather manifested as singular and multiple at the same time, in continuously different ways.[88]

As such, whether or not I saw my fieldwork as multi-sited or single-sited, seemed to be a question peripheral to the study of revolution. But although I have now claimed that the revolution was an instantiated, eventive process, both territorializing and de-territorializing, this does not mean that I could not see certain patterns emerging from the various places I conducted research, however. Even though I think about revolution as manifestation and actualization, both territorialized and not, this did not entail that there were not common patterns of interaction across the various locations.

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[88] This being said, the points that both Candea and Marcus make still stand, as I see it. *Pace* Candea, I still had to bound the field-site; but the 'sphere' of what I saw as *relevant* connections to follow was enclosed by my own understanding of this as event, which could not be entirely separated from my friends' understanding. Put differently, it was foreclosed by my own positionality in the event, and my pre-existing consubstantiality with my informants' concerns. *Pace* Marcus, the site(s) that I researched, when examined closely, could not be said to be single-sited, but rather imbricated globally – even in a totality. However, for me, it seemed that this global or international aspect of the sites was *emergent* rather than static, or there to be 'found.'

There was still a certain *logic* that structured the movement, creation, and transformation of the patterns of interaction, even though the patterns varied to an enormous degree. This logic, as I claimed in the introduction, was intimately intertwined with the role of martyrdom and its usages. As a conclusion to the chapter, I will once again return to Germany to illustrate what I mean.

Revolution and Revolutions

Adopting an eventive perspective does not necessitate confining analysis to singular, specific happenings. I see this perspective as having the capacity to extend beyond the confines of merely analyzing events (or situations) in themselves by virtue of examining *the social logic* imbricated across various situations. Whereas events are both territorialized and de-territorialized in the Kurdish movement, i.e. driven by something taking place far away spurning concrete yet variegated actions in multiple locations, this does not entail that the ways in which actions are deliberated on, undertaken and understood, is completely disparate. What I have forwarded in chapter 1, and what I will build up in the following chapters, is the idea that the creation, discussion, and implementation of revolutionary speech and actions deriving from these events, is very much structured by a logic and frame of martyrdom. In all of the various events across the movement's locations, the frame for reasoning is similar despite the differences in values, outcomes, and practical applications. This frame, and its concordantly generated logic, I hope to show, is intimately connected with the cosmological role of martyrs and martyrdom.

Returning to the example from Germany, in the event of Öcalan speaking, the woman used a logic of communication to my friends in the youth center that reminded them that martyrs were the capacitators for the revolution. In the event that Öcalan had 'caused,' she reminded them that they were not only themselves sitting there in the youth center, but that they were also carriers of the revolutionary promises that the martyrs had died for. "With the spirit of the martyrs *we* will be victorious", she said, indicating that she, as a guerilla, and they, as civilians, were in the same project together and had mutual responsibilities towards the dead. In this way, in the event of Öcalan speaking she relied upon martyrs as both *the shared frame* that bound them

together and as the *value* which compelled them both to action. By virtue of being bound together by commitment to the martyrs, there was a logic of action and speech that should be followed – whatever that might be in the given situation.

The same could be said in Amed. As the martyrs marked the names of streets, were taken or given as *nom de guerre* by the youth fighting, and commemorated with pictures in the councils, they there too played a part in connecting people to each other and compelling action – albeit in a radically different way than in Germany. As the youth, of their own initiative, drew inspiration in the guerilla who fought and died in the country-side, or from the militia-turned-army fighting ISIS, they too saw these sacrifices pertaining to their own situation, demanding action from them. The deaths offered by the martyrs profoundly shaped the way in which they thought about themselves, the way in which they understood their actions, as well as their motivation for undertaking them. As with Germany, the martyrs offered both the frame and a logic that was seen as necessary to adapt and apply to the particular circumstances in Amed. As we shall see, this was a structuring and recurrent feature in all the different places that I worked in; despite the variations in conditions, courses of action undertaken, and ways of relating to each other, the martyrs were constantly a *force* to be reckoned with.

Hence, the thesis does not rest on the presumption that the movement's revolution was martyrial in its static essence, but rather that martyrdom was a relational force that infused, created and capacitated actions and words, in an open-ended fashion, recurring across different events. Figuring as they do in the imaginary space between the living and the dead, as both a past and a futurity of the revolution, the martyrs were integral to both making sites into events and to the events' outcome, whatever they turned out to be. But before I can explore this empirically in the different places I conducted research however, a consideration of the history of martyrdom in the PKK is needed, as well as an understanding of the circumstances which may give rise to such a martyrial centrality. In the next chapter I will examine the history of Turkey as a means to elucidate these conditions; what conditions made the martyrs the centerpiece of the PKK's later revolutionary project.

3: The Birth and History of the Turkish State's Logic of Violence

Introduction

The tremors in my body preceded the sound. My gaze snapped over to the source, where I could see the cloth, smoke and dust rising from a void within the mass of people. The music was still blaring and Selahattin Demirtaş, the co-leader of the HDP, was calling for people to stay calm. I stood pressed against the fence, some 30 meters from the explosion with my friend Buldan and her cousins, packed between the tens of thousands who had come to the rally. Not everyone seemed to know what was happening, people asking those next to them, and lowering their various *Apocî* flags to get a better look. A few people started to cry, but we could not move to let anyone through – it was full for hundreds of meters in each direction. The heat was glaring. Some people who had understood the situation started passing their children over the heads of the crowd so they could be lifted beyond fences and run away.

I cannot recall how long we stood there, but we were packed in, sweating, hearing the screaming and the shouting, getting glimpses of the carnage whenever the masses moved a bit. I thought about scaling the fence, or pushing my way through, but no one else was doing it, so neither did I. People started shouting slogans, but were encouraged to stay calm by Demirtaş, who had not moved from his position on stage, although it had now become clear that the bomb was intended for him. He said we should wait for the ambulances, and filter out calmly.

Suddenly, there were more bangs and it became hard to breathe, a burning sensation piercing my lungs and my eyes watering over. It became impossible to stay in the same place, and I, holding Buldan's hand, started to run in the opposite direction of the explosion, where the crowds had begun to clear out. A few hundred meters away, we were offered water by a young Kurdish man, and washed out our eyes. We had been tear-gassed by the police he said with anger in his face, before he ran over to an election poster for Erdoğan and started to tear it down, while shouting *Bijî Serok Apo!*

– 'Long Live Leader Abdullah Öcalan.' Hundreds of people joined in on the chant, set fire to garbage, threw rocks at the incoming police vehicles and continued to tear down the election posters.

Buldan pulled me away from the spectacle and got on the phone with her friends. She found out that the election rally for the HDP had been moved to outside of the HDP office instead, and that Demirtaş was headed there now. We met up with her cousins and her friends and tried to find a cab that was willing to take us. I was still terrified, my legs shaking, but I too felt very strongly that "they can't do this to us," which one of her friends kept repeating. We hailed a taxi driver on the street, but when he heard where we wanted to go, he tried to drive on. One of Buldan's cousins shamed him into taking us there, screaming: "Are you not Kurdish? Here, here is 200 tl (sixty-five euros at the time), you greedy traitor." The taxi driver then promptly denied the money and ushered us into the car.

The entire way to the HDP's main office in Tesisler, all sound was drowned out by every single car for miles laying on the horn. It was an overpowering, constant, droning sound. People in apartments were banging pots and pans from the balconies, and flashing the lights of their apartments in the dusk. When we arrived outside of the HDP building, there were even more people there than had been at the first rally. Demirtaş stood atop his election bus, clearly affected by the bomb and the event, pleading with people to not resort to violence until after the election had taken place. Violence now would not help anybody, he said. "Use your anger for parliament."

His statement seemed to alleviate the situation, and it felt good to hear him talk. The speech was short, and we quickly left the meeting in trepidation for another bombing attack. People flooded out into the streets in all directions, stopping traffic, shouting "The PKK are the people and the people are here," "Long live Leader Apo," "Kurdistan will be the graveyard of fascism," and "War! War! War!" The police, who turned up in massive numbers in semi-tanks with machineguns on top, quickly met us. They created a blockade, and some tanks drove rapidly into the crowds so that people had to dive away, firing tear gas, and what I found out later was live ammunition,

simultaneously. Barricades were formed and people attacked the tanks with rocks, sticks, and Molotov cocktails. Some boys had gotten ahold of police helmets and were smashing them on the ground. Buldan took me by the hand as we could not hear anything over the blaring sirens, and pulled me into an alley through which we escaped home.

This was in Diyarbakir on the fifth of June, 2015, my fourth day in Turkish Kurdistan. The major news outlets reported the bombing attack differently, but according to the local hospital 350 people had been wounded and maimed and five killed (Icer, et al., 2016). The bomb had been planted close to the stage with the hope of killing Demirtaş. It was a so-called pipe bomb, filled with small iron pellets, which were intended to hit as many people as possible. Since it was so packed, however, a few people absorbed almost the whole charge of the explosion, paradoxically killing far fewer people than if less had attended. It should not have surprised me that something like this could happen - the HDP had allegedly been attacked 176 times before this on the campaign trail,[89] sometimes with a few casualties, and the movement would be attacked again, more severely in Suruc and Ankara.[90] Nevertheless, it was still an experience that I clearly could not have prepared myself for.

From the event, two things became viscerally clear to me, at the very beginning of my fieldwork. The first was that the state was indisputably the *enemy* in Kurdistan.

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[89] A documentation of the number of attacks the HDP suffered would warrant an investigation beyond the confines of this chapter, and not be central to the argument being made. The claim of 176 comes from Demirtaş himself: 'HDP leader Demirtaş says vandalism on party offices is a rehearsal for civil war.' (2015, September 9). *Today's Zaman*. Retrieved from https://web.archive.org/web/20151119065650/http://www.todayszaman.com/latest-news_hdp-leader-Demirtaş-says-vandalism-on-party-offices-is-rehearsal-for-civil-war_398646.html. More important than the actual numbers however, is an understanding of the intensity of the repression that the HDP faced.

[90] On the 20th of July a deadlier bombing took place in Suruc, next to the Syrian border, where a suicide attacker killed 33 people who were mobilizing to send aid to the Syrian Kurds; 'Suruç'ta ölenlerin sayısı 32'ye yükseldi.' (2015, July 22). *NTV*. Retrieved from https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/suructa-olenlerin-sayisi-32ye-yukseldi,BNZ2kTA7dUG-D1jkN1S93w. This was followed by an even more lethal bombing on October 10th in Ankara, where 109 people were killed in a peace demonstration; Demirtaş, S. 'Does Turkey have to learn to live with terror?' 2016 March 16). *Hürriyet Daily News.* Retrieved from http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/opinion/serkan-Demirtaş/does-turkey-have-to-learn-to-live-with-terror-96501. In both cases the HDP and much of the Kurdish movement accused the government of foul play, either assisting or turning a blind eye to the massacres.

Contrary to notions of control and acquiescence, which are usually considered core tenants for effective state rule (Weber, 1997), the state in Turkey responded to the Kurdish movement with what I could only understand at the time as pure hatred, a desire for annihilation, and a gleeful masochism. 'Repression' did not fit the bill. To tear-gas a crowd that had been bombed was beyond my experiential imagination before this point. To then actively seek to murder people who were participating in the following demonstration by driving into crowds, was also previously incomprehensible to me. People were, by an overwhelming majority, totally convinced that the AKP and the state itself had planted the bomb, or at least facilitated ISIS in doing so, but no one could know for certain.

The second thing that became apparent to me was that politics for the Kurdish movement meant something different than it did to me. Although literally bombed, no one at the rally panicked; no one was willing to trample others to get away themselves. People remained recalcitrant, willing to mobilize and reconvene, even after such an experience; it was not unexpected, new, shocking or surprising. If not accustomed to, it was at least something that was not beyond the horizon of what people would expect. State violence was well within the confines of the possible when it came to political action for the Kurds.

Neoliberal Capital, Violence and State

How could such a configuration of state violence have come about historically? How did the Turkish state come to be considered and act as an annihilating force, and what circumstances had conditioned people to react to state violence in this nonchalant way? From what I could glean from the event itself there was little information as to the origins of this grotesque configuration of subjugating violence and resistance. Although very much informed by this experience – in addition to later experiences at the receiving end of violence from the Turkish state – I believe the answers to these questions need to be considered in a longer historical perspective. If our larger task is to understand the revolutionary world that the PKK has generated for and in the struggle, I think we would be amiss if we did not consider it as inextricably linked to the violent conditions from which it emerged. We must therefore turn to a historical

account of the configuration of the Turkish state and the development of the Kurdish resistance, in order to both provide an answer to the questions above, and to set ourselves up for a progression into the revolutionary 'cosmos' of the PKK.

Recent accounts of the history of violence seem to emphasize its transforming, fluid and ever-changing character. Although few authors would seek to contest an understanding of violence as an ongoing, permeating phenomenon – what Philippe Bourgois has called a 'continuum of violence' (2004, 2001) – an emerging consensus seems to be arising that the advent of neoliberalism has profoundly changed the face and shape of violence (Zagato, 2018; Springer, 2016; Paley, 2014; Watt & Zepeda 2012; Benson, Fischer & Thomas, 2008; Friedman, 2004; Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2000; Nagengast, 1994). Neoliberalism, it seems, is in the process of becoming a *paradigm* through which the exertion, effectuation and configuration of violence is to be examined; it is becoming a condition that is to be studied *sui generis.* Gwyn Kirk and Margo Okazawa-Rey (2000), were perhaps among of the first to formulate this idea, arguing that "neoliberalism and militarism are inextricably linked" (Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2000, p. 2), contending, among other things, that under neoliberalism war becomes a permanent state of affairs due to the profit motive and power vested in giant arms corporations. For them, studying warfare without studying neoliberalism, would be a fallacy, since neoliberalism now engulfed and dictated the shape of violence all over the world (Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2000, p. 13-15). Concordantly, the shape of the contemporary various armed struggles all over the world could (and should) be traced back to a new economic hegemony in order to understand them properly. This perspective has been echoed in more recent (activist) accounts. Dawn Paley, for instance, argues that neoliberalism has become the motive force for generating and shaping of the drug violence along the Mexican-American border (Paley, 2014), Simon Springer sees neoliberalism engendering 'exceptional violence' in various locations across the globe (Springer, 2011), and Peter Benson, Edward Fischer & Kendron Thomas argue that Guatemala's resurgent violence is a "symptom" of "the changes brought about by neoliberal reforms (…)" (Benson, Fischer & Thomas 2008, p. 40).

In explaining the configuration of violence in the Turkish-Kurdish areas, however, I find this perspective lacking, and set out to relativize these accounts in the following historical analysis. To be clear, this is not to argue that neoliberalism is irrelevant, or somehow besides an analysis of the Turkish state with regards to the Kurds. Defined by Kapferer (2010b), recent years have seen a 'corporatization of the state,' meaning that the political organs of governance have been to a much greater degree subjugated to the economic organs of governance, and indeed, that the economic sphere has taken over, or become dominant in many areas of life, where it previously was not (Kapferer, 2010b). It is not to say that the 'face' of violence has not changed, in other words – the technologies, institutions, the 'theaters of war' (Coker, 2015), and so forth. During the height of neoliberal reconfiguration in Turkey in the 1990's, for instance, the amount of NATO weapons exported to Turkey for it to deal with its 'terrorist threat' more than quadrupled (Tirman, 1997), greatly facilitating the state massacres. The point I wish to make, however, is that although what Arendt called the 'implements of violence' have multiplied and become ever-more powerful (Arendt, 1974), the *use* of these violent instruments nonetheless hinges upon a logic that cannot be captured by neoliberalism alone. The logic of the violence implemented, needs to be placed in a historical trajectory so as to better understand its effects, origins, and developments.

In providing this historical account of the development of Turkey's paradigm of violence with regards to the Kurds, in other words, I hope to engage in a debate concerning the supposed *autonomy* of neoliberal re-configurations of violence. It seems to me that 'neoliberalism' has become such a massive container-term, which, by virtue of its enormous expanse and assumed importance and explanatory potential, circumscribes historical and cultural trajectories which may be as important – if not more – in explaining the shape of the violence on the ground. I suggest that although new configurations and sets of violent actors emerge with the advent of neoliberalism, the logic by which this violence operates may in fact be quite detached from the

economic paradigm in which it plays out, often more intimately connected with a particular state's historical development.[91]

To make this argument we will start with what I see as the inaugurating event for the logic of violence that has characterized the Turkish state's response to the Kurdish question for the last century, namely the Şêx Saîd rebellion in 1925 and its immediate aftermath.[92] From there we move on to examine how this logic of violence has continued onwards throughout the both the 'liberal' and 'neoliberal' reconfigurations of the economy and the state. Here we shall see a persistence in what measures were taken in response to Kurdish political claim-making. We shall then move on from the historical account to how this trajectory of violence is perceived and embedded in the experience of local inhabitants in the Diyarbakir (Amed) province. In the concluding parts of the chapter, I suggest that a re-thinking of Manicheism might help elude considering the study of violence as belonging to a trans-cultural and trans-historical paradigm, such as neoliberalism. This sets us up for the next chapter, where I will consider the origins of revolutionary 'cosmos' the PKK generated in relation to this particular condition of violence.

This chapter is not, therefore, a general history of Turkey, or indeed Kurdistan, as such. For our purposes, I will be paying attention to the history of what Feldman (among others) has called a 'formation of violence' in Turkey (Feldman, 1991) – in this case, in Turkey. This means that the 'place' of violence itself (its constitution, rationality, and effectuation) is what interests me, not the particularities of treaties, ceasefires, false compromises, 'attempts at reconciliation' surrounding it. Indubitably valuable, each of the aforementioned peace bargains – occurring numerous times throughout the Turkish-Kurdish history – have been discussed in such great detail that they would be impossible to do justice to within the confines of this chapter. Each of the time periods and events I sketch here can be (and have been) discussed in much

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[91] This is of course not a novel argument. It has been made by many different scholars in many different fields, but perhaps most famously by Agamben (2005). One might, however, claim that although Agamben tries to re-center the state in relation to violence through a historical account, his historical account is somewhat *unhistorical* (Colatrella 2011).

[92] I here spell this 'Şêx Saîd,' contrary to the according to the common English variant 'Sheik Said,' as this is the term most closely approximating how my informants would pronounce his name.

greater detail, brilliantly conducted by many authors (Gunter, 2016, 2015, 2013a, 2000; Olson 2013, 2000, 1992; Bozarslan 2008, 2000; McDowall, 2004; Van Bruinessen, 2000b, 1992). Moreover, this is also not to be read as an argument regarding the *intensity* of the violence exerted against the Kurds either. Although I will argue that the eradicative logic extends across time, this is not to be taken as an argument as to the constancy of the intensity of the repression. At times the eradicative logic has been more forceful, and at other times, less so. What I set out to do here is to trace a history of the logic of *state violence*. But to start with the beginning, we first need to define what violence I will be tracing.

Violence in Turkish Kurdistan

Violence can be approached in various ways.[93] Henrik Vigh, drawing on David Riches' 'originary' work (1986), has pointed out that violence, in its rudimentary form, "can be understood as a relationship in which at least one of the parties experiences an illegitimate limitation of his or her agency" (Vigh, 2011, p. 105). Others have pointed out that, as such, violence works as a certain form of constant background (Roy, 2008; Žižek, 2008), embedded, for instance, in educational institutions (Bourdieu, 2010), symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 2005), and legal and justice systems (Agamben, 1998; Foucault, 1995). Echoing these approaches, Vigh asserts that "violence", more broadly understood, "is an experience of being acted upon in a manner that causes bodily, psychological and/or social harm, moving us beyond the merely interpersonal dimensions of the phenomena to encompassing the concepts of structural, cultural and symbolic violence" (Vigh, 2011, p. 105). While this is undoubtedly true, this is not my main preoccupation here. For our purposes, I think it is wise to confine the definition of violence to being a harmful mode of interaction between two parties which may engender certain systems of perpetuation, exchange, and transformation of meaning and social organization.

This departs to a certain extent from Riches' foundational definition (1986). According to Riches, although violence is a form of social relationship, either 'symbolically' oriented or 'practically' oriented, he sees a triad of actors – notably, the

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[93] See Christian Krohn-Hansen (1994) for a genealogy of the concept in the social sciences.

perpetrator, the victim, and the witness – forming a unitary whole. While we shall still think of violence as a mode of interaction, we shall also retain a certain Fanonian underpinning (Fanon, 2018, 2008, 2004), and attempt to examine the straightforward dyadic (or Manichean) relationship that characterizes the exerted and the exerted upon. There are several reasons for this.

Firstly, as Veena Das has argued convincingly (1987), Riches seems to assimilate 'symbolic' or 'expressive' violence into the instrumentalist, or 'practical,' realm of violence in his treatment of the subject – despite his efforts to keep them apart. Riches seems partially aware of this himself, when he writes: "(…) the focus in this chapter is on what goals – 'practical' or 'symbolic' – people achieve by behaving violently, and on why, from among other alternatives, people specifically choose violence to strive for these goals" (Riches, 1986, p. 5). Besides arguing against the instrumentalism she sees in Riches' work as a catch-all framework for analyzing violence,[94] Das contends that violence may be also a 'phatic' action, or rather, an action that expresses its purpose in its very execution (Das, 1987), and that therefore the division between instrumental (practical) violence and expressive (symbolic) violence does not hold under scrutiny in the first place. I find this an apt critique with regards to analyzing the Kurdish setting. In a sense, Das' critique may be read as doubling my experience in the demonstration; as far as I could understand, the form of the violence exerted by the state forces during and after the bombing precluded a clear 'why' in an instrumental sense. Tear-gassing the bombed Kurds was its own motive,[95] and to me, recalled a Fanonian perspective on the nature of violence under colonialism (Fanon, 2008, 2004).

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[94] See Riches in Das (1987: 11): "If an act of violence has no instrumental aim, it would not be performed."

[95] Of course, it is possible to deem these actions that I perceived as eradicatory as having an instrumentalist orientation, *qua* Riches. However, I see this as a matter of interpretation and contingent upon which level one directs analysis. If, hypothetically, the bomb-planters and the police had been interviewed about their actions, they might have argued that they were subduing the Kurds in order to bring about/secure peace (in some register). I find this unlikely, however. More than likely (in my experience), they would have responded that the sole purpose of their actions was to do exactly what they did, namely destroy the 'terrorist' demonstration. Although this could arguably also be seen as a goals-means orientation, it still does not capture the *form* of the violence as it was happening. When deciding to ram civilians with tanks, I find it highly unlikely that there is an intentionalist, goals-means orientation operating in the minds of the police. In the very exertion of violence, in other words, it seems that the means-goals orientation might collapse into the execution of the act itself, rendering an ethnographic analysis of violence necessarily more contingent upon its *form* than on the intentions behind it. This also harmonizes with the state of violence under colonial regimes, according

Secondly, and as a corollary, the actions undertaken by the police did not seem to refer to witnesses as central constituents of the violent act; a group was acted upon by another group, and between them there were no 'innocent' by-standers to be swayed.[96] Riches' definition, in other words, seems to overwrite the particularity of a given group-dynamic formation in a given context. The suitability of a colonial analysis in the case of Kurdistan, to certain degree, excludes the 'witness' as a separated third category relevant to the architecture of the violent formation.[97] As Das contends, the witness in Franz Fanon's writing cannot truly be considered a witness, for it is also the witness who is attacked when a victim belonging to the same dyadic category as is assaulted (Das, 1987). Phrased differently, the violence exerted upon the victim may in the colonial situation re-manifest in the witness, since they belong to the same category, who will seek to remunerate this gift of violence through more violence (Fanon, 2004).[98] This also harmonized with what I found true in the Kurdish context.

Thirdly, with a Fanonian understanding "the violence which is in question here (…) is not an abstract violence (…)" (Fanon, 2018, p. 654). "Contempt, a politics of hate, these are the manifestations of a very concrete and very painful violence" (Fanon, 2018, p. 655), originating with the incursion of the settlers and the institution of the colonial regimes, and kept alive by the everyday actions of the colonizers. Although the ramifications and the forms of violence permeating this society are manifold (Fanon, 2008, 2004), they are, for Fanon, behest to a condition of a foreign power

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to Fanon, where the violence exerted upon the colonized, does not count as violence in human, means-ends oriented form, because the colonized to not have status as humans in the same way (Fanon 2018, Fanon 2004).

[96] This of course goes to 'where' the violence may be said to take place, which again refers to the level of analysis. As the bombing later reached national news, both on TV and radio, one could hypothetically consider the people watching or listening as 'witnesses,' but with regards to the form of the violence and the means of its execution in the physical context, there were none to be 'swayed.'

[97] Which is of course not to say that there is not a difference between being exerted violence upon and beholding the act, but more to emphasize the entanglement and consubstantiality of the victim and witness.

[98] Literally deprived of being, according to Fanon (2008), the only way for the colonized to 'break into history,' is through violence. Due to the European creating the measurements for what humanity is (with a big 'H'), and simultaneously excluding the colonized from part-taking in it, the 'native' is deprived of his being within this system while at the same time forced to act within it (Fanon 2008). He or she is forced to use and see himself through categories that do not apply to him and that have, through violence, been forced upon him or her. The colonizer, through claiming humanity, has removed the colonized's ontological status.

subjugating an indigenous population, creating a Manichean division between those who have 'Being' and those who do not. Whether or not Kurdistan can be called a colony has been discussed and disputed (Jongerden 2016b; Bozarslan, 2008), but the "very concrete violence" is recognizable in the acts of the police and the state forces aimed at physically maiming or destroying Kurdish lives, or threatening to do so. For our purposes, however, the purchase of a Fanonian frame for understanding violence lies not only in its re-emphasis on the concrete and physical, but also in the opportunity ascribed to violence for creating a liberatory transformation of the colonized community. According to Fanon, it is through re-paying the gifts of violence that the colonizer within and outside may be expunged, opening up for the potential of a "new Man" (Fanon, 2004, p. 239). The deployment of violence is the only way the colonized may 'break into history.' Fanon indicates, in other words, that a community may transform itself into an entirely new substance through the deployment of violence. As I see it, Apter may supplements such a Fanonian perspective by shedding light on *how* such a communal transformation may take place through exchanges of violence (Apter, 1997), which is useful for a more dynamic understanding of the Kurdish condition and its resistance.

Apter (1997) argues that violent interactions take different sequential forms, and that *how* these sequential forms are ordered and conceptualized may have great effects upon how the community organizes and sees itself. At each end of the barrel (so to speak), the violence may reproduce a common framework for seeing and organizing in relation to the violence, or they may diverge completely. In the cases where a thief killed by the police knows he is a thief and may be killed, for instance, Apter would deem it an 'exchangeist' relation; both the policeman and the thief know and (and at some level) accept that the thief might be killed for stealing; an agreement about the parameters of the action is in place. The shared parameters also here extend to the thief's community (although they might not consider the 'thief' a thief). When the police kill a revolutionary, however, something radically different may take place. The police may still consider the revolutionary a criminal, but the revolutionary will not recognize this category. For a revolutionary, and for the revolutionary community, the recognition of the common parameter is not in place. Thieving or crime is not a

possibility. Taking something 'that doesn't belong to him' might, on the part of the revolutionary, instead of thieving be conceptualized as having always belonged to him and his people. For him the justice of the state is his injustice. Upon his murder then, the legitimacy of the supposed common parameter – if it is even recognized as an existing parameter in the first place – is categorically shattered. It is a conjuncture which actualizes and reinforces radical difference. As such, violence may also be generative of what Apter calls an 'inversionary' interaction, namely that every act of violence engenders and manifests a radically alter understanding of the situation at hand, both for the perpetrator and his community. As is apparent, such exchange sequences may continue indefinitely under particular political circumstances, as, for instance, 'terrorism' and 'emancipation' are two terms which are inherently irreconcilable, but mutually generative for their respective cosmologies when crystalized in action.

We shall return to a more in-depth consideration of the purchase of a Fanonian perspective on violence with regards to neoliberalism in the conclusion of the chapter, but in the following section, we shall examine this form of violent interaction more closely in Turkey. I will argue that violence exerted by the Turkish state takes on *an eradicative form*, a logic wherein the premise for common interaction is that the interaction should not exist – since the Kurds as a separate and independent ethnic group should not exist – and that the violence exerted by the Kurdish militants takes the form of recognition, i.e. a form of violence that asserts the legitimacy and right of such a violence to exist. The violence of recognition, and what this entails for generating a cosmos for the recent PKK, will be briefly introduced, but is the subject of the next chapter, where we will further explore what Apter called its 'inversionary' properties, i.e. violence's potential for reproducing or generating radically divergent understandings of the world. Our purpose here, is to show that the shape of the state's violence is not a novel phenomenon arising out of a neoliberal regime of repression (solely), but more a structural continuation of the violence that took place under the genesis of early Republican Turkish times. By examining the form of violence emerging from the repression of the Şêx Saîd rebellion in 1925, we shall see that it is structurally analogous to the repression that took place in 2015.

The Birth of the Eradicative Logic: The Şêx Saîd Rebellion

Coming out from the bouts of the First World War, the Ottoman Empire was crumbling severely (McDowall, 2004). Defeated by the European states and bound for partitioning, radical measures were needed in order to not be split between the victors. After the Allied Forces had taken Istanbul on 1919, a general named Mustafa Kemal Pasha – later known as Atatürk – arrived in Anatolia with the promise and the ambition to free the empire from the colonizers. He set up headquarters in Ankara, and mustered powers to combat the foreign forces from there. Central to this process was building alliances and training military personnel (Van Bruinessen, 1992, p. 273). In his search for allies in the struggle, Mustafa Kemal Pasha initiated talks with multiple Kurdish tribes and sheiks, who swore to the cause. Kemal promised the tribal leaders the resurrection of the Caliphate and "a homeland for the Turks and Kurds" in the remnants of the Ottoman Empire, which had previously been seen as the case (Gunter, 2016, p. 28). Together with Kurds from the region, one of the first military campaigns Mustafa Kemal ordered was the attack on the incipient Armenian state, which, with military assistance from the Soviet Union, fell in 1920. Much like the Armenians had been an 'internal threat' during Ottoman times (although recognized as a religious minority), and exterminated with the assistance of the prestigious Kurdish Hamidîye Cavalry, they had now materialized as an external threat, remnants of which were still present within the Turkish borders. After taking back much of Armenia, Mustafa Kemal Pasha finally ousted the Greeks in 1921 from the territory that was to become Turkey.

What happened afterwards holds great consequence for our current concerns. Following the (partial) consolidation of the Turkish state to be, one of Mustafa Kemal Pasha' first moves, with the assistance of the new political elite, was to disband the Ottoman Sultanate. On the tails of this event, a peace treaty was signed in 1923 in Lausanne with the European powers and a few months later the remnants of the Ottoman empire became the Turkish republic (Van Bruinessen, 1992, p. 274). For Mustafa Kemal Pasha, as well as for much of the new political elite, the reason for the Ottoman Empire's downfall was its decentralized, pluralist, non-industrial, and

religious mode of governance. Reacting to this state of affairs, they saw the future as being modeled on the European nation-state ideals. Only by transforming the empire into a modern, industrialized, ethnically homogenous, centralized and secular state, did they think the new Turkish republic would be able to compete with, or stand up to, the European powers. Following from this, a series of reforms were set in place to realize this new political project.

For the Kurds, several of these reforms caused great unease. The first was the dissolution of the Caliphate in 1923, which was the reason many of the Kurdish tribal leaders had pledged their allegiance to Mustafa Kemal in the first place. As Hişyar Özsoy notes: "the abolition of the caliphate replaced the idiom of 'Islamic Brotherhood' with 'the unity of the Turkish nation,' and destroyed the so-called 'historical alliance' between Kurds and Turks" (Özsoy, 2013a, p. 209). The second was a law permitting the government expropriation of land in the eastern province, to be given to 'foreign' settlers (Van Bruinessen, 1994). The third was the ban on all religious schools, or *medresses*, where Kurdish had been the language of instruction, in addition to prohibiting all Kurdish organizations and parties. Additionally, the constitution of 1924 failed to mention Kurds as a separate ethnic group (Izady, 2009), and maintained the Ottoman position that only religious minorities, like Greeks or Armenians, had minority rights. With the constitution came also the claim that the sovereign of the Turkish state was the Turkish people, who ruled in an undivided and ethnically homogenous territory.

Şêx Saîd

Perhaps the most important among those disquieted by the developments was Şêx Saîd. From under the princes (or *mîrs* in Kurdish) who had been disbanded in the mid-1800s, Şêx Saîd was one of the numerous Sheiks that assumed power in the Kurdish regions of the Ottoman Empire. Based in the North-East of Diyarbakir, due to his trade in animals, religious prestige in the Naqişbandî Sheikly order,[99] role as a mediator in

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[99] The Naqişbandî order was one of the most influential Sufi orders at the time, capable of mobilizing thousands of followers in the Turkish and Syrian Kurdish regions. In contrast to other Sufi orders, it was a relatively conservative 'path' or *tariqa* (in Arabic) at the time, advocating the implementation of Shari'a law. The Naqişbandî lodge traced its lineage to Abu Bakr, rather than Ali, affiliating it more

inter-tribal conflicts, as well as his kin's marriage to several important tribal leaders in the area, he had secured an authoritative leadership position, according to Van Bruinessen (1992). Seeing the developments taking place in Ankara, and fearing both for a secular rule and a repression of Kurdishness, he participated in the clandestine party Azadî's congress in 1924 ('Freedom' in Kurdish). There he was elected as a figurehead for the Kurdish organization, and laid plans for a "general uprising" in 1925, with the "explicit aim of establish[ing] an independent Kurdish state" (Van Bruinessen, 1992, p. 265). The Sheik consequently travelled around the regions close to Amed in order to mobilize and attract followers, but due to an unforeseen skirmish with local gendarmeries and a miscommunication with allied contingents (Olson, 2000; Olson & Tucker, 1978), the rebellion took place a few months before it was initially planned. Although weakened, within two months Şêx Saîd had mobilized several thousand militants and taken large areas surrounding Diyarbakir, as well as laid siege to the city itself. The Ankara government responded quickly however, and with the support of the French-owned Baghdad railway sent 35 000 troops to the area (Van Bruinessen, 1992). Along with the assistance from competing tribes and severe aerial bombing, the rebellion was eventually crushed in April 1925, and Şêx Saîd and many of his companions were captured and incarcerated.

On the 28th of June 1925, Şêx Saîd and forty-six of his companions were hung by the neck in the Dağkapi square in the middle of Diyarbakir (Özsoy, 2013a). After being left in the square for a day, the bodies were taken down and dumped in a ditch close by, where soldiers unceremoniously poured concrete on top and filled the ditch with earth, leaving it unmarked (Özsoy, 2013a). Continuing the desecration, the Turkish state's military destroyed hundreds of villages, and killed thousands of men women and children (Olson, 2013; Van Bruinessen, 1992). In some cases "entire districts were deported to the west" (Van Bruinessen, 1992, p. 291), their fertile fields burned and livestock expropriated or killed. The so-called 'independence tribunals' created to deal with the crisis had been given "dictatorial power to convict, imprison and execute"

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strongly with Sunni'sm than Shi'a mysticism. After the fall of the mîr's in the middle and late 1800's, the Sufi orders had increased their social power as mediators between and leaders of various tribes, filling the power vacuum left by them (Özoglu 2004, Van Bruinessen 1992).

(Olson, 2013, p. 124),[100] leading British intelligence to assert that by late august 1925 a total of "357 Kurdish notables had been sentenced to death" (Olson, 2013, p. 122-123). Before its dissolution in 1927 the numbers had risen substantially; the Diyarbakir independence tribunals had arrested 7440 people, and executed 660 (Olson, 2013, p. 125). At a policy level, the rebellion also incurred severe repercussions. The Kurdish regions were made into a military area controlled by a centrally appointed general inspector, which lasted until 1965 (Gunter, 2016, p. 28), forbidding foreigners to enter. All the religious lodges were outlawed, religious garb was banned, Kurdish language was forbidden, and measures towards categorical disarmament of the populace were undertaken. Turks, Albanians, Circassians and Assyrian Christians were invited (or, in some cases, forced) to re-settle in the Kurdish region (Olson 2013, p.122), and state schools were opened with mandatory attendance. In the republic's center, the rebellion also permitted Mustafa Kemal Pasha to restrict the press, close newspapers that were critical, and shut down a competing political party.[101] The Şêx Saîd rebellion, and the way in which the State reacted to it, in other words, heralded a new political mode of governance in post-Ottoman Turkey.

In a strange way, the execution of Şêx Saîd described here is reminiscent of the "dramatic enactments of crime and punishment" that John Comaroff & Jean Comaroff see as being vital to the very production of social order in contemporary South Africa (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2004, p. 822). In their case, they suggest that "drama and fantasy" are central mechanisms of state governance (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2004, p. 822), which seem to point in a different direction than a hegemonization of Foucaultian biopolitics – a sentiment shared by Mbembe (2003), among others (Agamben, 1998; Zulaika & Douglass, 1996). Instead of the panopticon (Foucault 1995), various authors contend in various guises and places, that it is the carnival (Mbembe, 1992), the spectacle (Brown, 2009), or the apparatus of capture (Deleuze & Guattari, 2005), which is the central node in the performance of state governance.

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[100] The independence tribunals were special courts founded during the Turkish War for Independence, given special mandate to pursue the enemies of the new republican order, as well as the right to execute capital punishment, fiercely loyal to Mustafa Kemal. All in all, only 8 courts were established, and the one in Diyarbakir was founded as a direct response to Şêx Saîd's rebellion (Mango, 2002).
[101] The competing party was the Progressive Republican Party (*Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası* In Turkish), which Atatürk initially had supported founding, but closed after the Şêx Saîd rebellion on the basis of accusations of co-conspiracy.

More than through subtle techniques of disciplination and 'the headless state' (Foucault, 1995), the aforementioned authors seem to suggest that 'performances' of violence and the continual presence of forceful state agents is (still) a central feature of modern governance. Although we may question whether the panopticon ever truly arrived in Turkish Kurdistan, a collective, public and summary punishment, dramatically choreographed and rooted in fictitious imagery, seems a remarkably befitting description to summarize the case of Şêx Saîd's treatment. From the spectacle of his execution, the extra-legal court system, to the 'Kurdification' of the resistance and its summary treatment, and the paranoid speculations of parliamentary co-conspiracy, the 'performance' of state power may be seen as a central feature of the emerging state. Regardless of what theoretical 'performative' perspective we may adopt with regards to the nature of this state power, we may see the execution of Şêx Saîd as heralding the institution of Turkey's modern, direct mode of dealing with the Kurdish regions – founded on a novel phantasmagoric ideological configuration.

The Novelty of Şêx Saîd

The manner in which the state treated the Kurdish rebellion was unprecedented in Ottoman history (Olson, 2013; Özsoy, 2013a), and would have been unthinkable only a few decades earlier due to the Kurds' and Turks' originary unity, secured by their common Islamic confession. We may also take this as *the* instituting act of a new logic of eradicative violence. This is not to say that there had not been eradicative violence before – which can be seen in, for instance, the genocide of the Armenians a few years before – but the fashion in which this was committed indicated a novel configuration of this logic and, arguably, its hegemonization. Only half a century before, the response to Kurdish rebellions against the state had been completely different. Whereas Şêx Saîd was publicly executed, dumped in an unmarked grave, and had revenge exerted upon his kin and followers (and even 'his people'), the Ottoman response to previous rebellions had been of a radically different character.

In 1839, for instance, the Prince of the Kurdish Bohtan Emirate, Bedirxan Beg, led an insurgency against the Ottoman Porte. Reacting to the Tanzimat reforms,[102] which were supposed to centralize the state's power by means on an expanded legal system, new tax reforms, and reconfigured conscription policy, he led a protracted rebellion aimed at maintaining or expanding his autonomy (McDowall, 2004). By the end of 1845, he had taken large swaths of land stretching into modern day Syria and modern-day Iran (Van Bruinessen, 1992, p. 178), where he exercised de facto sovereignty – even rumored to have issued his own currency. This came to an end in 1847 when the Ottoman Porte was forced to react to Bedirxan Beg's slaughter of tax-evading Christians by the European powers. Bedirxan Beg surrendered, and he and his kin were brought to Istanbul. Instead of killing him or punishing him, however, he was received with "a great show of honor" (Van Bruinessen, 1992, p.180), and subsequently exiled to Crete with a government pension. Although not permitted to directly succeed him, his offspring received prestigious forms of education and lived in supreme wealth, two of them later given prominent positions in the Ottoman military and the title of "Pasha", or "Lord" in English (Van Bruinessen, 1992, p. 181). His two sons also rebelled in 1879 and when they were captured, however, only one was executed, and the other was, like his father, sent to exile on the government's check (Vindheim, 2016). Similar historical trajectories befell the rebellious leaders of the Hakkarî, the Baban and the Soran Emirate, as well as several sheiks and tribal leaders later in the 19th century (McDowall, 2004; Van Bruinessen, 1992).

This practice of catering to, negotiating with, and co-opting the *mîrs,* Sheiks, and other leaders of Kurdish rebellions was, in other words, widespread before the republican era. This was arguably informed by the aristocratic system where the Kurdish princes, even if they were in opposition, were recognized and respected as powerful leaders of

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[102] The Tanzimat 'period' were a series of reforms that started in 1839 and ended in 1876, aimed at 'modernizing' the Ottoman empire. Suffering defeat and economic subjugation at the hands of the European powers, the reforms aimed at imitating the progress Europe had made. Central aspects included the institution of universal conscription policies, expanded minority rights, removing the *millet* system, a renewed banking system, and a centralization of power in the hands of the Porte (McDowall, 2004). Bedirxan Beg is spelled 'Bedir Khan Beg' in English orthography.

large, partially autonomous provinces.[103] During the Ottoman era, the practices later enforced by the republican state were by and large seen as counter-productive, opposed to the ideal mode of governance which depended on the recognition of, and mediation with, Kurdish representatives. There were different ways of dealing with the Kurdish threat, but eradication was not on the table. Although the practice of exiling notables continued to a lesser extent in the early republic (Olson & Tucker, 1978), its inauguration nonetheless heralded a new paradigm of state violence.

New Governance, New Violence

Drawing on Üngor (2008), Azat Gündoğan argues that the former Ottoman territory, which had been configured into hierarchical segmentations of multiple ethno-religious groups, became gradually re-imagined as *a* "nation" reigning over a "unified territory" (Gündoğan, 2015, p. 34); the nation was to be Turkish, and the people who lived there Turks.[104] As a consequence of this national re-imagination, attempting to territorialize previously 'un-domesticated' lands, Gündoğan argues that "homeland was imagined as a *war zone"* (Dündar in Gündoğan, 2015, p. 35, italics retained). Turkey was imagined as threatened both by external enemies, internal enemies, and, more crucially, external enemies *inside* (Gündoğan, 2015). To secure the unification and territorial integrity of the Turkish state and nation, in other words, an eradicative process needed to take place. In order to appear as (and indeed enforce itself as) a unified territory with a singular inhabiting people, the state adopted a tactic of terrorization, re-settlement, disappearance, 're-integration,' and denial of representation to deal with the enemy in its multiple guises. Homeland was imagined as a war zone in the sense that war was synonymous with purification (Gündoğan, 2015, p. 36); the external enemies inside needed to be eradicated - not negotiated with.

This is what made the execution of Şêx Saîd such a monumental event. It was arguably the first manifestation of an eradicative logic of violence that was to shape

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[103] For a short discussion on the degree of autonomy accorded the Kurdish principalities, as well as its development and eventual downfall, see Atmaca (2017), and for a longer-more in-depth consideration see Eppel (2008).

[104] This was noted as early as 1940 by the anthropologist Edmund Leach, who expressed a disdain towards "the continuing denialist policies of the Turkish republic," although he also questioned the use-value of colonial travel documents for Kurds to document their existence (Leach in Houston, 2009, p. 21).

and continue onwards into the coming century. Inherent to this logic was a certain spectacular quality, that arguably also set a precedent for the coming century.[105] If it indeed was so that the nation needed to be 'purified,' as per Gündoğan's claims, it would be a fruitless process unless the purification could be shown and literally exhibited to the new nation. The eradication, in other words, also demanded a certain form of theater, where the new nation's public was invited to re-assert itself and its identity in relation to the enemy. By publicly executing Şêx Saîd for being 'a threat to the nation' (Özsoy, 2013a), the government invited the people to identify themselves with a new phantasmagoric frame and narrative of the Turkish state and its citizens. Similar to the 'dream and fantasy,' described by Comaroff and Comaroff as inherent in the spectacles of the state's performance of power (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2004), according to Ekrem Ekinci,[106] Şêx Saîd was framed by the Kemalist administration as a British spy, a Kurdish nationalist, a reactionary Islamist, and a puppet of the competing liberal Turkish party all at the same time.[107] Through fantastical spectacle, in other words, the eradicatory logic invited people to partake in a new-found nation where "the Turk is the sole *effendi* (master) and owner of this country", and "those who are not of pure Turkish blood (*soy*) have only one right in this country: The right

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[105] I say 'arguably' here, because I am not sure whether the spectacular qualities of public hangings, torching countrysides, etc, were a significant feature of the antecedent Ottoman Empire's performance of power. But regardless of whether it was new or not, Şêx Saîd's execution did harbor spectacular qualities. With a certain morbid imagination, one might arguably see a similar attentiveness to performance exhibited by state forces in Turkey today. A certain display of the means of death and the moments immediately before death seem to be salient, as with the strangulation of Haci Lokman dragged behind a police vehicle through the Kurdish city of Sirnax in 2015: 'Still no justice for Haci Lokman Birlik.' (2018, August 20). *ANF News.* Retrieved from https://anfenglish.com/kurdistan/still-no-justice-for-haci-lokman-birlik-29098. Similarly, the guerilla Ekin Wan was left naked, raped and tortured in the city of Varto in 2015: Kuray, Z. (2016 August 30). 'Report on the Execution of YJA star guerilla Ekin Wan.' *ANF News*. Retrieved from https://anfenglish.com/women/report-on-execution-of-yja-star-guerrilla-ekin-wan-12552. Turkish soldiers have also shared films of themselves casually shooting captured guerillas in the head: Tomson, C. (2016, October 29). 'Turkish Army execute two female PKK prisoners of war,' *Al Masdar News,* Retrieved from https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/video-turkish-army-executes-two-female-pkk-prisoners-war/. Spectacle is, in other words, arguably still important to the Turkish state's forces' performance of violence, in some variation.
[106] Ekinci, E. (2015 July 2) 'Traitor or a hero? The execution of Sheikh Said.' *Daily Sabah*. Retrieved from https://www.dailysabah.com/columns/ekrem-bugra-ekinci/2015/07/03/a-traitor-or-a-hero-the-execution-of-sheikh-said
[107] See footnote 75 with regards to the competing party. It is interesting to remark here, as an aside, that Abdullah Öcalan also occupies a similarly ambiguous position in the contemporary Turkish imaginary. He oscillates between being a tool for the European powers, to being a covert 'Armenian' seeking to disrupt the progress and unity of the Turkish state (Mater 2005).

to be servants to the Turks, the right to be slaves" – as the Minister of Justice at the time, Mahmut Ersat Bozkurt, stated (cited in Özsoy, 2013a, p. 105).

As Mustafa Kemal himself said, the state needed to "(…) extirpate any elements who may oppose the Turks and Turkism" (cited Özsoy, 2013a, p. 105), which certainly did not only extend to the Kurds. In 1915 approximately one and a half million Armenians were massacred by the Porte with active support of Germany and Kurdish tribes (Göçek, 2014) – an act which could also warrant a label of eradicative violence. While undoubtedly eradicative, however, I would claim that the violence exerted upon the Armenians was nonetheless of a different character than the violence exerted upon the Kurds later on. The Armenians were not, in the same way, cast as the external enemies *inside*. They were the *internal enemies,* or more precisely, a recognized minority who had the capacity to become an *internal enemy* – as they did when their independence parties received political and military assistance from Russia, the UK and the like (McDowall, 2004). Making such a distinction is *not* to claim that the violence exerted upon the Armenians should in any way be trivialized; in every meaningful sense the brutality far exceeded the violence the Kurds were subjected to a few years later. Instead, what I try to highlight is the position the Armenians had under the Ottoman Empire, and continued to have under the new republic. During Ottoman times, Armenians were acknowledged as a minority under the *millet* system by virtue of their Christian confession. In fact, in the later years of the Empire, one of the central tenants of the controversial Tanzimat reforms was strengthening Armenian rights (Olson, 2000; Olson & Tucker, 1978). After the genocide and the attack on the Armenian state, this same minority clause was included in the new republican constitution at the behest of the European powers.[108] In other words, even after the establishment of the republic, they were still seen as enemies who had an 'ontological status,' in Fanonian terms (Fanon, 2008).

The same did not go for the Kurds. Initially encompassed as a part of the Muslim brotherhood in the Ottoman empire, when ethnic identity started to play a role in the

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[108] See Eric Weitz (2008), for an interesting account of how the new legal protection status for minority groups in the early 20th was inseparable with a novel form of violence exerted upon them. The Kurds were, of course, not included in this novel minority protection category.

Kurdish rebellions and demands this was significantly *not* granted a minority clause in the new state. Kurds were left without recognition as Kurds in the new Republic (Yeğen, 1996). They were without essential being or ontological status in the state's eyes; a threatening externality within, but not *inside* the state. Given that there were (almost) no Armenians or Greeks left in Turkey after the establishment of the republic, or indeed any other minorities, this configuration of violence quickly came to dominate the response to the Kurdish issue in the new state.

Accordingly, Harun Ercan argues the Kurds have continued to pose an 'ontological threat' to the Turkish state up until today (2013). Drawing on Andreas Wimmer, Lars-Erik Cederman and Brian Min (2009), Ercan points out that in all the iterations of the Turkish constitution – 1924, 1961, and 1982 – is enshrined the dogma that only Turks have the legitimacy and right to govern the state, meaning that "the state is ruled in the name of an ethnically-defined people" (Wimmer, et. al in Ercan, 2013, p. 113). Since its inception then, according to Ercan, any attempt at claiming Kurdishness as something distinct from Turkishness has been perceived and treated as a direct assault on the constitution, and therefore an assault on both the state, and the people of the state. Acknowledging Kurdishness as a separate ethnic group or identity, would be, Ercan argues, at the same time, to simultaneously acknowledge the vacuity of the foundation of the state and of Turkishness itself. In this sense, Kurds are rendered a group without being; a people who *must be* the same as the Turks; a group whose traditional, linguistic, and cultural differences possess nothing that can be recognized as other by an 'Other,' but whose traits are nonetheless simultaneously threatening. Following on from this, to use Fanonian verbiage, we may say that the new shape of violence exerted towards the Kurds from the early republic onward, has aimed at annihilating the 'zones of non-being' (Fanon, 2008), created by, yet threatening to, the state.[109]

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[109] There is here an issue with taking the Fanonian perspective entirely onboard with regards to the Kurdish question. Whereas it is possible for the Kurdish person to 'pass' as a Turk, this is not the case in the colonial situation Fanon describes. Although many Kurds from deep in the south-east might be darker skinned than the Turks living closer to Istanbul, there is no surefire way of seeing which 'race' a given person belongs to. Moreover, as the Turkish state *demands* that everyone consider themselves as Turks, it opens up the opportunity for 'everyone' to do so (in theory) – not in practice, however, as darker skin, a Kurdish accent, and certain names and cultural practices arouse suspicion of dangerous alterity. This is contrary to Fanon's colonial description, where, by virtue of one's skin, one is

The Continuity of the Eradicative Logic

This is not to say that the eradicative logic directed towards the Kurds is a singular entity, or is uniformly manifested, even with its hegemonization. Married with both the physical violence of the past and physical violence of the present is the attempt at assimilating the Kurdish population, or more precisely, make them realize that they were 'always already Turks' (Saraçoğlu, 2011). However, we may say that both this institutional violence – that is, the forced repression of the Kurdish language, culture, history, and political representation (Marcus, 2007; Watts, 2006; McDowall, 2004) – shares with the 'physical' violence its eradicative nature. Both its 'soft' and 'hard' manifestations (Di Leo & McClennen, 2012), are aimed at reducing the space within which Kurdishness (as distinct) can be claimed. Firstly, through the assimilation of making Kurds understand that they are backwards and primitive Turks (Aslan, 2011), and secondly by massacring those designated as Turks but who refuse to see themselves as such.

Often times these strategies have gone hand in hand, as Senem Aslan illustrates brilliantly in his article from 2011. Drawing on archival material from the early Republican days (1920-1955), he illustrates how the injunction to assimilate was contiguous with physical threat. In 1940, a school director for a girls' institute in Elazig, accompanied by the gendarmerie, traveled to a village in the Bingöl province in order to convince the locals to send their offspring to the institution, where they would learn the Turkish language and the 'civilized' way of living. A father responded: "The government takes them to defile the Kurdish seed (…) Why does the state care if I live well or not?" (Aslan, 2011, p. 75). The director responded: "Each household is a child of the state, the government. If there is no family, can there be a nation? If there is no nation, can there be a state? Therefore, states are based on nations, nations on families, and families on individuals" (Aslan, 2011, p. 76). When the father rebutted, the director reminded him of the military's power, and the

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automatically and necessarily disqualified from participating in 'Humanity' (Fanon, 2008, 2004). Nonetheless, common to both situations, one could argue, is that the social order is founded on a certain form of non-recognition (albeit differently), robbing a group of people of 'being' as a group of people, upheld and maintained through violence.

destruction of the previous rebellions (Aslan, 2011, p. 76), which, most notably, included the public hanging of Şêx Saîd in 1925. The alternative that the director gave them was simple: subjugate your Kurdishness to Turkishness through assimilation, or have your Kurdishness eradicated by murder.

But we must make an important distinction here. Speaking on the configuration of this eradicative logic of violence, is not the same as speaking to its efficacy or the resistance to it, as Aslan's analysis also illustrates. In fact, Aslan shows, how many of the centrally appointed Turkish deputies in the Kurdish regions became themselves 'co-opted' into the local societies (Aslan, 2011). Through marriage, gifts, and trade the efficacy of this logic of eradication was stifled by the local communities. Returning to Apter, we may say that this was the counter-part of the violent exchange, an inversion of the relation where Turkishness was assimilated in Kurdishness, and the state became 're-tribalized.' Likewise, avoidance, denial and retraction also functioned as a way of resisting this logic. Many of the Kurds living in the eastern areas avoided learning Turkish, paying taxes, and in fact ignored to the best of their ability in the structures that had been set up – similar in practice to the 'everyday resistance' James Scott describes (1985). As Scott's peasants would retract from the state, in a bid to maintain autonomy and keep their local knowledge and practice systems, the Kurds could be seen as doing the same, given than many of the tribal Kurds were nomadic or practiced transhumance. In short, although the eradicative logic – in all its different manifestations – continued throughout the coming decades, this did not imply its acceptance by either Kurds or the local Turkish agents of the state. We shall return to a different inversion of the state's logic of violence when we examine the development of the PKK, but first we must substantiate the claim that this eradicative logic in fact permeated the coming decades.

Liberal Continuation: 1940-1980

Despite the inefficacy of the physical and institutional eradication efforts (Gunter, 2016; Aslan, 2011; McDowall, 2004), due to the Kurds' manipulation and the officials' susceptibility, the same policy towards the Kurds continued into the twenty-first century, seemingly unaffected by the various economic reforms that took place.

Even the advent of liberalism (and later neoliberalism) in Turkey did little to change the configuration of the eradicative violence directed at the Kurds. If anything, it merely intensified the preceding ways of handling what was perceived throughout as a problem.

Prior to the 'neoliberal event' in 1980 (Karataşlı, 2015; Taymaz & Voyvoda, 2012), which set Turkey on its current economic trajectory, the state had followed the USA's and the World Bank's edicts for how to structure a 'successful' economy. Bolstered with massive funds from the Marshall plan (after World War II) and later from the World Bank, Turkey aimed at industrializing agriculture and bolstering the manufacturing capabilities of the cities. Indicating the scale of industrialization, Gilles Dorronsoro (2005) shows that the number of tractors in employ in Turkey rose from 1750 in 1948 to an astonishing 40 000 in 1954, which, coupled with centralizing land reforms, forced hundreds of thousands of villagers into urbanization. Given that the Kurdish areas were the most agriculturally 'primitive,' this development hit them the hardest. The mass migration created a massive urban proletariat in cities like Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara, which served as an impoverished 'industrial reserve army' for the burgeoning industries. A corollary of this developmental strategy was the breaking up of the traditional Kurdish bonds of solidarity and social structures, which, from the state's perspective, would lead to a fragmentation that would be easier to assimilate (Aktan, 2014). It did not, however, have this effect.

The main reason why the development did not go ahead as the state had planned, and indeed the assimilation efforts as such, Michael Gunter argues, was due to the fact that "the country's large population and rapid urbanization exceeded its available economic opportunities" (Gunter, 1989, p. 67). Instead, the 1960s and 1970s saw a proliferation of increasingly radicalized workers' and student movements and clandestine parties. According to Yavuz, "Kurds (…) dominated [these] left-wing movement in the 1970s" (Yavuz, 2001, p. 9), and funneled their Kurdish demands into socialist programs. Given impetus by the relatively liberal constitution put in place after the 1960 coup d'état, and placed in a position of power due to control over significant means of production, as well as afforded means for protest by the skeletal

welfare state, workers movements engaged in increasingly more radicalized forms of contention and demand-making (McDowall, 2004). Moreover, due to the majoritarian configuration of the parliament, no singular party or coalition gained enough votes to hold power – between 1971 and 1980 there were ten different governments (Gunter, 1989) – leading to a chaotic political situation, and a great space for political maneuvering. This chaotic political system, in other words, afforded high levels of contestation and political expression. At the same time, however, this chaotic political situation also bred extreme violence, chiefly from the far-right parties and the Islamist fundamentalist party, who struggled amongst themselves and the left with covert, paramilitary groups. Most notable among them were the infamous ultra-nationalist 'Grey Wolves,'[110] who murdered the highest number of leftist and Kurdish activists in spectacular attacks (Yavuz, 2002). Between 1976 and 1980 more than 5000 people had been killed by 'terrorist actions' in general (Sayarı, 2010), and there had been a total of 9795 "incidents of clashes and armed attacks" before the twelfth of September, 1980 (Gunter, 1989, p. 69).

Towards the end of the 1970s, the contention came to a head. 300 000 students were left without opportunities for continuing their higher education (Gunter, 1989, p. 67), inflation in consumer prices were approximately 60% (Karataşlı, 2015), and the national debt had gone from USD 3 billion to USD 15 billion (Karataşlı, 2015). From 1977 to 1980, GDP per capita – in constant 2005 US dollars – fell in absolute terms from USD 4025 to USD 3700 (Karataşlı, 2015, p. 403). More than 6000 incidents of arson and throwing of explosives had taken place, and almost 11 000 people had been injured by terrorist attacks (Gunter, 1989, p. 69). By the end of 1979, the economic and social situation was deemed so atrocious, that the military saw it as necessary to intervene again. In 1980, the military seized control of the state, and cracked down severely on all forms of political expression.

During the chaotic time prior to the coup, no attempts were made at changing the structural position of the Kurds as an ethnic group at the level of the state, despite

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[110] The Grey wolves were the youth wing of the ultra-nationalist or fascist (depending on the definition) eelectoral party, the MHP, which provided funding, inscrutability and armament for the organization.

leftist and Kurdish contention (Saraçoğlu, 2011). In fact, during the 60's and 70's, an expansion of the early Republic's policy was set in place through, for instance, large scale academic operations that aimed to deny the existence of the Kurds as an ethnic group. Through falsified, incomplete and ideological research, academics 'proved' that Kurds sprang from the Turks in history. Among the most absurd assumptions was that Kurdish possesses only a total of 800 ill-conceived words, and the word 'Kurd' was onomatopoetically derived from the sound the boots made in the snow (Gunter, 2016, p. 30). This later became curriculum and enshrined in the textbooks in schools and universities. Indeed, the erasure of Kurdishness continued uninterrupted during this period, Kurdish names of places still being translated to Turkish, Kurdish associations repressed, and so on. In perhaps the most absurd case, Gunter documents that the state even changed the colors of the traffic lights in the Kurdish city of Batman from red, green and yellow, in fear of provoking Kurdish nationalism (Gunter, 2016, p. 30). Considering the burgeoning Kurdish aspirations in the workers movement, and the threat it posed to the foundation of the state, Yavuz consequently argues that "one of the key goals of the 1980 coup was the control of the centrifugal forces of Kurdish and religious movements" (Yavuz, 2001, p. 10). A parliamentarian had even, in 1979, spoken Kurdish in the national assembly, causing a great uproar (Karataşlı, 2015). Coupled with the economic uncertainty, Yavuz contends that the Kurdish aspirations were the last straw for the military (Yavuz, 2001, also argued by Aktan, 2014). For our purposes, if we are to follow Yavuz in his assessment, we may say the eradicative violence of the state came into play against the left only when signs of 'overt' Kurdishness became too present.

Regardless of whether or not Kurdish claims were the motor for the military coup, we may argue that in this climate of violence and social upheaval, we may see no substantial change in relation to the status of the Kurds at a state level. No rights were given, no acknowledgement extended, and no autonomy was granted; assimilation and displacement continued undisturbed. The pre-neoliberal policies, in other words, did nothing to change the eradicative violence against the Kurds, regardless of whether Kurdishness was an impetus for the military's intervention. As we shall see, the eradicative logic did not change with the advent of neoliberalism either.

Neoliberal Continuation 1980-2018

The 1980 coup created the material conditions for realizing the political implementation of neoliberalism in Turkey (Karataşlı, 2015). After the military had taken power, political violence dropped precipitously. 650 000 people were taken into custody and 230 000 were taken to trial, political parties were banned, trade unions were crushed, and all newspapers shut down for almost a year.[111] The military junta, in other words, provided the interim government with free reigns to implement far-reaching economic, political and social reforms (if one can call it that). With direct involvement from the IMF and the World Bank in policy making (Yalman, 2009), the government sought to dramatically re-structure the economy and the political system through an integration in the 'global market' (Karataşlı, 2015). The government opened up for large scale privatization, lifted import restrictions, and allowed for hire purchase, installment payments and more private credit opportunities. Additionally, the state moved from a manufacturing focus to a financial focus, suppressed wages, opened up for 'flexible labor,' raised the retirement age, and cut back welfare programs (Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018; Bozkurt, 2013). Like the institution of neoliberalism other places, it attempted to create an 'individualization of politics' (Dawson, 2013), and 'subjugate the social to the economic' (Kapferer, 2010b).

In the place of the welfare state, the state implemented a system of means-testing, and outsourced much of the social assistance programs to the private sphere, where philanthropist and extra-budgetary funds were intended to take over care for the ghettoized and impoverished (a significant portion of whom were Kurds) (Bozkurt, 2013). This unfolded in concert with a renewed focus on the family, and in particular, the patriarchal Islamic family, which was cast as the locus for social assistance. The family, not the state, was the responsible unit for welfare, and to receive its capacitating financial means, political support was often demanded (Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018; Aktan 2014; Bozkurt, 2013). Gradually moving away from a rights-based system, Umut Bozkurt (2013) argues that the general tendency was moving towards a

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[111] 'Turkey's 1980 coup facts.' (2012, April 4). *Hürriyet Daily News.* Retrieved from http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-1980-coup-facts-17628

'deserving' system, which was measured by religious fidelity, piety and (professing) Turkishness. In order to access the (meagre) social assistance programs, one needed to demonstrate one's worthiness to the providers, which indicated demonstrating 'Turkishness.' For the Kurds, instead of this indicating any new form of political configuration, the neoliberalist turn was more a return to a nationalist policy they knew well from before; denying one's Kurdishness in favor of Islam (Saraçoğlu, 2011). As Cenk Saraçoğlu tritely summarizes, despite the economic reconfigurations, "the Turkish state continued to employ its traditional assimilationist strategy (…) in the 1980's and 1990's" (Saraçoğlu, 2011, p. 58).

The re-configuration in this period has laid the foundation for what has later been called the 'neo-ottomanism' of Turkey (Taspinar, 2008; Yavuz, 1998). The neoliberal policies initiated in 1980 were eventually taken over by Erdoğan and his AKP party in 2003 after another series of new economic crises and political paralyses. The new Islamic doctrine of assimilation was attempted several times in the coming decades, with various degrees of success. The prime minister elected after the 1980 coup, Turgut Özal, made overtures to the Kurds by uttering that his grandmother had been a Kurd, for instance, and also preceded to extend diplomatic relations to Iraqi-Kurdish parties (Karataşlı, 2015). Erdoğan also courted the Kurds when he ran for president in 2013, greeting election crowds in Diyarbakir in Kurdish, and running on a promise of 'resolving' the 'Kurdish issue' (Gunter, 2013a). He gained progressively more votes in the Kurdish regions – at one point receiving the support of more than half of the voting electorate – up until in the elections in 2009, when a local pro-Kurdish party detracted from his support. In what the government then called the 'Kurdish opening,' Erdoğan nominally extended some initial acknowledgments towards the Kurds in the hopes of re-attracting Kurdish votes for the next election cycle (Casier, Jongerden & Walker, 2013). Leniency was provided to the expression of Kurdish language in public, private institutions were permitted to teach Kurdish, amnesty for Kurdish guerillas was attempted, cultural associations were allowed, and national news stations were permitted to broadcast in Kurdish.[112] However, Erdoğan, as his predecessors,

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[112] Whether or not these reforms had any actual potential, or were in fact more than a political maneuvering is still a topic of much debate (see for instance Casier, Jongerden & Walker 2013;

continued to encounter the same insurmountable obstacle: claims for autonomous Kurdish bodies of self-representation. At the same time as the governments were (nominally) extending their hands to the Kurds through Islamic unity (Çiçek, 2013), they were deeply committed to shutting down or banning different autonomous Kurdish parties or organs of representation. In a period of twenty years, five Kurdish parties had been banned or incapacitated by thousands of arrests and assassinations, and multiple Kurdish associations forcibly closed (Watts, 2006). In Erdoğan 's case, Marlies Casier, Joost Jongerden & Nick Walker argue, "the Kurdish Opening fizzled out without addressing the real issues of cultural identity and political control," since the main concern for the AKP was to use "its coercive power and extending influence to try to contain and roll back the Kurdish movement" (Casier, Jongerden & Walker, 2013, p. 139). When Islamic assimilation did not work, in other words, judicial force was exerted to repress any alternative.

Parallel to these developments, there was an evolution of the 'punishing' hand of the state. Understanding that the military served as an autonomous check on the state's development, the succeeding government in 1983 gradually attempted to curb its power. The government attempted to 'decentralize' parts of the military's monopoly of violence (Karabelias, 1999). It created secret counter-insurgency organizations, such as the JITEM (*Jandarma İstihbarat ve Terörle Mücadele* in Turkish, or 'Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism' in English), which still remains shrouded in mystery, and operated well beyond the confines of judicial oversight (Van Bruinessen, 1996). It also founded regional governorates with "extraordinary" military and political powers, and reorganized the intelligence service (MIT, or *Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı* in Turkish, 'National Intelligence Organization' in English), to answer more directly to the government (Karabelias, 1999, p. 137). The government also started to arm local tribes in the Kurdish areas, who were supposed to defend their lands against 'traitors' and 'terrorists' (Belge, 2011),[113] and in the cities the government undertook measures to militarize and restructure the police in accordance with government

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Gunter, 2013a; Çiçek, 2011), but for our purposes we are interested in general, sweeping tendency in relation to violence.
[113] See Şemsa Özar, Nesrin Uçalar and Osman Aytar's (2013) thorough account for an in-depth investigation into the social and political ramifications of this project.

authorities. From the 1980's onwards, in other words, the state 'diversified' its instruments and institutions of destruction, often pushing them beyond the oversight of both the government and the public, permitting them to operate as semi-autonomous and fluid units of violent excertion.

This restructuring tendency is recognizable from much of the literature on the 'neoliberal' transformation of state violence in other places (see Nagengast, 1994, for a summary). Violent actors become more ambiguous, fluid and pluralized (Ayuero, 2015; Friedman, 2004; Grassani & Ben-Ari, 2011), warfare becomes a permanent state of affairs (Williams & Disney 2015, Kirk & Okazawa-Rey 2000), and notions of sovereignty become more complicated (Sieder 2011; Bertelsen 2009). Although the array of actors, situations, and technologies changed, however, the same logic of annihilation and eradication continued to be directed at the Kurds; neoliberalism changed the face of the violence, so to speak, but little of its form. This becomes clear when we examine the return of Kurdish radicalism in the 1980's and 90's, and its treatment at the hands of the state (and its associated actors), which is the topic of the next chapter, but we shall briefly introduce here.

New Contestations?
Even though the coup in 1980 halted leftist and Kurdish radicalism, it did not destroy it. In fact, the aforementioned neoliberal restructuring of the military took place, in part, as a response to a massive resurgence of Kurdish resistance in the mid-1980's. The 1980's and 1990's may even perhaps be seen as the most intense Kurdish contestation since conflicts following the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Whereas the coup decimated most of the left and Kurdish movements *within* Turkey, there were certain organizations who managed to flee or transplant themselves in the bordering nations. Most prominent of these Kurdish revolutionary organizations was the PKK, led by the charismatic Abdullah Öcalan. The PKK had been only one of many revolutionary Kurdish parties prior to the coup (Gunes, 2013), but had taken an increasingly hard separationist and militant line after its first congress in 1978 (Özcan, 2006), where they openly advocated for an armed insurrection to overturn the state and establish a communist Kurdish worker's state. For the PKK at the time, they framed

the Kurdish conflict as one of colonialism, where a foreign ethnic group was exploiting the indigenous people, namely the Kurds.

Prisons, Mountains, and Villages

Returning to Apter again, in the time from the late 1970's onward we may here see a more 'advanced' inversion of the meaning of violence beginning to take form. Several of the militant leftist-groups who fled the country and established themselves in Syria started ideological training and weapons training with the PLO (the 'Palestinian Liberation Organization') (Marcus, 2007). Most of the PKK's cadres were still imprisoned, but, according to Kariane Westrheim (2008), the experience of incarceration came to serve as an educational foundation for creating what we have called an 'inverted' understanding of the struggle, meaning that the violence started to generate and manifest a radically alter understanding of the struggle, the world, and indeed the cosmos. The prisons were turned into sites of mytho-ideological transformation, and in particular the jail in Diyarbakir, which became the locus of education and resistance for the later popular movement. Indeed, the prison experience itself became a metaphor for the experience of living in Turkish Kurdistan (Gunes, 2013). These were sites where the assimilation attempts were perhaps the toughest – between the torture sessions the prisoners were forced to sing nationalist songs, pledge allegiance to the flag, praise the state, profess oneself a Turk, etc. – but simultaneously also the sites where the overcoming of the assimilation took on its most stringent and cohesive ideological form (Gambetti, 2010, 2005; Zeydanlioğlu, 2009). According to Welat Zeydanlioğlu, the people who left the prisons were made into 'new' Kurds by their experience of violence (2009).[114] This was arguably the place where the PKK's re-valuation – suffering becoming strength, defeat becoming victory, death becoming life, and imprisonment becoming freedom – sprang from.[115] It was, in other words, the locus for the cosmogenesis of the PKK (Zeydanlioğlu, 2009; Westrheim, 2008), which gradually developed throughout the coming decades.

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[114] With regards to the nature of torture and transformation, there has been a lot written, but for our purposes, the dynamics of self-erasure and 'un-making the world' (Scarry, 1985), or rituals of state sovereignty (Yıldız, 2016), are beyond the confines of our interests.

[115] This can also be described as a sort of Nietzschean 'transvaluation of all values' (Nietzsche, 1990), but will be dealt with more in depth in the following chapter, where we shall see how central the martyrs were to this process of ideological and cosmological (re)formulation.

What this cosmos consists of – how it was developed and structured – is the topic of the next chapter, but for our purposes here, the most important point to note is the immensely central role the cosmology played for a mobilization and recruitment to the movement. In tandem with the ideological development, scores of the prisoners who were let go from the various prisons joined up with the PKK from the late 80's to the 00's, or started forming their affiliated groups and (eventually) political parties within Turkey. Likewise, the massive destruction of the Kurdish countryside and urban disenfranchisement that took place after the coup also created a massive pool of people susceptible joining in a revolutionary struggle. According to Aliza Marcus (2007) and Handan Çağlayan (2012), since the PKK had also started its initial struggle with the assassination and attacks on 'feudal' tribal lords in Kurdistan, it had broad appeal to the rural proletariat, in addition to the Marxist-inspired urban classes.

Contrary to the PKK emerging out of traditional Kurdish struggles, Joost Jongerden and Ahmed Akkaya (2011b) emphasize that the roots of the PKK derive from the Turkish left. Traditional Kurdish organization, when transformed into a political movement, had a radically different structure and motivation, which both Frederik Barth (1953) and Edmund Leach (1940) provide some insight into. Although writing on Kurdish organization in Iraqi Kurdish regions on the border to Iranian Kurdistan and not in Turkish Kurdistan, Leach argued that there were two basic modes of Kurdish social organization operating in these areas. The first was a mode of tribal organization, meaning that particularly in the highlands, the population of all the villages in the tribe's territory were a part of the tribe, working as freeholding peasants and pastoralists. The villages would aggregate into larger and larger tribal units, which often had a separate ruling royal lineage, called a *begzada.* In the other case, more prone to exist in the fertile lowlands, tribal affiliation would only be relevant for the landowners, who exerted power over non-tribal tenant farmers in a feudal system. Here there was a serf population, who could be forced to give up as much as fifty percent of the agricultural surplus to the lord (Leach, 1940), and could (theoretically) be expelled at any point.

In both cases, political mobilization relied on using various statuses and kinship relations embodied in the leading individuals to gather people to their cause.[116] Strategic *alliances* between various tribes were forged with the promise of acquiring more wealth, land and status for their tribe, and often when faced with adversity, these alliances would quickly crumble and betray each other (Barth, 1953). A significant contrast to the PKK's mobilization can be found here in that there was no traditional leadership involved, the *kadros* were mostly 'lumpenproletariat' and not tribal (Marcus, 2007), Islamic piety was not a status symbol, a strong ideology of equal distribution of wealth to all individuals reigned, and fifty percent of the original cadre were Turks, since it was formed from a background of the Turkish left (Akkaya & Jongerden, 2011b). In fact, as a part of the process of liberating Kurdistan, the PKK initially argued it was important that Kurdistan shed itself of the oppressing feudal classes that were holding the population back and serving the interests of the colonial Turkish state (Casier & Jongerden, 2012).[117] For the PKK, the tribal leadership and the state were two sides of the same coin;[118] the nation that was to be (re)born was a

[116] There is much more to say on this, as Martin Van Bruinessen (1992), Barth (1953), and Leach (1940), would know. Although it cannot be discussed here, they all emphasize patrilineal kinship organization, through endogamous FaBrDa marriages, as being central to the exertion of power. In addition, the Kurds' nomadic history, often making their living off brigandage (at least mythically) plays a role here. Barth also notes the peculiarity that blood feuds Kurdistan are very rare within a village community, which he ascribes to the fact that village, tribe and family are *isomorphic* entities in these areas of Kurdistan. There would be no collective responsibility for a transgression within a village, because the transgressor would be related by blood to the aggrieved. With regards to other villages – *across* the tribal configuration, so to speak – blood feud has otherwise had a significant political potential. The mobilization of armed kinsmen, all the aforementioned authors agree, has been the emic measure of power in Kurdistan. Nonetheless, both Barth and Leach point out that it seemed tribal organization of social life would lose its hegemony within a few years (Barth, 1953; Leach 1940), freeing up more socially 'unregulated' labor in the countryside, and thereby making the tribal and feudal landlords' exploitation more visible to those working there.

[117] For the PKK, however, as far as I know, they did not draw the distinction between feudal organization and tribal organization until later, seeing them as one and the same. Now, members and leaders of the PKK will still denounce feudalism, but think of there as being 'good tribes,' and 'bad tribes' (read: traitors, feudalists, and state proxies).

[118] This is, according to Jongerden, how they presented it in discourse. Upon closer examination however, which Jongerden is quite aware, any assault on a tribe opened up means of negotiating and cooperating with competing tribes, which the PKK used to great effect (Akkaya & Jongerden, 2011b). As of my fieldwork, tribal members would define their tribe through its relationship to the PKK; arguing that they were a good (or bad tribe) depending on whether or not the supported the PKK's struggle. Nonetheless, at least at a formal level – although this certainly warrant further discussion and examination – the PKK saw themselves, and were seen as, a *break* with traditional Kurdish leadership structures.

Kurdish one unbeleaguered by 'feudal,' patriarchal and 'primitive' impediments.[119]
After continued skirmishes attempting to 'free' the Kurds from the tribes in the south-
east, on the 15th of August 1984, the PKK launched its first attack on the Turkish state.

PKK – State War

The resulting years of struggle, from 1984 until when Öcalan was captured in 1999,
were the most violent in recent Turkish history, and although varying in intensity, it
may still be seen as continuing until today. As per 1999, *state* statistics reported an
approximately 40 000 deaths, 4000 villages burned, and more than a million people
displaced in the years 1984 - 1999 (Yavuz, 2001). These numbers are not to be trusted,
however. The statistics do not include the massive numbers of people 'disappeared' at
the hands of JITEM or the resurgent Grey Wolves, nor do they account for the people
who died from hunger, malnutrition and exhaustion during the forced migration
process, or the amount of people who died in various prisons during this time.
Furthermore, since it is a state number, the suggestion that approximately 26 000 of
the murdered were insurgents, is likely inflated (or perverted by calling civilians
insurgents) (Yavuz, 2001). During the times of ceasefire and low-intensity warfare, the
state was, and still is, averse to investigating any of the potential war crimes it was
partial to, ignoring the demands from the local human rights and law associations and
hindering independent investigations (Gambetti & Jongerden, 2015). It has
systematically denied that civilians were (even randomly) killed as part of the 'anti-
terrorism' activities (Casier, 2009). Although allusions have been made to 'take it
seriously,' as detailed in the previous section on Erdoğan, within the span of a few
years, the various governments have systematically returned to a policy of denial and
continued violence (McDowall, 2004).

This is apparent in more recent years, beginning from when I started my fieldwork in
Amed in 2015. Selahattin Demirtaş' party, the HDP, mentioned in the beginning of the

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[119] The PKK's relationship to tribes has been sorrowfully unexplored in Kurdish literature and
warrants much further attention. Whether or not it was truly a 'break,' in which ways, how the PKK
reconfigured its ideological and practical arrangement with tribes, what aspects of Kurdishness were
novel entities created by the PKK and which were 'borrowed' from tribal culture are all extremely
interesting questions that I will not be able to explore here. Although we can see that the role of the
tribes has changed dramatically, particularly in the political realm, I am not sure I agree with Barth,
Leach and Van Bruinessen's assessment that they have 'lost' power.

chapter, was decimated under a wave of arrests, detaining more than 11 000 party members, and arresting more than 4500.[120] Although the numbers vary, from 2015 until 2018, it is estimated that upwards of 4000 people were murdered in the conflict.[121] Like the previous numbers, these might not be entirely accurate. Due to the war being predominantly urban, several parts of cities (and in some cases almost *entire* cities) were destroyed, displacing and dispossessing thousands of people, creating an incredibly difficult situation for assessing the death toll.

A case in point was the massacre in Cizîre ('Cizre' in English) in beginning in late 2015. On the border to Syria, and in fact having been the capital of the Kurdish Bedirxan Principality during Ottoman times, the city has been inextricably linked with support for the PKK, both in the eyes of the party and in the eyes of the state. After the PKK and its affiliate groups had attempted to 'protect' the citizens after their declaration of autonomy, as we saw in chapter 2, the state besieged the city and declared a state of exception. The military then went on to use heavy artillery against residential areas, and even went so far as to shoot a journalist in the leg and post-factum accuse him of terrorism.[122] The culmination came however, when the military poured gasoline into cellars where wounded residents – women, children and youth – were hiding, and set them on fire while reportedly singing nationalist songs associated with the Grey Wolves.[123] Several sources put the death toll well above 150 civilians,[124]

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[120] 'Turkish police operations against HDP before local elections.' (2018, October). *The Region*. Retrieved from https://theregion.org/article/13165-for-consistency-turkey-should-condemn-the-murder-of-unarmed-palestinians-and-unarmed-kurds.

[121] 'Turkey's PKK conflict: A Visual Explainer.' (2019, May 31). *International Crisis Initiative*. Retrieved from http://www.crisisgroup.be/interactives/turkey/.

[122] Paton, C. (2016, January 26). 'Refik Tekin: Turkish Cameraman shot in the leg faces terror charges.' *International Buisness Times,* https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/refik-tekin-turkish-cameraman-shot-leg-by-security-forces-faces-terror-charges-1540215

[123] ''Unprecedented destruction' of Kurdish city of Cizre.' (2016, May 18). *Deutsche Welle,* Retrieved from https://www.dw.com/en/unprecedented-destruction-of-kurdish-city-of-cizre/a-19265927.
'Cizre'de bodrumda mahsur kalan Derya Koç: Yaralıları benzin döküp yaktılar.' (2016 February 16). *Cumhuriyet*. Retrieved from
http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/video/video_haber/478893/Cizre_de_bodrumda_mahsur_kalan_Derya_Koc__Yaralilari_benzin_dokup_yaktilar.html#.

[124]ANF news puts the death toll at 259 people, most of whom were burned to death in basements: 'Cizre Case in the ECHR: Government gives elusive answers.' (2018, November 13). *ANF News*, Retrieved from https://anfenglish.com/human-rights/cizre-case-in-the-echr-government-gives-elusive-answers-30806.

while the Turkish state vehemently denied it, calling it 'propaganda.'[125] Crime scene investigations were forbidden, and after the all bodies had (purportedly) been removed, the authorities filled the basements with rubble and flattened the ruins of the houses which stood upon them. Besides the suspicious circumstances, the issue with assessing the death toll was that when the remnants of the corpses were sent to forensic investigation, the tissue was so mixed together from different corpses that it was hard to separate one person from another.

Assessing how many people were killed is, however, not at the center of our discussion. What we are leading up to with this argument is that although there were significant differences between how the state responded to the Şêx Saîd rebellion in 1925, and how the state responded to the Kurdish uprising during neoliberal times – as per early Erdoğan and Turgut Özal – the *logic* of the state's response may be said to remain the same. The same 'ontological' denial of Kurdishness at the heart of the state in early republican times persists and then, as now, the logic by which the violence progressed was one of assimilation or annihilation. As exemplified by punishing the families, associates, and in fact entire populations connected with Şêx Saîd, the same was undertaken both before and under neoliberal governance. In the same way that resettlement through the earlier periods of Turkish-Kurdish history had taken place by violent displacement, the same was happening now, and in the same way that expressions of Kurdishness as something separate from Turkishness was met with silent murder and assimilation, the same was happening now. In fact, much like the unmarked grave that the state dumped the body of Şêx Saîd in, so too did the state unmark the grave of the approximately 150 people killed in the basements in Cizîre. They were not people to be mentioned, grieved or considered – perhaps not even people at all. They were merely the external enemies inside.

Stated differently, the 'de-monopolization' of violence that took place with neoliberal re-configuration still follows a cultural logic that exceeds and encompasses it. Whether exerted by a paramilitary group, funded in secret by the government, like JITEM, or a

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[125] 'Erdoğan: Academics claiming 'massacre' make PKK propaganda.' (2016 January 20). *Andalou Agency.* Retrieved from https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/erdogan-academics-claiming-massacre-make-pkk-propaganda-/508043.

party-supported vanguard like the Grey Wolves, or indeed the army, plain and simple, the way in which the logic of violence is configured towards the Kurds has still retained significant characteristics from early republican times. As is hopefully convincing, it is still aimed at silencing, annihilating, eradicating and denying. Moreover, among people in Kurdistan, the form of violence is also very much *perceived* as a continuation. For them, the state is still experienced and categorically constructed as the enemy who is out to murder the Kurds.

Experience of (Neo)Liberal Violence of Eradication

Here we can return to the bombing in Amed. After the bomb had gone off and the crowd had been teargassed, the reaction that emerged took on a particular form. After the event, with regards to how one was to react, there was a clear and uni-directional response on the part of the people. Sadness, puzzlement and incredulity were not salient. Instead, in the events afterwards, the people expressed a profound frustration and overwhelming anger. To recapitulate, immediately when we had passed into a more open space, the first thing that people, and in particular the youth did, was tear down election posters of Erdoğan, throw rocks and Molotov cocktails at the police, and shout *Bijî Serok Apo.* The ensuing evening of June fifth, 2015, saw multiple popular, yet minor, attacks at government institutions and AKP offices, and inconsequential riots that continued for three to four days.

My friend Buldan's biography illustrates very well the personal foundation for experiencing the logic of violence as operating as an uninterrupted continuum—which is reflected and instantiated in the events above also. She was born in small village close to Mardin in the Diyarbakir province in the early 80's. Not initially speaking Turkish, when she started school, she was told that her mother tongue did not exist, and was, in her words, 'harassed' by both teachers and fellow students. When the PKK had started its campaign, her family was one day visited by the army, who asked her father if he would join the 'village guards' to fight the 'terrorists.'[126] Fearing the PKK's brutal treatment of the 'traitors' at the time (Marcus, 2007), as well as the

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[126] The aforementioned village guards was an initiative started by president Torgut Özal, which armed and created millitas out of villages, aimed at protecting the country against the PKK. At its height it numbered 90 000 participants (Öktem, 2011).

brutality of the army – the state had previously killed one of his brothers in 1960's, and his father had been affiliated with the Şêx Saîd rebellion – he was put in an impossible position. Eventually, he refused to join the 'village guards,' upon which the army burned their house, field and belongings, forcing them to migrate to their extended family in Amed. In Amed they lived in the ghettos outside of the city, and experienced the same form of racism and assimilation in the school system and the workplace. In a particularly malicious occasion, she recalled, her sister was getting married, and her family had arranged a large, Kurdish wedding celebration. In the middle of the wedding party the police had shown up due to the 'Kurdish music' being played, and arrested some thirty people of the wedding party, including the bride, groom and Buldan's father. Two of Buldan's brothers later joined the PKK and left for the mountains for training. Later the family was told that one of the brothers had been killed. The other brother, as per what is conventional in the PKK guerilla, had not been heard from since he left. She herself had decided to become a Kurdish teacher, and took up an education in the 2000's at the one institution in Mardin that offered advanced education in Kurdish. When she returned to Amed to teach at a movement-run (and free) Kurdish institution in addition to her high-school job, she herself had been detained on several occasions for suspicions of 'terrorist' activities. With the election in 2015 I was there to witness, she had joined the pro-Kurdish HDP, and campaigned on their behalf. When she then was bombed, alongside the thousands of others, it was no surprise for her, and, in her mind, no doubt about who was 'really' behind the massacre.

Beyond this being her personal history, however, there is something of a 'situated memorialization' of this form of violence that permeates the Kurdish region at large (Gambetti & Jongerden, 2015). A short example from Amed, will illustrate this point well. In 2011, the extent of the eradicative actions of the state, particularly those committed by the government-sponsored paramilitary organization JITEM in the 1990's, was re-discovered through the excavation of multiple mass graves found by local Kurdish citizens (Çaylı, 2015). Although gathering significant (local) attention, researching the mass graves, trying to find new ones, and attempting to find the murdered closest of kin was institutionally inhibited and repressed by the state. Almost

simultaneously, the refurbishment of Amed's old city, Sur, was stopped. In January 2012 "workers encountered numerous unidentified human remains in the construction site" (Çaylı, 2015, p. 78). Being closely situated to one of JITEM's secret headquarters, it fueled the demands for 'truth and justice,' advocated by the local human rights organization, which led to a forensic examination of the bodies in Istanbul nine months later. The examination concluded that the bodies were "at least a hundred years old" (Bozarslan in Çaylı, 2015, p. 79). This was not accepted out of hand, however. According to Eray Çaylı (2015), the forensic conclusion led to multiple speculations on who these dead bodies were and where they came from; some people directly disbelieved the forensic report since it came from Istanbul, insisting they were bodies from the 90's, others connected the dots to the genocide of the Armenians, while yet others thought the bodies were connected to Şêx Saîd. Nonetheless, the lack of clarity concerning origins of the bodies led to the matter being bracketed in the truth and reconciliation process, attention rather being turned to more 'certain' massacres of the 90's.

Despite being discontinued for further investigation, this event may nonetheless tell us something interesting about how violence is perceived. There are, as I see it, two interesting elements that can be read out of how this discovery was treated. First and foremost, the event bespeaks a perception of a temporal horizon which is, to a large degree, 'unplaced.' According to popular perception, the people who were found in the walls could have come from the 1990's, the 1920's, or the late 1800's. This means, as I read it, that there is no consideration of a 'break' in the history of the Kurdish regions, when it comes to the configuration of violence, or more specifically massacres. I would think it likely that if such a mass grave was found in Europe, people would hold relatively homogenous assumptions about the time period in which it took place (depending on the location). In Amed, however, this even could have taken place 'whenever,' within various periods of heightened contentions. The second take-away from this, is that the state does its best to repress the resurfacing of dead bodies. Returning to Europe, if such a discovery had been made in – let's say – Germany, a massive state-sponsored investigation would probably have taken place, to find out exactly how, by whom, and why this massacre had taken place. The Turkish

state, on the other hand, remained recalcitrant and unresponsive until forced into action, and even then could not convince the local public of its findings. What the event reveals, in other words, is the perception of a co-temporality of the history of violence that extends into the present. The particular form of violence which I have laid out, was also seen as trans-historical by many of the Kurdish inhabitants themselves.[127]

This is not to say that my perspective mirrors that of the Kurdish inhabitants. Although indubitably influenced by the various verbal accounts I have heard, the continuation of this logic first and foremost became apparent to me when reading accounts of Kurdish history. Even though Kurdish inhabitants may perceive the history of violence as unfolding without any significant ruptures that changed its course, this is not to say that they perceive *all* history as unfolding in this manner. As apparent with the wide-spread support for Erdoğan and the AKP in the elections of 2013 and 2011 – and even before – such a perspective on the continuity of violence might be a recent and fragile construction. There might also, parallel to those who hold views similar to the argument presented here, be people who consider the logic of violence as being ruptured at various points, as per the loosening of the Kurdish language restrictions, limited cultural rights, etc. As such, I would not say that my perspective mirrors that of 'the Kurds,' but rather emerges from a perspective gleaned from them in conversation with a reading of Kurdish history.

Conclusion: The Autogenesis of Manicheism

Returning then to the discussion on the nature of violence under neoliberalism, there are several aspects that need to be addressed in the light of the historical trajectory and the dynamics of violence that I have outlined in some detail above. The first aspect that I think the account presented here warrants, is perhaps an extension of a Fanonian perspective on violence, presented in short at the beginning of the chapter. In the discussion of the fluidity, multiplication, and de-monopolization of violence, it might be advantageous to recall the Fanonian perspective on the 'productive' effects of

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[127] Kabir Tambar reports similar findings from how Kurdish representatives and mothers of martyrs related to the Gezi protests of 2013 (Tambar, 2016).

violence (Fanon, 2008; 2004).[128] According to Fanon, in colonial situations, which we might consider the Kurdish situation as being, violence takes on a Manichean form. Within the 'zone of non-being,' i.e. given that the Kurds are not credited with belonging or separate existence in Turkey, there cannot be violence as a 'means to make' or 'repress' claims, since the colonized are not included in the 'ontological' grounds needed to formulate a claim in the first place. For Fanon, violence by the repressed in the colonial situation is a means to 'break into history,' rather than to change it from within (Fanon, 2004), and conversely, the violence of the colonizers serves to prevent the colonized from crossing the boundary into history and humanity. Whether or not this is a correct assessment of Kurdish case may be debatable (see Jongerden, 2016b; Aras, 2014; Bozarslan, 2000, for a consideration of this perspective), but I nonetheless believe Fanon points to a central dynamic in the exercise of physical violence in general – which seems to have fallen to the wayside with recent considerations of neoliberalism – namely its dualist character.

What I see Fanon as highlighting is what we may call the 'autogenesis of Manicheism.' For Fanon, although he specifies that he writes from a colonial situation, violence incurs a dichotomization of the oppressor and the oppressed. However, at the heart of this assertion lies a more foundational premise, namely that violence generates a situated dichotomization between the one who exerts and the receiver. Events of violence, he seems to suggest, generates an innately schizoid social relation, that is, a relation categorically divided in the perception of its mutual bond – an argument very much recognizable also from Sorel (1999). Such a perspective is recognizable from the event in Amed. The bombing that took place immediately catalyzed an 'us' vs. 'them' relation, where there was no question of who 'we' were and who the 'other' was, although these terms were still abstract. I am not suggesting here that the assumption of 'the state' as perpetrator was a natural extension of the violence, but rather that it generated consciousness of someone attempting to destroy 'us,' whoever both the 'us and 'they' might be – some of the 'they' could even still have been in the crowd.

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[128] As Achille Mbembe remarks: "…in Fanon violence is both a political and a *clinical* concept," meaning that "(…) by choosing violence rather than being subjected to it, the colonized subject is able to restore the self" (Mbembe, 2012, p. 21); albeit a self which, according to Mbembe, might very well be tarnished by the violence it needed to exert to assert itself.

Regardless of who the 'us' was and who the 'they' might be, the violence had instantaneously created those two categories.

This might be, in some of the literature dealing with neoliberalization, an understudied topic. With the focus on the fluidity, and inter-changeability, and general 'messiness' of violence in particular with regards to physical violence, it might overlook such polarizing tendencies central to the experience of violence. That is not to say that this 'autogenesis of Manicheism' somehow stands beyond culture and the social – be it 'traditional,' modern, or 'postmodern' (Nagengast, 1994). Rather it is to suggest that the division of the 'us' and 'them,' as instantly as it is formed, becomes a cultured, or, put differently, socially construed dichotomy. Whereas the 'they' in Latin American cases, seems to be a more culturally obscure category (depending on the location) (Zagato, 2018), in the Kurdish case it takes on a clearer and uni-directional expression. After the explosion, the accultured 'they' that emerged was categorically 'the state.' As alluded to previously, this did not depend on whether or not there were actual agents of the state in the masses of people, or indeed whether it was a representative of the state or an ISIS member who had planted the bomb; the 'they' that emerged was irrespectively conceptually synonymous with the state due to its history.

For our purposes here, however, the historical backdrop analyzed with this perspective also sets the stage for the direction of the following chapter. We may, in a sense, think that the inversionary ideology gradually developed within the PKK had its wellspring in the 'autogenesis of Manicheism' continuously produced throughout Turkey's violent Kurdish history. This Turkish history of violence towards the Kurds continues to hold even when we move out from Turkey; to Iraq or to Germany as I will do in later chapters. The Turkish state's violence, and the martyr culture following from its opposition, has become a cosmological primordialism for the Kurdish movement. Through the consecutive events of eradicatory violence, in other words, the Manicheism this engendered gradually started to develop into more 'inversionary' understandings of the world, across the various places where the movement is active. The continuity of the Manicheism generated by the Turkish state's violence opened up a space of rupture for 'us' and 'them,' through which an inverted understanding of the

world could be forged and reinforced. As I alluded to in the section on the PKK, without the violence in the prisons as a foundational experience, it would (probably) have been impossible for the PKK to create its own political cosmos, or ideology of resistance. It was through the schism created by the violence that the PKK could emerge as a 'cosmocratic' force (Apter, 1997), capable of transforming the meaning of not only the violence that had been exerted upon it, but also the meaning of the world at large. How this world was constituted and developed and what this meant for practice and for society, is the topic of the next chapter.

We shall see that the creation of a political cosmos in the PKK, hinged very much upon the inherited role of the martyrs. Martyrs had played a significant part in Turkish-Kurdish revolutionary history prior to the advent of the PKK, but due to more recent framings of the PKK as a terrorist organization, this leftist martyrology has been bogged down with notions of 'Islamic' or (Islamic-ally influenced) roots.[129] As such, the next chapter will try to re-establish a leftist martyrology, and free it from the oft-assumed 'Islamic' underpinnings, to examine more in depth how the PKK developed its own martyrology, and consequently, its own political cosmology. The role of the martyrs, we shall see, was very much inherited from the Turkish and international left, which the PKK re-deployed in its own fashion to great effect for both party formation and popular support.

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[129] There are multiple works that frame the PKK-Turkey conflict in terms of terrorism. As this is not my major concern, for the sake of brevity, I will only mention Moyara Ruehsen (2016), Nur Criss (1995), Ely Karmon (1998), and in particular Samih Teymur (2007) and Emrullah Uslu (2007), who see 'Islamic' terrorism and 'PKK terrorism' as two sides of the same coin. Several of these works, by virtue of the label of terrorism, equate Islamic groups and leftist groups in motivation, history, organization, 'psychology' and so forth, which I will argue is short-sighted, and in many cases, fallacious.

4: Inverting Violence: Martyrdom, Islam and the PKK's Party Formation

Introduction

So far, we have examined the violent conditions in which the Kurdish movement came to operate. I have claimed, and hopefully illustrated, that the Turkish state's response to the Kurdish issue has relied upon a 'logic of eradication,' although manifested differently at various times. Moreover, I have contended that the PKK emerged through an inversion of the state's violent relationship to the Kurds and Kurdishness. I have argued that in response to this eradicative violence of the state, the PKK developed an 'inversionary' violence, whereby they created a cosmologically alter understanding of Kurds and Kurdishness, aimed at changing the premises for interaction with the government. What I have not done in the previous chapter, is to provide a history of the PKK's party formation and its cosmology – its roots, foundation, and eventual hegemony – springing out of this violent condition. These two things – the PKK's party formation and inversionary violence – go hand in hand, and warrant further attention. Central to both of them is the role of the martyrs, as I briefly suggested towards the end of the previous chapter. Martyrdom, as I see it, is both the origo for the PKK's party formation, and at the same time the vehicle through which the meaning, relations and comportment in the world becomes inverted in a revolutionary way. It is both *within* and *through* martyrdom that the PKK has developed and spread its struggle. This section will elaborate on how that came to pass, and what historical trajectory lead up to this particular revolutionary paradigm.

But here we must be precise. Martyrdom as a phenomenon is often taken for granted, especially in scholarly discourses concerning violence, terrorism and the like – frequently boiled down to a simple logic of self-sacrifice for a greater good (be that Allah, the nation state, and so forth).[130] Therefore, it is imperative for us to examine martyrdom a bit more closely, in particular with respect to Islam, to attain a more

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[130] See, for instance Mohammed Hafez (2007), Ahmed Abdel-Khalek (2004), Karin Fierke (2009), and Jim Winkates (2006). They have various perspectives on how martyrdom is to be understood, but central to all of them is the notion of self-sacrifice.

nuanced perspective that we can use later on to consider martyrdom in full in the PKK, and to make the argument presented above. Central to many of the misunderstandings that arise when discussing martyrdom, derives from a reductionist understanding of Islamic practices, which is therefore what we must set out to examine first.

Following from the section on Islam where I highlight some issues with thinking Islam as a unified phenomenon with homogenous effects, I shall move into a consideration of a specific genealogy of martyrdom as pertaining to the PKK. We shall see, through an examination of the guerilla commander Sakine Cansiz's memoirs, how a leftist heritage has probably played a more direct role in shaping the 'martyr culture' in the PKK,[131] and how this played into the foundation of the party and its concordant configuration of revolutionary ideology. We shall then move on to examine how this 'martyr culture' evolved with the burgeoning hegemony the PKK established over the radical (Kurdish) left in Turkey. Throughout the chapter, we shall be attentive to what Apter has called 'inversionary violence,' which serves as a framework for considering how martyrdom has been integral to structuring the revolutionary ideology, practice, and 'world' of the PKK. The purchase of the chapter is to show how the PKK's history is intertwined with and contingent upon martyrdom, and to illustrate the centrality of martyrdom in formulating a revolutionary program and ideology; without martyrdom the PKK would not be the PKK, and the PKK would not have a revolution. Once we have considered this central role of martyrdom more in depth, we will be free to examine the contemporary 'martyrial order' as presented in the PKK's high-seat, the Qandil mountains in Iraqi Kurdistan.

First, however, we must delineate certain conditions for understanding martyrdom, starting with its purported Islamic wellspring, since Kurdistan spans several Islamic countries. However, the influence of Islam on the PKK's configuration of martyrdom is quite difficult to pin-point. One of the main issues with pin-pointing Islamic heritage is that Islam itself does not have a singular or consistent view on what creates (or warrants) martyrdom. David Cook sheds light on this problematic (2007), but also introduces a general history of martyrdom in Islam for us to depart from in further

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[131] See Allen (2009, 2006b) for a discussion on the use of this term and its problematics.

analysis.

General History of Martyrdom in Islam

Cook argues that the foundation for considering the 'uniqueness' of Islamic martyrdom, needs to be rooted in the particular history of early Islamic expansion.[132] Contrary to the other Abrahamic religions, the embryonic Islamic community was rooted in powerful familial descent-structures and quickly experienced a spread and success of their military and missionary undertakings (see also Hatina, 2014). This exempted Islam from presenting itself, or indeed experiencing itself, as a persecuted community like the early Christians or Jews. Martyrdom, concordantly, played less of an important role in asserting the power of their religion, since Islam's power was self-evident in its obvious expansion and influence. Due to the military success of the early conquests, Cook suggests, Islam generated a particular form of martyr seemingly lacking in the other major world-religions, namely 'the fighting martyr.' This martyr was a person "who actively sought out a violent situation (…) with pure intentions and was killed as a result of that choice" (Cook, 2007, p. 30). Contrary to Jesus' role in Christianity, for instance, where the humiliation and suffering of God's noble messenger is seen as a testament to the religion's strength, this would be seen as foreign (and even offensive) to the Islamic canon, according to several authors (Cook, 2007; Strenski 2003; Smith & Haddad, 1981). Resistance, vengeance and proclamation are often seen as more central attributes than acquiescence, humility and superscription (Cook, 2007). During the later years of the Islamic early community (Umayyad and Abbasid periods, 661-1258), most of the martyrs were also created in contestations between Muslims themselves, not in confrontation with repressive, outside forces, as opposed to other Abrahamic religions.[133] Hence martyrdom came, in

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[132] Martyrdom is very much connected with conceptualizations of *jihad*, but for the sake of simplicity, I shall attempt to treat martyrdom somewhat independently.

[133] This is not entirely true. There were significant martyrs before the theological divisions took place, but compared to the continuing iterations of Christians martyred by infidels, for instance, the Muslim martyrs killed in this way (and their relative importance) is marginal. The first major martyr in the earliest phase of Islam, pre-conquest, was Hamza, one of Muhammed's uncles. During a great military defeat for the Muslims, at the battle of Uhud, Hamza was killed in the struggle after killing one of the leaders of the infidels. He is commemorated as a "the noble one of the martyrs," not because he was the first martyr, but because his "life exemplified what a martyr should be" (Cook, 2007, p. 25). He is universally revered among Muslims, according to Cook, regardless of whether they are Sunni or Shi'a.

addition to demarcating a community, to prove the presence of Allah on the specific side of the internecine conflict. This became especially apparent with the Sunni-Shi'a split, which was a central factor in engendering the various ruptures and splits in the general Islamic martyrology.

Without delving too deeply into the reasons for the split and Islamic history as such, it is worth briefly examining the martyrdom of Hussein, since this event was central to shaping both the two different traditions, and both of their respective martyrologies. Even more important than the martyrdom of Ali, which was arguably the first step in creating the Sunni-Shia divide, was the martyrdom of his son, Hussein, at the battle of Karbala in 680. After the death of Ali's usurper, Hussein was invited to visit Kufa by its inhabitants, assumedly for political reasons, which he set out to do. On the way, he was overtaken by proto-Sunni forces who killed his family, his entourage, and lastly Hussein himself. This was memorialized as a great battle, where Hussein, according to some accounts, fought so ferociously that he needed to 'let himself be killed,' in order to fulfill the will of God (Andriolo, 2002). Contrary to the murder of Ali, which was cast in terms of an 'extremist' assassination by a group of sectarians, Hussein's murder revealed a proto-Sunni policy devoted to eradicating the 'true leaders' of the Ummah. Since his murder, his martyrdom has become a paradigmatic staple of Shi'ism, where believers 'relive' the death of Hussein on the tenth of October every year (tenth of Muharram in the Islamic calendar), flagellating themselves to prove that they would have stood with Hussein at Karbala and attempting to expiate their guilt and grief (Hatina, 2014; Cook, 2007; Andriolo, 2002). According to Cook, as well as others (Hatina, 2014), this event sparked the division of the different martyrology traditions in Sunni'sm and Shi'ism. In the incipient martyrologies "Shi'ite *jihad* and martyrdom focused upon sacrifice and death at the hands of the Sunni majority, [and] the rewards (…) [of the] Sunni literature naturally go the fighter (…)" (Cook, 2007, p. 44). In very general terms, one may say that in Shi'ism, in other words, martyrdom became a means to relive the downfall of the true caliphate, with all its self-sacrificial heroism, sanguinary details and present-day relevance, while in Sunni'sm martyrdom became a more distant reminder of foregone exulted exploits of conquest.

This does not entail that martyrdom as such – its creation, discernment and constitution – was a homogenous or unified process either across the Sunni-Shia divide or within it. In the *hadith* (tradition) literature – accounts detailing observations of Muhammed and his companions as well as how to interpret them – and Islamic jurisprudence, martyrdom is a much more complex and variegated phenomenon both in Sunni'sm and Shi'ism, and continues to remain entangled. Suicide (i.e. killing oneself by 'one's own hand'), is strictly disavowed, stated plainly in the Quran, but dying at 'the hand of an other' is not so. However, where 'one's own hand' ends and 'the hand of an other' begins, so to speak, is not an easy area to determine, and varies profoundly from jurisprudence, to hadiths, to interpretations of the hadiths among the various 'streams' of Islam, which themselves are relatively 'decentralized.' Without delving too deep into the diversity, for clarity's sake it is worth mentioning a few examples of how the complexities manifest.

In many of the cases where it seems that martyrdom is a warranted label, it is often considered as a willed action on the part of the supplicant – a self-sacrificial act in circumstances of struggle – but this definition has been contested and expanded throughout various locations and ages.[134] As Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (d. 1505) details in his compilation of hadith, for instance, people who die from frostbite, love, childbirth, structural collapse – and even a haircut (!) – should also be considered potential martyrs (Cook, 2007, p. 35). Especially in the last case, it becomes more difficult to consider martyrdom as a self-sacrifice (cutting one's hair is rarely putting oneself on the threshold of death by virtue of belief). Some hadiths even contested the necessity of dying in order to achieve martyrdom; sometimes merely suffering would suffice. This was the case of Bilal, for instance, one of the earliest martyrs in Islam. Bilal was an Ethiopian slave whose master tortured him with the purpose of having him denounce Allah and revert to the pagan gods of Mecca at the time. Bilal was

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[134] It is quite common to continuously equate martyrdom with 'death in battle.' Additionally several scholars orbiting terrorism studies, seem to 'slide' from martyrdom as sacrifice, self-sacrifice, suicide, gift-giving, and dying without particular attention to details or place, or indeed how this is done. An example of this ongoing conflation is Meir Hatina's book, "Martyrdom in Modern Islam," which despite its virtues exhibits several slippages of terminology and denotation, detached from time and place. There a general lack of serious investigation into *martyrdoms*, scholars often contented with claiming (not necessarily showing) its terroristic, (ir)rationalist, underpinnings. Andriolo also falls prey to this approach, in my view, when she distinguishes 'imagining' from rational thought, and sees the former as the realm of martyrdom (Andriolo, 2006).

eventually freed by Abu Bakr, one of the companions to the Prophet, and became a 'Christian-type' martyr by virtue of his persecution for his beliefs, despite his survival (Cook, 2007, p. 14-15).

Moreover, among those who *died* under conditions that could entail martyrdom, Islamic scholars debated how one was to tell that it was warranted, and if it indeed was warranted, how the body and soul was to be treated? In the fighter-martyr variant, for instance, scholars questioned what counted as 'dying in battle'; if one was stabbed, for instance, but then survived until the end of the battle, did one then warrant a martyr label (Cook, 2007)? Likewise, if one had died a seemingly martyrial death, scholars often looked for (or posthumously attributed) signs to the deceased, as to qualify the certification. Cook summarizes some of the various ritual processes the victim needed to be seen as having passed through in order to warrant this accreditation: foreseeing the moment of one's death, recognizing various omens in one's dreams, smelling like musk after dying, uttering a testimony to the greatness God at one's deathbed and exhorting the living to follow his path, swearing vengeance upon the enemy, and voluntarily (but not resistanceless-ly) giving oneself up (Sizgorich, 2009; Cook 2007).

In Islamic jurisprudence the question of martyrdom has also been subject to serious debate (Sizgorich, 2009; Cook, 2007; Bonner, 2006). Although disregarding much of the hadith's various interpretations of the conditions under which martyrdom may take place (Cook, 2007), Islamic jurisprudence was confounded by the question of how to establish a system for measuring for whom the intention was to 'raise the word of God to the highest' – which the hadith and Quran argued was the criteria for warranting martyrdom – and who merely intended to die merely to gain immediate entrance to heaven. One scholar of the 9th century, Ibn al-Mubarak, suggested that one needed to establish a martyrial hierarchy to solve the question of the martyrs' place. Those who were pure, and honest in their intention of praising God (regardless of the consequences), could hold the highest place in heaven next to Muhammed; those who committed sins against themselves but praised God through the specific action of violent demise would gain immediate access to heaven but nothing more, and those who merely wished to die for God in order to gain access to the heavenly realm were

'hypocrites,' who would burn in hell (Cook, 2007, p. 36). Gauging when these various instances were the case, was nonetheless not an easy feat, encouraging several scholars to contest (or suggest replacements) for al-Mubarak's and each others' register (Cook, 2007, p. 40). The place of the martyrs in Islam is also a contentious debate today – between the 'radicals' of Al-Qaida, Hizbollah and ISIS and the 'moderate,' 'mainstream' Islam, as some scholars classify it (Strenski, 2003; Andriolo 2002) – in both Shi'ism and Sunni'sm (Cook, 2005, 2002).

The Many Martyrdoms

The most important aspect of Cook's analysis for our present purpose, is that it is quite difficult to pinpoint any particular influence of Islam on the PKK's martyrdom in detail, because Islam and its various forms of martyrdoms cannot be considered a self-contained or stable unit across time. Conversely, Cook and several others authors show that finding out what martyrdom was and how it was to be treated was a contentious and evolving endeavor throughout Islam's history, fraught with different questions, answers and practices (Litvak, 2010; Sizgorich, 2009; Cook, 2007, 2005; Bonner, 2006; Devji, 2005). How and where these different responses to the question of martyrdom were practiced varied from Islamic sub-group to sub-group, location to location, and time to time, all within regions from where the PKK has drawn its recruits, continuing on until today (Hatina 2014, Cook 2007, 2002).[135] Cook illustrates the multifariousness of martyrdom in Islam, in all its contingent and situated development. Even though martyrdom is arguably more 'settled' now, Cook points to the problem of considering *an* Islamic tradition of treating martyrdom as having influence on the PKK. Although we may see that, for instance, revenge is a central part of the PKK's martyrial cosmology, as well as 'welcoming death,' and that this might have an Islamic background, this does not further our understanding of the PKK in any significant way. It merely tells us of a potential connection, but not *how*, from *which* Islam, and with *what relevance* this connection emerges. As I see it, with my knowledge and the research I conducted, any attempt at drawing long lines to Islam would be doomed to either superficiality or just plain erroneousness, because neither

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[135] I have mostly cited discourses on the nature of martyrdom from early Islamic periods, but, as for instance Faisal Devji (2005) shows, the nature of martyrdom and jihad is in no way more settled in a more universally canonical form now – arguably even to the contrary.

Islam or nor the PKK can be considered monolithic, trans-historically stable, or singularly constituted entities. This does not mean that figuring out Islamic influence would be impossible, but rather that it would require a dedicated field-study conducted at a specific location with this particular topic in mind, taking heed of all the local variations within the PKK's institutions and the local Islamic practices. That is (perhaps unfortunately?) not what I have done.

At the same time, besides highlighting the futility of thinking of Islam as a unitary entity, Cook also points us in a direction for nuancing our own perspective on martyrdom in the PKK. Cook shows that self-sacrifice, as has been a focal point for terrorism studies in analyzing martyrdom (McCauley & Moskalenko 2008; Battin 2004, Fields, et. al 2004; Schmid 2004), is more heterogeneous and contingent phenomenon than perhaps is often assumed. Besides pointing out that whether or not self-sacrifice is a pre-condition for martyrdom is contingent upon the place, time and particular Islamic sub-tradition in question, he also illustrates that self-sacrifice is often not enough to warrant a martyr status in itself. As he illustrates, the creation of a martyr is a ritual process. For a death to become a martyrdom it is contingent upon site-specific mechanisms of transformation, such as an interpretation of the available conditions for martyrdom, bodily purification, public veneration, and an estimation of the honesty of the intention. Sometimes, as he shows, these ritual processes for martyrial transformation may in fact take place without the person having sacrificed himself, rather acquiescing to being 'sacrificed' – indeed, in some cases, without even dying at all. Cook opens up, in other words, for thinking martyrdom not as a homogenous entity, even *within* a particular religious cosmology, but rather as a constellation of *martyrdoms* which work in tandem with – or even contradict – each other in various ways in a given time-space, utterly dependent upon ritual processes. This, as I will show, harmonizes well with the constellation of martyrdom in the PKK. Here, there are also different forms of martyrdoms, which are differentially configured, and differentially ritually imbued.

But before we continue on to an examination of 'the order of martyrdom' in the PKK in the next chapter, we still have to at least attempt to examine what martyrial

practices and cosmologies the PKK drew on to create its own variation. As we have seen, Islam is a fickle factor to consider a heritage in itself, especially since the PKK is an avowedly secular organization, and Islam has increasingly been subsumed to the Turkish state ideology in recent years (Kemerli, 2015).[136] But there are other ways of approaching this topic. To make the discussion a bit more grounded, and suggest a genealogy of martyrdom which is probably closer to the PKK, we shall examine the culture of political martyrdom on the left in Turkey, as described by Sakine Cansiz in her memoir of the early struggle. As Akkaya and Jongerden imply (2012b, 2011b), there is ample evidence to suggest that the PKK's configuration of martyrdom (also) has roots in secular, Marxist martyrial traditions, which Bargu Banu elaborates extensively in Turkey (Banu, 2014). By examining this tradition, we shall also gain insight into the party formation of the PKK, and the development of its institutional structures. We shall see that since the outset of the PKK's struggle, the martyrs have provided a means for an 'inversion' of the meaning of the violence exerted upon them – and the Kurds more generally – intrinsically linked with the PKK's configuration of revolution (Apter, 1997).

Sakine Cansiz, and the Roots of the PKK's martyrdoms

Sakine Cansiz was one of only two founding members of the PKK who were women. At the behest of Öcalan, she started writing a memoir in 1995, during some of the harshest years of struggle with the Turkish state. She completed a three-volume history of the PKK and her place in it, but in this section, we shall preoccupy ourselves with the first, since this details the party formation process (Cansiz, 2018).[137] This volume is particularly interesting because it chronicles the state of the Turkish and Kurdish left prior to the domination of the PKK in the mid 80's, and gives an insight into the syncretic leftist 'cosmology' that permeated her part of the Kurdish region at the time, and its martyrology. During my fieldwork, I saw that this book is still widely read,

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[136] It should be state here that I have also not investigated intersections between the PKK's martyrology and that of the Turkish state more generally; at a mere superficial glance, one might see parallels between the *şehîdlik* of the PKK and the Turkish state's *Anitkabir* memorial in Ankara (Wilson, 2007).

[137] The two following volumes are only available in Kurdish, Turkish or German at the time of writing.

both among *Apocî* in Kurdistan, and among the *Apocî* in the diaspora.

Alevi-Kurdish-Communist Martyrs

Sakine Cansiz was born in 1958 in a village close to Dersim (or 'Tunceli' in Turkish), a mountainous region in the south-east, to Kurdish Alevi Muslim parents. Both the region and the religion played a significant part in informing her political maturation. The Dersim region had during Ottoman times long been seen as a 'fifth column' in relation to the contending Shi'ite Safavid Empire, due to the Kurdish Alevi inhabitants' (supposed) Shi'ite predilections (McDowall, 2004). According to contemporary scholars, even though they affiliated with the Safavids in early times, Alevis should not to be considered Shi'ite sub-division (Şahin, 2005). Rather, according to Şehriban Şahin (2005), Alevism is a particular syncretic Islamic 'sub-stream,' that incorporates both animistic and shamanistic influences, drawing on both Sunni (but perhaps more heavily) on Shi'i tendencies (Karolewski, 2008). Alevis do not abide by the fasting or prayer rituals of either Sunni or Shi'a traditions, for instance, and pilgrimage to sacred sites along the Munzur river as well as communicate with spirits through mediums. Due to their particular regional and religious affiliation, however, in the aftermath establishment of the Turkish republic they quickly felt the need to gain recognition of their particular ethno-religious identity, and mounted a revolt in 1937 (Van Bruinessen, 1994).[138] This revolt was intimately tied to the Kurdish nationalist revolt of Şêx Saîd, only a few years previously. The Turkish state did not take kindly to this suggestion and, within a period of a few months, exterminated some 40 000 civilians, and torched hundreds of homesteads and villages.[139] This left a profound imprint of the survivors and generations to come, Sakine Cansiz's grandparents among them.

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[138] I do not spend too much time on the revolt here, although it was a significant event in Kurdish-Alevi history, and surpassed the Şêx Saîd rebellion in brutality and repression, because it is somewhat tangential to the point being made here, and the Şêx Saîd rebellion has been dealt with in depth in chapter 3. Some scholars have even suggested that the revolts should not be seen as separate but rather considered as a single continuum of resistance (Olson 2000; Olson & Tucker, 1978), since many of the fighters in Şêx Saîd's rebellion defected to the Dersim forces, the Dersim contingent was initially intended to rebel with Şêx Saîd, and there was a near-constant surge of smaller uprisings between the two events.

[139] Here, again, the actual numbers of killed varies profoundly. Some sources report significantly fewer death, while other sources place the death toll of upwards of 40 000 (McDowall, 2004; Van Bruinessen 1994).

According to Sakine Cansiz, her parents, although young at the time, remembered hiding in the woods with during the massacres with their own parents (Cansiz, 2018). Many of their family members were killed, and her parents were often told stories by their parents about what had happened. Cansiz's grandfather additionally spent time in prison, and his livelihood had been seriously affected. Nonetheless, Cansiz's father grew up to be relatively influential, partially due to his status as a *pîr*, or Alevi religious elder. He received an education and became a civil servant, which permitted them to move into the Dersim city center, where they were accorded public housing. It through visiting and eventually living in Dersim that Cansiz came into political awareness, as she herself puts it (Cansiz, 2018).

The first vivid memory she recalls of politization was a demonstration protesting the stoppage of a theater play about an Alevi poet from the 15th century. The governor's office had banned the play, and announced it publicly, which sparked a commotion in which several of Cansiz's family members were beaten up and taken into custody:

> From a distance I'd guessed it was Uncle Ali—Ali Gültekin—and I wasn't wrong. During the brawl sometimes the policeman was on top and sometimes Ali Gültekin was, as if they were wrestling. The crowd and the police were now clashing fiercely. More police came. They forced Ali Gültekin into the police wagon and drove away with him. His brother Veli had tried to wrest him free of the police hands. So now they went after him. But he was a fantastic guy. He ripped off his shirt with both hands and shouted at the top of his lungs, "Hit me, man—shoot! Whoever doesn't hit me a son of a b——!"

> The police began beating Veli with clubs and gun butts. One of them sneered, "You Moscow brute! Red Communist! Who's gonna save you now! Your people from Moscow gonna come and save you?" Then Veli was dragged away too (Cansiz, 2018, p. 14).

On the same day, later in the evening, news reached Cansiz that one of her more distant family members, Mehmet Kilan, who nonetheless lived in the same region as her, had been killed by police. He had apparently not been particularly political, but wanted to go to the police station to negotiate the release of Cansiz's uncles and been shot on the way.

> His death further enraged the group who were fighting near the police station. The slogan "Mehmet Kılan will never die" rang throughout Dersim. I kept wondering why they would say a dead man was alive. What did it mean? How did those who were martyred become immortal? (Cansiz, 2018, p. 22).

In these recollections, Cansiz shows us that configuration of martyrdom that she grew up with, and its political heritage, was very much intertwined with the context in which she was living. The event which set in motion the generation of a martyr was shutting down a play about an Alevi poet, who by virtue of his confession and region of origin, was (probably) seen as a threat to the sovereignty of the Turkish state. Underlying both the people's desire to see the play, and the government's desire to repress it, we can reasonably assume it was a remembrance of the violent history of the region, experienced and remembered by many people there, as well as passed down orally to younger generations. This resistance was remembered to have taken place under the banner of 'Kurdishness,' in addition to religious devotion. The people who were attacked, and later killed by the police were made into martyrs in a 'communist' sense, however, for having defended the Alevi's people rights of self-expression (or defended the proletariat, etc.). Cansiz's recollections therefore illustrate, in a quite profound sense, the hybrid nature of the martyrdom in the place that she grew up; it was a martyrdom pertaining to Marxism, Kurdishness, and specific Islamic sub-tradition all at the same time, melding with each other. It is reasonable to suppose that this hybrid nature – which would have been hybrid in all the places where PKK members came from – exerted a certain influence on the PKK when it undertook creating and institutionalizing its own martyrology later.

Pointing out this hybrid nature of history of martyrdom in the region, is not to say that there was no 'leftist martyrology' as such, however; it is merely underlining its immersion in other local, Kurdish and Islamic traditions. In the aftermath of the events, Cansiz became further interested in finding out more about who the "communist big brothers" were, and what they stood for (Cansiz, 2018, p. 23). According to her memoirs, the event was a sort of litmus test for finding out which side of the struggle people were on. Unsurprisingly, most of the local population both in the city and in the villages felt sympathy, while those centrally appointed by the state, who lived in their own enclave, did not. Whether one considered the deceased as martyrs became a marker between those who were 'fascists,' and those who were 'leftists' (Cansiz, 2018, p. 24).

Universal Marxist Martyrs

Cansiz makes us aware of this leftist martyrology, when she describes her search for a political affiliation after a sojourn in Germany. In Germany she had experienced a celebration of Kurdish and leftist identity that had been impossible in Turkey at the time, and when Cansiz returned, politically emboldened, she started looking for a party to affiliate herself with. She found many of the Marxist-Leninist parties and organizations unappealing due to the aesthetics and political programs, although she describes in detail her admiration of several individual members who had been martyred. Deniz Gezmiş, Huseyin Cevahir, and Mahir Çayan from the TKHP-C, and its political wing THKP (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi,* the 'People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey'), were all figures who Cansiz expressed a deep appreciation for. They were guerilla soldiers who had attempted to stem the US' influence on Turkey and create a communist state by engaging in political assassination, kidnapping, and attempting to kick-start a revolutionary 'people's war.' When they were murdered in 1971-72, before she left for Germany, Cansiz recalls how their images were plastered on walls in the street, how they were circulated, and even cut out and hung inside people's houses (Cansiz, 2018, p. 35), although she did entirely comprehend their program at the time. Upon her return, however, she was better prepared to understand the ideology, and quickly encountered stories about the most recent hero martyr, namely Ibrahim Kaypakkaya of the TKP-ML (*Türkiye*

Komünist Partisi/Marksist-Leninist, the 'Turkish Communist Party-Marxist Leninist) (Cansiz, 2018, p. 52).

4.1 The most famous image of Deniz Gezmiş, often still found displayed at various protests.[140]

A new guerilla leader of the Marxist-Leninist Maoist left, Kaypakkaya had led a guerilla organization operating mostly in the South-Eastern provinces of Turkey, aiming at a 'worker-peasant revolution.' After several successful operations, his comrades were killed and he was eventually captured, sequestered in the infamous Diyarbakir prison where Sakine Cansiz would also be interned. Kaypakkaya was tortured severely and finally shot to death in 1973, upon which his corpse was mutilated and portioned. According to Cansiz, after their murder, songs were composed about Kaypakkaya and his comrades' exploits and heroism and their names casually invoked in political discussions to make a point or convince others. In the following years their imagery constantly appeared in various leftist organizations and demonstrations, the days of their murder were commemorated annually, and they were

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[140] Image from: http://www.radikal.com.tr/hayat/deniz-gezmis-kimdir-en-meshur-sozleri-nelerdir-1177573/.

generally thought of as "embodying" the "spirit of resistance" (Cansiz, 2018, p. 95, 141, 200). Kaypakkaya's particular martyrdom arguably hinged upon his resistance in the face of adversity, not giving up any information about his comrades even under severe personal duress, but he, as well as the aforementioned comrades, were commemorated across various factions as "martyred revolutionaries," who had given themselves to the universal struggle for proletarian liberation (Cansiz, 2018, p. 92).

4.2 Ibrahim Kaypakkaya, the leader of the TKP-ML, with his signature six-pence hat.[141]

What Sakine Cansiz indicates in her descriptions of these martyrs and their uses, is not only how wide-spread a martyrial practices and cosmologies was before the advent of the PKK, but also how 'non-specific' these martyrs were considered to be. These

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[141] Image from https://www.tkpml.com/tkp-ml-ve-mkpden-ortak-aciklama-komunist-onder-ibrahim-kaypakkayanin-tarihe-vurdugu-nester-ideolojik-politik-guzergahimizdir/.

Marxist martyrs, if we take Cansiz's word for it, were martyrs for many different factions and peoples, not 'belonging' to one particular faction or organization in particular. They were, at least, not venerated in this way; they were martyrs in the global anti-capitalist, revolutionary struggle. Like Leon Trotsky or Rosa Luxembourg, they were general 'guiding lights' though which one could assess how best to conduct a revolution (Cansiz, 2018, p. 242).

Privatization of Martyrdom

While Kaypakkaya had forwarded the Kurdish national question in his writing in the TKP-ML (Bozarslan, 2004), Cansiz nonetheless found the organization he left behind lacking. In fact, she found that all the organizations betraying the "revolutionary values and traditions" that he and the other martyrs had embodied (Cansiz, 2018, p. 260). It was first when she had a deep conversation with members of the underground 'Kurdistan Revolutionaries,' also called *Apocular* ('the followers of Apo,' the nickname of the leader of the party, Abdullah Öcalan, as we have said),[142] that she found a strong political resonance. According to Cansiz, the most significant political innovation that the Kurdistan Revolutionaries offered at the time, was framing the Kurdish struggle as an anti-colonial struggle, which the majority of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist organizations disagreed with. It was through bolstering a non-chauvinist nation that Kurdistan, and, as a corollary, Turkey could be free (Cansiz 2018, p. 89-91). Kurdistan was its own place, with its own people, language, history, and tradition. As she narrates: "It was wonderful to arrive, so unconditionally and genuinely, through contradictions and struggles, at an ideal. It was an immense joy, and I will repeat it aloud now: *I'm the happiest person in the world because I participate in this struggle*" (Cansiz, 2018, p. 81, italics retained). After being initiated in the discourse and the politics of the Kurdistan Revolutionaries, she started working for them as much as she could, and profoundly changed her demeanor. It was here that she found the clearest expression of the legacy of Kaypakkaya and the rest of the revolutionary martyrs (Cansiz, 2018, p. 96).

She started to partake in long reading and study sessions, often lasting several hours,

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[142] This was the name of the PKK before it announced itself formally in 1978.

where they dealt out and received self-criticism, called *rexne* in Kurdish, changed her clothes to a more simple and humble attire, began sitting differently and raising her hand when asking questions, and abandoning more and more of her personal affectations (Cansiz, 2018, p. 92). Education was considered the paramount virtue of the underground group at that time, and was, according to Cansiz perceived as relatively spectacular at the time – both by competing groups, and the members themselves. Purity, honesty, and devotion were pinnacle values for becoming a "revolutionary person" (Cansiz, 2018, pp. 92-94). "It was like a divine force", she says when recalling those early days (Cansiz, 2018, p. 94).

Soon the intensification of the struggle in the Kurdistan Revolutionaries, led to the generation of martyrs of their own. In heavy competition with other emerging Kurdish revolutionary groups, as well as Marxist-Leninist ones, the PKK quickly received the conditions to form their own martyrology. The first martyr was (arguably) Aydın Gül, a local of Dersim who was killed by a rival political faction. Although he was an important figure for the PKK at the time, he is relatively unknown today. The second martyr, however, has gone down as a key figure in PKK historiography. According to Cansiz, on the same day that Kaypakkaya had been killed 5 years earlier, the second in command in the Kurdistan revolutionaries, Haki Karer, was shot by a sectarian Kurdish party in Gaziantep (Cansiz, 2018, p. 207). Haki Karer had been in Gaziantep to recruit new members to the Kurdistan Revolutionaries and spread 'the good word,' but encroached on territory claimed the Marxist-Kurdish organization Stêrka Sor ('Red Star' in Kurdish)*,* for which he was assassinated in a coffeeshop in broad daylight. Due to Haki Karer being a Turk, he was commemorated the PKK's in demonstrations, images, and lore as 'the great internationalist,' who struggled for the brotherhood between Kurds and Turks and was killed because of it (Casier & Jongerden 2012). His murder was, according to Cansiz (2018) and Akkaya & Jongerden (2012b, 2011b), an impetus for creating a more institutionalized party organization that could defend itself against aggression not only from the state and its fascists, but also from other leftist organizations. As such, "the formation of the PKK became the promise to continue the struggle of the martyr Haki Karer, as well as a symbol for Turkish-Kurdish brotherhood" (Akkaya & Jongderden, 2011b, p. 130). He

was an advocate for internationalism, but more specifically, an advocate for the PKK's internationalism.

In 1978, the Kurdistan Revolutionaries finally held its first congress and announced itself as an official party. Cansiz had been invited to participate, and was shuttled off to a small village called Fis, in the outskirts of Lice, close to Amed. Here the 22 members formally established the PKK (*Partîya Karkerên Kurdistan*, 'The Workers Party of Kurdistan'), also speaking on behalf of two other members who were not able to come (Cansiz, 2018, p. 282). One of them, Kemal Pîr, had already been imprisoned in the Diyarbakir jail, where he would die on a hunger strike a few years later, and the other, Mehmet Karasungur, was in in the Turkish south-east organizing an armed assault aimed at local tribes supporting the state. A political program was ratified, a name was decided on, and further strategies for recruitment and expansion were deliberated (Cansiz, 2018, p. 283). Most interestingly for our purposes, however, was that this congress arguably marked the inauguration of the PKK's own martyrology.

In addition to holding a minute of silence to commemorate their martyrs, (which was initially supposed to come before the meeting started but was forgotten) (Cansiz 2018, p. 283), the party declared that it was founded upon the premise that *its martyrs were the first members* (Jongerden 2011b: 136). Hence, *their* martyrs were immediately drawn into the very constitution of the struggle; they were carried with the PKK from the outset of when the PKK *became* the PKK. This arguably marked an important step forward for the PKK, demarking its political territory and ideology literally though the blood of its membership. The martyrs did not only precede and provide the impetus for forming the PKK, but were themselves an integral part of its very constitution and motion. As the memorial text for Haki Karer, published a few months earlier, argued: "Haki Karer is a perpetually burning torch in the Kurdistan Liberation Struggle" (Kurdistan Revolutionaries 1978, p. 33, cited in Akkaya & Jongerden 2012b, p. 12). As such, the party formation process illustrated a means of laying claim to, particularizing, or 'privatizing' the martyrs of their struggle; they were owned and

formed part of the PKK.[143] Contrasting to Ibrahim Kaypakkaya, Haki Karer was arguably not a shared figure in the same way; he belonged to and was embodied in the structures, ideology and people of the PKK.[144]

Martyrdom and Inversion

Shortly after the founding conference, Cansiz was arrested and put in the Diyarbakir prison, which ends the first part of her memoirs. Her story does not end here, but we will content ourselves with this volume, because it is here the story of party formation ends. In this volume, Sakine Cansiz provided us with a deep-dive into one of the contexts out of which the PKK and its martyrology sprang, which was our primary concern. If we lift our gaze, however, we can see that although martyrdom was an evolving concept (as we have seen, for instance, in relation to the 'privatization' of martyrdom), central to its nature in this context is what we may call its 'inversionary' properties. Martyrdom was a means of transformation in (and of) the struggle.

As described by Apter and also noted above, violence may be considered as generating sequences of exchangeist or 'inversionary' relationships between the exerter and the exerted-upon. According to Apter (1997), while not focusing on violence as a state-of-being (Scheper-Hughes, 1993), or a relationship that incorporates witnessing or remembrance as a central act (Krohn-Hansen, 1997, 1994; Riches, 1986), violence between two actors may unfold according to certain scripts which may or may not transform the meaning and effects of the violence exerted. Violence harbors the potential for semiotic and practical rupture, in other words, although it is not

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[143] Instead of 'privatizing' here, one could also say that the martyrs were politicized in a specific and particular way with the inauguration of the PKK. But I have elected to not use 'politicizing' here as general denominator since the martyrs were already politicized prior to their particular ideological monopolization.

[144] Whether or not he became accepted as a 'general martyr,' is somewhat difficult to assess due to the lack of empirical material. A significant difference between Kaypakkaya and Karer, however, is that the one was martyred by the omni-despised state, and the other was martyred by a competing leftist faction; in other words, who they spoke to as a community and who they pointed to as a perpetrator was significantly different, Kaypakkaya with a naturally much larger appeal. Additionally, Kaypakkaya was martyred when his party had already been founded and announced itself, rather than prior to it, making it perhaps more difficult to lay definite claims to his legacy. However, regardless of whether Haki Karer was in fact a martyr for many people outside of the PKK (which Kaypakkaya indubitably was outside of his party), it is unique and interesting that the martyrs form an integral *part* of the party. They were the first members, and the foundation upon which the organization should stand. Akkaya and Jongderden remark on this three of their articles, where *how* Haki Karer was turned into an impetus and foundation for the struggle more fully detailed (Akkaya & Jongerden, 2011b).

necessarily entailed. In an exchangeist relationship, for instance, the logic of 'an eye for an eye' may reign supreme, he suggests, while in an 'inversionary' relationship the violence exerted may be turned into a vehicle for something else – considered as a rightful punishment, chance, sacrifice, or not even acts of violence at all. The creation of martyrdom in this context, we can argue, functions as a sort of inversionary vehicle.[145] It takes the violence exerted and transforms it into a relation that means something else for the victim than it does for the perpetrator, and demands something else than mere equal retribution. This, we may say, is the essence of a revolutionary ideology: changing the nature and configuration of reciprocity within a hierarchical power relation.[146] Cansiz points out that the life of the deceased is not entirely considered 'taken' by the perpetrators, for instance; that the meaning of the killed is not defined within, or even drawing on, the same framework as the perpetrator's; that 'returning the favor' does not ultimately rely upon revenge killings; and that those killed demand an adjusted relational practice from and amongst the living. The martyrs, in other words, transform the relationships of the living, both amongst bereaved themselves and the bereaved's association with the executioners.

This was very much the case with Haki Karer, who by virtue of his martyrdom signaled a transformation of both how competing left parties were to be seen, and how the organization should relate to the state. The assaulting Stêrka Sor was seen as a satellite or proxy militia of the state (Akkaya & Jongerden 2011b), and such violent transgressions demanded not only a transformation of the PKK's institutions, but also a transformation of the people within it. Instead of memorializing a tragic event, Haki Karer was brought in as a foundation for further resistance, and framed as being integral to the (metaphysics of) the party itself. His martyrdom, in other words, served as an inversionary vehicle through which the PKK could re-examine its relation to the (socio-political) world and decide upon new courses of action.

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[145] 'Context' is here very broadly defined. It means a context where international Marxism has played a role, Islamic influence has played a role, peaceful Ghandi-style resistance has played a role, and where Palestinian martyrology has played a role, and so forth, but is only taken to denominate the particular time-space in which the PKK's martyrology emerged. As we argued in chapter 2, the logic of revolution exists both 'everywhere' and 'nowhere,' in a place where context is emergent, rather than being set beforehand.

[146] Reciprocity is here used in a wide sense. It is intended to encompass relations of gift-giving, remuneration, and symbolic affiliation, for instance - indeed as a short-hand for the constituent features of sociality.

The PKK's institutionalization of the martyrs was not, however, the endpoint in the development of its martyrology. The effects that martyrs had on the living expanded and seeped into different civilian areas of life. Relating to martyrdom, and more specifically the PKK's martyrs, became a commonplace feature of civilian daily life. Before we can proceed to the next chapter and examine martyrdom in its current 'synchronic' form, we must therefore first speak briefly about its popular elaboration and dissemination; how the PKK's martyrdom became a popular phenomenon, an effectuating force for masses of people all across Kurdistan, in other words.

The Maturation of the PKK's Martyrology: Popularizing the Dead

The maturation of the PKK's martyrology, Aliza Marcus argues, came after the PKK had moved its core membership to Syria (Marcus, 2007). Although much of the cadre was imprisoned, like Sakine Cansiz, the PKK had started training a guerilla contingent in Lebanon, preceding the coup in 1980 by a few months. Öcalan and a few of his followers moved to Syria towards the end of 1979, after having received some information that they were in danger of being taken by the state. Through various kinship and political networks Öcalan and his followers were put in touch with the PLO (the 'Palestinian Liberation Organization'), more specifically the subgroup DFLP,[147] and was permitted to train with them. Slowly members were funneled into Syria and then Lebanon, where they started their military education. When the military coup did strike, the concordant repression did not hit the PKK as hard as it did other groups due to this preemptive displacement. The PKK stayed there and trained in Lebanon and Syria for several years, alongside and under the instruction of different Palestinian resistance groups.

Training in Syria and Lebanon was not unique or novel. From the mid-70's until 1982 Lebanon was not only the center for the PLO, but also the central training grounds for different militant groups from all across the world (Akkaya, 2015, p. 49). Diverse

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[147] *Al-Jabhah al-Dimuqratiyah Li-Tahrir Filastin* in Arabic, or the 'Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine,' an armed Marxist-Leninist-Maoist sub-group of the PLO, *Munazzamatu t-tahriri filistiniya* in Arabic, or the 'Palestinian Liberation Organization.'

groups of Nationalist/Marxist groups from Sri Lanka, Iran, Argentina, El Salvador and several African countries visited and trained there (Akkaya, 2015, p. 50). Funds and arms came from China and the Soviet Union and many of the weapons which are still in use by the PKK today. Akkaya estimates that there were approximately 2000 militants from various factions training in the Beka valley in 1980 (Akkaya, 2015, p. 52). The Palestinian resistance, and especially the *fedayeen* in Arabic, translated as 'military groups willing to sacrifice themselves,' had long exerted a particularly strong influence on the Turkish left (Akkaya, 2015, p. 50). Turkish revolutionaries had come there to train and gain inspiration already since 1968, Deniz Gezmiş among them, but the largest wave of revolutionaries from Turkey came right before and after the 1980 coup. None of these Turkish groups managed to assert themselves like the PKK, however.

There were several reasons for this, but arguably the most central was that the PKK 'proved' its internationalist commitment by fighting side-by-side with Palestinian groups in 1982, when Israel invaded. In 1982 the PKK had the highest number of militants among the Turkish/Kurdish groups, numbering approximately 300, according to Akkaya (2015), of which many were committed to the struggle. At the end of the conflict, the PKK had given 10 martyrs to the Palestinian cause, and another 15 had been put in jail, which made the Palestinian commanders see that 'they were serious' in their commitments (Akkaya, 2015, p. 61). The PKK was therefore given a training camp of its own in Helwe, close to the Syrian border (later taken over by Syria), which was in use until 1992 (Akkaya, 2015, p. 61), as well as funding and permission to set up its own headquarters. This privileged position afforded the PKK the opportunity to establish a political hegemony over the revolutionary (Kurdish) left in Turkey. When the PKK started to move its cadres into the Iraqi-Kurdish mountain range in 1982, and finally attacked the state directly on the 15th of August 1984, it was the only organization capable of doing so, much due to the support of the Palestinians.[148]

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[148] Naturally, there were several other factors as well. First and foremost, the 1980 coup had decimated the left in Turkey, which the space of influence 'ripe for the picking,' so to speak (Gunes, 2013). Additionally, much of the attacks the PKK planned and executed were propagandistic, small guerilla maneuvers, which – due to the terrain – were difficult for the state to combat efficiently. Moreover, its 'nationalist' profile also attracted much local support from the Kurds, who were not necessarily leftist in their initial orientations.

Publicization of Martyrdom

According to interviews with leading members of the PKK, in addition to the training and general support they received, they also "learned a lot about martyrs" from the Palestinians (quote from Markus, 2007, p. 58, see also Akkaya, 2015, p. 61). Akkaya and Marcus cite the knowledge of (the use of) martyrdom as a central factor in attracting and generating support among the Kurdish population in Turkey – a vehicle for propaganda. Nonetheless, neither Akkaya nor Markus elaborate much on what the PKK actually learned from the Palestinians in this respect. At the peril of speculation, we may here see if we can take some cues from Allen (2009, 2008, 2006a), who has worked extensively on martyrdom and its history in Palestine, in attempting to see how the Palestinians influenced the PKK's configuration of martyrdom as a compelling and public affair.

Allen describes the Palestinian history of resistance as intimately connected with constructions of martyrdom. Although not writing about the period of 1979-1982 specifically, Allen nonetheless delineates certain ritual martyrdom practices in the Palestinian struggle which we can see as having inspired the PKK. Focusing mostly on the first and second *intifada* (in 1987 and 2001 respectively), a period in which the PKK was still in contact and working with the Palestinian movement, she describes how "funerals" became "small enactments of the moral responsibilities of the larger national community" (Allen, 2006a, p. 108). This notion preceded the uprisings in question – at least in a less articulated and sporadic form (Allen, 2006a, p. 110). During the first *intifada* ('shake off', in Arabic), the public martyrdom funerals became more commonplace, and were seen as an integral part of the resistance. The UNL ('Unified National Leadership') of the resistance framed *any* occurring demonstrations and marches as "shows of unity and solidarity with the martyr" (Allen, 2006, p. 111). To participate in funeral marches became showing faith and devotion to the nationalist cause, as much as it was showing faith and devotion to God. It became an illustration of David's struggle against Goliath (Israel), which could only be won by strength of will and self-less devotion to the cause (Allen, 2008), and a way of bringing international attention to the suffering endured by the Palestinian population.

They became massively popular phenomenon, often numbering participants in the thousands, which could often turn into violent contentions with Israeli forces. The martyrdom funerals, in other words, became the "expression of commitment to the struggle against the occupation available to most people other than those activists willing to take up arms" (Allen, 2006a, p. 112); they were affective and effective ways of connecting 'the people' with 'the struggle.' The PKK, we can assume, saw that these commemorative rituals as effective ways of spreading propaganda and drawing people into the(ir) struggle during their stay in the region, melding the popular commitment to the martyrs with a commitment to the ideology of the party, in a sense, *martyrializing* the revolution.

The 'Palestinian roots' of the Kurdish martyrology can be clearly seen in the first *serhildan,* or 'uprising' in Kurdish (modeled after the Palestinian *intifada*), in 1990. Marcus chronicles that in mid-March a group of 13 PKK soldiers were ambushed in the mountains close to Nusaybin (Marcus, 2007, p. 141), which was a relatively large number compared to losses previously. "At the time", Marcus argues, "relatives of PKK militants rarely claimed the bodies" (Marcus, 2007, p. 140). It was both difficult to identify them, due to the location and the practice of giving fighters a *nom de guerre*, and if one sought to do so by petitioning government institutions, one was quite likely to suffer harsh and persistent persecution (Weiss, 2014). But the PKK wanted the families to claim the bodies; publicly burying the martyrs would be a sign of "sympathy and respect for the PKK fight" (Marcus, 2007, p. 141), and in this case, the PKK 'got lucky.' One of the killed commanders, Kamuran Dündar, had been from Nusaybin himself, and the PKK managed to send word to his kin. When his very patriotic family heard, they went to the authorities and demanded the body. When they had received the corpse an intended to bury it, the funeral procession tuned into a massive demonstration, numbering in the thousands, which then turned into a violent skirmish with the police. Several people were killed and dozens more wounded. This demonstration spread to other cities close by, like Cizîre and Sirnax, and, crucially, coincided with the Newroz celebration, an incipient symbol of Kurdish national identity as discussed in chapter 6. As Marcus says, with this event, "it seemed like the PKK's war had finally come down from the mountains and into the cities" (Marcus,

2007, p. 142). If we are to take Marcus' word for it, this marked the inception of martyrdom as a public affair, one in which the people shared the responsibility for the care of the martyrs.[149]

During my fieldwork in Turkish Kurdistan, I participated in a few such martyr funerals, but the first one I attended in the beginning of July in Amed left the strongest impression.[150] I had spent the day with the aforementioned local council in Sur when a bus came and gathered up local residents and the council's administration. We were told that were going to a martyr funeral in the Bağlar district, and given a small black badge to pin on our shirts. After driving for approximately thirty minutes, we arrived at a graveyard towards the outskirts of the city where we were greeted by thousands of mourners waiting in the open-air courtyard. After half an hour of waiting, the body of a martyr from the YPG was driven into the courtyard by a municipality hearse, followed by dozens of civilian cars, and several police tanks encircling the area. The crowd surged towards the casket, shouting PKK slogans and howling ululations, and carried it to what seemed to me a shrine, where a few impassioned speeches were held, and an image of the martyr's face was held up towards the crowd. The body and the image were then moved to the front of the funeral procession, and carried to towards its grave. The crowd filtered in behind the body in silence – nobody spoke to each other except under their breath. The quiet was ruptured only by sporadic chants exploding at different times during the 20-minute walk to the gravesite. Both in front and in the back of the procession were large Turkish gendarmerie tanks, mounted with water-cannons and machineguns, and several times Turkish fighter jets flew over the procession so low that the sound was deafening. Every time a fighter jet had passed, the crowd would erupt into slogans, ululations and chants. "We are not afraid", an older man nudged at me in one of these quite periods, smiling. Once the body had

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[149] It might be interesting to note here, that the popularization of the martyr funerals may be seen as a practice directly disputing the Turkish state's sovereignty, if we are to follow Stepputat's assessment of sovereignty as perpetually unfolding (Stepputat, 2014a). According to Stepputat (2018), the very management of dead bodies and the control over how it is to be treated is a central mechanism to the (re)production of state sovereignty, more so even than the right to decide 'who lives and who dies' (Agamben, 1998).

[150] This is also the funeral from which I have the poorest fieldnotes. At the time my Kurdish was not good enough to understand much of what was being said and chanted, and it was hard for me to differentiate names from verbs and places and conduct interviews on my own, but I include it because it made such a profound impression personally.

arrived, the people carrying the body dug a grave, and slowly lowered it down. During the lowering process the thousands of mourners extended their right hands and made a 'V'-sign with their fingers.[151] A person dressed in mock-guerilla garb, started singing *Çerxa Şoreşê* ('the wheel of revolution,' see chapter 8 for the lyrics), where the line he sung was shouted back at him, in a thundering call-and-response. As the procession aimed to exit, several youths climbed on top of hearses parked nearby and shouted political speeches at the crowds, waving PKK and PKK-affiliated flags. Although the council and I returned to our bus without incident, one could hear weapons going off nearby.

4.3 Image from the funeral procession of the human rights lawyer Tahir Elçi, mentioned in chapter 8, who was buried in the Yeniköy cemetery, same as the YPG fighter.[152]

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[151] Like the common usage of the symbol, it is taken to symbolized peace, but gradually also becoming a symbol of the Kurdish movement as such. As I was perhaps forty to fifty meters away from the grave I could not hear whether a prayer was said before the burial.

[152] Image from Ayse Albayarak's article: Albayrak, A. (2015 November 29). 'Thousands Mourn Kurdish Human Rights Lawyer in Killed in Turkey.' The Wall Street Journal. https://www.wsj.com/articles/thousands-mourn-kurdish-human-rights-lawyer-killed-in-turkey-1448811854

Despite these obvious similarities between the Kurdish and the Palestinian movements' popular martyr practices, however, this does not mean that the PKK's and the Palestinian resistance's configuration of martyrdom was uniform. Although both ways of venerating the martyrial dead were massive, popular spectacles, Allen sees a certain exhaustion and exasperation as being intrinsic to the performance of martyrdom funerals. According to Allen, the martyr's funeral demonstrations in Palestine both further and challenge the nationalist ideology, which cannot be said to be the case in Turkish Kurdistan. Perhaps due to the somewhat lesser numbers of people killed, funeral demonstrations do not in the same way challenge or "breach" the political order of the resistance in Kurdistan (Allen, 2006, p. 109). As in the demonstration above, fatigue was not a part of my experience of the procession, nor was any cynicism directed at the event's organizers. This divergence may also be connected with the heterogeneity of parties and resistance organizations in Palestine, compared to the uncontested hegemony the PKK holds over the Kurdish regions in Turkey. Moreover, whereas the second intifada marked significantly less 'popular' participation in the liberation struggle – the struggle becoming more 'professionalized,' militarized and Islamized – such a shift has not taken place in Turkish Kurdistan. In Turkish Kurdistan, funerals are still massively effervescent events, which, although perhaps not producing much hope, do not generate emotions of "ennui" or "cynicism," as they do in Palestine (Allen, 2006, p. 109). The 'emptiness' of the politics espoused in martyrdom commemorations in Palestine (Allen, 2006), is not found in the same degree in Turkish Kurdistan.[153]

Disseminating Inversion

For our case, the Palestinian influence is nonetheless quite interesting since it testifies

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[153] In fact, Selahattin Demirats, the aforementioned leader of the HDP, describes his initial introduction to the Kurdish struggle as deriving from participating in a funeral event. Participating in a funeral for a Kurdish activist, who had mysteriously been tortured and murdered in Amed after having spoken Kurdish at a human rights conference in Ankara in 1991 (Laizer, 1996, pp. 45-47), Demirtaş remarks: "they opened fire on the crowd from all sides (…) the wounded couldn't be treated because if they went to the hospital they would be arrested.""That day I became a different person," Demirtaş reflects; "My life's course changed (…) although I didn't fully understand the reason behind the events, now I knew: we were Kurds, and since this was not an identity I would toss away, this was also my problem," as reported in: De Bellaigue, C. (2015 October 29). 'The battle for Turkey: can Selahattin Demirtaş pull the country back from civil war?' *The Guardian.* Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/29/selahattin-Demirtaş-kurdish-turkey.

to a change and maturation of the PKK's martyrology. After the first *serhildan* in 1993, the martyrs were arguably not venerated as the *PKK's martyrs* in the same way.[154] By involving the families, the neighborhoods, the communities and the mosques in this process, in the 90's the PKK's martyrology spread to the people and shifted partial responsibility for care of them onto the people themselves. Thus, martyrdom became a public matter, a foundation for the relationship shared between the militant vanguard and the people. It marked a stage in the resistance where the dead were no longer only the domain of the PKK or of the families, but one in which they coincided and mutually depended on each other.

Hence, returning to Apter once again, we may say that the funeral practices picked up from the Palestinian movement marked a means of disseminating the inversionary properties of martyrdom. Whereas the martyrs' promulgation of the meaning death and dying, as well as the espoused relation to the state and other actors, had to a large degree been confined to the cadres and the sympathizers of the PKK prior to the first *serhildan,* the popularization of the funeral practices assisted in spreading this notion to the people. "The spirit of resistance" embodied by the martyrs, as quoted from Sakine Cansiz and PKK newspapers (Cansiz, 2018, p. 200; *Serxwebûn* in Gunes, 2013, p. 260),[155] became of means of relating to the world that did not exclusively pertain to the guerillas. In addition to distributing the responsibility for the martyrs to the people, the funerals became a means of formulating a martyrial ethos that could be emulated on the part of the people themselves. The values that the martyrs had exhibited were not confined to being followed or emulated by the guerilla alone, but could also be emulated by the body politic – albeit by other means. The courage the martyrs had shown in attacking the state despite the risk of self-annihilation, could obviously be mimicked by guerilla – through contesting the state in a directly violent way – but also, with the advent of funeral demonstrations, by the people themselves. Both the guerilla's actions and the people's actions became expressions of the same martyrial ethos of challenging the state in the face of death; at certain times participating in

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[154] Whether or not it started exactly with the uprisings of 1993, is not necessarily true as the previous footnote would suggest (although the murdered in question was not a PKK member).
[155] *Serxwebûn* ('Independence') is the PKK's Turkish language newspaper, and the aforementioned *Berxwedan* ('Resistance') is the Kurdish language newspaper.

demonstrations could be just as deadly as assaulting an army outpost, if not more, as Marcus has alluded to (2007). With the advent of the popular veneration, in other words, martyrs became vehicles for inversionary transformation of the people as well as the guerilla.

And it is here that we can see the full purchase of martyrdom in relation to revolution: Martyrdom becomes a means of breaking out of (or transforming) relations both within a given community, and the relation of the community to its (alleged) oppressors. Martyrdom becomes a vehicle through which the meaning, relations and comportment in the world may be 'inverted,' challenged and concordantly reconfigured. Like Ibrahim Kaypakkaya embodied a guerilla's ideal revolutionary ethos, Haki Karer obligated party formation, and Kamuran Dündar demanded popular celebration, the martyrs served as vehicles for reconfiguring people's relationships to others, to the state, and to themselves. They were, in other words, the means through which the world could be thought through in a different and compelling manner. As the PKK itself declared on its 40th anniversary, "we will always be their comrades and followers, and we will fulfill their dreams. On this basis we celebrate the 40th anniversary of our party for all comrades and say, *Bijî Serok Apo!*".[156]

Conclusion

But having elaborated this development of martyrdom in the PKK, we do not necessarily have a better grasp of what this entails and how it is configured. Put differently, if the martyrs are the foundation, what is the building, so to speak? By passing through this history, however, we are nonetheless better equipped to examine a synchronic image of how this ideology is structured today. By seeing how Kurdish history in Turkey has been characterized by a continuity of eradicatory violence in the previous chapter, and in this chapter seeing how the PKK developed its revolutionary ideology in relation to a changing martyrology, we are now in a position to examine

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[156] The quote is taken from Bahoz Erdal's speech to a guerilla contingent in the Qandil mountains in 2018, Bahoz Erdal being one of the most mythical and famous guerilla commanders: 'PKK's founding celebrated in the Kurdistan mountains.' (2018, 27 November). *ANF News*. Retrieved from https://anfenglishmobile.com/kurdistan/pkk-s-founding-celebrated-in-kurdistan-mountains-31037. He is also included in many popular songs, for instance: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ls2oEpDMSqU.

the cosmology of martyrdom in the PKK more in depth. If martyrdom is at the center of the PKK's revolution – as we have argued that it is – it is now appropriate with a closer examination of what 'world' the martyrs structure. What universe, so to speak, do the martyrs construct and reveal? We shall here see in full the complex nature of martyrdoms in the PKK's contemporary revolutionary cosmology.

5: Death by the State, Martyrdom by the PKK: A Social Order of Sacrifice

Introduction

As a part of its 'eradicative' campaign directed at the Kurdish movement, the HDP reported that the Turkish state destroyed thirteen cemeteries in the Kurdish areas between 2015 and 2017.[157] Such eradication followed a previous period where, during the cease-fire negotiations of 2013, a total of seventeen cemeteries for the discovered remains of murdered PKK-guerilla were constructed across Turkey. Although sparking outrage in Turkish media when being built,[158] it was not until hostilities resumed in 2015 that the state actively sought to physically destroy them.[159] Perhaps most famous among these was the Lice cemetery, close to Amed, since this had long been associated with Kurdish resistance.[160] In November 2015, the Turkish state forces launched a full-on assault on the cemetery. With mortar-fire and helicopter missiles precipitating the ground 'invasion' which secured the graveyard,[161] Turkish flags were raised and photo sessions of shooting the tombstones were circulated.[162] The impetus for the destruction on the part of the Turkish state - of not only the tombstones, but also the mosque, rest hall, library and fountain - was the purported hiding of weapons in the tombs.[163] After the army had concluded its excursion, it also bombed the road

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[157] Khalidi, A. (2017, December 29). 'HDP says that Turkey has destroyed 13 cemeteries of fallen fighters.' *Kurdistan 24*. Retrieved from http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/1ba714ff-6fe1-40ed-a377-f34c786dac3c

[158] 'Cemetery for PKK militants opened in Diyarbakir.' (2013, July 15). *Hürriyet Daily News.* Retrieved from http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/cemetery-for-pkk-militants-opened-in-diyarbakir-50745

[159] Bozarslan, M. 'Why have PKK cemeteries become a target?' (2015, September 30). *Al-Monitor*. Retrieved from https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/09/turkey-kurdish-rebels-accused-of-using-cemeteries-as-bases.html. Although there was but there was a marked escalation in 2015, it can be disputed whether it started *exactly* then: 'Two killed in Turkey clashes over PKK cemetery destruction,' (2013, December 6). *Naharnet.* Retrieved from http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/108824

[160] The PKK was founded in a village close to Lice, and it had been a central place during the Şêx Saîd rebellion.

[161] 'Turkish state keeps demolishing cemeteries of PKK guerrillas.' (2015, November 23). *ANF News*. Retrieved from https://anfenglish.com/kurdistan/turkish-state-keeps-demolishing-cemeteries-of-pkk-guerrillas-13224

[162] I was shown videos of the assault when I returned to Amed towards the end of December 2015, but I have not been able to retrieve this documentation.

[163] Here it is difficult to actually ascertain whether there were weapons there or not due to the intense ideological positions of the Turkish media and the Kurdish discourse (see the aforementioned

leading to the respite. Similar attacks took place in 2015 throughout the Kurdish regions in Turkey, in Sirnax, Muş, Amed, Wan and Dersim among others, and continued well into 2017.[164] This sparked a series of increasingly dramatic protests, ranging from massive demonstrations, to civilian 'human shield' operations attempting to block military personnel and protests in parliament.[165] In short, the destruction of the graveyards played a central role in the escalation of the conflict in 2015-18. Indeed, as Banu Bargu (2016) has noted before me, the cemetery has become a central 'locus' of contention between the Kurds and the Turkish state in its most recent phase of the struggle.

This, of course, begs the question of why and for what reasons cemeteries have become so politically, socially, and culturally important. The question has already been asked and answered by a few authors (Bargu, 2016; Özsoy 2013a, 2010). I do, however, see the need for an elaboration of the responses given. Bargu, perhaps dealing with it most directly, suggests that in bombing cemeteries "the desecration of the dead becomes a new site of articulating identity, of producing the ethnic, spiritual supremacy of the Turkish nation" (Bargu, 2016, p. 5). While this assessment seems reasonable to me, I would like to supplement the answer she provides. The other half of the answer she provides alludes to the role of death and the dead in the Kurdish movement – a burgeoning topic in Kurdish studies (Koefoed, 2017a, 2017b; Bargu 2016, 2014; Casier & Jongerden, 2012; Gambetti & Jongerden 2015; Weiss, 2014; Özsoy, 2013a; Bozarslan, 2000). Quoting Özsoy (2013a), Bargu argues that the bombings strike at the heart of the movement because "the Kurds resurrect their dead through a moral and symbolic economy of martyrdom as highly affective forces that powerfully shape public, political and daily life," thereby "promoting Kurdish national identity and struggle as a sacred communion of the dead and the living" (Özsoy in Bargu, 2016, p. 16). For the Kurds, in other words, she argues that the cemeteries are

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Bozarslan article from 2015), but it seems *highly* unlikely to me that there would have been weapons there, also from my experience of visiting them.

[164] 'Turkish Police attack Yeniköy Cemetery again,' (2017, December 27) *ANF News.* Retrieved from https://anfenglishmobile.com/kurdistan/turkish-police-attack-yenikoey-cemetery-again-23873
[165] 'Another cemetery of guerillas bombed by Turkish army in Cudi,' (2015, September 21). *ANF News.* Retrieved from https://anfenglish.com/kurdistan/another-cemetery-of-guerrillas-bombed-by-turkish-army-in-cudi-12765

important symbolic locations for giving life to the martyrs, and thereby creating Kurdishness – a mechanism which the state seeks to inhibit.

If the cemetery bombing is both a recognition and attempted destruction of the core of the Kurdish movement—that is, death's centrality to the (re)generation of Kurdishness as life – this warrants further analysis and elaboration. For, if by bombing the Kurdish cemeteries the state inadvertently recognizes and attempts to attack the central core of the Kurdish movement's structure, organization and momentum, then what is this 'core' in discourse and practice? If there is a 'sacred communion' between the living and the dead, how, then, is this constructed, performed and represented, and what shape(s) does it have?

In this chapter, I will deal with the above questions suggesting that it is important for the state to destroy Kurdish cemeteries because of what the cemeteries and the dead *do* in the Kurdish movement. We have seen in the previous chapter how martyrs were central to both the organizational and ideological formation of the PKK, and in chapter three I remarked that the way state violence is deployed may engender an 'exchangeist' response, or an 'inversionary' response (Apter, 1997). I have also argued that the PKK is building a new 'inversionary' understanding of the world out of the violence exerted upon it and – given that we have examined the formation of the PKK's organization and ideology – I think it befitting to now delve a little deeper into what this 'inversionary' mode of violence may be said to contain. I shall attempt to answer this by conducting an analysis of the structure of martyrdom in the PKK, departing from an examination of the *Şehîdlik*, or 'martyr house,'[166] in the Qandil Mountains in Northern Iraq. Here we shall see that martyrdom is a multi-dimensional phenomenon operating at different levels simultaneously. Theoretically, the chapter seeks to contribute to anthropological understandings of martyrdom by challenging the notion that this can be approached as a singular phenomenon, extended across boundaries and borders. Treated as such in much of the literature – on terrorism in particular (as we saw in the last chapter) – the aim of the chapter is to illustrate the multiple constitutions and effects of martyrdom, even within a 'bounded community'

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[166] In Turkish '*Şehitlik'* can also be used as a denomination of a cemetery, but in my experience, in Kurdish it was taken to denote the actual 'martyr house,' not always tied to a cemetery.

such as the PKK. I thus claim that it is more beneficial to execute a rooted analysis in order to think of a 'whole' generating *martyrdoms,* in plural.

To summarize, this chapter is not to any significant degree concerned with showing how martyrdom *moves*, that is, how it is involved in shaping everyday life, how it intercedes in common conversation or practice, or changes throughout its various invocations and usages. This will be the major occupation of the following chapters. What we are concerned with here is showing that martyrdom can be several things within a singular community; that it is not a clear-cut or socially static category, that it is neither necessarily unified nor homogenous.

The Şehîdlik: Designing a Space for the Dead

Although I visited the cemetery in Lice prior to its destruction in 2015, and indeed participated in a few funeral processions leading to other Kurdish cemeteries, it is not these I choose to focus on here. What I would rather turn our attention to – if we are to take the cemetery as a point of departure for examining the PKK's political cosmology – is the cemetery in the Qandil mountains. This is, arguably, one of the first PKK cemeteries to be constructed, and contains the bodies of many of the movement's most important martyrs, as we shall see. It provides us with a figurative 'enclosed space' in which the structure of the PKK's cosmology can be examined.

The cemetery is situated in a remote part of the Qandil mountains in Iraq on the border to Turkey and Iran. 'Given' to the PKK by the KDP ('Democratic Party of Kurdistan', or *Partîya Demokrat ya Kurdistan,* in Kurdish) in Iraq in the Iraq-Iran war, after they had departed from Lebanon and Palestine, this mountain area has since served as the central training grounds, and respite of the guerilla, which uses its rugged terrain to pass unnoticed between the surrounding nation states. It is both a point of transit and a place that holds special significance to the movement, due to its natural beauty and association with resistance and 'traditional' Kurdish livelihood. Despite its remote location, the cemetery has nonetheless become akin to a pilgrimage site for many of the PKK Kurds, who will travel from their country of origin – some even from Europe – to visit the graveyard, pay respects, and see the site for themselves. This, in turn, has

led to bombing missions by the Turkish state aimed at destroying the cemetery.[167] Unsuccessful in a bombing attempt in February, a mere two weeks after I was there on the 21st of March in 2017 (a month after my formal fieldwork had been completed), a Turkish bombing run destroyed most of the cemetery and its structures. My description of it is from before it was destroyed.

The cemetery itself spanned perhaps a kilometer and possessed several distinct and interesting architectural features. When I arrived at the cemetery, in connection with the Newroz festival, detailed in chapter 7, my group and I formed part of a civilian convoy parked outside of the surrounding fence. Upon arrival, we formed into a line and walked up to the main entrance where it was emblazoned *Pakrewangeha Mehmet Karasungur*, literally named 'the martyr camp of Mehmet Karasungur,' named after the first commander of the armed proto-guerilla. Underneath the name, there were five pictures of some of the earliest martyrs in the movement, although not all of them were buried there (see photo 5.1). From left to right, Kemal Pir died in a hunger strike in the Diyarbakir prison in 1982, Mazlum Doğan hung himself in the same place in the same year, Mehmet Karasungur was killed by a competing Kurdish Party in Iraq in 1983, Hayiri Durmuş also died in the hunger strike in the same place as Kemal Pir, and Haki Karer was murdered in Gaziantep by a competing Kurdish revolutionary organization in 1977 as we saw in the previous chapter.

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[167] 'Turkish jets bomb martyrs' cemetery, demolish graves in Qandil,' (2017, April 6). *ANF News*. Retrieved from https://anfenglish.com/human-rights/turkish-jets-bomb-the-cemetery-of-martyrs-demolish-graves-in-qandil-19345.

5.1 Pakrewangeha Mehmet Karasungur. My own image.

Returning from the Newroz celebration (described in chapter 7), our local group of PKK sympathizers from Slemanî, who had been bussed up to the celebration, stopped at the graveyard. We were a motley crew in the sense that I knew a few of the participants rather well from the youth center in the city, but there were also people I did not know, who showed up with their families, siblings and the like, in addition to a guerilla minder. Most of the other movement-organized busses from the other villages and cities in Iraqi Kurdistan also stopped at the cemetery before returning to their respective locations, making it seem like a customary practice. Although not guided in the formal sense, there were a few caretakers of the cemetery, who were PKK guerillas, who accompanied the various buses loosely in during their visits.

As we entered into the cemetery, the space opened up to us, and I was surprised to see the amount of people who were buried there. I asked our minder why the bodies were not sent back to their families after they had been killed. She replied that it was not

always as easy to send a corpse back – sometimes the family did not want it, other times it was impossible to move a corpse through the mountains quick enough, other times the borders were closed, and so on. Some people also did not want a 'civilian' burial, but wanted to be buried with their comrades, especially since it was only recently that it became possible to bury martyrs 'politically' in Turkish Kurdistan, and even that was an onerous process (Weiss, 2014).[168] Most of the people who had been buried here were killed in Iraqi Kurdistan, she said.

5.2 Martyr Graves in Qandil. My own image.

The several hundred graves, with tombstones in one section, and mere placards in others, were organized in ascending sections under two massive mosaics of the martyrs Mehmet Karasungur and Ibrahim Bilgin. Both founding members of the PKK, they had been sent to establish contact and possible avenues for cooperation and training with Kurdish parties in Iraq and Iran when they were killed in a meeting with the KDP by PUK assailants in 1983 (Orhan, 2016). Above their picture stood a large monolith, topped with a red star – both the typical symbol of Marxist-Leninism and

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[168] This is detailed in the previous chapter; prior to the 90's there was not a large public spectacle attached to funerals, and the families would not necessarily claim the bodies of their children in fear of repercussions. The state opened up for 'political' burials around 2011, when, once again, there was a (superficial) attempt at reconciliation.

the early symbol of the PKK. Around the graveyard – and springing from the graves themselves – were well-tended flowers and plants, watered by the guerilla caretaker who led our group around.

5.3 Ibrahim Bilgin and Mehmet Karasungur. My own image.

The guerilla caretaker brought our minder and us down from the central plateau to a building that had obviously been constructed later.[169] The tiles were relatively new, and the concrete used for the surrounding stairs also seemed fresh. It was, however, slightly hard to tell when, since there had been multiple bombing attacks throughout the years and the caretaker was not sure when it had been erected. The structure was the famous *şehîdlik*, or martyrium, belonging to the Qandil mountains. As far as I know, besides the *şehîdlik* in Maxmur described in the next chapter, there is only one

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[169] Who constructed the cemetery, when and how is not something that I know exactly, and not something I can find described in the literature on the PKK and the Kurds. From the buildings – the materials used, their freshness and so on – it seemed that it had been gradually constructed over several periods.

other *şehîdlik*-proper, up in the Mahsum Korkmaz training camp further into the mountains. Considering its placement in the heartland of the PKK, and in the most 'sacred' space that it possessed, the reverence towards it expressed by my companions, and the eagerness of the caretaker to show it off, it seemed an incredibly important building. In my mind, this was the 'center' of the movement.

5.4 The *şehîdlik* in Qandil. My own image.

Literally 'house of martyrs,' the *şehîdlik* serves different social purposes in movement, but is in its most general sense a building constructed to commemorate the martyrs. Interestingly, the vernacular term used, *şehîdlik,* is derived from Turkish, whose country has a strong martyr tradition in its own right (partially examined in the previous chapter, but see Doğan Gürpinar & Ceren Kenar, 2016, and Lucienne Thys-

Senocak, 2016, for a more elaborate account),[170] but guerillas will use the 'true' Kurdish name for the building, namely *Mala Şehîdên,* or *'*the home (house) of the martyrs'. Inside the building there are hundreds, or even thousands, of miniature images of people who have died in and for the struggle, as well as flags and sometimes artefacts. The space can be fortuitously compared to a mosque in the sense that there are certain ritual observances connected with entering and using it – such as taking off one's shoes, and not crossing one's legs, not cursing, and generally being disrespectful – and also in the sense that it may serve as a central community institution. Much like what Barth and Leach documented the role of the mosque in Iraqi-Kurdistan in the 1930s-50s, the *şehîdlik* could also be a place where community decisions are arrived at, discussions held, information spread, hierarchies re-affirmed, and social admonishments administered; a place for ritual observation, but also a more general deliberatory social space.[171]

I found this site to illustrate several of the core tenets in the PKK's cosmology – cosmology here, as we have defined it, meaning the 'underlying' foundation upon which the ideology, with all its discourses, organizations, and practices were built on; the essential ideas concerning the passing of time, the nature of hierarchy, relation to mortality and general coherence of the world. But whereas I will examine the practical utilization of the *şehîdlik* in Maxmur in the next chapter, in terms of its influence on creating and exhibiting the foundation for sociality in the camp, I will in this case take a step back. Instead of examining the *şehîdlik* as a space of practice, I will take the *şehîdlik* in Qandil as a point of departure for analyzing some aspects about the nature and construction of martyrdom in the PKK. We will here be attentive to the material and structural dimensions of the PKK's martyrology, so as to better progress into its practical usage later.

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[170] The similarities between the Turkish nationalist *Şehitlik* and the PKK's *şehîdlik* is an incredibly interesting avenue for future research, bound to find certain mirroring, doubling, or refracting functions, roles and usages, but due to my lack of my knowledge of Turkish, this was not an avenue I pursued. Moreover, although one would undoubtedly find certain similarities this chapter is devoted to an elaboration of the PKK's cosmology, not a comparative endeavor as such.

[171] This was more the case in Maxmur than in Qandil, detailed in the next chapter.

At the outset of encountering the building, on the face of it, the first thing one sees is the portrait of Öcalan looking out, warmly but purposefully, into the distance (see photo 5.4). Indeed, as I have been told by several comrades, this picture – now canonical, and one of the most used portraits – was modeled on the famous image of Che Guevara, captured by Alberto Korda. Like Che Guevara, Öcalan is presented as a strong, charismatic figure, directing his gaze towards the future. On each of his sides are two lanterns, which frame his image, and highlight him as the center of the structure. Thrown into relief by the priority of Öcalan, four martyrs adorn the inner façade. Under Öcalan on the left-hand side was the *fermandar* ('commander') of the armed forces – a Turk named Mahsum Korkmaz, *nom de guerre* 'Egîd' – who led the first attack on the State on August 15th 1984. In a dramatic skirmish with state forces he was killed in 1986, upon which the most important training academy in Syria at the time was given his name. The large picture on the right depicts Sakine Cansiz, *nom de guerre* 'Sara,' who – like Mahsum Korkmaz – was also a *fermandar* and a founding member of the PKK, and spearheaded the institutionalization of separate women's structures for representation and military training in the PKK, as indicated in the previous chapter. In addition, she played a greatly important diplomatic role in the diaspora, where she spoke for the PKK in the 'Kurdish National Assembly' (KNK) as well as with different state institutions. She was killed in Paris in 2013, along with two other female comrades, probably by the Turkish secret service, but – despite spurring massive Kurdish resentment towards the European states and their legal systems – the killers have never been identified.[172]

Moving on to the two smaller, inner images, on the left-hand side is the image of Zeynep Kinaci, *nom de guerre* 'Zilan,' the first self-sacrifice bomber of the PKK.[173] Not a founding member of the PKK, she was a guerilla *fermandar* who, dressed in civilian clothing, infiltrated an army outpost close to Dersim and blew herself up,

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[172] My information on the lives of the martyrs comes from several places. Most of it comes from conversations with people in the field, written together and compiled, but I have also found assistance in Akkaya & Jongerden's collaborative work (2012b, 2011b), and Casier & Jongerden's work (2012), in addition to other works on the history of the PKK, as well as the PKK's (or more specifically the armed forces') website: http://www.hezenparastin.com.

[173] Interestingly, the *nom de guerre* 'Zilan' is taken from the Zilan valley, close to Wan, where the Turkish state forces massacred approximately between 5000 - 15000 of Kurds in 1930, in connection with the aftermath of Şêx Saîd's rebellion.

killing 8 soldiers in 1996. She was hailed by Abdullah Öcalan, praising her 'resistance' as the pinnacle of the new, free womanhood (Açik, 2014). Zilan had also written a letter to Öcalan, explaining why she had undertaken this action.[174] From an English translation available at the PKK's armed forces' website, we can read that she "want[ed] to be part of the total expression of the liberation struggle of our people."[175] Her letter, as well as excerpts from her diary, now serve as integral educational materials for new recruits in the mountains. On the right-hand side, is depicted Mazlum Doğan, one of the founding members of the PKK, who hung himself in prison on the eve of Newroz, the twentieth of March 1982, whose contribution to the PKK cosmology will be examined more in depth in chapter 7.

Upon entering the structure, however, it became apparent that this was not entirely similar to a mosque or museum. As we took off our shoes and entered the building, we were greeted with an entire room covered in icons of martyrs. The room itself was meticulously cleaned, and every surface was shining and dusted – all of the hundreds of martyr icons as well. Most were stylized images, every fighter looking directly into the camera, and therefore looking one directly in the eye. In the glass casings mounted underneath the icons were various artifacts gathered from the deceased. Some of the items were pins, clothing items, flags, memoirs, letters, and personal trinkets and handicrafts, marked with labels detailing which martyr it belonged to (see photo 5.5).

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[174] I almost consistently use the *nom de guerre* of the martyrs, because that is the term that people themselves use in everyday life. Likewise, when I do not use the *nom de guerre* this reflects how people talk about the particular person or martyr in question.
[175] Available at: http://hezenparastin.info/eng/index.php/guencel-yazlar/1543-zeynep-kinaci-zilan

5.5 Apo and the Martyrs inside the Şehîdlik. My own image.

When the people in our group entered, the mood changed significantly. As the mood had been cheerful and celebratory before, when people entered, the atmosphere became hushed, and people moved slower and more controlled. Smaller groups formed, and meandered around the space pointing at various martyrs on the wall and having quiet discussions. Some groups recognized some of the martyrs as friends, friends of friends or even family members, and stopped to take composed pictures in front of the icons. While taking the picture there was no smiling, but rather an emulation of the expression of the martyr in the photo. The caretaker also strolled behind the various groups, commenting and intervening in the conversations, providing some background information on the specific martyrs, when he could. All in all, it was a profound atmosphere of respect and gravity that sifted in when we entered. When we exited, it took some time for our excited mood to return, only coming back in full on our way back to the city.

The point of providing this brief sketch of the architecture of the *şehîdlik* and the stories of the martyrs, is not so much meant to illustrate the cosmology of the movement as such. By providing this brief account, I have laid a foundation for discussing what this may tell us about the ideational organization of the movement, in all its particularity and (potential) cross-cultural commonality. It is, in other words, more of a spatial metaphor for the cosmology, which we can use to explore martyrdom further. Going on to provide an analysis of the architecture and the stories of the martyrs presented, may permit us to see the PKK's construction of martyrdom in relation to other groups in other places and times, and indeed 'martyrdom' as such, more in-depth.

Bridging the Living and the Dead

Martyrdom has been etymologically connected to the act of 'witnessing' (Cook, 2007), and is in its most vernacular sense taken as meaning 'dying for a cause.' However, as Nerina Weiss (2014), among others (see also Akkaya & Jongerden 2011b, Allen, 2006a), have shown, becoming recognized as a martyr demands a social transformation of the dead body. For a body to become a martyr, a community of people need to exercise certain rituals of transformation, veneration and appreciation on it, building on an ideational notion of consubstantiality (Weiss, 2014). Martyrdom is, thus, a socially constructed enterprise, which demands framing, 'encoding' and disseminating information and ideology about the dead body (Feldman, 1991). It is, in other words, a particular way of transferring the dead body back into the social, which is impossible to accomplish on a purely individual level.

As Bloch and Parry (1982) have remarked, how the dead (and perhaps especially martyrs) are socially re-integrated holds profound consequences for the constitution of society. The way in which death is re-integrated in the lives of the living has significant ramifications for how a social order is maintained, changed and reproduced (Bloch & Parry, 1982). As they argue, conceptualizations of the afterlife both legitimize and reveal much about what sorts of social circumstances and life trajectories are to be accepted by the living. Where the dead 'end up' may, for instance, be as ancestors who can be communicated with for guidance in practical

matters, as in the case of the Kwaio (Keesing, 1982), or as capricious spirits capable of wreaking havoc in personal affairs, as in the case of the Azande (Evans-Pritchard, 1976). But for both Kwaio and Azande the dead somehow instruct those that are non-dead on how they are to behave and relate to the world. Central to all social orders however, Bloch and Parry argue, is that this 'dealing with death' demands intermediary structures. As communication with the spirits demands consulting with a shaman in the Azande case, so do Christians often feel the need to pass through a priest and church in our pursuit of communion with the dead. The dead are never 'directly' accessible, so to speak; there needs to be discourse, ritual, ideology and institutions that facilitate an eventual proximity and influence. Equally so is the case with the martyrs, meaning that we may see martyrdom as a specific practice of mediation between the dead with the living.

The prerequisite of mediation may be clearly be seen in the Kurdish case, as exemplified in the architecture of the *şehîdlik*. Here, it is clear that the PKK's dead are 'institutionalized' as martyrs and the house as a memorial provides the mediation. And, in order to access or view the dead in the Qandil *şehîdlik*, first one needs to pass under the figure of Öcalan. Elevated beyond the martyrs, Öcalan holds the dead inside of himself; only by going into Öcalan may one may have access to the thousands of martyrs that he keeps. Similar to the appeasing rituals conducted with offerings to a shaman or priest, respect is due to Öcalan by, for instance, taking off one's shoes, keeping his domain clean, and not speaking out of turn. Indeed, befittingly, in addition to one of his sobriquets being *Bavê Şehîdên* ('the father of the martyrs'), one of the epithets Öcalan has in Turkish is *Önderlik*, quite literally translated to 'institution.' Like the priest or shaman, Öcalan forms an integral part of the institutional, ideological and ritual frame for accessing the dead.

Martyrial Hierarchy
However, framing the dead is never *just* undertaken in a neutral or egalitarian sense of levelling those not living, to a common plane. Rather, by mediating the relationship between the living and the dead, the adjudicating institutions simultaneously set up and legitimize social hierarchies within the lives of the living. This is why, Bloch and

Parry (1982) argue, death is at the heart of society (and vice versa). According to them, managing death corroborates setting up hierarchical social systems that order the world. Continuing on with the familiar comparison in Bloch and Parry's footsteps, we may see that as the church has been a key arbiter of how to deal with the dead, it has also been accorded a powerful capacity for constructing social hierarchies. Using death as an instrument, the church has been able to not only accord itself more power – stratifying the levels of access to, and understanding of, the afterlife – but has also persisted in shaping the order of the social world outside (Nietzsche, 1996). In our case of the PKK, we may perceive homologous hierarchies resulting from the arbitration of the relation to the dead. Such hierarchies are visible and tangibly present in the context of Öcalan, which demonstrates how the dead take on a hierarchical relationship to each other: As is apparent by the proximity to Öcalan and the size of the portraits, some martyrs are more elevated than others.

This is not, however, restricted to the martyrs closest to the image of Öcalan; all of the aforementioned 'major' martyrs played instrumental roles in party formation, gender reforms, military commandment, and dispersion of propaganda (Jongerden & Akkaya 2012b, 2011b) – exhibiting exceptional characteristics of 'resistance,' in PKK historiography at least. Compared to the stylized images on the inside, i.e. the normal *kadros* with their homogenous presentation, the images on the outside of the building were more 'personalized.' They were people who were not mere complete incarnations of 'the spirit of resistance' (Gunes, 2013), but extraordinary martyrs who had contributed to developing and changing the course of the struggle in and concrete ways. Put in structuralist notation, the above relation could be represented as inner:outer::anyomous:personalized, meaning that although their respective identities were dependent upon their mutual relation, the personalized martyrs on the outside marked a different temporal and ideological expression than the anonymous martyrs on the inside. Furthermore, since everyone who has been killed by the state is a martyr according to the PKK (Weiss, 2014), there was a massive echelon of martyrs at the bottom lacking representation and presence in the *şehîdlik* at all. Within this hierarchy, we could say by virtue of analogy, the guerilla caretaker of the memorial took on the role of a priest, unraveling for the attendants the mysteries and acts of the saints,

having devoted himself to the same clerical pursuits as the deceased. What the building and the caretaker taught the spectators, in other words – besides that martyrdom was a venerated endeavor – was that some martyrs were more important than others, and that indeed, some ways of living were more venerable than others.

Tiers of Martyrdom

We hence have tiers of martyrs combined within the 'whole' of Öcalan that we will have to analyze separately to better understand 'martyrdom' as such. As we have seen, martyrdom is not a category or state of being that can be considered a singular entity – even *within* a 'bounded' community (or 'whole') (Candea, 2007), such as the PKK. For the sake of argument (without claiming that this is exhaustive) we will therefore examine these three different tiers of martyrdom – i.e. the *fermandars*, the *kadros* and the people – and their various constitutions. Assuming that this provides a true 'photograph' of the order is, of course, fallacious. Martyrdom, like all other phenomena when examined closely, is an ambiguous, situated, and malleable entity which moves in time (Lecomte-Tilouine, 2006). As is perhaps underemphasized – particularly in the literature on 'Muslim terrorism' (see Andriolo, 2002) – martyrdom cannot necessarily be said to produce homogenous effects for its acolytes. To progress with a 'diachronic' analysis in the next chapter, however, it will benefit us to make some preliminary categories for analysis. When we have delineated 'ideal types' of the various forms of martyrdom in the PKK, we are better prepared for examining how these categories are negotiated, proponed, overturned, and complicated in the lived practice of the movement, which will be the topic of the coming chapter. Additionally, if the martyrs argued that some ways of living were more venerable than others, then examining the particular constitution of each tier of martyrdom will tell us more about what kinds of lives these venerable ones are.

The three martyrial categories we shall concern ourselves with are the 'unrepresented' martyrs; that is, the generic and 'eternal' mass of dead, who are martyrs by virtue of their murder at the hands of the state. The second category is the *kadros*, the guerilla soldiers represented inside the *Şehîdlik*. They are the martyrs who, as we shall argue, are martyrs by virtue of the gift of their self-sacrifice, even though they have been

killed by the state. Lastly, we shall examine the *fermandars*, the exceptional commanders who receive more personalized memorialization and representation. They are a sub-set of the *kadro* martyrs but have become remarkable by their exceptional deeds more than by merely their deaths. We might say they represent the inauguration of 'epochal' times in the movement.

Gift and Self-Sacrifice

As a host of authors have pointed out, the efficacy of the 'encouragement' – if we may call it that – the *şehîdlik* and the caretaker proffered, hinges upon the fact that the dead are not passive, remote figures.[176] Indeed, for dead and killed to be considered martyrs at all, the living need to construct an idea of something shared with the deceased; something they take part in together (Strenski, 2003). Only then does it become prudent to speak of a sacrifice committed on behalf of someone or something, which belies the definition of martyrdom.[177] If one accedes to the PKK gospel then, these dead people had *given* something to the onlookers. Crucially, as Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss (1964) have pointed out, believing that the dead have given something to the receivers, also incurs an obligation to return the gift. This point has also been taken up by Luc de Heusch, in a different guise, where he argues that sacrifice is "the repayment of an original, congenital gift" (de Heusch, 1985, p. 193),[178] and in fact goes so far as to argue that sacrifice is the act at the very constitution of the universe; "sacrifice creates (and maintains) world order, creating (and maintaining) proper differentiations" (de Heusch, 1985, p. 193).[179] By virtue of their gift, in other words,

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[176] There are so many authors who have documented the various lives of the dead that I will content myself by only citing a few works which deal with the dead in explicitly political setting – see, for instance, Kathrine Verdery (1999), Maurice Bloch (1971), Bruce Kapferer (2012). Finn Stepputat (2014b) also provides an overview of many of these works.

[177] What is shared in this context, we might say, is the belief that the PKK is pointing to, and gradually realizing, a freer middle-east, and a freer situation for the Kurds. This is debatable, and mostly posited for the sake of continuation. What this consubstantiality consists in, I believe, is a topic that cannot be exhaustively researched. For many, people the belief in the PKK's project does not hinge upon their support for the PKK – often, in my experience, it is taken for granted or felt as a duty. Regardless of what this consubstantiality consists in however, the fact remains that it *exists* as evidenced by its efficacy.

[178] Not to be conflated with 'sin,' as such.

[179] In his conclusion, de Heusch argues that world-generating should be seen as *essentially* departing from series of original sacrifices, that sacrifice is (at the center of the) world, so to speak – in "cosmogonic myths, human sacrifice bears a maximum load" (de Heusch, 1985, p. 206). These original sacrifices, he argues, provide the foundation for social hierarchy and organization, where kingship, for instance, becomes the meeting point for the two worlds, of which he or she is (to a lesser

the dead are in a position where they can often structure the order of the living through their *demands.* What is to be given (back) to the immaterial, 'spiritual' world, has a manifold of documented variations (see for instance Lambek, 2007; Bloch 1971), but in order to clarify the particular gift that martyrs in the PKK *kadros* offer, we start out with an analysis of sacrifice provided by Evans-Pritchard. This will also help us clarify *kadro* martyrdom as a particular modality of death-transference through self-sacrifice.

Edward Evans-Pritchard distinguishes between two different forms of sacrifice among the Nuer (Evans-Prichard 1954, 1953, 1951). The first, the "confirmatory sacrifice", he sees as the offering that changes the social status of the sacrificer and "the interaction of social groups," and the second he calls the "piacular type" of sacrifice, which is "concerned with the moral and physical welfare of the individual" (Evans-Pritchard, 1954: 21). In both cases, Evans-Pritchard argues, the Nuer see a sacrifice to God as needed. Puzzled, however, Evans-Pritchard rhetorically asks how this is possible? How is it possible to 'give' something to God, if everything already belongs to him? The answer he finds is that it is not about giving something to God – for like the God of the Old Testament, among the Nuer he is absent and cares not what mortals do – but it is rather about separating a part of oneself from one's person and removing it. In both cases, Evans-Pritchard argues, the Nuer transfer either their ailments or their undesired status to a surrogate who then becomes sacrificed and destroyed. In this way, they are not attempting to appease God in sacrifice, but rather *use* him to rid themselves of their negative conditions, often in fact caused by the presence of a divinity in the first place. What is to be sacrificed, the Nuer argue, is arbitrary, since it is the *intention* which is at the core of the sacrifice. Consequently, if one has not been honest in the sacrifice the negative condition will persist – or God might just ignore the appeal. It is, in other words, a way of using or petitioning God to rid oneself of what one finds unsatisfactory in oneself or in one's community.

Of course, Evans-Pritchard is more nuanced in his analysis than I am here, and the critiques lodged at his analyses have also been strong and poignant. With regards to nuance, Evan-Pritchard tells us that beneath the Nuer God there are a manifold of

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or greater degree) the *co-sovereign* of. Hence, he attempts to turn Frazer on his head, by arguing that sacred kings are not dying gods, but rather that dying gods are sacred kings.

different spirits who compete with each other, and indeed, the conclusion of his essay argues that sacrifice in Nuer society has so many different variations and applications that it is impossible to speak of a *singular* model for interpretation of sacrifice (Evans-Pritchard, 1954).[180] Nonetheless, the generality, and even factuality of Evans-Pritchard's description of sacrifice among the Nuer has been critically challenged by Luc de Heusch (1985), among others (Detienne & Vernant, 1989), who correctly points out that he smuggles in Judeo-Christian terminology and categories for analysis without being sensitive to the emic qualities of the local designations and taxonomies. While some anthropologists have found this (and later) critiques to disqualify the study of sacrifice as such, others have attempted to avoid the pitfalls by calling for a 'centripetal' understanding of sacrifice, locally determined (de Heusch, 1985), a 're-mythologization' to avoid positivist and teleological accounts (Millibank, Ward & Pickstock, 1999), and a closer attentiveness to 'the other side' of sacrifice (Mayblin & Course, 2014). I take the endeavor of examining the 'other side' of sacrifice – that is, examining what sacrifice achieves for those who sacrifice – as being a fruitful pursuit for understanding the construction of the cosmology of the PKK, and it is within this comparison of the 'other sides' of sacrifice that I find Evans-Pritchards' Nuer as assisting us in better understanding the PKK – not necessarily as indicative of representative truth in-and-of itself.

Using Evans-Pritchard's framework, then, we may clarify the nature of the PKK *kadro* martyrs' sacrificial gift. In our case the sacrifice is both 'piacular' and 'confirmatory' at the same time. For the *kadros,* the sacrificer and the victim are the same person. As the sacrificer makes his or her own body the sacrificial victim, upon his or her martyrdom, he or she is both sacrificing for "the moral and physical welfare of the individual" but at the same time also changing the "status and the social interaction between groups." The self-sacrificer is using the body, in other words, to shed the unwanted negative conditions – be that weakness, unfreedom, egoism, etc. – but at the same time becoming something categorically different, beyond the starting position as

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[180] The incredibly important *prophylactic sacrifice,* for instance, is not being touched upon here. Moreover, in many cases among the Nuer, sacrifice is performed to *free* the person from the influence of spirits, rather than get in contact with them, as we may arguably see the PKK's sacrifice as achieving. See de Heusch (1985, p. 149), for a critique and intra-African comparison.

a sacrificer. As the person is morally purified through the sacrifice, the person also transitions to a radically different social status, that is, the status of a martyr. What this means is that in the case of the PKK, as opposed to the Nuer (where moral purity in itself does nothing to change the social status of interceding groups or individuals), the sacrifice for moral purification is synonymous with a categorical change of social status.[181] To make this point convincingly, however, we first need to take a detour.

Self-Sacrifice and Martyrial Preparation

Before we can pursue this argument further, we might have to ask how can we call this self-sacrifice? Surely, the guerillas are killed by the state? To this we must respond that 'yes, they are killed by the state,' but we must point out that martyrdom it is not contingent upon who *kills*, but upon who *sacrifices*.[182] Oftentimes, martyrdom assumed as category which befalls the sacrificer-victim at the moment of physical annihilation; the victim achieves martyrdom at the moment at which his body is killed (for the sake of others in faith, etc.) (Verkaaik, 2004; Andriolo, 2002). While not entirely untrue in the Kurdish case, I think it would be better to examine the attainment

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[181] Much more could be said about the particular nature of sacrifice in the PKK in comparison to sacrificial practices in other parts of the world, and their particular constitution. De Heusch, in a suggestion for a *possible* outline for a general theory of sacrifice (that is not [tacitly] centered upon Judeo-Christianity and thinks exclusively in terms of rites of passage) argues that the main distinction to be drawn in sacrificial practices runs along the lines of whether the sacrifice is *disjunctive* or *conjunctive*. By *disjunctive*, de Heusch denominates sacrificial practices found among the Nuer, for among others, where sacrifices are means to separate the world of the men from the world of spirits and deities; the sacrifices the are intermediaries aimed at 're-constituting' the boundaries between the world of spirits and the world of men in order to keep them separate. *Conjunctive* sacrifice, on the other hand, is a means of 'interiorizing the spirit world,' or bringing the divine world to bear on the world of men. Among the *Lugbara*, for instance, sacrifice is committed to bring the spirits back into the worlds of men for various purposes, where they may partake in meals and be conferred with. The choice in sacrifice is, as he tritely puts it, either to eat a god or to be eaten by it (de Heusch, 1985, p. 211). In the case of the PKK, we could argue that the former is the case. Sacrifice works there as a means of *interiorizing* the divinity, or what de Heusch calls 'adoricism' as opposed to exorcism. Through sacrifice, the divine preceding martyrs 'take hold,' so to speak, of the victim – or in a different verbiage – the sacrifice-victim is stripped of all his or her other impurities until she is left with the pure spirit of the martyrs; a willed 'shedding of the moral coil' to join with the immortal and eternal spiritual martyrs. As runs through all of the PKK's activities, an attempted approximation of the martyrial way of living, i.e. achieving a closeness to the (the spirit of the) martyrs, is the centerpiece of structuring practice.

[182] As several authors have pointed out (Mayblin & Course, 2014; Detienne, 1989; de Heusch, 1985, to name a few), one must caution to not 'smuggle in' Judeo-Christian sentiments into analyses where they do not belong. I think this critique can be lodged at my previous analysis. Nonetheless, in addition to the PKK (arguably) having Judeo-Christian roots in their cosmology, the degree to which this is a Judeo-Christian system is not my concern, and I have employed the language and comparisons as a heuristic to better convey how I perceive the sacrificial dynamic and structure of the PKK's cosmology.

of martyrdom as a ritual endeavor, not as a sudden and instantaneous transformation. As the state attempts to eradicate expressions of an independent Kurdish identity and organization, how this death is treated is subject to an 'inversionary' process in the Kurdish movement (see chapter 3 and 4).[183] As de Heusch remarks in relation to the exceptionality of human sacrifice, "when the stakes of a sacrifice are of a collective and cosmological in nature (…) the preferential victim is none other than man himself" (1985, p. 207).

As Terry Eagleton (2018, p. 82) points out, and as anthropologists have documented meticulously, "death needs to be worked into something precious in order for it to become something that may become a gift of value." For a sacrifice to be sacrifice, as Hubert and Mauss (1964, p. 13) argued, the victim needs to be consecrated it needs to be worked into a vessel "imperious enough" to contain the weaknesses, strengths, ailments, and benefits that the group seeks to overturn – in short, strong enough to encapsulate whatever profane or sacred elements the community seeks to transmute or eradicate. Sacrificing without these preparations is not sacrifice, but merely killing, as Giorgio Agamben (1998) also remarks. Hence, martyrdom should be seen as a particular ritual process rather than a categorically achieved state upon the moment of death. As we may learn from Victor Turner in his discussion of the martyrdom of Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury, his death was merely a stage in the "ritual drama" that he himself well perceived (Turner, 1974). According to Turner, six years before his eventual death, Thomas Becket had already started enacting the 'root paradigm of the martyr entering upon the road to crucifixion,' paraphrasing Ronald Grimes' words (Grimes, 1985, p. 83). For Becket, the beginning of his martyrdom came already with his rupture with the King of England. This is analogous to how martyrdom unfolds in the PKK; the guerillas are in a sense already sacrificed before they are killed. Whereas the Turkish state might kill them, the resistance of the PKK consists in inverting the concept of killing itself, making it into a stage of pre-ordained, self-determined sacrifice.

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[183] A similar point has been made by Özsoy (2010).

Sacrificed into the Ranks of the *Kadro*

The sacrifice as a process rather than instant, I argue, takes place when the guerillas are sworn into the PKK. To be sworn into the PKK, one needs to have received education in the mountains for an extended period of time, normally half a year to a year,[184] which entails adapting to the PKK way of life. During this 'liminal phase,' as we may say with Turner (Turner, 1974), the normal cycle of the day becomes 'de-individualized,' new recruits following a common pattern of daily organization. Getting up with the sun, the recruits first do a couple hours of exercise, then eat, then go to several hours of ideological education – organized as a seminar where an instructor reads through and explains the five major works of Öcalan, then eat again, work out, prepare food for the coming day, and then study again with a bite to eat, going to bed with sun-down.[185] This is of course differently configured depending on the time of year, unit, and what tasks are needed to be done in terms of material preparation, but the point is that from sunrise to sunset life is organized as a collective cycle. After having learned both the ideology by heart, correct social practices, and how to conduct guerilla warfare, a final ceremony takes place, initiating them into the ranks of the *kadro*.[186]

First there is a public rehearsal of the different commands – including a pose of bowing to the martyrs – under the instruction of the unit's sub-commander. The sub-commander, after seeing the orders fulfilled successfully, goes to greet a committee, which includes the general commander and other leadership figures. The general commander examines the commands again, and gives a speech from which he re-

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[184] I heard both versions, but from most it seemed that it was a full year of training needed before one could be sworn in. This would entail the weapons training, the strategic and tactical training in the summer semester, and more ideological education in the winter, although the two overlapped and were not mutually exclusive.

[185] Interestingly, both for the fully initiated guerilla and for the liminal applicants, wild boar is permitted to be eaten, something which regular 'people' would be averse to ingesting due to Islamic eating customs. Although mostly related to me as arriving from necessity, talk of eating boar (in particular in the presence of civilians) was a much favored topic. The 'taboo,' so to speak, of eating boar was lifted for the guerilla and the applicants, while it still applied in large part to the civilian population. If a civilian were to eat boar or pork, it could easily, and possibly intuitively, be taken as a sign that this person had become more devoted to the PKK's secular ideology than before; if one were to eat pork it would easily be seen as an act taking place within or in relation to the PKK's dogma.

[186] See the link under for an instantiation of the same ceremony that I was shown on film by a guerilla soldier and told extensively about, but taking place in Syria. The Syrian were recently permitted to marry, however, and did not swear until their death – they were indeed more of a professional 'army' than a guerilla, although modeled on it; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IxQT-XDVU0Y

emphasizes the importance, history and necessity of the struggle. Starting with 'in the name of the *Şehîd* (…) academy we greet all the comrades,' the commander then briefly summarizes Abdullah Öcalan's project again, and re-iterates the values and commitments that the PKK incarnates. The speech ends with a remembrance of the martyrs (reciting 'martyrs never die') and repeating the slogan 'Long Live Leader Abdullah Öcalan' three times. When chanting the last slogans (which can to a certain degree vary, such as *Bê Serok Jiyan Nabe*, meaning 'Without the Leader [Apo] there is no Life'), the commander and the recruits clap synchronously and rhythmically at each other. The commander then goes to all the new recruits and shakes their hands, before they line up and swear into the guerilla. Three or four at a time, the recruits approach a table bedecked with a flag of the PKK-military unit they are joining, a book of Abdullah Öcalan, and a weapon (usually an AK-47). They lay one hand on the table and clench one hand to their heart and repeat after the commander that they will protect 'the people of the middle-east and the paradigm of a democratic society' until their death,[187] and swear on it three times by the martyrs and Abdullah Öcalan. After this completing this ceremony they receive their PKK 'passport,' thank the commanders, and pass through the lines of their already-sworn-in comrades, shaking all their hands, on the way back to their assigned place. After the ritual, a celebration is usually held where the new recruits dance various *govend* (the traditional Kurdish dance described in chapter 7), along with other, previously trained *kadros*. Upon its completion, they are considered fully trained *kadros*, who may be deployed on the front lines, and may therefore not marry, engage in sexual relations, reproduce, or leave the organization, and must surrender their family-given name in favor of *nom de guerre,* chosen from an assortment of 'acceptable' alternatives. Normally these names are taken from martyrs, already fallen – Mazlum, Egîd, Zilan or Berîtan are all popular – or they are taken from Kurdish words describing nature, such as *Bahoz* (storm), *Baran* (Rain), *Agir* (fire), *Brûsk* (lightning), and the like. Often times recruits take the name of a famous commander or a family member who was killed in the guerilla – or one name from each. They become 'clean,' or *paqîj*, as the guerilla call it. They are then expected to adhere to the ethos, language, and ideology of the PKK that the

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[187] 'The Democratic Society,' is the umbrella term used for the ideology delineated by Öcalan in his five prison books, which are now the curriculum for the guerilla and the project for which the PKK (along with its affiliates) say that they are fighting for.

learned until they complete their mission by dying, or, less likely, liberating Kurdistan.[188]

What we may see here is that by virtue of the initiation ritual, the new recruits have already 'entered upon the path' to martyrdom. After the ceremony has been completed, they have 'worked their lives' into something worthy of sacrifice, and have, in fact, already partially sacrificed it. In the liminal state, leading up to the ceremony, their personal 'attributes' are to a certain degree 'erased,' or stated differently, re-configured within a different whole. Many PKK-soldiers whom I spoke to thought of the guerilla as having become their family.[189] The rhythm of everyday life became collectively organized in relation to the disseminated ideology of Öcalan, who thought of the guerilla life as recapturing the traditional, and pure life of the Kurds before the advent of the state. Frivolous enjoyment such as television, excessive eating, or 'personal time,' were disavowed, as well as individual communication with the outside world. At the same time, while the distribution and completion of tasks were undertaken as a unit, what tasks was to be done was regulated by those who were the sworn-in commanders of the units, cementing a certain appreciation for hierarchy. Up until the initiation, as well as afterwards, the lives of the prospective *kadros* became re-constituted as collective property; personal reproduction became imagined as defined by and subsumed to collective reproduction. As Gunes argues then, when death eventually comes, their life was not for the state to take; their life had already been given (Gunes, 2013). Life as a personal virtue in itself had already been disavowed and abandoned, in favor of reconstructing a life aimed at death, as per the PKK's ideology. In this way, it is not truly the state that sacrifices, although it is the state that kills. The life has already been sacrificed, by being 'given up' to the party, prior to their murder. Hence, death is merely fulfilling the predestined fate chosen by the fighter when he decided to join the party. If we want to be dramatic, we may say

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[188] See Bargu (2014) for an examination of similar initiation rituals into death among Turkish Marxist revolutionaries embaking on death fasts.

[189] Although I unfortunately do not have the space to expand upon it here, this was also my experience from staying with the guerilla in the mountains as well. Dynamics often associated with family, such as older men teaching younger boys how to conduct themselves, some degree of physical contact, playfulness, games, and a taken-for-granted age hierarchy with respect to making tea, preparing food or cleaning the common spaces, was very much a part of the every-day social world. Additionally, when asking non-guerilla *Apoists,* they will all confess to considering the guerillas as parts of their family.

that when recruits become guerillas they are already partially dead; their life reconstructed as martyrs-in-waiting.

The Gift of Self-Sacrifice

So, what is, then, this gift that is given by their self-sacrifice and eventual martyrdom? - and how does this ritual of 'purity' intercede with changing social groups? Here we may again turn to the Nuer, for as Evans-Pritchard emphasizes, the essence of sacrifice is not so much concerned with the object of sacrifice as with the intention, and the *honesty* of this intention. Looking to the 'suicide letter' of the PKK's Zilan, who merely completed by her own means what everyone else was waiting for the state to do in theirs, we may find this clearly expressed. Towards the end of her letter, she states:

> I am convinced that to overcome my weaknesses and the realization of my freedom, this action has to be carried out. (…). My will to live is very strong. My desire is to have fulfilled life through a strong action. The reason for my actions is my love for human beings and for life![190]

In the first sentence, Zilan claims that this is the means for her to overcome her negative conditions, i.e. her weakness and lack of freedom, but in following paragraph she is also claiming that it is not only her who will benefit from this action; in fact, it is "human beings" in general. Indeed, as we quoted earlier, her motivation was also "to be a part of the total expression of the liberation struggle of our people." Hence, the *intention* of the self-sacrifice was both directed at her own personal moral purification, but at the same time – and more importantly – directed at incurring a change for 'our people.' As evidenced by the gravity of her sacrifice, the honesty of these intentions was hardly possible to doubt. The honesty and intention of helping others through oneself gives rise to the opportunity, within the 'frame' of Öcalan, for people to see the sacrificial actions as not only speaking for her as an individual, but to see them as speaking for them as well.

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[190] See footnote 158 for a link to the letter.

The Impossible Remuneration

And here we come to the crux of self-sacrifice and its relation to the generative gift. If one is to partake in the ideology that the self-sacrifice is not only done for oneself, but also on behalf of others, this means that the gift of self-sacrifice becomes impossible to remunerate. As Derrida argues, the gift of death 'explodes' the reciprocal relationship; the chain of exchange becomes irreversibly asymmetrical (Derrida, 1995). For Derrida, by virtue of the 'ontological' transformation of the sacrificer in self-sacrifice, there is no opportunity for even attempting to classify what sort of gift this is or how it may be recompensed – all that is known is that it was a total gift. This, as others have argued (Eagleton, 2018), produces a sort of allure on the part of the beneficiary of the sacrifice, a desire and drive to figure out what this gift is through own experience. It is generative in the sense that it produces a search to figure out what this (eternally elusive) gift is, and how it may be repaid: If someone sacrificed themselves for me, what in me is it that they sacrificed themselves for? How may I use myself to repay my benefactors in the same currency as they found valuable? How may I repay such a gift with a surplus (Mauss, 2002), so my benefactors will be contented? As de Heusch argues, sacrifice is never complete, it always leaves a void; "the annihilation of life nourishes a phantasmagoria of want" (de Heusch, 1985, p. 214). The way of exploring these questions is, of course, by exploring the ideology that framed this sacrifice as a gift in the first place (Lecomte-Tilouine, 2006), which in our case is Abdullah Öcalan. For if it is through Öcalan that others have sacrificed themselves for me, then in order to understand what in myself was worth sacrificing for, I must understand what Öcalan says about me.

This practice of charged, self-reflection is very much encouraged among the *kadro*, who spend a great deal of time not only reading Öcalan but martyr-memorial texts as well (among them Zilan's confessional), but it is also practiced to greater or lesser degrees by all who subscribe to 'Abdullah-Öcalan-ism' i.e. what I have called Apoism. The gift that the *kadros* have given, in other words, transverses their place in the hierarchy. Civilians feel just as much in debt to the martyrs as the *kadro*-martyrs-to-be do. However, before we can consider the ramifications of this in any practical manner – modes of veneration, etc. – which is the object of the next chapter, we first must

discuss how martyrdom is configured for those who haven't already ritually killed themselves, namely the people.

The 'Everyone' as Martyrs: Eternal Time and the Foundation for the Struggle

For 'the people' the nature of martyrdom is radically different. As Weiss (2014) points out, for the PKK, everyone who is killed in contention with the state becomes a martyr. Weiss focuses on the onerous process of claiming the body, since it has become a vehicle for contention between the movement and the state itself, and how the 'script' of reclaiming it supersedes the individual desires for burial and commemoration, and draws people into a pro-Kurdish political arena, willingly or not. However, 'everyone' is not a term elaborated much in her account – who is 'everyone'? And how does 'everyone' become a martyr? In what ways? This encourages closer examination, not least because the martyrdom of 'everyone' has a direct influence on the martyrdom of the *kadro*, and the martyrdom of the *fermandars*. They are, in a sense, the background from which the struggle receives power.

Interestingly, the 'everyone' is not present in the *Şehîdlik*. It is only the guerillas who have been killed by the state that have received images and icons, taken in under Öcalan. This does not mean that 'everyone' is not present, however. Paraphrasing de Saussure, we might say that the 'everyone' is there as the defining negative of what is (de Saussure, 2000). What I mean by this is that the *kadro* icons displayed in the *şehîdlik* would have no content unless they sprang from the unrepresented 'everyone,' the *kadros* becoming the 'parle' of the general everyone's 'langue.' This demands some elaboration, and we may again to look to the self-sacrifice of Zilan, the first suicide-bomber, to elaborate it.

The Unrepresented and their Purity

As she told us in her letter, her self-sacrifice was partially committed on behalf of 'our people,' for 'Kurdistan,' and for 'humanity.' She extends her reasoning for committing self-sacrifice beyond the confines of the *kadro* and sees herself as acting upon an obligation to an 'everyone.' Following her reasoning, we must therefore ask: why is 'everyone' a category worth sacrificing oneself for – especially since the 'everyone'

seems not to possess any ritually imbued characteristics? The answer, I believe is that 'the people' – whoever they might be – have already been vested with essential virtue. There are many ways in which this has been done,[191] but one of them is through the writings and teachings of Öcalan. In the literature obliged to be read by all *kadros*, Öcalan argues that 'the people' contain in themselves a 'natural affinity for democracy and peace' (Öcalan, 2011), and indeed that "democratic modernity, since the formation of official civilization, has always existed as counterpart in a dichotomy" (Öcalan, 2017 p. 103). The democratic modernity "signifies the system of universal history that is *outside* of the forces of tyranny and exploitation" (Öcalan 2017, p. 104, my italics). The other part of the dichotomy is the malicious myths and social systems imposed upon the people by state elites, capitalism and religious autocrats, and so on (Öcalan, 2017). The people's 'fall from grace,' in other words, lies not within the essential core of the people, according to Öcalan, but is rather something that has been imposed upon them, deluding the masses away from their 'natural' life. Despite their corruption, in other words, 'the people' are always already pure and consecrated.

This purity permits them to be sacrificed *for,* as Zilan intended, but also capacitates them to become martyrs *in their own right*. Since 'the people' are already consecrated and purified, it means that when they are killed, they become martyrs because they already stand for something beyond themselves. 'Everyone' can become martyrs, because they represent something pure and virtuous beyond themselves – be it Kurdishness, 'Humanity,' civilization, or democracy. By mere virtue of living, in other words, they incarnate the values that prepare them for martyrdom.

The Unjust Sacrifice

However, a crucial difference with the *kadros* is that the people are not *self*-sacrificers. When they are killed, they are at the same time sacrificed. Unlike the *kadros*, they have no life aimed at death, but rather live in a state of primordial purity. The resulting dynamic of martyrdom then, is radically different. When the state kills 'the people,' it is exerting violence upon the innocent. Here we may see an interesting inversion of the

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[191] It is often done, perhaps unsurprisingly, by fetishizing culture as an essential and stable trait of a people(s) (Kapferer 2012). This takes place through literature, handicrafts, art or language.

martyrdom of the *kadros*. While the *kadros'* life is essentially aimed at death after their initiation, already having relinquished life for life's sake and thereby becoming consecrated, it is not the same for 'the people.' Their sacralization lies precisely in living life. It is through living their 'natural' life that they are elevated beyond blame and accusation and become consecrated figures. When the state then murders these embodiments and representatives of those who live life for life, i.e. 'the people,' it is an act of injustice. One need only think of the mass-murder of the 'autochthonous' Kurdish village population taking place during the late 1980's and 90's in Turkish Kurdistan.[192] The same cannot be said for the guerilla, for they are already partially dead and *seek out* their martyrdom. The killing of a guerilla is not *unjust,* for killing (and being killed) is their purpose. As such, *injustice* does not result from killing guerilla, it results from killing 'the lamb,' 'the people' who have done nothing wrong, but are killed because (or despite) of it.

These two martyrdoms are nonetheless integrally linked. Without the innocence resulting from the sacrality of living life for life's sake, as the people are considered to do, there would be no impetus for living a life aimed at death, as the guerilla as supposed to do. Dying innocently creates the impetus for 'protection,' as a means of combating the injustice visited upon the blameless. Indeed, as the name of the PKK's guerilla unit (HPG) indicates, 'The People's Protection Units,' or *Hêzên Parastina Gêl* in Kurdish, and Öcalan emphasizes in all of his books, the guerilla are meant as forces for 'self-defense' (Öcalan, 2017, 2009, 2004). As such, we may say that martyrdom of the *kadros* is in some sense an attempt at substituting their death for the death of the people, serving as what Evans-Pritchard called a "prophylactic" sacrifice (Evans-Pritchard, 1954, p. 23). By relinquishing their life, as Zilan illustrates, the hope is that this may give a gift of life to 'the people.'

The Unrepresented as the Struggle's Perpetual Progenitors
However, the condition of injustice is not possible to remediate. Due to the polysemic nature of 'the people,' or 'everybody,' there is no particular group that is to be

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[192] I set autochthonous in quotation marks here because many Kurds took over villages from displaced and genocided Armenians in the beginning of the 20th century, not truly making the Kurds the 'earliest' inhabitants.

protected, and indeed no finality to the struggle. It generates an eternal time for the movement, since literally everyone killed in contention with the state has the capacity to become a martyr. And this does not indicate the 'everyone' killed by the state in recent years. In other martyr-memorial spaces, in particular in the diaspora (but within Kurdistan as well), it is not entirely uncommon to see images of Rosa Luxemburg, Che Guevara, as well as images of Ottoman Kurdish rebel leaders and local heroes, adorning movement spaces. Since Öcalan has argued that 'since the formation of official civilization' the people have existed as a counter-weight to tyranny, i.e. as an incarnation of 'democratic' purity, this entails that from Neolithic times until today,[193] everyone who has been killed in contention with the state has the capacity to be mobilized as a martyr. They all embodied some part of the universal humanity which struggled against, and was martyred by, the deceitful state. Hence, the 'the people as martyrs' forms a generic background, which can be mobilized in everyday life, without having particular denotative properties. It is the continuous weight of the injustice of history that is invoked when 'the people as martyrs' is called upon. It is the foundation for the martyrdom of the *kadros*, and the background from which the exceptional resistance may emerge.

The Martyrdom of the Fermandars: Exhibiting and Ushering in Epochal Times

Although *kadros* themselves, there are certain martyrs that seem to transcend their standard representation. As in the *şehîdlik*, these martyrs are given space for personalized expression. Both the *fermandars* Sakine Cansiz and Mahsum Korkmaz are presented with a different color palette, with images deviating from the face-to-face style of the images contained on the inside. While still occupying a role as a *kadro* – sworn members of the PKK whose life is aimed at death – these figures are both symbolically and literally lifted out of the generalized iconography. This prompts us to ask why they receive such special treatment? What makes these *kadros*, both symbolically and literally, exceptional – why are they lifted out?

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[193] Early Neolithic times is incidentally where the movement places its utopia; i.e. before state formation, before patriarchy, and before capitalism; in a state of 'natural' life and 'primitive socialism' (Öcalan, 2013).

The answer, I believe, comes from a closer examination of how time is demarcated within the movement. As 'the people' mark time eternal, or (almost) time 'immemorial,' the *fermandars* are elevated, because they mark time 'memorial,' so to speak. Although all *kadro* martyrs contribute to the movement of time, the exceptional martyrs mark and contain significant temporal events when the struggle changed course, progressed, or re-examined itself. Upon their deaths they become the embodiments of moments of transition. As the HPG recently published as a prelude to their "week of heroism" in March 2017, Mahsum Korkmaz (*nom de guerre* 'Egîd'):

> the great commander of the Great 15 August Leap, on the path of Leader Apo, is the greatest reason for the success of this resistance. Commander Egîd (…) has turned our people away from the brink of destruction. The spirit of Egîd (…) is today the exclusive guarantee of the freedom of our people in every corner of the country, especially in the cities of Şengal [Iraq], Rojava [Syria], and Amed [Turkey].[194]

As we can see here, '*Heval* Egîd' ('Comrade Egîd,' as he is known), is elevated because of his actions in starting the war with the Turkish state on the 15th of August, 1984. His actions incurred a 'great leap' for the movement, the ramifications of which can still be felt today all across Kurdistan – from Syria, to Iraq to Turkey. By attacking the state, in other words, (and then dying at the hands of it himself) he spurred Kurdish history into a new and different direction, into a new epoch. Interestingly, however, it was not merely his actions which produced this movement in time, but in fact *his being as an individual.* The movement of history was not only due to what he did, but due to *who he was*.

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[194] Retrieved from: http://www.hezenparastin.com/eng/index.php/anakarargah-alamalarinmenu-300/1620-we-celebrate-the-week-of-heroism-to-our-people-and-all-our-comrades-who-are-struggling-on-the-path

To elaborate on this, however, I think it best for us to briefly turn to the Maxmur camp in Iraqi Kurdistan for a moment. In 2016, I participated in one of the major festivals of the movement, namely celebration of the aforementioned 15th of August. All the residents in the camp passed into the festival grounds at the outskirts of the village where they were greeted by the nearby guerilla who had set up a stage. The stage was of course bedecked with pictures of Öcalan and Egîd, and the title banner over the center read: *Bi rûhê 15 tebaxê emê bi ser kevin,* meaning 'with the spirit of the 15th of August, we will be victorious.' Among the various cultural events displayed – recitations of poetry, skits, musical numbers and dance performances – the most impactful was a theater play devoted to *heval* Egîd. The guerilla actors chronicled Egîds life in the guerilla, up until his heroically framed martyrdom. Most striking was a scene where *heval* Egîd, supposedly in the winter in the mountains right before the attack, finds a young guerilla soldier sleeping and shivering from the cold. *Heval* Egîd then took off his jacket and laid it over the guerilla without him noticing. From where I was sitting, this made a few of the old members of the audience burst out in tears, and the person in the seat next to me said half-way to himself, and half-way to me, "that's how he was", while nodding solemnly. After the play had finished the crowed clapped enthusiastically, and chanted the common slogan *şehîd namirin,* meaning 'martyrs never die.'

What this indicated to me was that celebrating the beginning of the war was simultaneously celebrating *heval* Egîd as a person. Who *Heval* Egîd *was*, was central to the new epoch he had initiated. He marked not only the 'beginning of,' but also 'the reason *for* the beginning of.' His exceptional personality was in a sense pregnant with a new epoch and its complementary (reinforced) values. The values that he extolled, which were serially re-visited in the play, were attributed special significance. It was, for instance, not the common guerilla soldier who put his cloak around *heval* Egîd, but the other way around. It was he, as the play also indicated, who had to plan the action and to ruminate on the consequences for his comrades. Additionally, as we were informed in the play, he was a Turk, not even a 'natural' affinate of the Kurdish misery, who – which was explained in a monologue – had decided to devote himself

entirely to the struggle. Testifying to the greatness of his action, the actors told in detail about how they had been greeted in the village after they had assaulted the military outpost. Throughout the play, the actors repeatedly emphasized his exceptional strength, resolve, care, comradery and military prowess. He was, in a sense, attributed personal characteristics which would carry over into the new epoch that he had initiated. Although the values he exhibited were not new – some of the *fermandars'* values were novel – they were depicted as extra forceful within his personality. As such, the play was not only telling a story about *heval* Egîd, but also about the epoch and its values that we were all still living in.

5.6 The stage where the play about *heval* Egîd was performed. The text on the banner read, 'Long Live Leader Apo. Long live the Spirit of the 15th of August' (*Bijî Serok Apo, Bijî rûhê 15 Tebaxê* in Kurdish). My own image.

But here we must ask ourselves: if he carried the new epoch and its reinforced characteristics inside himself, in his living personality, why did he need to die before it could be remembered as such? Lambek, I believe sheds light on the matter (2007). Engaging with Hubert & Mauss, Michael Lambek asks, quite simply: what is the first gift? In his exploration of this question among the Sakalava, he observes that each year a 'new beginning' takes place. This beginning, he claims takes place with a sacrifice. After consulting with the spirits on whether it is permissible to start a new year, a bovine animal is sacrificed to the Queen, consulted with through a medium. However, the sacrifice of the bovine creature is, according to Lambek, a stand-in for the Queen herself, who sacrificed herself at the behest of a morally neutral diviner in order to permit the formation of the polity. Hence, "each sacrifice is a repetition and recognition of her original act" (Lambek, 2007, p. 26). The reason why this sacrifice is needed, Lambek argues, is that it confirms "the death of alternatives not taken," permitting the polity to re-confirm itself and 'begin again' (Lambek, 2007, p. 27). Sacrifice holds a privilege place here because, in some form, a sacrifice is always a finite act. As he argues: "once you have killed something there is literally 'no going back' for either victim or killer" (Lambek, 2007, p. 23). In this way, if we are to read him critically, we can see that Lambek provides an elaboration on Turner's 'ritual drama.' Lambek implies that due to the fissure sacrifice engenders, the script is, in a sense, never completed; the 'drama' is open but iterative – it never closes, but just begins again.

This holds value for our consideration of the necessity for Egîd to die to initiate his epoch. Since sacrifice signifies "the death of alternatives not taken" (Lambek, 2007, p. 27), it is upon his death that the values Egîd extolled in life may be transferred onto his legacy and be opened up for re-iteration. Before his death, for instance Egîd might have transgressed in some awful manner; abandoning the guerilla, having sex or drinking alcohol - acts which would, in part, have overturned his previously conducted heroic actions. By dying he foreclosed these opportunities. In his death the values he bespoke become completely totalized in his person, rendering an openness for his epoch to begin. After his death Egîd would be in no position to contest the values that

he had exhibited, or that others had attributed to him. When his life closed, in other words, its iteration could begin. Although Egîd, like the rest of his fellow *kadro*s was destined for death, his legacy as a person was not pre-destined; it was first upon his death that the 'epoch of Egîd' could begin.

Extrapolating from this, we therefore may say that for the *fermandars*, although they like the *kadros* engage in a form of self-sacrifice as martyrdom, they nonetheless also die in order for a new epoch to begin. They mark, in various ways (as we shall see in the coming chapters), iterative beginnings of various forms of the struggle. Echoing de Heusch, we might say that the *fermandars* compose a "series of sacrificial sequences that constitute so many energizing nuclei and essential stages in the complex unfolding of mythic events" (de Heusch, 1985, p. 126). Mazlum Doğan, as we shall see in chapter 7, marked the beginning of the paradigm for self-sacrifice, Haki Karer marked the 'internationalization' of the struggle, Sakine Cansiz marked both the 'gendering' of the resistance and the illegitimacy of *all* nation states, and more recently Arîn Mîrkan marked the turning point in the victory over ISIS. *Heval* Egîd, as all these other *fermandars*, upon his death both froze time in a person, and at the same time propelled time in a novel direction. The *fermandars'* martyrdom, in other words, generates a marked temporal movement of the struggle in relation to the eternal injustice testified to by the martyrdom of 'the people.'

Conclusion

This chapter has run quite close to claiming that 'everyone sacrifices themselves for everyone else' and that, by extension, 'everything' is sacrifice within the Kurdish revolution: The guerilla sacrifice themselves so the people may live, and when the people are sacrificed they generate the conditions for the sacrifice of the *fermandars*, who in turn, sacrifice themselves to show the guerillas the way. I have, in other words, created a nigh total system.

The condition for this system to function, however, is the role of Öcalan. Without Öcalan serving as the 'whole' through which the parts are given meaning, the sacrifices made would become void, or at least, significantly less powerful. As Öcalan

would be both the frame for understanding the sacrifice, and at the same time the impetus to commit it, without the ideology espoused and incarnated in the leader, it would cease to be generative as a revolutionary system. Sacrifices would be able to be made, but the cosmological generativity of it might be lacking; without Öcalan, I think it is safe to say, sacrifice would become an interpersonal commitment, and not an action moving the struggle in and into a spatio-temporal realm of alterity. There would be no potential for understanding martyrdom as an inversionary practice. Without Öcalan opening up the alterity through his writings, popular mythology, and folklore, the sacrifices would only pertain to 'this world,' to put it like that. Without the purity inscribed in 'the people' by Öcalan, and the protective role assigned to the guerilla by Öcalan, for instance, there would be no temporal demarcations for the *fermandars* to create, which again, rely on a reading of how the project is progressively aligning with the philosophy outlined by Öcalan. If Öcalan had not been both the personification and the frame of the ideology, the sacrificial 'tiers' would have collapsed, and rendered them potentially mere disjuncted practices, localized in various places, with little stringency or systematicity. We shall see this more clearly in chapter 7, but I must also caution against thinking this system as a true representation of how the struggle unfolds in practice, in time.

I think that we should return to our initial caveat, namely that this is a system which does not reflect (in its entirety) how martyrs are circulated in lived life. The analysis made here, however, was to underline the dynamics of the different forms of martyrdom(s) in the PKK's cosmology. We may, in fact, already now start pulling at its threads. For one, there is much traversing of the hierarchy that we have not dealt with. For instance, as we claimed that the *kadros* self-sacrifice takes place before the act of killing, we could often say that this is the same among the civilians. Mehmet Tunç, which we shall examine more closely in chapter 7, was a civilian who sacrificed himself prior to his murder by hiding in a basement he knew (for fairly certain) would be lit on fire. Indeed, he became a temporal marker like the *fermandars* himself, by virtue of this action – his martyrdom testifying to the spread of the PKK's ethos to the

people and the PKK's commitment to them.[195] Indeed, as testified to be the shape of the 'civilian' participation in many of the urban wars across Turkish Kurdistan in 2015-2016, the guerilla life as aimed toward death is very much emulated on the part of the popular resistance, as I mentioned in chapter 2. Likewise, we have treated Zilan's self-sacrifice as exemplary of the entire ethos of the *kadro* guerilla's life aimed at death, but she has in fact been elevated to a *fermandar* because of her actions. Perhaps we should have concerned ourselves with a fourth category: the people who *really* kill themselves. There are many things here that do not quite 'work,' and the categories are unstable and fluid. As Özsoy has pointed out, the dead may 'come loose' from their trappings (2013a, 2010), and wreak havoc in the lives of those who feel obliged or desire to venerate them.

Furthermore, the categories themselves, and how I have described their essential properties, may also be challenged. A short vignette will duly illustrate this. During my last visit to the city of Culemerg ('Hakkari' in Turkish and English) in Turkish Kurdistan close to the border of Iran and Iraq in 2016, I asked a friend of mine what he was planning to do now that the Kurdish uprising seemed to be failing. I thought it likely he would have reconsidered his commitment to the Kurdish struggle and the armed insurrectionary organization. He shrugged and said that now he had gotten married and landed the job as a doctor in the hospital, that he might focus on building a family. I asked him how many children he would like to have, as is conventional to do, and he responded aloof:

> Three. I want one to stay at home and take care of my wife and I when I get old, one to get educated and work, and one to give to the guerilla.

To me, this came as a surprise at the time. It was no wonder that he would continue to support the guerilla, but rather that he had such a clear, even nonchalant, attitude towards designating one of his children to the PKK.

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[195] One of the last interviews with him can be found at Kurdish Institute of Brussels' website: https://www.kurdishinstitute.be/en/the-death-of-mehmet-tunc-open-letter-to-the-european-parliament/

Given that being a guerilla means to a certain extent living as though one is dead – or more specifically, sacrificing oneself before one's death – one could question where this sacrificial process actually started. If my friend was already set upon 'giving' one of his children away to the guerilla, even before they were born,[196] and the essential guerilla trait is being already somehow dead, one could perhaps say that the sacrificial process starts already from birth. This harmonizes with the injunction Maya Mayblin & Magnus Course (2014) forward, namely that sacrifice should be considered a practice not only occurring in and being confined to ritual settings.[197] One could here even question whether sacrifice starts with the beginning of a human life, or whether it in fact is something else entirely; perhaps sacrifice could be seen a reproductive model onto itself that both predates and post-dates any given individual life trajectory. If a person is a sacrifice from the moment he or she is born until the day he or she dies, maybe sacrifice would be the wrong term for describing such a position in the first place?

Despite these (very real) challenges to the system I have outlined, I nonetheless claim that this taxonomy may be useful. By deconstructing this taxonomy in the following chapters, we will have a better understanding of why such denominators do not entirely work –which is a valuable insight in itself, I would say – but, at the same time, we will also be equipped with categories, that by virtue of their non-functioning, may assist in revealing how the movement 'moves' diachronically. We shall see more of the social, practical usage of these martyrs – albeit in a highly regulated environment – in the next chapter, where we examine the Maxmur refugee camp in Iraq, close to the Syrian border. There, as in Qandil, the *kadros* and the *kadro* martyrdom play a central role.

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[196] Which must be said to not be an uncommon experience. There is a common sentiment among Kurds in Turkish Kurdistan, at least closer to the Iraqi and Iranian border, that one is to give *at least* one child to the guerilla.

[197] We might also say that this challenges the Hubert & Mauss' (1964) assertion that sacrifice is a form of enclosed *rite de passage,* where the central culmination is the killing itself. Aside from this critique being offered by de Heusch (1985), we can also see this in the case of the PKK, where (given that we accept the aforementioned premise) the central act of the sacrifice is not the killing but the life-giving. Moreover, considering sacrifice as originating with the inception of life – or even before(!), also questions the pertinence of thinking sacrifice as being ritually confined spatio-temporally bounded in any clear sense.

6: The Double Position of Martyrs: Folding the Revolutionary World onto the Everyday in the Maxmur Refugee Camp

Introduction

In the middle of my fieldwork, after having been expelled from Turkish Kurdistan in 2016, I got acquainted with an *Apoist* peripheral who lived in Hewler ('Erbil' in English), the capital city of Iraqi Kurdistan. Originally from Turkish Kurdistan, Dicle had moved during the oil boom in pre-2008 to look for work. Working as a journalist, and feeling deeply associated with the *Apoist* movement, he was very excited about the Maxmur camp in Iraqi Kurdistan, and took every opportunity he could to go visit and make stories from there. Maxmur had long been a legendary place. I had first been told about it in Bakûr*,* where people would, often in couched terms, refer to it as a place where *Serok Apo's* system had been fully implemented. It was a place where guerilla and civilians lived side by side, working democratically in concert, constituting a microcosm for the later revolution in Rojava. It was, allegedly, there that one could experience what *Serok Apo's* 'new life' would entail and how it was to be lived, despite the torrid conditions it labored under.

Dicle shared this fascination and believed that Maxmur also showed how a truly equal and revolutionary life should be lived. In addition to the system being free and gender equal, he said, the people there were 'pure' and 'full of honor.' As I stayed with a friend of Dicle's in his house, and they were flat-mates, I got to see how he had decorated his room and how he spent the leisure time of his day. When he found out that I was doing research about the Apoist movement, he became very interested in sharing his take on the project. After our conversations had ended, he would often show me some of his hobbies and leisure time activities. He showed me that he had collected the 5 central volumes of Abdullah Öcalan's revolutionary theory in Kurdish, sitting in the shelf (mostly unread), as they were used as instruction for new PKK guerillas in the first year of their 'becoming part,' or *tevlîbûn* in Kurdish. On the walls of his room over the bed were several flags belonging to the armed divisions of the PKK, as well as a large flag of the pro-Kurdish HDP in Turkey. One of the flags

belonged to *YJA-star* (*Yekîneyên Jinan Azad ên Star* in Kurdish, or the 'Free Women's Units') the all-female guerilla division in the PKK, who were in many respects the founders of the now famous *YPJ* (*Yekîneyên Parastina Jinan*, or 'The Women's Protection Units')*,* in Syria, and the source of much pride in the movement. They were, as Öcalan called it, 'the free women,' who had returned to the 'natural' life of early Neolithic times, a roaming and nomadic life in the mountains, harkening back to an era when patriarchy had not yet been institutionalized in religion or the state. He also displayed his Kurdish suit in his room, hung neatly on a coat hanger on the closet, which he only used for special occasions. He had modeled it on the dress of the PKK guerilla: the cut, the fabric, the pockets, the sash, and the even color – an un-trained eye would not be able to see the difference. Whereas the Iraqi Kurdish military forces had moved away from the traditional garb as the inspiration for their uniforms – donning cameo and berets instead – the PKK had maintained this practice, and kept their dress similar to the traditional civilian clothes still used regularly in rural parts of Kurdistan.

The same clothes could also be recognized on the cover of a few of the CDs he had placed on his nightstand. The groups wearing the clothes were pro-PKK bands who, it was rumored, had themselves served in the PKK before being allowed to spread their art to the people, due to their musical talent. In a similar vein to the clothing, the Iraqi-Kurdish political music groups had emulated western marches and tattoos, while the PKK still retained a traditional flare. The different groups still played the traditional Kurdish instruments, also depicted on the covers, such as the *tembûr* (similar to a guitar), the *dap* (a handheld drum), and the *zurna* (a small piccolo flute), and sang songs in honor of Kurdistan, the PKK, and the revolution.

One time, I asked Dicle if he played anything himself. It turned out that playing the flute was a passion that Dicle nurtured. He was not very proficient, but very much appreciated showing what he had learned. On one occasion, he showed me a video that he had made for social media of him playing the flute. He had brought a friend up to a high mountain, and had him film Dicle from behind. Dicle changed from his normal clothes into the guerilla outfit from the closet, and sat himself on a rock with a glorious

view over Qandil or (perhaps Pencvin) mountain chain. After receiving the 'clear' signal from his friend he pretended to casually take his flute out of the green knapsack. He sat looking out over the view for a few seconds, before he started playing the melody to the song 'Berîtan,' slowly and emotionally.

'Berîtan'[198] was a song written by Sipan Xelat and, in addition to being hugely popular, was a song that held special significance in Iraqi Kurdistan. The story had it that during the war with Turkey and the KDP (among other parties) in 1992, a PKK-soldier named Berîtan had been surrounded on a hilltop by *peşmerga*.[199] She had told her unit to retreat while she held them off. After having spent all her bullets, instead of surrendering to the beckoning *peşmerga*, she lept from a cliff, killing herself upon impact. It was said that after this deed the *peşmerga* unit laid down their weapons and refused to continue to fight the PKK. Since then she had become a staple martyr for the movement, venerated in song, dance, literature and conversation. On the 25th of October every year, she is celebrated in the PKK newspapers *Berxwedan* and *Serxwebûn*, for instance, and there are held seminars several places in Kurdistan and the diaspora devoted to discussing her life. I will give a short extract from the lyrics in both Kurdish and English:

> *Tu tîroja rojhîlatî* / You are the sunrise's sunrays (May also be the sunray's of "the East")
> *Tu asitî û xebatî* / You are peace and work (work having political connotations)
> *Tu cenga warên welatî* (…)/ You are the battlefields in the homeland,
> *Tu tîroja Rojavayê,* / You are the sunset's sunrays (May also be the sunrays of "the West").
> *Tu cenga warên Kurdayê, (…)* / You are the battlefields on Kurdish lands
> *Tu sorgula Kurdistane,* / You are the rose of Kurdistan
> *Reberâ Kecên Cihanê,(…)* / Leader of the women/girls of the world,
> *Tu gel rakir serhildanê (…)* / You raised the people to an uprising

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[198]. The song can be found here; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7aFCiduX_0. After each line "Berîtan, Berîtan" is repeated.

[199] Literally 'towards death,' this was and is the name of the Iraqi Kurdish parties' armed forces. Prior to the no-fly zone in northern Iraq instituted in 1991, these forces operated much as guerillas, but with the autonomy and the emerging proto-state, they gradually became a professionalized army.

After Dicle had played the refrain to its end, he put down the flute and looked over the mountains again, contemplative, echoing the aesthetic of the PKK's bands' music videos, until he suddenly turned around and asked his friend to turn off the camera and let him see.

After the video was done, I was initially puzzled with why he showed me this. What was this video supposed to convey? How was I to interpret it? After ruminating on it a bit, without coming up with an answer, however, I thought that this music video might somehow shine a light on a general problematic inherent in the movement. I thought that this video, somehow, was an attempt by Dicle to show how close he was with the movement, the ideology and the martyrs, that this video was a token, or an attempt by Dicle, to situate himself in, or at least in relation to, the PKK's revolutionary mythology. This was, indeed, the question that really sat with me after having lived in Turkish Kurdistan: how could the revolutionary cosmology be folded onto the everyday? How could people 'take part' in this revolutionary mythology, and how could they see themselves as acting in and through it? It seemed like Dicle was grappling with these questions too, in his music video.

Martyrializing Maxmur: Creating Everyday Revolutionaries

I think that this question can be fortuitously explored by turning to the Maxmur camp. As the Maxmur camp in Iraqi Kurdistan was venerated as a lived instantiation of the utopian project of Abdullah Öcalan, it seemed accordingly that this would be the place in which the myth, or the revolutionary cosmology, was truly imbricated in everyday life. Rojava, or Syrian Kurdistan, would arguably have been a better place to explore it, but due to difficulties getting there (both with regards to safety, ethics, logistics, and so on), this was unfeasible. Moreover, as Rojava was truly a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic region, with a multitude of different people living according to vastly different traditions and belief systems, Maxmur might arguably also be seen as a 'purer' manifestation, where *everyone* who lived there was deeply subsumed in the

ideology.[200] Contrary to studying the 'new life' in the place where it was a profoundly experimental and emergent project (Öcalan 2017, 2016, 2011), in other words, I examined it in a place where it was already very much institutionalized and 'paradigmatic.' Although I spent less than 2 months 'living' in the camp, I tried to be as diligent as I could about gathering information quickly, and I became friends with several of the residents who I kept in touch with and could ask about things.

I suggest here, again, that the martyrs were the central agents in transforming the everyday into the revolutionary. Invoking or recalling the martyrs, often serve as means for transforming that which was mundane into an activity or discourse that was mythical and revolutionary, due to their peculiar position. This takes place both in institutional and personal settings. Both within ritual-democratic practices, and in causal life situations and interactions, the martyrs work as means for bridging the gap between the everyday and the revolutionary. I argue that the dynamics of transforming the everyday into the revolutionary takes place through the mediation of the martyrs, in other words – through recalling, using or employing their sacrifice. By the end of the chapter, I hope to convince you that the martyrs imbue life with its revolutionary quality.

A clarifying comment might be needed before we move on, however. If we posit that there is an 'everyday,' and that there is a 'revolutionary,' and that these two are separate categories, how can one switch between these two perspectives and 'modes of living'? How is it that a phenomenon can both be revolutionary and non-revolutionary at the same time? Bertelsen (2016) and Kapferer (2012) assist us in understanding this. They argue, in different ways, that neither history nor history's capacity for motivating action can be taken for granted. It is not enough that a historical event has taken place for it to mean something or motivate something in the present; it must be enacted, cathected and re-worked by living agents. For Kapferer, it is history's *mythical* transubstantiation which affords this capacity. As Kapferer states, lived history becomes a social force "where human beings recognize the argument of its mythic

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[200] I am aware that this is contrary to Öcalan's ideology, where, for instance, the multitudes of cultures is precisely the place in which the system is intended to thrive.

reality corresponding to their own personal constitutions" (Kapferer, 2012, p. 46).[201] If history is not considered simultaneously constituting and constituted by present social life, it can easily become 'just one goddamn thing after another,' covering rather than revealing its generation of action, reasoning, and legitimation of a social order (Kapferer, 2012; see also Kapferer's response to Jonathan Spencer, in Spencer, et. al, 1990). Kapferer, in other words, sees the contemporary social significance of the past as emerging primarily through its appropriation and re-signification in the present. In a similar vein, Bertelsen, when grappling with the history of Mozambique, coins the term 'a traditional field,' which for him denotes the vast 'time past' that can be brought into the present through various social devices (Bertelsen, 2016). As such, for both authors, history may be deemed a '*vessel*,' a vehicle ready to be filled, re-worked, actualized, and given emotional significance in situated contexts in lived people's lives. In this way, any innate qualities residing in things, people or memories past carry no significance unless they are 'actualized' in concrete lived situations. For Bertelsen and Kapferer, in other words, history can exist in two states at once – in limbo, so to speak – where the potency of history is only released when it is re-worked and actualized in the concrete present. The same, goes for revolution I would say, which, according to Georges Sorel (2004), is itself a generative myth.[202]

What this chapter can be seen as elaborating on, then, is the process by which myth or revolution is *brought into people's lives*. For although the abovementioned process delineates a general mechanism for 'mythologizing' life, it does not account for the site-specific means of imbrication or overlap, so to speak. If we are to believe Alain Badiou, for instance, revolutionary activity designates an intimacy with a revolutionary idea, making a transcendental value immanent to how one lives one's

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[201] The usage of myth as a means for explaining the potency and force of a social movement has a long history that will not be touched upon extensively here. From George Sorel (2004), to Carl Schmitt (McCormick, 1997), to Franz Fanon (2004), myth has held a prominent place in theories of war and revolution. In psychoanalysis a similar term used to describe the processes of emotional and 'libidinal' investment in the world, namely 'cathexis' (Lyotard, 2004; Freud, 1995).

[202] Myth is in no way intended as a disparaging term, but rather as a thought-pattern that is emotionally and practically effectuating. Myth can possibly fortuitously be opposed to 'discourse,' which often connotes a circulation of ideas and text, without 'real-world' ramifications in terms of action and change (at least pre-Foucault).

life, and supersede other values (Badiou, 2015, 2012).[203] According to Alain Badiou, during the French revolution of 1789, for instance, the values of "freedom, fraternity, equality" incurred a fidelity among those who had witnessed and participated in the revolution (Badiou, 2017, p. 16); these values were 'taken in' and they re-organized peoples' practice and self-perception. Freedom, fraternity and equality became the central values through which one measured oneself and others; they were made supreme and immanent in the lives lived by the revolutionaries in the "new debut of the human species" (Badiou, 2017, p. 16). Following Badiou's perspective, this chapter will concern itself with how this takes place: How is the revolution made 'immanent'? What are the site-specific mechanisms for bringing the revolutionary/mythological world to bear on the quotidian? Indeed, how is Öcalan's 'new life' realized, what characterizes it, and what does it look like?[204] Bringing Badiou into the equation, the aforementioned question for the chapter can be rephrased as attempting to chart the topology of the "where" in Kapferer's quote "where human beings recognize the argument of its mythic reality corresponding to their own personal constitutions"; *where* does lived history turn into a revolutionary myth, significant to the people engaged in concrete situations? What are the patterns and dynamics of its transformation? As we have argued that the PKK's cosmology is generated from an 'inversion of violence,' exploring how this cosmology is attached to everyday life is of central importance.[205]

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[203] Which is of course more complex than described here. For Badiou a revolutionary event also involves a subtraction from the world, i.e. a movement through a negativity previously unincorporated in the 'One,' through which a new 'One' may emerge (Badiou, 2012, 2002).

[204] This might sound like a very 'pro-PKK' line of questioning, but it is not intended in this way. My aim is not to say anything about the quality of the 'new life,' or prove that it is a new life in the way that Öcalan described. Rather, since it was seen as an instantiation of the new life by many Apoists, as Dicle testified to, my line of questioning is aimed at interrogating what this new life *is,* as well as the dynamics of its formation. I do, however, set Öcalan's prescript of merging the people and the guerilla as a condition for the new life as point of departure, since this was a part of the reason why it was perceived by Apoists as being a new life in the first place. Within this, my attention is directed towards *how* this new life is achieved, regardless of whether it works in the way that Öcalan prescribed. As an aside, I also believe that my contention that the new man is actually a martyrial man, and that the order of the new life is the order of the sehidlik, would be quite contested among the Apoist community. I do not think they would conceive of the revolution as being contingent upon the deployment of myth, nor that they would emphasize the role of the martyrs in achieving it as much, or in the same way, that I am arguing here.

[205] I am also aware that I am conflating cosmology with myth here, but, as I see it, myths are the central components of cosmology – the 'periodic elements' so to speak – that together (working as an irreducible whole) form cosmology. Myths may be seen as the central constituent elements of cosmology which gives cosmology its effectuating force (Rio & Erikesen, 2014).

It should be specified here that although I have said I will examine this revolutionary conversion in both 'ritual' and 'non-ritual' spaces in the Maxmur camp, I do not intend to posit a strict separation between the two. I do not consider the ritual and the non-ritual as being entirely distinctive spaces; both are, as I see it, integral to everyday life.[206] I do not intend to argue that the ritual spaces are divorced from the everyday – to the contrary, the use of ritual spaces, such as the *şehîdlik,* are very much a part of how the routines of everyday life are structured. In this way, the places where I shall conduct my analysis could be re-dubbed the 'ceremonial' and 'unceremonial' spaces of the movement, but for the sake of emphasis on where social norms and rules are more important, I will retain the verbiage of ritual and non-ritual when considering the places of revolutionary transformation.

In terms of structure, I first provide a general outline of the formal and informal social structures of the camp, before I move into describing more in-depth the central symbolic and social locus of the camp, namely the *şehîdlik*. Much like in Qandil, this was the most 'sacred' place in the camp, where major decisions and rituals were to be executed. Taking the *şehîdlik* as a point of departure, I shall examine its role in bridging the myth with the everyday, and once again suggest that this has to do with the particular role of the martyrs. We shall see that the martyrs occupy a double position, both as family members and as immaculate incarnations of ideology, which serve to bring the guerilla and the family into the common mythic, revolutionary space, which Öcalan dubbed 'the new life.' From this assertion we shall chart what consequences this has for the community in terms of self-perception, democratic process, individual valuation, and election of leadership, i.e. the process of creating Öcalan's 'new man' who is to thrive in the 'new life.' I conclude that the martyrs encourage residents to 'become martyrial' in their own lives, and that this dynamic underpins the discernment and legitimation of hierarchies in the camp, as well as the

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[206] This, of course, depends entirely on what definition one employs for 'ritual'. One may, with Erving Goffman (1967), think of ritual as a constant feature of interaction, for instance, regardless of particular context, and regardless of what categorical change in status, community, and hierarchy it achieves. In this perspective, the entirety of the life in Maxmur could be thought of as a ritual world – which I would not disagree with. As a heuristic, however, I will use denominate ritual as a popular event where the community relates to itself as a community and achieves some form of transformation or movement – which, again, is not to say that it is not a part of the everyday.

generally valorized mode of living there. As such, I claim that the order of the 'new life' is actually is the order of the *şehîdlik,* and that the 'new man' is a martyrial man. Taking Mayblin & Course's intervention seriously however (Mayblin & Course, 2014), I shall attempt to chart how this self-sacrificing ethos is not only present in ritual spaces and structures, but also how this is more generally found in non-ritual social life (both of which are, of course, part of the everyday). Here we turn to a few select episodes that illustrate the everyday-mythical transformation taking place outside of ceremony, but also illustrate some of the ambiguities and problematics inherent in this process. With regards to Dicle and what I think he was doing when he showed me the video, I shall return to him at the end of the chapter and attempt to explain how I saw his gesture after having ruminated on this phenomenon writ-large in the Maxmur camp.

The Maxmur Camp: The New Life Incarnate

The Maxmur camp in Iraqi Kurdistan (formally named *Wargeha Şehîd Rustem Cudî* in Kurdish, or, 'the camp of the martyr Rustem Cudî') was,[207] as I have said, a legendary place. It was a place that was conceived of as cut off from the rest of the world, a place where the utopian system of Abdullah Öcalan had been fully implemented: a sort of microcosm of the revolution writ-large.[208] This autonomous capacity was founded on the camp's refusal to integrate with the rest of the Iraqi-Kurdish governance structure. Initially founded by approximately 15 000 refugees from the Culemerg and Sirnax regions in Turkey during the brutal 1990's,[209] they had been shifted around and

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[207] A *nom de guerre* for an important commander in the PKK who elaborate Öcalan's system in great detail concerning the role of ideology and guerilla warfare (Cudî, 2012), his title is nonetheless interesting in a cosmological lens. Rustem is, according to the 10th century Iranian poet Ferdowsi, a Persian great hero who rebelled against a mythical ruler and his 'demonic powers' but has been appropriated as a *Kurdish* hero in Kurdish folklore (allegedly through a linguistic mis-interpretation) (Izady, 2009). Cudî denominates the Cudî mountain around which the city of *Culemerg* (or *Hakkari* in Turkish) has been built, on the border to Iraqi Kurdistan, in the Qandil mountain range, part of the Taurus mountains. Hakkari was also one of the oldest and most resilient Kurdish emirates during the Ottoman empire. The *nom de guerre* in other words, harkens back to both a mythological time of the Kurds, as warrior-heroes, and at the same time connects the name with a similarly mythological territory in the 'heart' of Kurdistan.

[208] This position of Maxmur has been related to me throughout my fieldwork, and there is no available academic literature on the camp and its structures. I also call it Maxmur and not *Wargeha Şehîd Rustem Cudî* because this was the colloquial term among my interlocutors.

[209] Depending on who one spoke to, one would receive different estimations ranging from 13 000 to 20 000.

terrorized by Turkish state incursions, as well as Iraqi and Iraqi-Kurdish forces, before finally being settled in a place which Saddam Hussein purportedly described as a location where 'nothing will grow, and they will inevitably die in the heat.' Despite the location, and the difficulties with accessing the Iraqi-Kurdish labor market, identification documents, and inconsistent international aid, the camp has subsisted for thirty odd years, protected by its self-defense units, and later a contingent of PKK-guerillas. In fact, many of the military leaders that assisted in constructing the social system in Northern Syria had spent a prolonged time in the camp studying the social architecture.

6.1 The Maxmur refugee camp in the 90's, before it was resettled in its current location close to Mosul.[210]

Continuously a thorn in the side of the Iraqi Kurdish parties as well the state, the camp gradually became a central hub for PKK activity in Iraq. Due to its proximity to Syria, as well as to the mountains of Qandil, it became a transit point for guerillas who were re-assigned. Additionally, with the advent of the war (or revolutionary struggle) in

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[210] Image received from and reproduced with the permission of the camp's male general co-leader.

Syria, Maxmur became an even more strategic site for the movement. Guerillas could travel from Maxmur with relative ease from Şengal, Qamislo and through Mosul. In 2014, the camp was taken by ISIS. At the time, no civilian casualties were suffered (as far as I know), since the residents pulled out of the camp in time. According to the residents, however, despite their pleas to the Iraqi-Kurdish *peşmerga* forces, they were not given any assistance in defending the camp prior to the attack or re-taking it after. According to the residents, the PKK stepped in, and in a matter of days re-took the camp, which ISIS had booby-trapped. In the process of re-taking it, which was not a 'major' battle, four guerillas lost their lives. These guerillas gave name to a few of the central streets in Maxhmur and two of the children's schools.[211] After the guerilla had taken the camp back, the PKK established a permanent camp in the adjacent hill, in accordance with the wishes of the residents, where they provided security and weapons-training for the inhabitants. Moreover, older PKK guerillas who were no longer in shape to fight were given lodging and space in the camp as well (although, as I have said, most of the residents had deep personal and familial connections to the PKK prior to ISIS' incursion).

It was already in 2005, however, that the camp started re-organizing according to the revolutionary structure of Abdullah Öcalan, according to the residents. This was during the time when the Kurdish institutional structures in Turkey and the diaspora started to grapple with the implementation of the utopian system Öcalan was outlining in his prison writings (Öcalan 2017, 2009; Leezenberg 2016a). Even though the political line of the PKK had softened prior to this (Akkaya & Jongerden, 2011a), moving away from the ethnic socialist nation-state ideal, the new writings of Öcalan seemed to point in a different direction. Inspired in part by the American communalist Murray Bookchin (Leezenberg, 2016a),[212] Öcalan argued that the nation state should be seen as a hindrance to freedom and democracy rather than its protector. The state,

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[211] All the streets in Maxmur that were streets and not alleys were named after martyrs.

[212] One should, however, be careful with over-emphasizing the importance of Bookchin's thinking for Öcalan, I believe. In addition to sublating certain Eurocentric notions that such a system would need a European impulse to develop, it also assumes the precedence of abstract ideas over a dynamic merging of governance systems with local traditions and cultures. To cite Luc de Heusch in relation to sacred kingship structures in a different context, "it is certainly not Islam which introduced such a mythic schema on the banks of the Niger" (de Heusch 1985, p. 199); likewise, one could say in a similarly poetic manner that it was certainly not Bookchin which introduced such a mythic schema to the banks of the Euphrates.

he claimed, was in fact the institutionalization of un-natural hierarchies, building upon the patriarchal repression of women (Öcalan, 2017). Patriarchy, and later the state, had 'masked' itself through religion and aristocracy, creating an ideological façade that perpetuated the hierarchized social structure (Öcalan, 2013, 2011). In its stead, and in order to return to the natural order of society, Öcalan argued that the movement should organize itself through de-centralized federal structures, which should promote direct democracy as the means for decision-making. Central to the project was the judicial foundation of human rights, and in particular the cultural and religious rights of minorities, women and youth. On this foundation, Öcalan envisioned different political parties competing and co-operating to influence the policies and ideological directions of a given level within the confederacy. To maintain and give life to this system, 'the new life,' he argued that it was necessary to create a 'new man,' namely a human being that was rid of patriarchy and individualist ethics. The 'new man' needed to be a person who could live, work, and function communally, according to the aforementioned ideological and ethical principles, but also defend himself or herself and his or her community autonomously (Öcalan, 2009).

The 'new man' was, in other words, a fusion of the people and the guerilla; a 'place' in which the ideals incarnated in the guerilla were assimilated in the people to such a degree that they became inseparable. Although beyond the horizon of what was immediately achievable, Öcalan argued that the revolution would be consummated when an *aufhebung* of the dialectic between the guerilla and the people had taken place; it would be accomplished with the arrival of a time and place where the values of the people and the values of the guerilla became indistinguishable from each other (Öcalan, 2009). [213] Öcalan details this in several of his works, but perhaps most thoroughly in *Şoreşa Civakî û Jîyana Nû* (2009), 'The revolution of society and the

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[213] As Öcalan responds to the question of 'when can I say I am a free person?': "Freedom is doing revolutionary work [*xebat*]" (Öcalan, 2009, p. 109, my translation). He goes on to argue that work is tied to war, as work is tied to freedom, and that there is no difference between whether you do work in politics or war or in other fields. More interestingly he argues that one can say one is free, if, when in the struggle for freedom, one proves in oneself in one's practical revolutionary work, and there is a development of one's value as a human. In Kurdish: *Jin dibe zilam dibe ger yek dikare bibêje "ez azad im" di şerê azad de ango di qada bîrdozî, leşkerî û siyasî de bi xebatên pratîkî yên xwe ve xwe ispat kiribe û bi pêş xistibe nirxekî wî yê mirovî heye*.

new life',[214] and *Parastina Gelekî* (2004), 'The protection of a people'. In the latter work he states explicitly: "Globalism, which offers the free market as a fetishism, presenting itself to us as the only alternative, is truly a thief and a destroyer of the past. We will, based on this knowledge, still exemplify our democratic and ecological alternative, and wave our flag of the new life in the air," a statement which the rest of the work seeks to elaborate the content of (Öcalan, 2004, p. 13).[215] With regards to the guerilla specifically, Öcalan argued the ideal strived for is:

> "rather than a military stance or an armed organization what we mean [when we talk about self-defense] is the organization of society to protect itself in every sphere, and for it to struggle based on these organizations." (Öcalan, 2016, p. 55)

> "Self-defense does not only stipulate an armed structure; although it does not reject the use of force when necessary, it can not be viewed only as an armed structure. It represents the organization of society in all spheres and in its relation to its own identity and life (…) Values that used to belong to the people and the country but were usurped by the colonialist powers are retrieved and returned to social values in an act of self-defense." (Öcalan, 2016, p. 56).

For Öcalan, this would entail that in the new life, the new man is created as a sort of 'total' human being who can defend himself or herself independently, needs not to be told how to be revolutionary, re-lives the glory days of early Neolithic society, and is deeply immersed in the democratic, ecological, and gender-equal society as found in peoples' nature. The new man, in short, would incarnate both the values inherent in the people and the values inherent in the guerilla, becoming a person who is the totality of

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[214] In the book there is an own sectioned devoted to precisely this topic, called *Divê em bi Şervanên Azadîyê re ji nû ve Jîyanê Biafirînin,* meaning 'We should with the revolutionary fighters again [anew] create life [the life]' (Öcalan, 2009, p. 331).

[215] In Kurdish: *Globalîzm, piyasa serbest a mal ku wek fetîşîzmekê pêşkêş dike, mîna alternatîfê bi tenê dixemilîne û datîne pêşiya me, ya rastîn bi vê yekê, dizek û desteserkerê berê ye. Emê jî bi vê zanebûnê, alternatîfa xwe ya demokratîk û ekolojîk hê jî rave bikin û ala jiyana xwe ya nû li ba bikin.* My translation.

the revolutionary system presently divided.[216] The current division of labor, with the people being guided by the guerilla to re-discover the true nature of society, and being protected by the guerilla in the process of doing so, needed to be abolished in favor of a subject who possessed these abilities autonomously in order for the new life to arrive, Öcalan argued.

In practical terms, implementing this new ideological system threw the movement into disarray (Leezenberg, 2016). The examination of this project among the leadership of the movement started with a conference in Amed in 2005, where the ideological project was attempted to be translated into a schema for practice (Jongerden, 2016b; Akkaya & Jongerden 2012a).[217] No longer were the people and the guerilla to be seen as separate entities working in tandem, but needed rather to merge into one cohesive and revolutionary unit (Öcalan, 2004). What gradually emerged in practice was the prescription that supporters should construct councils, co-operatives, interest-groups, and self-defense committees at different levels in their communities. In Turkish Kurdistan, erudite members, i.e. members who had either had a part in practically adapting the system, or people who had been educated in it, traveled around to communities that were sympathetic and attempted to engage the population in constructing these organizations (see chapter 8, for a description in Wan). In Maxmur it was no different. Considering how intimately connected the camp was with the PKK (even at an early stage), the small number of people, and the lack of constant state repression, the system was rather quickly implemented there. It had now been up and running for approximately 10 years, and, according to all the residents (although it is doubtful whether they would express themselves otherwise), it all worked better than it did before.

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[216] Interestingly, but perhaps not relevant, a phrase often offered in revolutionary self-criticism or criticism of others is *kêmasî,* which very literally translated means 'lack' or 'short-coming', possibly indicated that weakness stems from being unable to incorporate all the correct elements within one's person.

[217] This narrative is also part of the movement's own historiography, and was related to me multiple times.

6.2 An early political assembly in Maxmur before Öcalan's new system had been institutionalized.[218]

The 'complete' implementation of this utopian system in Maxmur was one of the main reasons for its legendary status. In addition, the idea of living side-by-side by the guerilla in an organic relationship was also very much appealing to Apoists in many different places. At the same time, however, I claim that for both the functioning of the camp, and indeed for the very definition of what made this camp exceptional and exemplary, a model for the 'new life,' was the role of the martyrs in structuring social relations. For, as we have seen in the previous chapter, lieu of becoming guerilla themselves, the best way for the people to become guerillas was by taking on the values espoused by the best of the guerillas, namely the *kadro* martyrs. As I see it, it was through the martyrs that the guerilla and the people could become one, or 'unified in purpose and constitution,' as per Öcalan's directives (Öcalan, 2016, 2009, 2004). The proximity achieved through the mediation of the martyrs was what made the camp such a stellar example of the 'new life' in the Apoist imaginary. We have alluded to this already with the name of the camp being taken from a martyr and schools and

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[218] Image received from, reproduced with the permission of, the camp's male general co-leader.

roads being named after them, but as we shall see presently, their role was also more strongly practically and socially imbricated in everyday life and its structures. But I am getting ahead of myself. We need to take a closer look at the functioning of the camp's social structures to make this argument convincingly.

Social Structures of the Camp

Formally, the Maxmur camp was organized through an aggregated system of councils and committees. Informally, there were of course other social structures operating, which were at least just as strong, and I think better to start with.

In addition to the formal electoral bodies, there was a strong community interlinkage among the various families and residents. First and foremost, most of the refugees who had come from Turkish Kurdistan's Sirnax and Culemerg in the 1990's belonged to the Goyî tribe, which was still very much a "corporate" unit in Sirnax in some respects when I was there in 2015 (see also Barth 1953, p. 23). Although not generally approved of – since tribes were seen as a potentially reactionary mode of social organization – conversations would nonetheless sometimes revolve around which blood-relations one had where, both in the guerilla and in the civilian structures of Turkish Kurdistan.[219] People would often compare different tribes, in a semi-humorous way, with regards to how 'good' they were, i.e. how close the tribe in question was with the PKK.

As Fredrik Barth (1953) and Edmund Leach (1940) remarked in their ethnographies of Kurdish social organization (conducted only a few dozen kilometers from the camp), due to the endogamous character of the Kurdish marriage patterns, there seemed to be a strong overlap between village loyalties and kinship loyalties. By practicing comparatively strict FaBrDa marriages, this often ensured that an entire village would be composed of a singular lineage. Even though Marshall Sahlins has questioned whether such 'kinship' relations should hold priority in considering the means for collective mobilization and cohesion (or, what Barth calls 'corporative action') – and

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[219] There was of course other tribes and non-tribal Kurds represented there as well, such as the *Gewdan* tribe, the *Herkî* and the *Pinyaniş,* but although I do not have numbers on this, I would venture to say that most of the residents belonged to the *Goyi.*

rather arguing that kinship structures are always partially *invented* in relation to the continuation of social reproduction (Sahlins, 2013) – Maxmur was both deeply territorially and familially intertwined, irrespective of whether village produces kinship or vice versa.[220] Regardless of which degree this was dependent upon specific marriage patterns, determined by actual lineage, or indeed considered as an impetus for political action, in other words, the residents considered themselves 'family' in some register of denomination, and related to each other in socially responsible and 'politically' cohesive ways.

This was apparent in how common it was that people would merely drop by for dinner at whichever house was the closest.[221] Food rituals were not confined to close family, or even 'real' bloodline family at all – guerillas would for instance happily come down from their posting when they had the opportunity and join in on the meals in the guest house with local residents and visitors. Oftentimes, when I was walking around with a comrade, we would just pop into a house to eat, when it was dinner time. Terms for guerillas visiting were often *kur, keç* or *pismam* – 'son,' 'daughter,' and 'cousin' respectively – and would be used without hesitation by local inhabitants, in addition to the normal *heval,* or 'comrade.' In most of the houses that I visited in the camp, (approximately twenty or so over the course of my stay), images of deceased family-related martyrs decorated the interior, alongside images of martyrs and commanders the given family was not related to. Likewise, if permitted by the security council, guerillas and youth would play soccer or volleyball with each other in the evening,[222] where, as far as I could interpret it, the guerillas were seen as 'big brothers' by the youth playing, instructing them on how to play tactically, kick correctly, etc.

Similarly, watching TV (that is, watching the PKK and affiliates' channels), was also a familial-communal activity in the evening. As the day would start pretty much with

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[220] For a relatively contemporary assessment of the configuration tribal organization in the Culemerg area, see Lale Yalçin-Heckmann (1991).
[221] There were of course other rituals and indications of how the village saw itself as a 'family,' or at least as a cohesive 'corporate unit,' such as the amount of people that mobilized for funerals, cultural events, festivals, demonstrations and the like.
[222] Abdullah Öcalan was apparently very much a volleyball player and encouraged sporting events as a part of the daily routine. Aliza Marcus has written about this (Marcus, 2007), but it was also more generally just common knowledge in the movement.

the sunrise for all the residents, the common work-day cycle would inevitably lead to large conglomerations of people gathering around one of the sparse TVs in peoples' houses or in the guest house when the sun had gone down and the day was finished, where they would be sitting for a few hours drinking tea and chatting. In addition to there being relatively few TVs in the camp, the electricity would cut at around seven pm, meaning that a backup generator would be needed for watching TV, which only a few institutions and private homes had. Being a predominantly male space (except for female guerillas and a few 'daring' women), equally important for women's social life was the communal tandoor oven where bread was made. Bread was the staple food in the movement, in addition to rice and couscous, and preparing it was tacitly seen as the domain of women. For every four to five houses, in a central open space stood a tandoor oven which the women would meet around and prepare bread. Women would also constantly have female visitors over, but these spaces were inaccessible to me, and would be partially separated from the men's.

In terms of broader self-definition or identity in the camp, i.e. 'which supra-local group they saw themselves as being linked to,' the members emotionally identified closely with the PKK's struggle in its various places of contention. A happy day in the struggle, no matter where it was, was a happy day for the people in the camp. During the evening one of my first visits to the camp, when approximately twenty people had gathered in front of the TV in the guest house and were drinking tea, *Gerîla TV* (as well as many of the other PKK-affiliated TV channels, apparently) suddenly launched a breaking news story. The TV presenter said that they had just received footage of a recent PKK operation in Bakûr and were going to show it presently. The video showed two guerillas in the mountains, one of which was holding a rocket launcher, and aiming it out of frame. The camera then panned to a Turkish Cobra helicopter circling the area, some few kilometers away. The guerilla behind the camera started counting up to fifteen, upon which the other guerilla fired the rocket towards the helicopter. Within a matter of seconds, the helicopter had been hit and exploded mid-air, which incurred a loud "woooo!" and cheering from the comrades watching, some even getting out of their chairs. Seemingly dumbfounded by the success of the action, the guerilla behind the camera exclaimed: *Kobra ket! Saet xwes! Saet xwes!,* which

translates to 'the Cobra is falling. A happy hour! A happy hour!'. However, the last statement could also be interpreted more vernacularly as 'good times,' which everyone around the table started repeating. In the following week, this was a trope, often used to great comic effect among everyone in the camp. People who I had not watched the segment with would come up, and for instance, talk about how good the food was, or the cleaning, or the weather in general, and exclaim *saet xwes*, which everyone thought was funny. This remained a trope not only in Maxmur but was also a common point of reference in Germany when I arrived there a few months later. [223]

In economic terms, the familial-communal relations of the camps were also quite apparent. Even though private property had not been abolished, as Öcalan had suggested the people do (Öcalan, 2017), there was a strong collective valence to the economy. Through assistance received from the UN more than a decade prior, the camp has set up its own agricultural production and greenhouses, where a direct-democratic committee attempted to keep the camp self-sufficient in terms of vegetables. The six large greenhouses grew cucumbers, tomatoes, and potatoes, in addition to various herbs, which they would sell for a profit in the Iraqi-Kurdish capital, Hewler, if there was a surplus. According to interviews done with the representatives of the camps at different levels, they attempted to keep as many people as possible employed in the camp, people working either in agriculture, in the school system (from primary school to a newly founded 'University'), the hospital, or as cultural and religious figures as well as service providers such as tailors, barbers, 'tinkerers' and shop-keepers, and a few as sheep and goat pastoralists, but they recognized the need for outside capital as well. As such, many people would commute to Hewler or neighboring villages where they would work mostly as unskilled laborers, since they did not have (or want) an Iraqi-Kurdish identity card. Even though wage-labor existed in this capacity, both for people who worked in Hewler and in the camp, capital accumulation was strongly regulated by the council system, which

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[223] There is of course something to be said here about the absurdly disproportionate means of waging war that the Turkish state has in comparison to the PKK. The *saet xwes* incident was also an incident that I think was very much perceived as a 'David and Goliath' moment, and was a relatively uncommon experience.

would re-distribute wealth to those who needed it within the camp.[224] It was common, for instance, that if someone fell sick in a neighborhood, that the other people in the neighborhood would provide food or money for medicine, or that those who 'had more' would give more to the administration if a new collective project was to be undertaken (such as new electrical wires, a new public building, sanitation canals, etc).

Formally, the camp was run through direct-democratic, deliberative councils. At the lowest level, every street had (or was at least supposed to have) a *komîn,* where matters relating to the street were to be resolved. Approximately five to ten households would meet there and elect two delegates – one woman and one man – to be sent to the second level, namely the neighborhood, or the *tax*. At *tax* level, there would be approximately fifteen to twenty *komîns* represented, which in turn would send five delegates to the *semt,* or disctrict, council. There were in total five *semts* in the camp, each representing approximately four *tax*s. From there on five representatives from each *semt* would be sent to the *meclisa gêl*, or 'people's council,' which was composed of representatives from the various commissions, interest groups, and co-operatives, in addition to the representatives from the councils, and was the highest decision-making organ with approximately hundred members. The leadership, or executive committee, of the *meclisa gêl*, was however not elected by the representatives. The thirteen members, and the two co-leaders, were elected by the general populace in a direct bi-annual election, and vested with instantly recallable mandates that could be actualized through an extra-ordinary general assembly. Paralleling these structures were several 'interest groups' occupied with women's issues,[225] youth issues, or religious issues, among others, who had identical democratic structures and intervened at all the different levels. The women's interest group, for instance, was male-exclusive and had veto power at every level of decision-making. In

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[224] I have this information mostly from interviews with leadership officials, but from being there and witnessing interactions between those who were employed in Hewler and those who were employed in the camp, it seemed to be the case that wealth was re-distributed according to relatively 'equalitarian' principles.
[225] 'Interest groups,' sounds less important than these structures actually were. They were part and parcel of the movement, rather than a separated entity which could influence a given process. The women's 'interest group,' *meclîsa Iştar* (named after a mythic, Sumerian goddess)*,* encompassed 81 representatives from *their* local women's councils (in addition to the elected administration), for instance, and had been instrumental in legalizing divorce and banning polygamy in the camp. I have used this term in lack of a better word.

sum, the different organizations formed an aggregated system where each set contained the next, in a nested mode of organization. The hierarchy that emerged was one that was structurally a bottom-up, representative democracy, but continuously encompassed and mediated by other structures which were directly democratically elected. As such, the hierarchy that emerged was engineered towards direct-democracy supplementing and guiding the representative democracy through every level. The different councils and committees would meet at least every two weeks to discuss pressing issues, and once every month the *meclisa gêl* would meet in the grandest building in the camp, namely the *şehîdlik*. Even though we dwelt on the *şehîdlik* in Qandil in the previous chapter, I think it is wise to spend some time examining the *şehîdlik* in Maxmur as well, since this was a socially utilized space in a different way than in the mountains.

The *Şehîdlik* as the Organizational and Administrative Center

The *şehîdlik* was the center of formal activity in the camp. Situated where the two major paved roads intersected (named after the martyrs killed when re-taking the camp), it was quite literally in the middle of the camp. In addition to the general assembly, it was here the weekly information meetings from the guerilla would take place, where they would broadcast and stage their funerals, their protests, parts of their festivals, and their martyrial memorial ceremonies, as well as hold particularly important meetings. According to the co-leader of the camp, who was my minder for the first few visits, this was the building that was first constructed once they had finally settled, alongside the schools. The building was a massively concrete structure, located in the center of the camp, with streets radiating out from it, and could hold approximately 300 people in the main structure, and perhaps a thousand in courtyard. Half of the courtyard was covered, adorned with flags and icons of different martyrs and parties, and the other half blending with a garden with a little pond of running water. In this way, it seemed similar to a mosque in that when people arrived at the *şehîdlik* for events, most people would wash their hands and face, as is customary before prayer, and go outside or to the margins of the garden to smoke, and the women put on hijabs outside before stepping in. On the long side of the covered courtyard was

written: *Her şehîdek felsefeyek ya jiyanê – Reber Apo*, meaning, 'every martyr is a philosopher of life – Leader Apo.'

6.3 The women holding up the image of Öcalan were the women from the commission for 'the care of martyrs' families.' All of the women had lost (or given) at least one child to the struggle, and would for the most part wear white shawls, which signified both Kurdishness (often adorned with small red, green and yellow beads) and piousness.[226]

Inside the building, the walls were covered with small, framed icons of *kadro* martyrs. As I have argued in the previous chapter, the *kadro* were characterized by being always-already partially sacrificed, or martyrs-in-waiting. Starting from approximately a meter and a half over the ground, going seven or eight rows upwards, they covered all walls but the short one, where there was a large picture of Abdullah Öcalan, surrounded by some of the most famous martyrs, Berîtan among them. The camp alone had given approximately 450 *kadro* martyrs to the cause, and most of them were depicted there, supplemented by martyrs who had been born in other places but had been buried in Maxhmur. In my experience, everyone I spoke to had some more-or-less close family member who had been killed in the struggle – oftentimes more than

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[226] Image retrieved from 'Hunger strike in Maxmur on day 160,' (2019, May 24) *ANF News*. Retrieved from https://anfenglishmobile.com/kurdistan/hunger-strike-in-maxmur-on-day-160-35176

one as well. The pictures had a customary, generic style where the *kadro* martyrs would look straight into the camera, in guerilla clothing, with a flag of their military association in the background.

6.4 An image of the *şehîdlik* provided to me by the male co-leader of the camp, taken a few years before I arrived. By the time I arrived, there were a lot more martyrs, images almost going down to the ground by the mirrors as well. In addition, the martyrs Öcalan was surrounded by in the middle had changed.

6.5 A typical image of a *kadro* martyr. If the information was available, or if it was deemed appropriate, the *nom de guerre* would be stated, the given family name, the place and time of birth, the name of the mother and father, the place and time of death, and name of the commander. Most times, only the given name, the *nom de guerre* and the place and time of death/birth would be given. The martyr in question here was from the *Goyî* tribe. My own image.

Besides its architecture and placement in the camp, the centrality of the *şehîdlik* this was quite apparent in how the space was used. During important assemblies (the lesser meetings would be held elsewhere), the crowd would split upon entry. On the one hand, the women would sit in four lines extending backwards, wearing white shawls sometimes ornamented with traditional handicraft of red, green and yellow, and on the other the men, in traditional outfits, mostly garb imitating the guerilla, or indeed in proper guerilla garb. There would always be a soft quarrel of deference for whom should sit where before the meetings, younger people insisting that older people sit at

the front, and vice versa, and the leaders of the various committees and organizations would consistently be ushered to the front. They would all sit on the floor in front of a makeshift desk, draped in the flag of the PKK, often with a picture of Abdullah Öcalan and a book of his resting on top. While sitting it was important have removed one's shoes previously, not extend one's legs, cross them, or fiddle with one's hands.

Two speakers would then come up, normally a man and a woman, and introduce themselves with a prolonged speech in deference to the martyrs and the family of the deceased, and their contribution to the struggle to free Kurdistan and the people(s) of the Middle East. All speeches held in this space started with approximately a one-minute recital of deference to the various groups present. Personalized manners of speech were attempted obviated at every turn. None of the speeches used 'I' as the vehicle for narration or argument; there was only talk of 'us,' 'Kurdistan,' and 'the people.' The tone imitated the speeches and writing of Öcalan, filled with iterative statements and phrases concerning Kurdistan, the Martyrs, the Middle East and the revolution. From there the speech or information would be given, but in a very formalized style, using the language that Abdullah Öcalan wrote in, opened up for a discussion, and concluded with applause and the chant *Bijî Serok Apo*, 'Long Live Abdullah Öcalan,' or *Bê Serok, jîyan nabe*, 'Without Apo, there will be no life,' and a final veneration of the dead, often including *Serok Apo, Bavê Şehîdên* – 'Leader Apo, Father of the Martyrs.'

Much like in Qandil, counting from the centrality of the building – both materially and socially – the *şehîdlik* was also the symbolic or cosmological 'center' of the camp. To use Luc de Heusch's fortuitous phrase, it was the location where the "two worlds" – the spiritual and the social – came together and united (de Heusch, 1985, p. 199). It was where the martyrs met the people ritually, so to speak. It was the location from which 'co-sovereignty' over the ordinary and revolutionary world could be exercised.

As we have now charted the rudimentary social structures of the camp, and highlighted the *şehîdlik*'s centrality, we can move into a more analytical perspective. If the *şehîdlik* is the center of the camp, and the camp is a partially utopian incarnation of

'the new life,' it seems reasonable to take the *şehîdlik* as a point of departure for an analysis of how the 'new life' is constituted. We will therefore move into a more in-depth analysis of what the *şehîdlik* accomplishes ritually, in particular with regard to the designation and configuration of leadership, and shall see how the rituals in the *şehîdlik* bring the revolutionary world into the everyday via assistance from the martyrs. After we have examined this structure more in-depth we shall move on to consider how the world is made revolutionary outside of the ceremonial context.

Creating the New Life

It seemed to me that why the camp was so important in the movement as a testament to the fecundity and glory of 'the new life' and 'the new man,' was intimately tied to the use and place of the *şehîdlik*. As we have seen that Öcalan argued that creating the new life was contingent upon amalgamating the people and the guerilla to compositely create 'the new man,' it seemed to me that the *şehîdlik* was the central performative space for this materialization. In the camp the *şehîdlik* was the place in which 'the new man' and 'the new life' was to be formed,[227] and the place that best incarnated and illustrated the dynamics of its formation. As I saw it, the architecture and the usage of the *şehîdlik* brought the participants not only in ideologically assigned positions in relation to each other, but also in relation to the revolutionary cosmology. It was the place that could give insight into the social order of 'the new life,' which is what we shall examine first, before moving into a closer examination of creating 'new man' in the next section. Through examining the *şehîdlik*'s architecture, use, functioning, and surrounding rituals, I shall create an image of how and in which ways myth is mapped onto the everyday and its practical unfolding, i.e. how the people and the guerilla are brought together in 'the new life,' what it looks like, and what the consequences are.

Both Family and Guerilla: The Double Position of the Martyr

Counting among the hundreds of martyrs on the wall within the *şehîdlik*, it seemed to me that they served a double purpose. The images of the deceased guerillas were (for the most part) not only there as 'generalized' *kadros* (as in the second tier described in

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[227] The concept and ideal of creating a new man is no way particular to the PKK's struggle, as Yinghong Cheng (2009) has shown in-depth with regards to the 'Western world.'

the previous chapter), but also simultaneously as close relatives to many of the inhabitants of the camp. The internal space was at the same time bedecked by pictures of revolutionary, 'transcendental' *kadros,* but strangely enough, also with the dead family members of the people who were sitting in the room. The individual spectators were tied to the images displayed in both a revolutionary and familial way, which could not be separated.

The guerillas could not be separated from their families because they could neither exist entirely as a *kadro* or entirely as a family member. They were at the same time both family members and ideological proponents (or personifications). A particular guerilla soldier was defined by his or her *guerilla-ness* (*hevaltî,* in Kurdish)*,* as the previous chapter outlined with the *rite de passage* (where one of the central issues was relinquishing family connections), but for the family, the guerilla soldier was nonetheless, at the same time, remembered and considered as a blood relation. Outside of the *şehîdlik,* martyr-icons of family members abounded in personal-familial spaces. Although not considered a son or daughter in the same way as children who had not joined the guerilla,[228] when a given son or daughter joined the guerilla, the guerilla soldier would nonetheless leave a 'trace' in the family's memories, and was generally seen by the community as a specific family's 'gift' to the struggle. As such, although there was a denial of familial connection at one level,[229] namely among the guerilla, at another level this bond was not entirely separated – not in the eyes of the family, and not in the eyes of the surrounding community. The family relation was both broken and maintained at the same time, in other words; they were both transcendental revolutionary figures (who had already, in a sense, given up their life to the revolution), but at the same time they were also sons, daughters, cousins, and so on.

Moreover, it seemed that a particular guerilla was both a *particular* family's guerilla/martyr and, at the same time, not. All the guerillas also belonged to *all* the

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[228] Offspring or relatives who were not in the guerilla were expected to follow certain familial codes with regards to house-work, wage labor, child-care and so on, often organized in a way where older members of the family were supposed to be relieved of work and obligations.

[229] What I mean here is a denial of a familial connection in any *meaningful* way – that is, as someone one is required to express loyalty towards the family in discourse and practice, nurses obligations towards the family, and is assumed to act 'corporatively' with it – not as a denial that one 'had' a family, or was given birth to by a mother, etc.

families. This was apparent in the martyrs' homogenous aesthetic display both in personal homes, and in the *şehîdlik*. In their images, the *kadro* martyrs were in part dissolved into a unit larger than the constituent parts. A martyr in question was not so much '*a* sacrificed revolutionary kinsman' who belonged to a particular family or person. Rather, through eviscerating any aesthetic independence of the martyr icons – everyone having more or less the same style of portraits – it signaled that *all* the martyrs, regardless of blood relations, belonged to *all* the families. Looking back at figure 6.5, the design of that icon was precisely the same for ninety percent of all the others. They were all homogenously stylized and placed beside each other both in personal spaces and in public spaces, and living guerilla soldiers would be spoken of as 'sons,' 'daughters,' 'cousins' and the like, by non-blood related families. As the martyrs were 'de-individualized,' a single image became a synecdoche for all the other martyrs as well; the person killed was not only an individual family member, but also a part of and a carrier of the greater community – a stand-in for the rest of the families' dead relatives. Through the martyrs, in other words, the guerillas become connected to the families, and the families to the guerillas.

Unsurprisingly, the community the martyrs composed with the families and guerillas was not an a-political one. The colors used as backgrounds in the portraits were strongly ideologically loaded. The color scheme of the background indicated a military affiliation to a particular armed sub-group, but all of these groups were in turn defined by their derivation from Kurdish colors, and the symbology of Öcalan's philosophy. In figure 6.5, for instance, which was a martyr from the HPG, the color scheme of the background was the traditional Kurdish colors, but simultaneously symbolically laden with Öcalan's philosophy. According to common knowledge (or popular mythical connotation), the green in the pictures represents the nature of Kurdistan, its fertility and beauty, the yellow the Sun, connected with Kurds' supposed Zoroastrian past and hot climate, and the red with the blood of the martyrs who have died in defense of the country. The figures, however, bring these colors into Öcalan and the PKK's ideological configuration. The star was the first icon of the PKK, which at the time was very much connected with the Marxist-Leninist tendencies of the 70's and 80's, which is a symbol not shared with the other Kurdish parties in Iraq.

6.6 The first flag of the PKK, which was in use until 1995.[230]

In 2003, as the PKK was starting its ideological reforms, the flag was changed to the more-or-less current version, where the star and surrounding circle was kept, but shaded in the traditional Kurdish colors.[231] Interesting, assumedly to mark its ideological distinctiveness, the PKK did not add white to the flag, as the other major parties in the Kurdish regions were using to connote 'peace.' In this way, 'imbuing' the PKK's flags with Kurdish colors, the PKK symbolically sublated 'Kurdishness' (and a particular Kurdishness, at that) to its project. As the martyrs were lifted up in front of the traditional Kurdish colors and Öcalan's revolutionary philosophy upon their death, in other words, they re-constituted the guerilla-family community in a different (mythic) sphere. The community the martyrs composed with the families was deeply mytho-revolutionary in its nature.

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[230] Image retrieved from: https://imgur.com/r/leftvexillology/lPWJN. There were several other flags in use after this before the PKK found its current design.
[231] Even today with the proliferation of the different PKK-affiliated groups in Syria, Iran and Turkey, the star continues to play a central role. One may, for instance examine the flags of the *YPS* ('*Yekîneyen Parastina Sivil'* or the 'Civillian Protection Units')*,* the YJA-star*,* the HPG*,* the YPG ('*Yekîneyen Parastina Gel,'* the 'People's Protection Units') and YPJ whose flags I will not be displaying for reasons of space.

As the main wall stated, it was 'Leader Apo' who claimed that the dead had been examples of life; it was he who praised the dead and him who the people and the *kadros* praised in turn. As Öcalan was venerated at both the beginning of speeches and at the end, and depicted in both public and private spaces, he was (the incarnation of) the frame through which the relation to the dead could be re-assembled. Through Öcalan's Kurdish and revolutionary project, the families politically re-constituted their relations with the deceased; the families who attended these meetings continuously transformed their non-political relations to the deceased into political-communal relations to the martyrs through the figure of Öcalan. Öcalan encompassed and 'gave life' to the martyrs, who in turn encompassed and 'gave life' to the families and the community.

As such, we can here clearly see in this section how the 'ordinary' people of the camp become linked with the revolutionary project, and in some sense, represent and incarnate its pinnacle values. In the ritual space of the *şehîdlik*, a constituent feature of everyday life, we have seen how the martyrs become the integral 'connective tissue' between the residents of the camp, the revolutionary project and the guerilla. Through the double position the martyrs hold as both blood-family and revolutionary exemplars, family relations become interpreted in a new light and spread out beyond the confines of blood-lineages. Guerillas and residents become re-constituted as a singular revolutionary family, through the particular transformative qualities of the martyrs. Via the martyrs, residents and guerillas were brought together in Öcalan's mytho-revolutionary world; the martyrs dissolved the separation between guerilla and the people, amalgamating them as a unitary community in 'the new life.'

Moreover, as this was the place where major social and political decisions were held, the 'cosmos' of the *şehîdlik* brought the concrete and practical discussions and plans of action into the mythic sphere; as it was a practical space, the martyrs imbued whatever decisions being made with a revolutionary flare. Through the martyrs, in other words, 'the people' and the guerillas could also be seen as *moving* as one in the revolutionary

project of 'the new life.'

This was apparent in the way the *şehîdlik* meetings progressed. The democratic rituals reinforced the connection between the families and the guerillas, and was integral to bringing them both into Öcalan's 'mythological, revolutionary' world, but at the same time moved them together through the revolutionary time and space.

A particular information meeting towards the end of my stay will serve as an example. As opposed to other 'direct-democratic' meetings I had been part of in other places of the world this time there was no deliberative dialogue where people voiced their individual ideas and suggestions, which the group then later voted on. Participants rather merely listened to what the representatives of the community said, asking only questions for clarification. The representatives would obviate terms such as 'I,' 'me,' and 'believe,' 'think,' 'suppose,' as we have said, and rather spoke in declarative sentences using collective pronouns. In this way, it seemed that the representatives were removing themselves from the speeches they were holding. An extract from a weekly information meeting I attended serves well as a typical example of the style:

> With the power of the martyrs, we will give the people the will to continue, and President Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the Kurdish people and the people in the Middle East, and the provider of the democratic solution for the development of the Middle East, will ensure that the struggle will be victorious. The project of freedom is marching onwards, and the struggle is being elevated in Bakûr [Turkish Kurdistan], Basûr [Iraqi Kurdistan] and Rojhîlat [Iranian Kurdistan]. The project in Rojava [Syrian Kurdistan] is now serving as a model of the world, it is showing how, once again, the people of the middle east can overturn the tyrants, the authoritarian terrorist regimes, the Zahhaks of today, and once again live together peace and democracy, according the to the natural life of democracy, and ethical and communal life (…).

Every phrase was affirmative, in the sense of expressing a statement of fact without doubt. Any form of speech was intended not so much as a reflective statement to be debated, but rather as a 'democratic update' on how the various processes, both local and international were going. Using this verbiage, the representative was, in a way, not so much an individual taking on the task of representing the desires of the community to the best of his personal ability, but rather an incarnation *of* the community relaying *to* the community what had been accomplished.

The speeches that these representatives 'embodying' the community would hold, would invariably situate the camp and the community in the global scope of the struggle. Judging from the talks, it was just as important how the struggle was going in Turkey, or arguably even Germany, as it was in Iraq or the neighboring Syria, or even closer to the camp. The collective pronouns used, did not only designate the community in front of which the representative was speaking, but also the general Apoist community as such. By doing so, the representatives could arguably be seen as lifting the concrete situation of the camp into the mythological and engulfing narrative of the Kurdish struggle in its global reach. The 'we' was not only the people listening and speaking, but also all other revolutionary Apoist Kurds and guerillas. Moreover, the 'general form' of resistance that the speakers would situate (or dissolve) the Maxhmur community into, also had a particular mythological quality. Although the aforementioned text is cited with this in mind, it was also a frequent occurrence. The use of 'Zahhak,' for instance, as the next chapter details, harkened back to a primordialism myth of Kurdishness, and the returning 'once again' to peace and democracy, recalled Öcalan's writings on the early Neolithic age as being the only true age of real equality and freedom (Öcalan, 2013). The speeches, in other words, assisted in bringing the guerilla-family connection to an explicitly different level; it situated the 'new life' in the global (and mythic) progress of the revolution.

This way of framing the camp's place and activity, naturally also held consequences for the configuration of leadership. If the community moved as one in the revolution together with all the other places of the struggle, then the person who spoke for the community had to be *of* the community in a particular way. If the families, the

guerillas, the camps and the struggle moved together as one, it would have been strange to think of a representative as somehow disjoined from or autonomous in this social order. For the 'new life' to progress, in other words, a 'new man' was needed; a person adapted to the conditions of living in utopia.

Configuring Leadership: Configuring the New Man

This communitarian-democratic system worked in tandem with how leadership was accorded and configured, in other words. Once a leadership role had been accorded, it was customary that leadership was *assumed*, so to speak. Leadership meant, to a certain degree, *embodying* the community rather than only representing it. That is not to say that leadership in the various committees did not represent the community, but rather that in addition to representing what the community wanted, the leader was afforded the capacity of partially deciding what the community wanted or needed to hear. Of course, these mandates were circulated through general elections, but leaders were supposed to 'take on' and 'incarnate' the community, at least while holding the mandate.

Aside from being accorded the right to speak and the manner in which this was done, the emphasis on the leader incarnating the community was apparent in the symbolic construction of the 'pulpit 'in the *şehîdlik.* When the representatives stood up behind the desk, always a man and a woman (as to reflect the gender-equal philosophy of Öcalan), they would invariable be dressed in guerilla attire, which, as we have argued, was a strongly collective identity marker. Moreover, as the desk from which one spoke was draped in a flag of the PKK, and often with a book of Öcalan upon it, the representatives, in a sense, 'came into' a highly politicized space from which they could speak. As the pulpit was situated in front of the room, the speakers literally had Öcalan and the important martyrs in their backs when they were speaking. Perhaps paradoxically, the representatives were 'channeling' Öcalan and the martyrs in their speeches given to the very people who had given Öcalan his power (through their gifts of martyrs) in the first place. By virtue of their position in the (symbolic) space, Öcalan and the martyrs were 'imbuing' the speeches they held, which in turn, would make any personal statements and reflections seem vastly inappropriate.

Such a 'collectivist' conceptualization of leadership also held ramifications for who could be elected, how and on what grounds. As leadership was necessary in some form, yet should at the same time be an incarnation of the collectivity, a particular electoral strategy and ideology needed to be put in place for selection.

More than Offering

For people to be accorded a leadership position of embodying and at the same time representing the guerilla-family community (and the general mytho-revolutionary struggle), several factors needed to be in place. As we shall see in Turkish Kurdistan in the next chapter, the people who were elected (and in some cases, tapped) for such positions in the movement, were people who had often exhibited or possessed exceptionally valuable traits, according to the movement's ideology. Central to this valuation was the proximity to the martyrs. If one had given a martyr to the struggle one was most often considered trustworthy. The co-leader of the camp when I was there had, for instance, given a daughter to the struggle, had personal connections to Sakine Cansiz and had himself spent much time with the guerilla in Qandil. I will not show images of this, however, for reasons of informant protection. The female co-leader had also mothered a daughter who had been killed in the struggle, and had another daughter who had 'become part' (*tevlîbûn*). This was a general tendency across all the different places I worked, but more generally speaking (and perhaps more empirically solid), one could say that in order to hold a mandate it was necessary that one had proved one's revolutionary credentials. In particular in Maxmur, since most of the families had at least one family member who had been martyred or given away to the guerilla, this was not small enough category for easily determining a person's ascension to leadership.

More than merely having 'offered' a martyr to the cause, assuming leadership was intimately connected with proximity to the martyrs, or becoming 'martyrial' in one's practices and outlook on life. Given that the martyrs were the pinnacle of a fulfilled revolutionary life, in order to be truly revolutionary (and thereby be elected), one needed to be martyrial in one's own life. This was the way of proving that one was

deserving of embodying the community, the revolution, and the ideology; in short, taking values of the guerilla into one's own praxis, assuming the position of 'the new man.' As this presents us with an apparent paradox, namely that those elected for singular leadership positions were those who were the best at eviscerating individualist traits, i.e. becoming totally 'martyrial' in their own lives, elaborating what this entailed and how it was set in motion, deserves more in-depth attention.

To do so we should briefly re-iterate the values the martyrs embodied upon their death, as elaborated in the previous chapter, however. At the heart of the Apoist martyrdom lies the purity of revolutionary zeal attested to by their death. Upon their death, their lives were eradicated in favor of the ideal that they both represented and incarnated. Even though we have argued that the guerilla *kadros* were partially martyred at the moment at which they took the oath, or, completed the *rite de passage*, their death became the final signal that they had totalized their commitment to the revolution; that the intention and devotion was completely *pure.* Upon their death, they *proved* that they were willing to sacrifice 'everything' for Kurdistan, and the people in it - that the ideal superseded the individual. This logic permeated social life the Maxmur camp, albeit in a transubstantiated form.

Becoming the New Man, Becoming Martyrial

Becoming martyrial, or signaling a proximity and deference to the martyrs, was a not a practice that was undertaken only by singular individuals. Rather, becoming martyrial was a general, 'popular' practice that permeated the social life of the camp. It was integral to the social fabric of the camp and the currency through which status could be estimated and exchanged. As I saw it, it was the means by which Öcalan's 'new man,' was created. Symbolically adopting a martyrial way of being, could be signaled in several different several ways.

Aesthetic Purity: Looking the part

First and foremost, as we have argued, donning guerilla garb was a way of signaling an appreciation for the guerillas, who were in a sense already dead (or martyrs-in-waiting). During one of the festivals in Maxmur, celebrating the beginning of the war

with Turkey, which started in the *şehîdlik*, the co-leader lent me a pair of his guerilla clothes, because he did not find my normal attire appropriate for celebration, and more specifically for 'participating' in the meeting in the *şehîdlik*; to be appropriate in the *şehîdlik* I too should show appreciation for the martyrs, or signal that I 'took them on.' In the festival I would estimate the approximately eighty percent of the camps' male inhabitants were wearing guerilla garb. For women, this could take place with the white shawls, which indicated a certain purity and 'bodification' of the martyrs, carrying a reminder with them, in the same way as the guerilla garb for men – as far as I understood, the white shawls were informally reserved for women who had given a child to the struggle.[232]

6.7 The fieldworker in the borrowed guerilla garb, along with a retired PKK soldier. My own image.

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[232] Likewise, the little embroidered red-green-and-yellow colors on the white shawls, mirrored the colors in the icons in the *Şehîdlik*.

6.8 An image from the Newroz festival in Maxmur in 2017, where the child-parade was walking from the *şehîdlik* to the festival grounds. As is apparent here, dressing in guerilla garb as a token of appreciation for the guerillas (read, the martyrs-to-be), was not only confined to adults. By dressing up their children in traditional Kurdish garb and guerilla garb (of which families were very proud), people signaled that they were willing to 'give more' to the struggle, were proud of the struggle, and would sacrifice more, if called upon. Dressing children in guerilla garb honored the martyrs, and signaled a commitment to the martyrs' cause.[233]

Similarly, it was important for men to be clean-shaven, since this signaled a 'purity' and 'transparency,' except if one would like to don a mustache like Öcalan. These were the only two acceptable ways of dealing with facial hair in the camp (as well as in the guerilla), and if someone did not shave, they would be reprimanded and told to do so – in particular before festivities or meetings in the *şehîdlik*. For women, long hair was highly valued, often tinged with red from henna coloring and always braided in tight reams. Loose and wet hair was seen as inappropriate and even loaded with

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[233] Image provided by the male co-leader of the camp.

sexual connotations, recalling uncouthness and being overcome with passion. In all the images of the martyrs, of both men and women, this was the style. In order to praise and become like the martyrs, in other words, it was important to 'look the part.' Similar to a religious practice, deference and respect for the martyrs would also be shown in tweaking comportment and posture; it was also important to 'act the part.'

6.9 Image from the festival celebrating the start of the war with Turkey in 1984. Although a poor-quality picture, please note the large amount of people in guerilla garb. During this festival, one of the legendary guerilla commanders (who had founded the PKK with Öcalan) saluted the Maxmur camp in a live-stream from Qandil mountains to great uproar and cheers from the crowd. My image.

Bodily Purity: Acting the part

In addition to many people washing their hands, face and neck (sometimes also feet),[234] and everyone taking off one's shoes before entering the *şehîdlik*, one was not to cross one's legs, curse, talk loudly, or hold unnecessary conversation, as we have said. Smoking was also shunned in within the *şehîdlik* grounds, people congregating

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[234] This was not as strictly observed as in a mosque where washing is a pre-requisite for prayer, for many of the residents this was nonetheless a practice they engaged in before entering.

outside the fence before and after the meetings. All of these gestures were taken as signs signaling purity, mimicking in a transubstantiated form the purity the martyrs had shown upon their death.[235]

The degree to which one had become martyrial outside of the *şehîdlik* was partially informed by these prescriptions and taboos. As smoking was generally seen as a negative, impure practice (even though very many people did), purity could be acquired by avoiding smoking in all settings. Moreover, sitting properly and having deliberate controlled movements, was reminiscent of the guerilla ethos, where proper bodily movements were signs of control, intent, and deliberateness. Likewise, employing 'pure' Kurdish language, as was taught to the guerilla in the mountains – i.e. eradicating what was considered Turkish, Arabic and Iranian words from the vocabulary – was also considered a venerable trait. As in the guerilla, the general mode of address between civilians, and between civilians and guerilla, was the term *heval*. As all the guerilla would denominate each other as *heval* 'X,' X being the first part of the *nom de guerre*, like *Şoreş* ('revolution'), *Brûsk* ('lightning'), or *Agir* ('fire'), civilians would do the same, and even use *nom de guerre* for each other. Many people were also named after revolutionary heroes or nouns, making the *nom de guerre* merely another layer of revolutionary denomination. *Hevaltî*, or 'comradeship,' was a term used exclusively for people who had sworn the PKK oath, however, and was recognized as such by all parts. General personal hygiene was also a valorized trait, people being very concerned with personal odor and dirty clothing. People would often ask intently and in confidence if they smelled bad, and would bathe approximately every other day. If one was not wearing guerilla garb making sure that one was proper, that is, not showing any skin, especially not around the chest and beyond the elbows, was extremely important – for men as well as women. This was how the guerilla lived, which reflected what the martyrs had represented and embodied, which in turn, made it important for the residents to emulate.

All together, these practices and aesthetics things were 'objective' markers of being

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[235] As avoiding smoke, regulating conversation, and washing oneself are common gestures with regards to preserving purity across various religions and places, I have elected not to expand much on this particular practice.

martyrial. They were the background practices, so to speak, that everyone, to a greater or lesser degree were concerned with. However, returning to the question above – of how leadership is accorded – we are no closer to an answer. If this is the general 'culture,' i.e. if everyone is attempting to become martyrial in their everyday lives, this still leaves us with no distinction for who should be elected for leadership positions and who should not. To shed more light on the distinction between those who are *more* martyrial*,* which means *more* fit for leadership, as opposed to less martyrial, I will return briefly to a meeting in the *şehîdlik* that exhibits its dynamics.

Playing the Part (more or less well)[236]

Once one had entered the *şehîdlik*, men and women were separated into two groups, as they were supposed to sit and listen. In line with the writings of Öcalan concerning mutual respect and deference, the beginning of every meeting would witness a low-key scramble to seat other people in front of oneself. After a few minutes of whispering, friendly pushing and exhortations, the leaders of the various committees, local representatives and mothers of martyrs were nonetheless ushered to the front, closest to the 'pulpit.' Although they would themselves attempt to bring younger men to the front, or younger girls, they would eventually cede, and take their place in the front. In this way, although everyone in certain ways exhibited deference to each other, and a subservient position in relation to the martyrs, there were nonetheless hierarchical relations known, recognized and respected by the residents. We shall return to this in Wan in chapter 8.

Hence, although it is important to note that respecting the martyrs and 'becoming martyrial' was a common practice, there were nonetheless people within this system who had higher positions than others. Even though the deference to the martyrs was a categorical truth in the camp, this did not entail that there were not people who were *more* martyrial, so to speak. In addition to certain 'objective' markers, such as haven given children to the struggle, holding a formal position, or being familiarly related to important commanders or several guerilla martyrs, there were also different

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[236] By using this theatric verbiage, it is in no way intended to signal that it is inauthentic, or indeed to be thought of as a 'performance.' It was far too engrained in social life to be thought of in any self-conscious, conscientious way.

'subjective' markers. Having been involved in the struggle for a long time, having given away a large amount of wealth to the struggle, having a university education, holding a position of religious or familial power, having close personal connections to the guerilla, or having shown great bravery or revolutionary fervor in situations of war and contention, to mention a few, were factors that played into where one sat, both metaphorically and literally. The minder of the guest house, for instance, was a Mullah who had come to the camp only a few years before my arrival, and often sat in the middle or closer to the back (due to the 'positive' factors of his old age and his religious prestige, I would assume, and not in the front due to his relatively recent arrival), and younger men in particular (who had not taken over as 'the head of the household') were most commonly seated towards the back.

As far as I could tell (and recognized from Turkish Kurdistan) the combination of the 'objective' and 'subjective' demarcations signifying a martyrial attitude were the primary measurements for who became 'tapped' or elected to the leadership positions. For people to be tapped for leadership positions within this general martyrial culture, they often needed to be *exceptionally* proven. If one could take the aforementioned practice of purity more or less to heart, higher status was accorded those who had shown they had taken them 'the most' to heart. Naturally, the degree to which people had proven this was an important marker, since leadership positions entail *embodying* the community more than merely representing it, and the values that the community held as a community needed to be expressed *in its purest and best form* in its leadership. In my experience, these were paradoxically often the people who attempted the hardest to put other people first. The co-leader of the camp's general assembly, the highest position that one could objectively hold, who, as we have said, had provided kinsmen to the struggle, was intimately connected with the PKK, and had been with the camp since its beginning, thwarting all attempts at 'assimilating' (as the residents would call it), was one of the people who literally pushed the hardest for people to sit in front of him. To get him to assume his place in the front of the room was a difficult process as he would try, insistently, to push other people in front of him. When I tried to sit towards the back, he grabbed by arm uncharacteristically hard to pull me towards the front with him. Other (lesser) leaders would have to, resolutely but still low-key,

push and drag him towards the front. For him, it was important to 'symbolically' place himself at the bottom of the hierarchy,[237] which, paradoxically, assisted in putting him at the top.

Comparing this action to the values that the martyrs embodied, why he had received this status becomes clear. As the pinnacle value that the martyrs represented and embodied was eviscerating one's self in favor of the people, this was, symbolically translated, exactly what the co-leader did (the best) in the meeting. He showed, like the martyrs, that he strove intently to let other people past himself, and to 'sacrifice' himself for the people. Like the martyrs, he tried to show that he too, in a different way, was willing to 'sacrifice' everything, i.e. his position and importance as a person, for the people. Combining this performance with his objectively martyrial qualities, he would be a natural candidate for election, in my interpretation.

The New Life and the New Man

Taken all together, then, we can ask: what does this tell us about the functioning of the social system in Maxmur, the venerated 'new life'? As with Qandil, we have taken the *şehîdlik* as a point of departure for examining social life, except that we have examined what the *şehîdlik* in the camp does in practice, rather than only symbolically. I have argued that as in Qandil, the martyrs have operated as a central vehicle for intertwining the families with the guerillas in the revolutionary struggle, whose agglomeration Öcalan set as the goal for the realization of 'the new life.' On the back of this analysis, I have argued that the martyrs have assisted in placing the struggle in a mythic space, situating the community in a trans-historical and trans-geographical struggle while re-configuring notions of the individual. Moreover, I have suggested that the martyrs, beyond defining a political community, intercede with the democratic process with regards to status and election. I have suggested that in the camp's 'cosmos,' where deference to the martyrs is a pinnacle value, practices of 'becoming martyrial' are not only commonplace, but measurements of status and the background upon which political leadership is elected, and the core tenets of becoming Öcalan's

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[237] Not here intended as a synonym to 'fake,' but rather that this heartfelt act was symbolically charged.

'new man.' In short, I have argued with the case of Maxmur, that 'the new life' should be seen as a martyrial life, and that the 'new man' should be seen as a martyrial man; that martyrs and martyrdom provide both the means and the goal of realizing the movement's revolutionary socio-political structures and reconfiguration of the individual. The 'new man' can in other words be seen as a living martyr, and 'the new life' as the social order of the *şehîdlik*.

Mythologizing the World outside of Rituals

Up until this point, however, I have to a certain extend confined the examination of the process of becoming martyrial and creating the 'new life' to the ritual spaces of the camp and the movement. In order to get deeper into how the revolution is subsumed in non-ritual life, I think it wise for us to move into unceremonious episodes of transformation. This will also open up to see more contradictions, tensions, and disjunctions in the movement – the unfolding of the process, so to speak – which we have so far not been very attentive to. The aforementioned bodily practices would 'spread out' from the ritual spaces, for instance, but not without tension and negotiation. I will therefore examine the social instantiation of the order through a closer look at the youth center in the camp, where I spent most of my time during my time in the camp.

Şoreş at the Youth Center

The youth center was founded in 2008, and was intended as a means for educating and schooling the youth for becoming ethical, democratic and upstanding people. Although there were reading groups, weapons training, communal construction projects, and leisure activities organized by the center, it served mostly as a meeting place for the young people in the camp. It was, by and large, a place where youth could drink tea, chat, eat, text, watch TV and play ping-pong, and although it was open to both genders it was mostly male dominated. There was a formal membership in the youth organization, for which one needed to complete several sessions of education in Öcalan's philosophy, but this did not seem to matter much to the twenty to thirty youth who frequented the place. The center was run by guerilla soldiers who had either been maimed in the struggle, or were placed there while waiting to be re-committed to the

war. During my visits I became gradually more acquainted with the administrator of the center, Şoreş, as well as a few of the boys.

Şoreş was a twenty-four year old YPG-soldier from the city of Derîk in Syrian Kurdistan. He had been engaged in the Syrian civil war for three years until he had had been hit by shrapnel in his face. He was currently on leave and recuperating in the camp's hospital while he was being assessed for further armed engagements. Although he survived with only minor injuries, he had lost some of his back teeth and damaged some of his nerve-endings, causing him near-constant headaches. Nonetheless, he wore his wounds as a source of pride, and would tell me (and everyone else around) how he longed to get back into the war. Once while we were sitting at the youth center, he was telling me a story from his time in the war. Suddenly one of the youth stormed in to get a bottle of water before going back to play ping-pong. While trying to run out of room Şoreş grabbed a hold of his arm, and beckoned him harshly to sit down.

Şoreş pointed to the picture of a martyr on the wall and said: "Have some respect, huh? You are almost an adult, you should know how to behave". More frustrated with not being let go than remorseful, the youth sat down at our table and drank from the water bottle. Şoreş continued: "What are you in such a hurry for, huh? Do you have some television to watch or something? Listen. Listen. You know what *Serok Apo* said about Lenin? You know why he was a good revolutionary?". The boy shook his head, and took another sip of water. "I'll tell you." Şoreş took out a cigarette, lit it, and put the lighter on the table. "Lenin one time met a worker who was not convinced by the revolution. Instead of saying 'forget this, I'm going,' Lenin sat down with the worker. The worker told him, 'oh, my legs hurt from the work, I don't get enough money, but I don't believe in the revolution' and so on. Lenin just sat there and listened. But by the time the worker had finished talking he was convinced. Why? Because while the worker had been talking, the cigarette had burned up, and all the ash was still hanging there," he said and pointed to his cigarette. "Lenin had not noticed that the cigarette had burned up, he had not smoked it; he was too busy listening to the worker. Good, no?". The boy nodded. "He showed the worker that he was actually listening, that he

took him seriously, yes? Don't forget that. Respect, huh?". The boy nodded, and took his water bottle to walk back to the ping-pong room.

Although not a part of any ceremony or a formal process, Şoreş' sanction was nonetheless a way of imbuing the world with a revolutionary quality. Even though there was no ritual occasion, such as the election of leadership or commemoration of a commander, in the quotidian aspects of the everyday, Şoreş illustrated that the revolutionary mythology was as relevant there as it was in ceremony. In my mind, Şoreş had reprimanded the boy for discourteous behavior in the presence of a martyr. The picture of the martyr on the wall had vested the space with a mythological force, which Şoreş, as a guerilla soldier and revolutionary, was also a personification of, or embedded within. By disrespecting the martyr on the wall by being unconcerned, in a rush, and nonchalant, the boy had inadvertently disrespected Şoreş. Şoreş then took it upon himself to correct this behavior by telling the boy, who was indeed just a boy, what was in fact demanded for being a revolutionary, which was the ideological consubstantial link that they both shared. In order for him to become revolutionary, Şoreş said, it was important to be attentive to the needs and desires of others; it was necessary to prostrate oneself and show by one's conduct that one was being respectful of the other people in the room, be they alive or dead. To set one's own self aside for the furtherment of others.

What Şoreş did in this case was play on the structural (familial) linkage that was shared by him and the youth. Telling by the solemn atmosphere that arose after the sanction, it was clear that the boy did not feel recalcitrant about the issue. He took Şoreş' critique at face value, and offered no protestations. Although it would be possible to imagine that such a sanction to getting a bottle of water was felt as over the top, spawning irreverent reactions, the boy listened to Şoreş intently and comported himself different after the critique. In my view, this reaction arose not only from the fact that Şoreş was older than him, but also because Şoreş indeed was a guerilla soldier, that is, someone what was capacitated to speak for the ideology and the movement by virtue of his proximity to the martyrs. Şoreş had taken a vow to serve the PKK until his death, and bore the marks of this on his body. In this way, he was

not a foreign authority figure, but an authority figure who derived his authority from the linkage that the boy had with his family and the dead. Instead of being a mere administrator paid an elected by a servicing institution, Şoreş was in fact a counselor for how to treat the dead (and thereby the revolution) with respect in speech and practice during the ordinary routines of life.

A family visit

Such mythical transformations, or re-framing activities in a revolutionary light – devoting oneself to a martyrial life, was not a permanently unambiguous affair, however. Once during my stay at the youth center, the guerilla running it, meeting up with healthy 'active,' guerilla decided that they would pay a visit to a family whose daughter had joined the YPS only a few days before. At the time, the YPS was one of the most exposed militant contingents, as it was composed mostly of youth defending the urban inner-areas of Kurdish cities in Bakûr against the Turkish army's onslaught. They invited me to come along, and as we walked towards the house in the dusk, the mood was cheerful and upbeat.

As we arrived, we were greeted by the oldest son in the household who lived there with his wife, but was still not old enough to be the head of the household. We shook his hand, and had a brief and seemingly friendly, respectful conversation, before we were ushered inside where the father and his wife were sitting. The son went off to make tea with his wife, and we took our places on the mats on the floor, underneath the image of Öcalan and a few martyrs. As the most senior of the guerilla initiated the conversation, she praised him and congratulated him on his daughter joining the armed resistance. She said she was very happy that his daughter had decided to join, and that this was a great contribution to the liberation of Kurdistan. If more people had done what his daughter had, Kurdistan would be free a lot quicker. The father, however, did not seem to be listening. He had hung his head, and was looking down into the carpet. After receiving several more praising comments from some of the other guerilla soldiers, telling him about the greatness of the cause and the pride he should be feeling, he finally interjected, "no, she wasn't ready." "She was only 17, and had not received enough training. She was too young." The guerillas took turns trying to

convince him, trying to get him on their side, telling him that she probably would not be killed, and that as she was born in Maxmur she had received the best training that could be given, that she was 17 and had to make her own choices, and that her choice was a laudable one, truly exhibiting a commitment, strong spirit and devotion to the liberation of the Kurds and all people in the Middle East. But he was not having any of it. He merely repeated, "she was too young", "she was not ready." The tea had arrived, and the conversation was punctuated with tense and sad silence. As the soldiers were gradually becoming cognizant that they were agitating him, we drank our tea quickly and without being formally rude, left him in peace. As we exited, it would have been customary as a display of deference for him to get up and shake everyone's hand individually, but although he extended some verbal courtesies he did not get up or concern himself with taking everyone's hand in his.

After we had exited and said goodbye to his oldest son, who seemed significantly less affected by the incident, and was courteous and even nice (maybe even proud), the mood became agitated. As we were walking back to the youth center, one of the guerillas apologized to me, saying that this really never happened, that it was the first time that he had experienced it, and was sorry that I had to witness it – "normally families are proud and happy when their children have joined!". From the conversation next to me, I could hear one flustered guerilla say to another: "What shame! He has ten children, and he can't give one of them to the struggle? What is that?".

This episode tells us a few different things. First and foremost, it illustrates that for a person to transition from a normal, civilian life into living in the realm of myth – devoting oneself to re-paying the debt to the people, Kurdistan, furthering the revolution, etc. – is often not a smooth and painless process. As the father illustrated, when his daughter 'took on' the commitment to the martyrs, and devoted herself to follow the same path as them, he felt it as an unjust and non-desired sacrifice. He had trouble embracing the values espoused by the guerilla. At the same time, however, it is interesting to note precisely how 'deep' this martyrial 'culture' goes. Although I believe that when he said that his daughter "was not ready," what he in fact wanted to say was that 'my daughter is more important than your revolution,' this was

unspeakable for him. It was not a statement that he could say, given the omnipresence and weight of being respectful towards the martyrs and the guerillas 'fighting for Kurdistan.' It was not aberrant to (at least pretend to) be glad or happy or proud when one's child joined the guerilla, the aberrant behavior was the opposite, namely protesting it.[238] The guerillas' surprise and irritation (if not anger), illustrated this vividly.

All in all, we can see that despite the ritual appreciation of the martyrs, and the centrality of 'becoming martyrial' in one's own life, the transformation of an everyday life into a mythologized life, or a life devoted to the revolution, was not always an easy or unambiguous process. Often it was filled with conflict, sorrow and regret, but due to the public 'culture' being so very much wound into myth and vice-versa, contesting this hegemony often seemed beyond the purview of any individual attempt or singular event. Forming and living 'the new life' was both a venerated and often sorrowful affair. It was a process that could be joyous, feeling elated with the crashing of Turkish helicopter, or painful, as with a son or a daughter being killed in the struggle. Nonetheless, venerating the martyrs, taking their mythic commitments into one's own life, was the central way of both dealing with and continuing the revolution.

What Dicle Was Doing

I believe we have now come to a point where we can re-examine what Dicle tried to show me when he showed me the video, as I talked about in the introduction. As I saw it, more than Dicle merely fabricating and staging a personae for himself and the public when he made an uploaded his video, Dicle was here also emulating what he saw to be the revolutionary mode of conduct. Not only would he 'talk the talk,' but he also desired to illustrate that he could 'walk the walk.' When he put on the Kurdish garment, he draping himself in the vessel that permitted him to comport himself revolutionarily. He was making himself mythological, making himself a person who,

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[238] This also harmonizes with information I was told by PhD. Isabel Käser, who had access to the women's sphere of the camp, so to speak. She would tell me that in the private, predominantly female spaces, mothers and family members would 'break down' on occasion, when reminded of their martyred sons and daughters. In the middle of preparing food, for instance, she told me that she had witnessed a mother starting to cry and having to sit down, being overcome with emotion. As she pointed out, however, this did not in any way entail the mothers arguing that the sacrifice 'was not worth it,' or that it had been squandered or was not necessary or unjust.

by virtue of being mythological (or emotionally invested in the cause), could claim access to and represent the revolutionary cosmology – whatever that would be. Like a guerilla, he conspicuously contemplated the sacrifice of the great martyr Berîtan, taking it to heart, while looking on over the natural beauty of Kurdistan – the land which she died defending. He, like they, thought about the selflessness of the martyrs, and gave voice to his emotions through the mythologized instrument of the flute. In this fabricated situation, in other words, he dissolved himself into the image of revolution passed on to him through the music groups, the rhetoric, the garments, and most importantly, the martyrs of the PKK. He himself became a mythological vessel through which the revolutionary cosmology could emanate.

Similar to the residents of the camp, he too desired to show that he too could become martyrial; that he too could participate in the 'new life,' that he too could share the ethos of the guerilla of sacrificing himself for the revolution. As we have seen that the martyrs were the markers for a complete revolutionary life in line with Öcalan's philosophy, both for the guerilla and for civilians, accessing the ethos of the martyrs was at the same time accessing the ethos of the guerilla for the residents. Like the residents of the camp, in other words, Dicle would also don the guerilla garb, and present himself as following the path of the martyrs, to close the gap between them. He wanted to show that he desired to transform himself into the person that Öcalan called the 'new man,' even if he was not at the frontlines of the struggle. He signaled that he too wanted to be a total person in the revolutionary ideology. Despite not being in the war, he too was taking on the commitment of the martyrs, in the same, yet transposed way, of the guerilla.

But here we need to be precise. Naturally, when he returned from the mountains, the garments came off, the flute was put back in the case, and he would go to sleep and go to work in the morning. His transportation into myth was not something permanent. He could, in a sense, pick and choose. He would often indulge in things which – in a revolutionary lens – could be seen as disdainful, such as drinking beer or courting women. For Dicle on the mountain, it was not so much pretending that he *was* a guerilla, but rather about presenting an image of himself as emulating them. It was

about him mirroring that which he knew that he could never be, nor entirely desired to be. Dicle would never have dared or desired to claim that he in fact was a guerilla soldier when he was not – that would have been shameful as well as dangerous.

Just because he pretended, in other words, it did not mean that he *became* – at least not in his entirety. This was to a certain degree true in Maxmur as well. Although people tried 'harder' there, so to speak, more realms of life being subsumed to adopting a martyrial ethos, they were never, nor could they entirely *be* martyrs – unless, of course, they were killed. In this way, Dicle's activity, as well as that of the residents in the camp, signaled an appraising mirroring through a cognizant separation. Rather than a full-on, yet gradual, transformation into the *sui generis* category of a martyr, it was an un-ending process of becoming martyrial. For both the guerilla and the civilians, they could gradually approach each other by mutually approaching the martyrs, but they could never consummate a total transformation. The fact that neither Dicle nor the residents could become martyrs in their entirety, however, did not mean that the attempt was not effectuating. Although the effects for Dicle might have been confined to receiving likes on his social media page, and re-affirming his political identity, in Maxmur, as we have seen, this emulation was central to the entirety of the social order. In the Maxmur camp the clothes very seldom 'came off,' so to speak. For the camp to elect leadership, utilize the direct-democratic structures, and in general constitute a sociality, the process of becoming martyrial was a central feature. Even when sons and daughters were given away, or when one was merely thirsty for a bottle of water, the clothes would 'stay on.' In this way, the very relationality of the camp was informed by its position *vis-à-vis* the martyrs. It was through continuously becoming martyrial that the camp was driven forward, both in and towards, the 'new life.'

Conclusion

As is hopefully evident from the current and preceding chapters, Maxmur's particular social order is intimately informed by the amount of eradicative violence experienced the residents. Initially fleeing Turkish Kurdistan after having their villages burned, the assertion of Apoist Kurdishness in Iraqi Kurdistan had also been an onerous and

oftentimes brutal process. If one went up to the hill behind the camp, close to where the PKK had stationed its contingent, one could see the ISIS frontline, marked by black-and-white flags. During my time in Iraqi Kurdistan, a suicide attack had been launched at the camp from ISIS. Although the drivers of the two suicide trucks were shot before they could enter into the camp, one of the vehicles breached the perimeter and managed to kill a guerilla protecting the camp when it detonated.[239] Moreover, as the Iraqi-Kurdish Parties negotiated with Erdoğan so as to continue with their oil export, an embargo and enclosure around the camps was enforced by the KDP, who lined up tanks and vehicles in what some of the residents suspected would be an attack on the camp, or the PKK' base close by.[240] The sound of airstrikes and bombs were a permanent feature of the camp's soundscape. Additionally, several people from the camp were killed in combat in either Syria or Turkey during my time there, which spurred large funeral celebrations and commemorations. After I had left, Turkey also bombed the camp, killing four people, including an older woman and a child.[241] It was in other words, very much informed by the relatively extreme conditions that it labored under.

However, given that this was such a volatile and violent situation, as indeed it was for most of the Kurdish regions when I was there, this condition begs the question of how the cosmology reproduces itself. What makes it so that the mothers and fathers who give their children, and the children who must become as the martyrs, find a meaning in this schema? In order for this to be accepted, not to mention believed in, a system for reproduction and movement must surely be in place? Indeed, the central question that arises is how the passing of time imagined; where is the struggle going, where has it come from, and, most importantly, how is one as an Apoist to think of time itself?

From the previous chapter we have seen how the martyrs form a tripartite caste-like system, which designates different groups' place in the mythological world. I called

[239] 'DAIŞ'ê hewl da êrîşî Mexmûrê bike.' (2016, August 8). *ANF News*. Retrieved from https://anfkurdi.com/kurdistan/dais-e-hewl-da-erisi-mexmure-bike-67636
[240] 'PDK'ê Hewlêr li Mexmurîyan qedexe kir.' (2016, September 9). *ANF News*. Retrieved from https://anfkurdi.com/kurdistan/pdk-e-hewler-li-mexmuriyan-qedexe-kir-69061
[241] 'Victims of Turkish attack laid to rest in Makhmur.' (2018, December 14). *ANF News*. https://anfenglishmobile.com/news/victims-of-turkish-attack-laid-to-rest-in-makhmur-31409.

this a 'synchronic' order, which I said would be complicated by an examination of the role of martyrs in lived practice. In the Maxmur camp we have seen how the martyrs inform practice at both an institutional and personal level, both in the realm of ritual and outside, and that their 'influence,' although omnipresent and socially structuring, is ambiguous and fraught with conflict. We are hence, now in a position where we can attempt to assess what role the martyrs play in social reproduction; i.e. how the martyrs condition how the struggle is considered as moving in time, and indeed what time itself is considered to be. For if they play a role in structuring the social order, albeit in different and shifting ways, they must also participate in its reproduction. We shall examine this process empirically by looking closer at the performance of the Newroz festival in the Qandil mountains. Here we will get a better sense of how the martyrs assist in assigning roles for the (re)production of the revolutionary cosmology. Through Newroz, in other words, we shall see how the martyrs intervene in conceptualizing how time, and the struggle, moves.

7: (Re)producing a New Time: PKK's Newroz and its Eternal Kawas

On the twenty-first of March every year, Kurds in all parts of Kurdistan as well as in the diaspora gather in streets, hillsides, mountains and squares to celebrate Newroz (literally 'New Day' in English),[243] the festival marking both the Kurdish National Day and the coming of the New Year. Having an ancient pre-history, it is an immensely popular celebration, and in large cities like Amed annually over a million people gather in the 'Newroz square' to celebrate. People dance traditional dances, enjoy live music, listen to speeches, and often jump over bonfires to mark the event. Whereas it is a rather uncontroversial celebration in Iranian, Syrian and Iraqi Kurdistan, in Turkish Kurdistan there is an immanent possibility that the festival will result in riots and demonstrations. Although confrontations with the police culminated in the 1990's, it is still widely considered a festival of resistance, and the celebration may still leave people wounded, or killed by state forces – as with Kemal Korkut in 2017. The political and violent connotations the celebration carries in Turkish Kurdistan has been explained by its connection to the PKK (Aydın, 2014, 2005; Gunes, 2013; Bozarslan, 2004; Güvenç, 2011; Tezcür, 2011; Gunter, 2000). As Bahar Aykan (2014) argues, participating in the Newroz festival in Turkish Kurdistan is mimetically taken as support of the PKK's struggle and project, which is what this chapter will explore and analyze. It will set out to examine what the Newroz festival, as performed under the PKK's aegis, may tell us about the ritual (re)production of the PKK's cosmology.

As has been argued by previous scholarship, the PKK strongly connected itself with Newroz in the late 1980's through constructing a narrative in which they inherited the Kurds' revolutionary struggle from the mythological figure of Kawa (Aydın, 2014, 2005; Gunes, 2013; Özsoy, 2010). According to legend, Kawa was a Median

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[242] A version of this chapter has been published previously (Rudi, 2018).
[243] As 'Newroz' is how the festival is known in English as well as Kurdish, I have elected not to italicize the name.

blacksmith who killed the evil Assyrian emperor Zahhak on Newroz day, thereby creating the Kurdish nation and ushering in a new, more just and peaceful time, signaled by a great bonfire (Perwer, 1990).[244] The Kurdish calendar year, which is currently 2719 at time of writing in 2019, is widely believed to have originated when the Medians overthrew Zahhak. In recent decades, a PKK martyr named Mazlum Doğan was remade into the 'contemporary Kawa,' and the twenty-first of March has marked when the PKK delivers important announcements, declares new regiments fully trained, launches attacks at army outposts,[245] and praises the Kurdish nation (Aykan, 2014), as well as calls for peace. For the PKK, Newroz plays a central part in framing their revolutionary struggle. Responding to this framing, the Turkish government has attempted to clamp down on the celebration in different ways (Aydın 2014, 2005; Aykan, 2014; Gunes, 2013; Bozarslan, 2004). This seems to have led scholarship to consider the contemporary political content of Newroz as being almost solely determined by its interaction with the Turkish state, rather than concerned with what Newroz might mean for the PKK's own political cosmology.

This chapter examines the political role of Newroz in greater depth by focusing on its cosmological content, as structured and imagined by the PKK. For, the dynamic of resistance and repression does not seem to capture all that is interesting, politically, in the celebration's contemporary configuration. Newroz, as sponsored by the PKK, harbors more central, ideological ideas about the meaning of agency in life and death in relation to time. As the PKK itself argues in its party magazine, Newroz and Kawa are the foundation for the PKK's struggle, and "Newroz [is] a paradigm for life" (*Berxwedan,* 1983a, p. 12).[246] To move beyond the propagandistic and rhetorical aspects of these assertions, it is necessary to expand analysis beyond the confines of state-repression/popular-mobilization perspectives. In this way, it is possible to respond to calls for examining the political logic of the PKK from the inside rather

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[244] Very much a folktale with different variations, the very famous singer Şiwan Perwer (1990) provides a good example of the common perception of the story, in my opinion, because he was an author whose iteration of the story many of my informants had read or heard.
[245] This was more prolific in the 90's, but was also the case in 2012 as Ayla Albayrak and Joe Parkinson have documented: Albayrak, A. & Parkinson, J. (2012, March 21). 'Five Turkish police killed in clash with PKK militants.' *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304636404577295792267051820
[246] In Kurdish, it states: "Newroz bû Pergala Jiyanê." Pergal can also be translated as 'system,' but in my experience, it is taken to mean a 'paradigm.'

than focusing on external macro-structures (Jongerden, 2016a; Yarkin, 2014; Gunes, 2013). This chapter sets out to answer questions about *how* Kawa and Newroz are the foundation for the PKK's resistance – what this entails and means. What place does Newroz occupy within the PKK's political universe, and what can the actual performance of the festival tell us about the underpinnings of the PKK's ideological configuration?

The chapter argues that Newroz may be seen as a festival fundamentally dealing with death and agency's relation to a temporal (re)production of a utopian social order, as imagined and idealized by the PKK.[247] Returning to Bloch and Parry, described in chapter 1 and 3, I argue that not only are the dead always in some respect re-integrated into the social order (Bloch & Parry, 1982), but also that *how* death and dying is treated constructs temporality (Willerslev, Christensen & Meinert, 2016). As Bloch and Parry (1982) have shown, the relationship between the living and the dead provides a structure through which passing of time can be imagined, and consequently, a frame for the construction of a social order – which, in the PKK's case, may be described as utopian. In this way, I argue that the performance of the PKK's Newroz reveals a particular utopian social order, and illustrates the ideological prescripts for attitudes towards death and agency that will eventually bring it into existence, as well as demonstrates the means for the reproduction of the process of arrival.

Newroz's prehistory as fertility festival – a festival of renewal and reproduction – became sublimated in the PKK's appropriation of it, and, consequently, when Mazlum Doğan was dubbed the 'contemporary Kawa,' it made martyrial struggle into the vehicle for both creating and moving in time. Doubling as the historical Kawa who had created the Kurds (or at least freedom for them), Mazlum Doğan provided both a model for living freedom in the present, and promised that a potential epochal shift could be achieved if his mode of living and dying was assimilated. Upon an examination of the role of martyrs in the performed context of Newroz at Qandil, a social configuration designed to move the struggle towards the new time is seen to

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[247] Hisyar Özsoy (2010) lays much of the foundation for the perspective in the article in his brilliant doctoral thesis. However, the work does not deal much with Newroz's role in the PKK cosmology, or how martyrs intersect social life, which this article attempts to elaborate.

arise out the 'Newroz paradigm for life,' and returning to the Maxmur refugee camp, the festival discloses its means for reproducing this movement. Through ritually controlling the transformative functions of death, I argue, the PKK never permits the dead to die, which might be said, paradoxically, to be the very condition that the movement struggles to achieve.

I draw on materials collected from the Newroz celebration in Qandil, the previously mentioned high-seat of the guerilla in the mountains of Northern Iraq, and interviews collected from Maxmur, as well as archive materials collected from the PKK's newspaper *Berxwedan*. It was after my fieldwork had been formally completed in 2017 that I came back for the celebration. I stayed with my friend in Slemani, whose wife was affiliated with the Apoist movement, but traveled to Qandil with the *hevals* from the youth center, who had organized busses to take people from the city to the mountain. Although normally the relation between the PKK and the ruling Kurdish parties who had the checkpoints were tense, during this day, it seemed as though the 'pan-Kurdish' identity superseded any internecine conflicts; our bus was happily sent through most of the checkpoints without much ado.

Renewal and Reproduction: Newroz Prior to the Kurds

Newroz was for a long time not considered a political festival – in fact, it was not even considered essentially Kurdish. Nonetheless, the historical backdrop of the celebration may be seen as laying the groundwork for the PKK's restructuring of its political content. At the outset a festival of renewal and reproduction, this background became first entangled with Kurdishness, and then later with the PKK's ideology. As the festival became 'Kurdish' and came into its contemporary political and mythological form, prior connotations to reproduction and renewal were carried over, or sublimated within it. It is therefore necessary to first examine how Newroz developed as a Kurdish festival and how it became politicized, before we may understand the influence it had on the PKK's ideological configuration.

According to several scholars, the earliest precursors to Newroz have strong connections with spring equinox festivals (Boyce, 2016; Foltz, 2016; Hirschler, 2001).

It has been argued that Newroz, or its preceding forms, has been celebrated by Middle Eastern peoples almost continuously from ancient pre-history to today, although the name, form, and popularity of the festival has varied (Shahbazi, 2016; Aydın, 2005). It is popularly considered the national day of Iran, for example, which is still enthusiastically celebrated at the trepidation of the Islamic regime. Several scholars have argued for Newroz's connections to the Zoroastrian celebrations and the festival of Mithragan as well as other pre-Islamic rituals (Foltz, 2016; Boyce, 1992; Hirschler, 2001), and UNESCO has acknowledged its status as one of the oldest festivals in the world (UNESCO, 2016).[248] The general consensus is that Newroz's ancient history has connections with fertility festivals and the start of the turn of the seasons (Aydın, 2005; Yarshater, 1959). To quote Boyce: "As far back as records go, Nowruz has been, either in fact or by intention a celebration of early spring, when the sun begins to regain strength and overcome winter's cold darkness and when there is a renewal of growth and vigour in nature" (Boyce, 2016, np.). As such (much like today) Newroz seems to always have been associated with renewal and reproduction, although not necessarily with the myth of Zahhak – or Kurdishness for that matter.

There are several different stories surrounding Kawa and Zahhak, but there are a few common staples. Zahhak was an evil Assurian ruler, reigning over the Median people. Every day Zahhak demanded to be brought two children's brains to feed the snakes growing out of his shoulders.[249] The blacksmith Kawa, who had lost many of his children to this evil emperor, finally mustered a rebellion and killed the malevolent ruler. To signal his victory over the evil emperor to the oppressed subjects, he lit the hills on fire – later, the fire of Newroz – thereby ushering in a new, free time (Özsoy, 2010; Hirschler, 2001), and creating the Kurds (Perwer, 1990).[250] Alternatively, other stories relate that the Kurds came into being by escaping to the mountains, and descended to overthrow Zahhak once they had become a strong and powerful nation (Ferdowsi, 2016; Özsoy, 2010; Bidlisi, 2005). Regardless of their differences, both

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[248] See also 'UNESCO'dan Newroz kararı.' (2016, November 30). *Rudaw*. Retrieved from http://www.rudaw.net/turkish/culture/30112016
[249] See, for instance, Sheref Khan Bidlisi (2005), Abolqasem Ferdowsi (2016), Perwer (1990), Konrad Hirschler (2001), Özsoy (2010).
[250] Siwan Perwer (1990) is one of the few authors directly seeing Kurds as being created by the lighting of the fire, but it is version of the story that circulates widely among people in the region, in my experience.

stories in some sense mark the ushering in of a new time and the ethno-genesis of the Kurdish people. Today, besides Kawa being presented as a Kurd, he is also popular due to his proletarian (blacksmith) status, and Zahhak is a popular denominator for both oppressors of people in general, but also, more concretely, for heads of state which take the lives of Kurds.

Connecting Newroz, as festival of renewal and reproduction, with both Kurdishness and its myth of ethno-genesis, has been a lasting interpretative task. The first written version of the Zahhak story has no connections to Newroz or Kurds as such, although both elements are mentioned. Passed on from the Persian poet Abu al-Qasim Firdowsî in his *Şahnamê* from around 1000 AD ('Abolqasem Ferdowsi' in English), he argues that Kurds are born of children spared from being eaten by Zahhak (Ferdowsi, 2016).[251] The spared children, who took refuge in the mountains, became "the Kurds, who never settle in Towns" (Ferdowsi, 2016, p. 15). But in Firdowsî's story the person who eventually puts an end to Zahhak reign is a Persian King, not a Kurdish blacksmith. Kawa is mentioned, but only in passing as a wronged Persian citizen trying to achieve justice through assisting the King. Newroz is not mentioned as a related event, rather it is described as a separate day spent celebrating the grace of the divine ruler and the coming of spring (Ferdowsi, 2016, p. 7). It marked the day when the ruler, Jamshid, had domesticated the "demons," and brought a new order onto the world, upon which nature flourished and blossomed (Ferdowsi, 2016, p. 8).

In the same fashion, the second earliest written iteration of the Zahhak story did not connect it with Newroz either. The *Şarafname* was written in 1570 by Şeref Xan al-Bidlisî ('Sheref Khan Bidlisi' in English), tracing and elevating the origins and genealogy of the noble Kurdish families of which he was part, in a bid to secure more autonomy from the Ottoman Port (Bajalan, 2012).[252] As such, several origin stories of the Kurds are discussed, but al-Bidlisî concludes that the Zahhak story is the most credible (and most honorable) (Bidlisi, 2005, p. 10). Al-Bidlisî argues that the children

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[251] I reference these historical works in the orthography of the publishers, but in-text I write their names in the Kurdish orthography, as this mirrors closer how their names are pronounced and used in the movement.

[252] *Xan* is a Kurdish way of writing and saying 'Khan,' an honorific title accorded aristocratic leaders.

spared from Zahhak eventually became the Kurds, gaining valor and honorable traits by living in exile in the mountains, but he does not see Newroz and Kawa as being related. In fact, Newroz does not appear in the voluminous work at all. Hence, both Firdowsî and al-Bidlisî illustrate that Newroz was, in its earliest iterations, probably not seen as connected with the Zahhak story, although the Zahhak myth was inextricably linked with the emergence of the Kurdish people.

Making Newroz Kurdish

In the mid-to-late-1600's, sources suggest that Newroz might in itself have developed connections to Kurdishness – or at least burgeoning associations – but not to the Zahhak story as such. The 17th century Ottoman poet Ehmedê Xanî ('Ahmed Khani' in English), for instance, who was another Kurdish proto-nationalist, wrote a saga called *Mem û Zîn* in 1692, which he hoped would bolster Kurdish self-consciousness (Xanî 2008, p. 33).[253] It was the one of the first works to be written in Kurdish,[254] and was supposed to be the defining epic of the Kurdish people.[255] *Mem û Zîn* is, in essence, a Romeo-and-Juliet-like story where, due to an evil character's malicious manipulation of aristocratic structures, the two infatuated protagonists end up dying of unrequited love. Conspicuously, the event that sets the Kurdish epic in motion – where the protagonists see each other for the first time – is Newroz. Xanî describes the lavish Newroz festival in *Mem û Zîn* as taking place in his Kurdish principality, without feeling the need to recount the origin of the festival or any of the surrounding mythology. In addition to the festival being considered a public holiday by the Ottoman Porte at the time, this suggests that Newroz was an established, well-known, and uncontroversial practice in the Kurdish regions. It seems dubious, however, that the day Xanî chose to set the self-proclaimed Kurdish epic in motion would be without

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[253] See Van Bruinessen (2003) and Leezenberg's (2016b), problematization of the supposed nationalist undertones.
[254] Another famous Kurdish poet, Melayê Cizîrî ('Malaye Jaziri' in English), from the Principality of Botan, shared Xanî's proto-nationalist ambitions, but although Newroz appears in his collected poem, it is also not connected with Zahhak but rather with Sufi Mysticism. Similar to Xanî, it seems to a symbolic festival of reproduction and renewal.
[255] Xanî details this early on (2008, p. 31), but as Michael Cyet (1991) shows, there are multiple versions of the story, which also might have existed simultaneously, and Leezenberg argues that the argument should be read allegorically rather than 'nationally' (Leezenberg 2016b).

connotations to an event that was not (at least partially) perceived as 'identitarily' Kurdish.

Similar to its origins, in *Mem û Zîn* Newroz is described more as a fertility festival, with people traveling to the mountains to dress up and make good impressions on the opposite sex with the hope of finding potential spouses, than a festival of identitarian becoming. In the Newroz celebration, Xanî writes about baroque amounts of food and describes women's bodies in detail, alongside lengthy descriptions of the prowess and bravery of the attending Kurdish aristocracy, and how they were responsibly seeking mates (Xanî, 2008, pp. 55-60). Remarkably, it seems Xanî was familiar with the Zahhak myth but did not see it as related to Newroz,[256] even though both might have had Kurdish connotations at this time. The written, historical documents therefore suggest that both the Zahhak myth and the Newroz festival might both have borne Kurdish connotations, but had not been merged into one as of yet.[257] Interestingly, this would mean the Newroz – as a fertility festival of reproduction and renewal – might have been perceived as Kurdish before its political and mythological connections emerged.

Politicizing Newroz: Bringing the Myth to the Festival

Delal Aydın argues that it was not until the mid 20th century that Newroz came into its current political and mythological configuration, i.e. when Zahhak and Newroz became bound together in a tale of Kurdish *resistance* with contemporary, parallel relevance (Aydın, 2014; 2005). As temporal boundaries are somewhat fluid, the unification of the story and the event may have taken place when Iraqi Kurdish Parties adopted Newroz as their national holiday in the 1950s (Van Bruinessen, 2000a). Such allusions are also apparent as early as Pîremerd's poem *Bo kurd cejinî rast Newroz e* from 1948 (Pîremerd, 2005), but Delal still emphasizes that Newroz truly became a festival of resistance in the 1970's, under the banner of Kurdish progressive and

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[256] As can be seen in the subtle references throughout the work; the 'snake-emperor,' for instance, possibly referencing the snakes growing out of Zahhaks shoulders, according to Ferdowsi.

[257] It is important to note here that folklore is a completely different thing, and that the story and the festival might have had this connection among the common people, but one might be rather certain that these two stories had not fused in the elite's conception of Kurdish proto-nationalism, as exemplified by Xanî. For a thoughtful discussion on the emergence of Kurdish nationalism, see Bajalan (2013).

socialist movements (Aydın, 2005).[258] There, Newroz became mythologized in a political fashion.

According to Aydın (Aydın 2014; 2005), the first written reference asserting Kawa as a revolutionary Kurd who overthrows Zahhak on Newroz in order to usher in a new time, comes from the immensely popular nationalist poet and politician Cigerxwîn. Cigerxwîn wrote the poem, *Kîme Ez* ('Who am I?') in 1973 in Syria, which states:

> Kawa the Smith is my Ancestor
> He cut off the head of Zahhak the enemy.
> (…)
> The Newroz day,
> Winter Fades away and so do all days of Agony
> The Kurds are liberated*[259]*

Here it is clear that Newroz as the Kurdish New Year's celebration was indisputably fused with the legend of how Kurds were created through the destruction of Zahhak. Newroz shifted from being merely a way of celebrating the New Year through song and dance and bonfires, to also echoing a mythical story of resistance to oppression – a story that could easily find contemporary parallels through how various governments treated the festival (Bozarslan, 2004). The conception that 'New Zahhaks' were oppressing the Kurds (Gundî, 2013; Cigerxwîn, 1973), was wedded with an earlier festival where "all Kurds get dressed up in their prettiest clothes (...) singing folksongs, playing games" (*Özgurluk Yolu,* March 1976*,* cited in Aydın, 2005, p. 73). Cigerxwîn clearly melded Newroz's preceding notions of renewal and reproduction with ideas of resistance and liberation of contemporary relevance.

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[258] There were attempts at making Kawa into a Kurd before this time, but this was not in relation to Newroz as such.
[259] Cigerxwîn's original verse (1973, p. 13), is recounted below, but here I follow Aydın's (2005) translation on page 74:
Kawey Hesinker Bav û Kalê min
Perciqand serê Zehakê dijmin
(…)
Ew roje nûroz
Zivistan dicî
Ew rojen new xwes

Although not solely his doing, Cigerxwîn contributed to making Newroz into a political lynchpin for the contemporary and future Kurdish movements. During the heyday of the Kurdish anti-colonialist struggle of the 1970's, Bozarslan argues there was not a single Kurdish party that did not relate to Kawa in one way or another (Bozarslan, 2004). By the end of the 1970's, Newroz had become an 'internally' politicized celebration – a festival that not only signified social renewal and reproduction and Kurdishness, but also gave the contemporary struggles mythological bearing; it had become a festival and story about the rebellious Kurds who were born from resistance on New Year's Day. This unification had profound implications for how the PKK used the festival when it fell under their domain.

The PKK's Newroz: The Discursive Hegemony

What the nature of Newroz became when it fell under the aegis of the PKK in Turkey, and how it should be understood, has been the subject of some debate. As Cengiz Gunes (2013) relates, after the Turkish coup in 1980, which practically eradicated the Kurdish and Turkish Left, the PKK was the only party left with any significant influence due to the preventative move of its headquarters to Syria. According to Gunes (Gunes 2013, p. 259), this afforded the PKK the opportunity to lay a strong claim to Newroz festival in Turkey, creating parallels with its own struggle, making Newroz into a "contemporary myth of resistance." The PKK managed to connect itself with Newroz's mythological content by dubbing Mazlum Doğan, a political prisoner who killed himself in the infamous Diyarbakir prison on 21st of March 1982, 'the contemporary Kawa,' as well as connecting several of his fellow inmates with the 'spirit' and 'fire' of Newroz (Gunes, 2013). Mazlum Doğan was said to be 'the spirit of resistance,' in that instead of appearing before court and being forced to confess on television, he had burned himself in his cell in a 'Newroz fire' (Özsoy, 2010). It was later revealed that he had lit three matches (a different Newroz fire) and hung himself instead, but the point was still the same: he had denied the Turkish state's its rule and power – like Kawa had done with Zahhak. In Gunes' perspective, Newroz thus became a discursive tool for the PKK, marking mythological "constructions of relations of difference" to Turkishness and the Turkish state (Gunes, 2013, p. 262).

Importantly, Gunes contends, it also added force to the PKK's political ideology; by making mythological time relevant to its struggle, the PKK presented its resistance as having historical purpose – inheriting a teleological motive power (Gunes, 2013).

This perspective echoes, to some degree, Aydın's argument, although the focus on force is missing. Aydın posits that Newroz became an "ideological tool" for "counter-hegemony" under the patronage of the PKK and argues that it became a means through which the PKK could unite Kurds in common purpose, despite divisions of class, place and social standing (Aydın, 2005, p. 83). It was a "common imaginary" through which people could create political consubstantiality, in other words, a place where Kurdish identity could be created as well as a place where one would illustrate opposition to the State (Aydın, 2005, p. 3). Common for both perspectives was the central role of Mazlum Doğan in bringing the myth to bear on the present, in his capacity as the contemporary Kawa. Through his suicide, or martyrdom, the PKK was able to create its own narrative of Newroz.

This is where I see a space for elaboration. Whereas Aydın and Gunes convincingly argue the connection of Mazlum Doğan to Kawa, re-casting political resistance as self-sacrifice, it is also possible to understand this framing of Newroz as having broader ramifications, considering Newroz's lasting history as a festival of reproduction and renewal. Gunes alludes to this thematic expansion but does not elaborate when he argues: "Their resistance [suicide] in Diyarbakir prison (…) was described as the beginning of a 'new era' for the struggle and survival of the Kurds as a nation" (Gunes, 2013, p. 262). Taking up the thread from Gunes here, I will attempt to examine what characterizes this 'new era' heralded by Mazlum Doğan. I suggest that Mazlum Doğan's suicide marked not only 'the spirit of resistance' for the PKK, but also revealed ideas central to how the PKK conceived of movement in time in relation to agency and death, and indeed sketched a blueprint for a utopian social order apparent in the actual performance of Newroz. More than "exemplars", motivating Kurds for self-sacrificial resistance (Gunes, 2013, p. 262), Mazlum Doğan and Newroz played (and continue to play) a significant part in the PKK's political cosmology and social visions for the future.

This perspective finds precedence in the work of Rane Willerslev, Dorthe Refslund Christensen, and Lotte Meinert (2016). They posit that death is always, in some sense, connected with fertility rights and rebirth, and vice versa. Thus, death rituals "establish a temporality through actions with material objects in a set space," wherein "timing" becomes "a central structuring aspect" (Willerslev, Christensen & Meinert, 2016, p. 2). It is, they argue, through events marking death (and rebirth) that cosmological assumptions and beliefs about the structure of the world and the passing of time emerge. If there is a triumph over death, "it has to do with our grasping and *taming* of time" and the re-production or re-making of social structures (Willerslev, Christensen & Meinert, 2016, p. 2, italics retained), they claim. By framing Newroz in this way – as is warranted by both its prehistory and its contemporary connection to the death of Mazlum Doğan – we may see that the event reveals cosmological notions of time and agency, central to the PKK's utopian project.

Newroz and Kawa in the PKK's Cosmology: Agency and Time

Mazlum Doğan and Newroz's place in the PKK's political universe is, at least in part, implied in the PKK's Kurdish newspaper *Berxwedan's* issues from around the time of his suicide*. Berxwedan* was widely circulated in the Turkish Kurdish areas and in the diaspora at the time (Gunes, 2013). In issues of *Berxwedan* following Doğan's suicide, Newroz was called the "the sign of the uprisings of our people" (*Berxwedan,* 1983a, p. 12),[260] and was interestingly framed in terms of a "paradigm of life" (*Berxwedan* 1983b, p. 12).[261] It is important, an article in May 1983 stresses, to recall its history, because it was through struggle, bloody and difficult, that "Newroz was *created*" (*Berxwedan,* 1983b, p. 12).[262] The article goes on to enumerate what different elements Kawa embodied when he (re)created Newroz, namely "goodness, cleanness of heart, rebirth, struggle, rebellion, independence and desire for freedom", in a bid to inspire and instruct people on how to live properly, according to this paragon (*Berxwedan,* 1983b, p. 12). This description harkened back to an earlier article on Mazlum Doğan in April, in which it was argued that, ultimately, "(...) by giving his

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[260] In Kurmanjî: " Newroz, nîsana serhildana gelê me yê."
[261] In Kurmanjî: "Newroz bû Pergala Jiyanê."
[262] In Kurmanjî: "(…)NEWROZ afrî ye."

life, he gave new life to the declaration of Newroz" (*Berxwedan,* 1983a, p. 12). Both articles conclude, in other words, that Mazlum Doğan's self-sacrifice engendered and embodied a "paradigm of life", which opened the possibility of an arrival of a new time and as well as delineated the "way forward" (*Berxwedan,* 1983a, p. 12; *Berxwedan,* 1983b, p. 12).[263] *Berxwedan* argued that as Kawa and Newroz had created the coming into being (or time) of the Kurds in prehistory, the same could (and should) be accomplished now – and Mazlum Doğan showed how (*Berxwedan* 1983b, p. 12). In this way, more than serving as an 'exemplar' for other revolutionary Kurds (Gunes, 2013), Mazlum Doğan illustrated a cosmological tenet central to the ideology, namely that epochal time can be changed through self-sacrifice and death. As the articles suggest, if one lives the Newroz paradigm, like Kawa, a transformation of the temporal and social order may follow.

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[263] Berxwedan 1983a, writes, for instance, "û bi vê afirandina danezanê, bi vê bê emsalîye, rûpelen dîroka Kurdistan nexsandiyê" on page 12, and Berxwedan 1983b, writes "MAZLUM DOGAN (…) xasiya şoreşgeri û rêberiya gel û taybetên Newroz û Kawa ya nûdem cikirim parast û pêtiyê Newrozê di nav telên pêcayî, deriyen hesin, û dîwaren bi rêz pêxist," on page 12, as well.
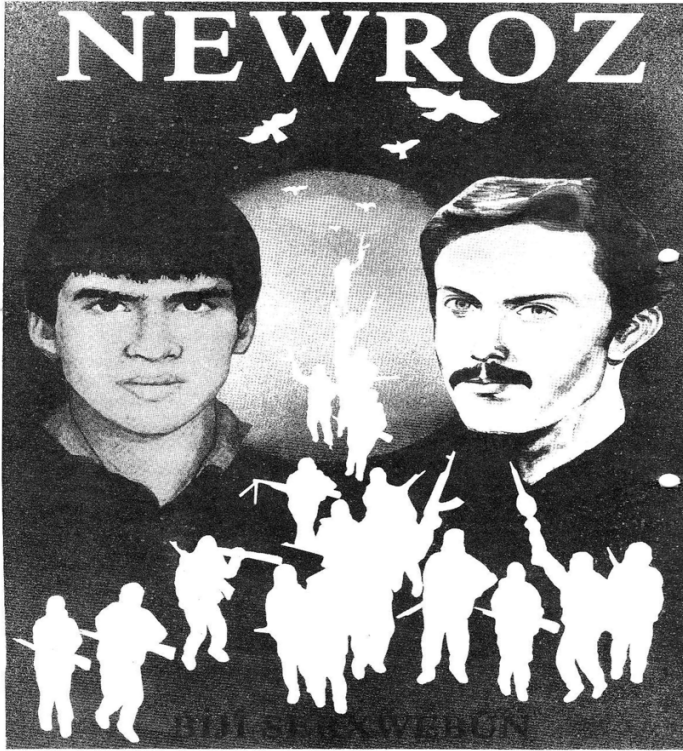
7.1. An image celebrating Newroz taken from *Berxwedan* (1984). On the left Mazlum Doğan, and on the right Ferhat Kurtay, who followed Doğan's example a few months later, and set himself on fire in his cell, along with Mahmut Zengîn, Eşref Aynik, and Necmi Öner.

Artworks in *Berxwedan* during this period also make this point. In an illustration (Figure 7.1) from the 1984 February issue of *Berxwedan* (*Berxwedan,* 1984, p. 40)*,* the reproductive and transformative character of Mazlum Doğan is clearly depicted. In the image, under the aegis of Mazlum Doğan and another martyr who killed himself in prison, the armed people collectively comprise the Newroz fire, and are gradually transformed into birds, a symbol of freedom and peace. The interpretative purchase of the image suggests that through collective sacrifice and struggle, i.e. through emulating the life of Mazlum Doğan (and Kawa), one can move from oppression to freedom; through death, a transformation to a new, more peaceful time will be

achieved. In this way, the liberated time of Kawa may be 're-instilled,' as a function of (collective) agency. Not only does the PKK's presentation of Newroz collapse mythological and lived time into one continuum (Gunes, 2013; Aydın, 2005), it also suggests that epochal changes can be brought about through sacrificial action.

Li berbang ronahi didin tirêjên beyanê
Gaveke Roja sorê hilê,
Giringe em şer bıkın leşkerê hogır;
     weke KAWA!..
Di xwîna em dırjînın da
     Wê bifetıse zılma sazıya kedxwara.
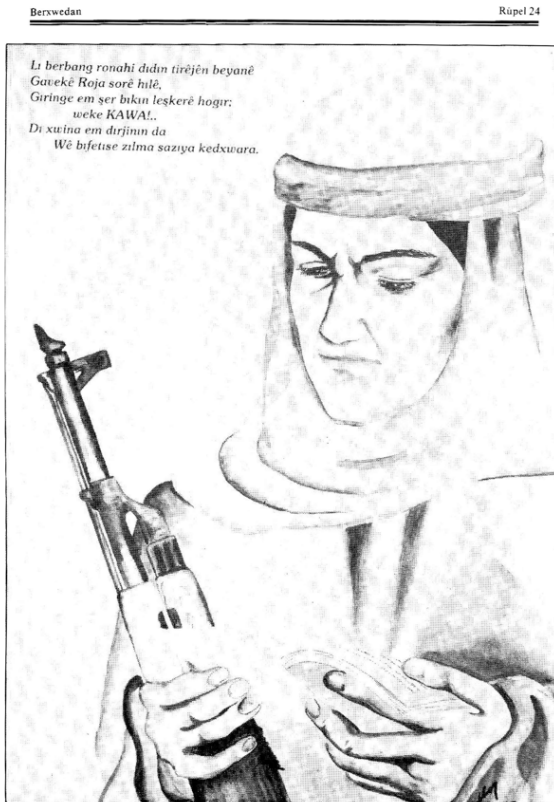
7.2 A poster from *Berxwedan* in April 1983, encouraging people to "do war, like KAWA!.."[264]

We can thus say that Mazlum Doğan and Newroz play two parts in the PKK's political universe. Firstly, Newroz can be a 'paradigm of life,' is, something that can be strived for in lived practice. Secondly, this way of living – a life of resistance and self-abnegation – as exemplified by, and embodied in, Mazlum Doğan, promises to result

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[264] Image retrieved from *Berxwedan* (1983a).

in a collective re-birth of a free Kurdistan and Kurdish nation. As such, Newroz's prehistory as a fertility festival, concerned with renewal and reproduction, becomes intertwined with the PKK's current ideological configuration of the celebration; through a collective emulation of Mazlum Doğan's abnegating agency, one may 're-produce' a new epochal time for the Kurdistan. I consider below how this configuration is manifest in the actual performance of the festival in the PKK's high-seat, Qandil, and the Maxmur refugee camp, controlled by the PKK. Based on my participation in 2017, the festival reveals a social formation arising out of the idealized 'Newroz paradigm of life,' and shows how social reproduction is imagined and symbolically enacted within this same order. In short, Mazlum Doğan's utopian promise and exhortation for practice engenders a social order, which we shall see apparent in the performance of the Newroz celebration.

Newroz in Practice: Creating a Social Order

In 2017, I attended the Newroz festival in Qandil Mountains in Northern Iraq. Even though I had not been back to Iraqi Kurdistan for several months I recognized several of my friends and the *hevals* from the youth center in Slemanî. In order to get there in time, we had to get up at around 6 in the morning and pack into busses that could take us there. In the busses the mood was elated, people blasting revolutionary music and singing along for hours, and flying Apoist flags out the window, shouting slogans. Aside from the civilians packed into the buses, there were a few senior guerillas accompanying us, who assisted us in passing through the PKK-controlled checkpoints as we grew close.

As we snaked our way between the towering mountains, I was struck by how this location was so clearly a space controlled by the PKK. On the way up to the festival grounds, seemingly coming out of nowhere, a huge picture of Abdullah Öcalan was visible, mounted to the side of a hill. Instead of checkpoints manned by other Kurdish parties, PKK guerillas stood guard on the winding roads and checked vehicles for bombs. Fixed structures built in concrete were painted with PKK flags and slogans, which would be hard to imagine in Turkey. The people in the bus were elated, happy to be invited to the festival in the home base of the guerilla. Contrary to Newroz in

Turkish Kurdistan, there was no intervening state prohibiting the festival from taking place precisely as the PKK imagined that it should. Whereas one could make the argument that in order to glean the idealized imagined structure, the festival should be observed in Turkish Kurdistan, the PKK's control over the territory might also be seen as a factor 'purifying' the celebration. In contrast to Turkey, in Qandil there would be no hindrances for the use of flags, music, speech or outfits, making this perhaps one of the best places to examine an 'unadulterated' performance of Newroz; here, the event could truly exhibit the PKK's designs for the festival, more clearly revealing what social order the PKK set out to instantiate.

Resolving the Division between the Guerilla and the People

The first inklings of how social order was performed and exemplified in Newroz could be seen in how the festival grounds themselves were organized. When the bus arrived, on the left-hand side of the area, outside of a guerilla checkpoint, there seemed to be a 'civilian' zone, where families brought homemade food to be warmed up, sitting around with their relatives and friends, dressed in traditional clothes – in my mind echoing the pages from Xanî. A large number of people, in an effort to praise the guerilla, wore mock-guerilla garb, made from fabrics that looked very similar. Guerilla soldiers would come and visit, sitting and eating with families – some even finding their own families there, but most staying within the enclosure on the right-hand side. This was the area of the actual festival grounds, where PKK guerillas were standing around close to a couple of pyres warming themselves. They were guarded by a checkpoint that searched people coming in, but not those leaving. At approximately mid-day, people started filtering into the festival grounds. The civilians seemed to sit on the outside, and when the time was right, came to 'visit' on the inside. In a matter of minutes, several hundred people moved through the checkpoints, gathering in front of the stage. Some people were fortunate to find places underneath the elevated pyres. Discreetly, the guerillas blended into the crowd, becoming engulfed in the mass.

As a function of the construction of the festival grounds and how they were used, it seemed to me that transitioning between these spaces resolved the division between the guerilla and the people. After the civilians had entered the checkpoint, there was

no easy way at first glance of distinguishing who was guerilla and who was not –
particularly considering their garments. They were now enclosed together as a unit
within the same spatial zone. The evisceration of the distinction between the guerilla
and the people also became quickly apparent when the music from the stage started
playing. Within seconds of the song *Kîne Em* playing (Siwan Perwer's appropriation
of Cigerxwîn's poem *Kîme Ez*), guerilla and civilians grabbed hold of one another and
danced together. There were no performed distinctions between who was guerilla and
who was not, everyone dancing with everyone. The form of dancing facilitated, quite
literally, the guerilla and the people to act as one. *Govend* or *dîlan,*[265] as the traditional
dance form is called, has a quite unique characteristic in that it is not a dance that
permits for much individual variation or improvisation. Rather, it is a dance that has
eight or more repetitive moves depending on the difficulty and region of origin,
conducted in unison by circular arrangements of multiple people. A continuous dance
can last for a single song without breaking pattern, or in the case of weddings, over
several hours. In front of the stage, guerilla and civilians danced shoulder-to-shoulder,
locking hands and arms and moving in synchronicity to music detailing the honorable
exploits of the Kurds and the PKK:

> *This is the earth of life (…)*
> *With Kawa as a mould,*
> *It realizes* [pêk anîn]
> *It gives birth to patriots (…)*
> *We tell of the path of Marxism*
> *The Path of Leninism*
> *Sons of Guhderz and Şerab and Rustem*[266]

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[265] There is supposedly a difference between *govend, helperkê* and *dîlan;* i.e. different dances for
different occasions, but in my experience the terms were used interchangeably.
[266] Translated from Siwan Perwer's lyrics to *Kine Em* ('Who are we?'), these three people are initially
mentioned in Firdowsî's *Sherefname,* but are then called Persian Princes (Ferdowsi, 2016). Nationalist
Kurdish historians, like Izady (2005), have however (deilberately?) misread the old-Persian word
Gourd, which means Hero, taking it as a descriptive term instead, namely 'Kurd,' in order to buttress
the common folklore, according to Bajalan (2012). Hence 'Rustam the Hero', in Firdowsî, has become
'Rustam the Kurd' in some literary works, also becoming an important figure in the mythology; recall
for instance the guerilla *fermandar* with the *nom de guerre* Rustem Cudî, who the Maxmur camp was
named after.

Participating in rings which may have literally hundreds of people doing exactly the same thing, may generate profound experiences of collectivity. In the chain, there is no way to 'show off' or to individually become at the center of attention. Although some people, especially young men, add some idiosyncratic flares, being a good dancer means to know all the steps perfectly and to feel the rhythm in the body, as well as being able to blend seamlessly with the dancers next to you. If someone does not know the dance, people will actively assist in showing the steps clearly, and guide the movements. It only truly becomes beautiful and powerful in the aggregate. Almost symbolically, the center of the ring is always empty, although, in smaller groups, if a person becomes 'overtaken by the dance,' he or she may enter the center and dance by themselves for a few bars, but still following the base moves piously in their improvisation. At the celebration, the participants would really put their hearts and souls into it, and after a song ended it was not uncommon that everyone was rather sweaty and red-faced.

Govend is also a particular dance in that men and women dance together unfettered – at least in Apoist circles. There is no gender separation in the major Kurdish *govends*, and no age separation either. This is rather exceptional, since other forms of dancing are normally divided along gender lines. Furthermore, in *Apoist* communities there is no shame in coming into a circle at any time and grabbing anyone's little fingers. Guerillas and people would filter in and out of the current *govend*s going on, in addition to enjoying the dancing, also trying to learn *govend*s that of unknown provenance, and holding conversations about the location of their origin. At the most, there were 4 or 5 different *govends* happening at the same time at the celebration. Some of the *govends* were from the guerilla, some of them from Iraqi-Kurdistan, and some of them from Turkish Kurdistan, as well as a few from Syrian and Iranian Kurdistan as well. In the dancing there was, in other words, a sharing as well across the various gender and age divides.

This spatial configuration and its use in dance was, perhaps inadvertently, designed in such a way that the normal separation of the people from the guerilla was temporarily and symbolically dissolved. Typically spatially and socially separated – the guerilla

seeing themselves as 'protecting the people' and the people as 'supporting the guerilla' – they were now a common unit, very much in line with the ideological writings of the leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan (Öcalan, 2017). Öcalan posits that in the "new life" (Öcalan, 2009, p. 331, my translation),[267] as the corollary of the new time, there will be no need for the guerilla, since the people will have organized their own self-protection units, organized at a communal and local level; a utopian goal of the revolution being the guerilla becoming civilians and civilians becoming guerilla (Öcalan 2009, Öcalan 2004). More importantly, however, as is often emphasized in not only Öcalan's work but also in *Berxwedan*, is the united purpose and direction created between the guerilla and the civilian population. In terms of re-arranging categories in an ideal and symbolic way, it seemed the first performative element of the festival was bringing people and guerilla together in an equal and undivided space.

Equal Before the Martyrs

Upon entering the stage area, however, it seemed like a hierarchy had been symbolically instilled. As people looked up at the performers, it was hard not to notice the pantheon of martyrs next to the large picture of Öcalan adorning the stage. The dead had, in a sense, intersected this equal space of the living.

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[267] "*Jiyana nû,*" in Kurdish.

7.3 The Newroz Stage at Qandil. My image.

The stage, in front of which everyone was dancing and listening, was decked with a
large picture of Öcalan adorned with several martyrs on each side. Between the
performances, the master of ceremonies would read different poems composed by
civilians and guerillas alike and always try to rile up the crowds – or indeed end any
segment or introduction – with the slogan *Bijî Serok Apo! Bijî Serok Apo* ('Long live
Leader Öcalan! Long live Leader Öcalan!'). People responded to this injunction with
chants, repeating the slogan four and five times, waving flags intently. Other times, the
crowds would shout *Şehîd namirin!* ('martyrs never die!') until their voices croaked.
The young men in particular were exceptionally loud, truly trying to fill the slogans
with passion and energy. Before performing, the different bands also expressed
humility and prostrated themselves in front of the crowd when they were introduced.
Some band members had previously been part of the guerilla, and some were purely
civilian, but made songs about the Kurdish struggle. Performing in front of Öcalan and
the martyrs on Newroz was a very honored but also humbling affair, as one of the
bands said in their introduction, and they were happy that they could 'praise/honor'

(*pîroz kirin*) the day and the movement. Many bands coupled this sentiment by saying that they hoped they did not bring "shame" upon the struggle, and, arguably more importantly, the martyrs.

The humble feeling that the band spoke of, and many people were certain to feel, might have come from the picture of Öcalan and the martyrs on stage. The icons were aimed at the crowd, observing performers and audience alike as they interacted. The martyrs were, in a sense, beholding and 'examining' the interactions taking place, from a removed position. The performers would naturally have felt humbled by being in a position where they were both intended to represent Öcalan and the martyrs and, at the same time, venerate them; they were not only playing *from* them, but also playing *to* them. Likewise, the spectators might also have felt humbled due to their observation (perhaps judgment?) by the martyrs, and their participation in a festival that took place under their aegis, and in their honor. They too were the object the martyrs' gaze, included in the uniform body of their attention. In this way, the martyrs were not only the capacitators for the unification, since participants – performers and spectators, civilian and guerilla – were undivided under their eyes. They were also figures who stood elevated beyond them, the figures for whom the festival took place, and the objects of their adulation. The humbleness felt and expressed by the performers and the participants alike might, in other words, have derived from being observed by someone who was considered more powerful and venerable than themselves.

In this perspective, we may see how the unification of people and guerilla was hierarchized in relation to the dead. Literally through their eyes, and in front of the martyrs, people were all equal and the same, but they were not the same as the dead. The martyrs and Öcalan were elevated above the performers, both literally and symbolically. They had given something that the living had not; they had completely totalized their self-abnegating practice. In the same way that Mazlum Doğan, on Öcalan's right hand side, had been elevated for sacrificing himself for the cause, becoming an 'exemplar,' all the people next to him had been elevated for the same reason. They had all, in different ways, proven themselves willing to give up

everything, willing to "consciously sacrifice their life for the sake of developing our struggle" (*Serxwebûn,* December 1982, cited in Gunes, 2013, p. 260), contributing to a re-installment of the epochal new time for Kurdistan. Drawing on Bloch and Parry, then, from the stage arrangement we might say that the martyrs were re-animated as a moral, discriminating force. Being committed to the struggle and to the ideology, as participating would surely indicate, was not enough to land one a spot on the stage next to Abdullah Öcalan, leaving the participants in a deferent and humble position. A hierarchy had been established between the living and the dead; the dead who had died selflessly had the right to a category beyond the reach of the living.

This did not mean that there were special criteria, belonging to only one group, for who could become martyrs, however. The guerillas were not necessarily privileged in becoming martyrs; civilians could also achieve this status. That both civilians and guerillas had equal potential to become martyrs was illustrated by the image of Mehmet Tunç, a 'civillian' activist, positioned next to guerilla martyrs. Mehmet Tunç had been a spokesperson for the BDP party in Turkey, and spoke to international media from Cizîre when it was under siege from the Turkish state. Instead of leaving the city when the fighting escalated and the rumors of mass homicides started circulating, Tunç stayed and continued reporting, keeping them informed about them of the situation. He was burned alive in a basement along with several Kurdish youths in the beginning of February of 2016 (see chapter 3). His willful and selfless act warranted martyr status, as one of the people assisting in the process of bringing about a new, more just time for Kurdistan – a category shared with the harbinger of the new time, Mazlum Doğan.

Subsumption of the Martyrs to Abdullah Öcalan

Although participants were equivocated under the gaze of the elevated martyrs, this did not mean that all the people on stage had the same status. Square in the middle of the stage was Abdullah Öcalan, depicted by an immense, personalized portrait. He was, quite literally, at the center of the celebration. Streamers with different flags connected to the PKK radiated from the center and encompassed the area, leading all attention back to him. It was clear the he held a position of his own.

A possible explanation of how he related to both the people/guerilla and the martyrs, was once provided to me by a guerilla who had served as educational instructor for the training camps in the mountains. Sitting with him on the outskirts of Mosul, I had asked if he was *qehreman*, which means hero, since he had been previously injured in battle. He humbly said: "No, of course I am not a hero. The only heroes are the people who have truly given everything to the struggle; the martyrs are the only heroes." Thinking that I was going to play a trick on him, I asked: "So, Abdullah Öcalan isn't a hero, then?" to which he jokingly but seriously replied: "*Mala te* (your house),[268] how can you say that Apo isn't a hero? Of course he is." He repeatedly said Öcalan was *Bavê Şehîdên* – 'the father of the martyrs' – a common epithet in casual conversation and in PKK discourse. In fact, in fear of hubris, neither guerillas nor civilians considered themselves *qehreman,* and would almost exclusively use the term about martyrs and Öcalan. This particular status, I believe can reflect back on the position he had at the celebration, and how he related to the rest of the categories.

Due to his status as *qehreman*, it rendered Öcalan the only living person to hold the same status as the martyrs, and simultaneously a position that encompassed them. People could not be *qehreman* unless they were martyrs, i.e. somehow killed in contention with the state, and the martyrs were only martyrs because they had died for Öcalan, the purveyor of freedom for Kurdistan and the road to the new life/time. Hence, by being *qehreman* himself, Öcalan paradoxically both stood beside the martyrs and beyond them, providing the means for the living to appreciate the dead, and in the same move, himself. At the celebration, he was endowed with the largest picture and situated in the center, because he, in a sense, 'enveloped' the participants, and was the wellspring for the ideology that framed the how the event was to be understood. Tritely put, if Öcalan had not been present (or, more precisely, not both the venerated figure and the incarnate framework), the pictures on the stage would just have been of dead people. He was the person who, while being equal to the martyrs, also stood beyond them and provided the living with the framework for appreciating and elevating them.

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[268] A friendly insult, often abbreviated from '*Xwedê mala te bişewite,*' meaning 'May God burn your house' – 'house' here taken as a synecdoche for your family line.

Combining the previous sections, we may now see how Newroz generated a social order, in the expanded definition. Concretely, this involved how the organization and performance of Newroz informed its participants, in a structural way, about their social relation to the dead and how to participate in their 'society.' The dead told their beholders about how they could live 'the Newroz paradigm,' and what this entailed. The martyrs, in their elevated position, were all placed there due to their self-abnegating practice in service of the cause, which had been totalized upon their death. This was the distinguishing factor for the dead, which permitted them to treat all the participants as one and the same, regardless of whether they were guerillas or civilians. Like Mazlum Doğan, only they had offered or sacrificed everything for the cause, and due to this sacrifice they had the capacity to dissolve social divisions. The cause, however, was encompassed and incarnated in Öcalan, who provided the spectators with the means to understand what it was the martyrs' death had accomplished and why they were important. Öcalan had promised, through his own writings and the PKK newspapers, that the martyrs were both embodiments of the new life/time and the road which could eventually cause an epochal shift to the utopia of freedom for Kurdistan. The martyrs were, for Öcalan, the 'form-consequence' of freedom, which was intended to liberate the living. Hence, we may see that Newroz created a social order that equivocated all living participants – be they guerilla or civilian – by virtue of their relation to the dead, due to an encompassment in a utopian project incarnated and framed by Öcalan.

The PKK's Newroz was, in other words, a (re)instantiation of a utopian social order, in which the central ordering principle was the living's ideological relationship with the dead. We may, however, follow this logic even further: Not only did the festival exhibit a social and political order, it also illustrated its means of reproduction. For the living to then appreciate this gift of freedom – or indeed appreciate the dead as martyrs – they had, in the same turn, to appreciate Öcalan, since it was for him that the dead had died. Hence, by venerating or praising Öcalan, the living were, in the same move, paralleling in their own practice what the martyrs had lived and died for in theirs. In this way, the festival 're-placed' the life of the dead in the living, thereby renewing

and re-producing the struggle. We may say that Gunes' 'exemplars' of (paragon) revolutionary struggle, became 're-integrated' in the lives of the living. Nowhere was this mechanism for re-producing the social order more apparent than in Maxhmur. As we have said, similar to Qandil, Maxhmur has been integrated with the PKK for more than 20 years, where its approximately 15 000 people have opted to develop and implement the system delineated by the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan, instead of integrating with the Iraqi Kurdish mainstream society. Here, Newroz's role not only exhibited a social order, but told of how social reproduction is imagined and symbolically enacted.

Social Reproduction

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the celebration in Maxmur, but I spoke to a friend who lived there on the phone back to the city from Qandil, and he sent me a video of the event. As became apparent to me through the conversation and the recording, the reproduction of this social order in the Maxmur refugee camp was very much connected to the lighting of the Newroz fire. Like Kawa had lit the fire to create the Kurds and usher in the new time and/or year ages ago, a new Kawa was needed to re-kindle the fire and continue, as well as re-start, the process.

The event would take place in the large square outside of the 'city,' at the foot the surrounding mountains, where civilian residents would sit across from the guerilla, divided by a no-man's-land. This was the common place where the guerilla and the people would meet for certain ritual occasions, as I recalled from my previous visits. After the commander of the guerilla had held a speech to his contingent in front of him, with his back to the public audience, both the guerilla and the civilians would behold mothers of martyrs in white headscarves traverse the mid-ground – the liminal space so to speak – to light the bonfires in the center with fuel provided by the guerilla who came in from the other side. While the guerilla poured fuel, the mothers lit the torches, to the clapping and slogans emanating from the spectators. PKK music started blasting from loudspeakers, and the guerilla and the people applauded each other enthusiastically. Rather than a singular person taking on the role of Kawa, the generator of the new time, it seemed to me that they became Kawa together; one could

not exist without the other, the people and the guerilla were mutually dependent in re-producing the social order leading to, and embedded in, the new time.

As such, it was not surprising to me that the mothers of martyrs were, for the people organizing and attending the celebration, the most fitting choice for the people who could "carry the torch", as he told me. "Since they are the people who have sacrificed the most – they have given sons and daughters to the resistance – they are also the people who are the best suited to re-start the struggle." That sacrificing had given them the right to renew, fit well with what could be expected from the festival in Qandil. Moreover, it seemed logical that the mothers would be more than willing to fulfill this task, because not renewing would mean the life of their dead family members would no longer be included in 'the spirit of the resistance.' If the movement would not accept or include the dead who had given their lives for the struggle, their death would become meaningless for the people who had given them life – i.e. the mothers, the 'best' representatives of 'the people.'

For the guerilla too, the acquiescence or sympathy of the mothers was also imperative, since they were the people who both materially gave force to the struggle with their offspring, but also were the people who could declare, post-mortem, whether the offerings of their sons' and daughters' lives had been well spent. As the guerilla was aware, especially since they were sworn never have children of their own and to die for the struggle if necessary, the key to keep reproducing the struggle lay with the mothers, which made them all the more important to *pîroz dike*, honor and praise. If the mothers, as embodiments of the best of people, turned against them and contested the meaning of their offspring's death, the militant struggle would be thrown into disarray. Therefore, by lighting the fire together, the mothers (i.e. the people) were consenting to uniting, or transferring, the death of their children to the guerilla for mutual benefit. The guerilla would be acting in the stead of their children, following in the life and working for cause for which their offspring had died. Lighting the fire was thus a symbolic enactment of the idealized social reproduction: the mothers had given the life of their children to the resistance, and the guerilla, who had sworn never to procreate themselves, honored the mothers' gift (or sacrifice) of life by being prepared

to die for the resistance themselves. The fire served as the connective link between those who had given life by death to the struggle in the past, i.e. the mothers, and those who would give life by death to the struggle in the future, i.e. the guerilla. In a sense, then, the Newroz festival became less of a festival than it did a ritual of reproduction.

Newroz, we may say, does not only reveal a utopian social order, as imagined by the PKK, but it also tells us about how the reproduction of this social order is to take place. As the lighting of the fire in the Maxhmur camp illustrates, by exchanging life (the mothers' children, who are given to the cause) for the promise of potential death (the guerilla's oath not to procreate and to die for the cause that the mothers' children had died for), order is restored and the different parties are satiated. Indeed, much like how Mary Boyce argued that Nowruz, marked a 'renewal of growth and vigour' thousands of years ago, the theme of renewal and reproduction is remarkably similar today in the iteration espoused by the PKK. In some fashion, it is hard to imagine that Newroz's pre-historical structural associations with reproduction and renewal are not relevant to the PKK's instantiation, although what this renewal and reproduction concerns is radically different. By using or appropriating this festival of renewal and reproduction, the PKK managed not only to connect itself with a mythological past, but also to structure its political cosmology. Newroz is, as we have seen, an integral means through which people can imagine and place themselves in the (utopian) world. For the PKK, Newroz tells of how time progresses in relation to man's choices, what a social order resulting from this looks like, as well as how it may be reproduced and (continuously) be brought to fruition.

At the time of writing, the power of Newroz, as a festival bringing into being a continuously performed 'new time,' has become very apparent with the military defeat of ISIS. On what I can only assume was at least a partially planned action by the Kurdish-dominated 'Syrian Democratic Forces' (SDF, or *Hêzên Syria Demokratîk* in Kurdish), the last city held by ISIS was taken on twenty-third of March 2019.[269] In its

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[269] 'Statement to public opinion.' (2019, March 23). *SDF-press.* Retrieved from http://sdf-press.com/en/2019/03/statement-to-public-opinion-14/. It is important to bear in mind that although the day marking the transition is the 21st of March, the Newroz celebrations usually extend over a week.

statement, the SDF's general command, remarked upon the great toll the war had taken on the people, stating that they had given more than 11 000 martyrs to the struggle, and that another 21 000 had been injured. The general command recalled the battle for Kobanê and stated that "on this occasion we cannot but those heroes and pay tribute to the memory of the martyrs (…) without their sacrifices we would not be granted this victory." As the SDF fighters were celebrating Newroz in the last city held by ISIS,[270] thousands of candles were lit on the graves of the fallen in the Kobanê graveyard, where a great funeral/celebration procession walked through laying flowers on their graves. In the festival where victory over ISIS corresponded with Newroz, it once again brought the promise of the 'new time.'

7.4 People visiting the martyrs' graves in Kobanê on Newroz.[271]

Conclusion

We might find in this analysis a point of departure for supplementing contemporary understandings of what death and martyrdom might imply in social life. As I have suggested in this chapter, ordinary life was ritually suspended, and the new register in which the dead were re-embedded promised and enacted dramatic social re-

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[270] 'Newroz fire on the Baghouz front cleared of ISIS.' (2019, March 20). *ANF News*. https://anfenglish.com/rojava-northern-syria/newroz-fire-on-the-baghouz-front-cleared-of-isis-33725.
[271] Image taken from the eminent journalist Vladimiar van Wilgenburg's twitter account; https://twitter.com/vvanwilgenburg/status/1108416718613950466

formulations. Reconfiguring the relationship between the living and the dead, was at the same time reconfiguring notions of agency and movement in time, as it was maintaining social order in Maxmur, and illustrating the value of different forms of life in Qandil. However, we have so far spoken about the ritual (Newroz) and material (Qandil) and institutional (Maxmur) confines of martyrdom and its effects. But what does this mean when the people come down from the mountains, so to speak? Departing from these structural arrangements, indeed any investigation into an over-arching social order as such, we might find a space for supplementing contemporary understandings of what death implies in social life outside of strictly regulated contexts.

When death is to a large degree socially regulated, and takes place in seemingly predicable fashions – through old age, illness and accident – it might easy to see how death is considered a stable and maintaining aspect of a social order (as per Bloch and Parry, 1982). Since death is so imminent in the Maxmur camp, for instance, martyrs may be easier to 'pin down' and cement in the process of maintaining the social order. In a situation of uncertain violence and repression, on the other hand – as is (and has been) the case for Kurds of Wan in Turkey – the dead might not be as quiet. When death and near-death seem to be more arbitrary than predictable, the dead might 'come loose' from their entrapments (Verdery, 1999), and sacrifice become a more confused category. Death may, perhaps, also be seen as contributing to a transformation of a social order – in unexpected ways, in addition to a maintenance of it. It may not even be strictly causally related. The order outlined in this chapter may, in other words, not be relevant to the practices directed at mortality that people deploy in their own lives outside of the ritual context, and while martyrs contribute to maintaining the social order in Maxmur (as the last chapter detailed), outside locations that are 'isolated' PKK fortresses, they may not.

Outside of highly regulated and ritual environments the martyrs may act in unpredictable and unscripted ways. Carried in front of demonstrations, displayed in personal homes, invoked in casual conversation, and ruminated on in private, in other locations the dead may become social agents for change on their own accord. This has

been pointed out in recent works on the nature of sacrifice, which seek to explore how death may open social horizons rather than enclose them (Eagleton, 2018; Özsoy, 2010). For who, truly, knows how to live the life of Mazlum Doğan in practice? 'What would Mazlum Doğan do?' is not a question that is easily answered in all the various contexts of life, and yet it might seem a very important question to pose. If it is not institutionally or ritually contained, they may 'run wild.' Indeed, more than serving as cathected vehicles for political re-imagination or structural maintenance (Verdery, 1999), they may in fact become erratic and unsettling figures in people's personal lives. In this way, if we accept that the dead somehow constitute a central component in how the PKK organizes its political universe, we have to think not only of how the dead assist in regulating its ideological output, but how, in fact, it may assist in scrambling or transforming it.

Thinking with Bloch and Parry, this would perhaps entail an examination of how and where the dead do *not* fall into their assigned places once they are deceased, or, as in the case of Maxmur, where their use and exhortations are not as institutionally regulated. Further thinking of the relation between the dead and social transformation, might require an examination of where and how the reproductive cycle of re-placing the dead breaks down, becomes postponed, or in fact begets a completely different system of organization. As Seremetakis has illustrated in rural Greece, this might imply examining competing orders of re-integration, and the contestive mechanisms which are employed on both sides (Seremetakis, 1991). Likewise, as Özsoy has argued in the Kurdish context, the meaning and the nature of the martyrs' gift has been contested within the movement itself, and brought been into new and unexpected social formations and ideologies (Özsoy, 2010). Whether the martyrs demanded peace or continued warfare, Özsoy shows, was a contested topic in both the discourses and the practical decision-making of people in Turkish Kurdistan (Özsoy, 2010). Pursuing this path, I believe, is fruitful when moving on to consider the precarious and sometimes chaotic organization of the movement in Wan, when I was conducting fieldwork there in 2015. Although the martyrs were there, looming, what they wanted was not clear, and open to both institutional and personal interpretation. As such, I find it appropriate to attempt to provide a less theorized and more ethnographic

examination what everyday life in the resistance looked like in Wan, to further understand the multiplicity and ambiguity.

8: Anatomy of the Kurdish Movement in Wan: The Dynamics of Martyrdom in a Contested Environment

Introduction

In Maxmur we saw how the martyrs imposed a relatively strict system on the movement and its participants in relation to how they were supposed to conduct politics, and how emotionally invested they should become in doing so. We have not, however, considered what this has means in an ideologically and physically contested situation. Whereas Maxmur was subsumed in an Apoist philosophy, with little to contest it within its borders (although plural in the practices the martyrs were seen as encouraging),[272] the case in Wan in Turkey was different. In Wan, the type of 'sovereignty' of the Maxmur camp – having their own self-governance system and armed forces – was absent. In contrast, people in Wan lived 'modern,' urban lives, dealing with interactions with the state as an everyday occurrence. As life in Wan was less institutionalized solely within the movement, what role the martyrs played in the struggle was also more plural and unclear.

This is not to say that the martyrs did not play an important role, but rather that they were lacking hegemonic and autonomous institutions that could guide people in how they were to be implemented in life. In Wan, the Turkish state's presence strongly intervened in how people could organize and conduct their business. The martyrs were therefore not 'centralized' in the same way as in Maxmur, and were to a lesser degree taken for granted as woven into the fabric of everyday life. In Wan, the martyrs needed to be *used* and actively cultivated; no *şehîdlik* would have been permitted to stand undisturbed in the local community there. This also meant that the martyrs were used in a different way than Maxmur - their power, direction and efficacy being more ambiguous and contested; what they signified was not apparent. Since the martyrs could not structure life without hindrance due to the repression of the state, more

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[272] This is not to say that there were not challenges to the system, but as the camp in Maxmur was a geographically enclosed area with its own self-protection forces, they were in the sense 'the sovereign' of their territory, while this could not be said to be the case in Turkish Kurdistan.

effort was needed to make them relevant in the various walks and institutions of the everyday. How this took place is the topic of the chapter.

As we shall see, the usage of the martyrs was more *intertwined* with the state in Wan than it was in Maxmur. In Wan, people's relationship to the state was very much informed by their relationship to the martyrs, and the people's relationship to the martyrs very much informed by the state. In such situations of physical and ideological duress, *bringing* martyrs into usage was much more of a central feature of the struggle than merely taking them for granted in revolutionary deliberation and action. This shall become clear when we examine the role of Dilgeş, a representative of one of Wan's municipalities' ecology commissions and a local council's economy commission,[273] in building up the revolutionary movement in his neighborhood, where I spent most of my 7 months in the field in Bakûr in 2015. More empirically than theoretically inclined, this chapter is intended to serve as a window onto the everyday of the struggle in Wan and its anatomy.

Nevertheless, a general point can be read out of the text with regards to the functioning of the so-called democratic system the movement seeks to implement. We shall see how the martyrs intersected the organization of the movement, beyond the formal offices accorded various people. We shall see that the movement 'moved' at the behest of the martyrs who transversed the formal channels of decision-making and deliberation, rather than being subsumed to them. In this way, the chapter may be seen as contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the democracy the Kurdish movement seeks to manufacture in Bakûr, as it moves beyond sociological fetishization of organizational structures as such. Beyond the latched-on activist appraisal and scholarly fixation on the movement's formal democracy, in other words, the chapter may be seen as contributing to an examination of how these structures move and *actually* organize. Stated differently, it may be seen as an examination of how the martyrs straddle the moving of the movement.

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[273] After some deliberation I decided to keep both the name of the municipality and the council secret (as well as Dilgeş' real name, of course). Although I find it unlikely that the Turkish state would use my thesis to pursue legal action against the participants in the council, I have decided to follow the idiom 'it is better to be safe than sorry,' and have obviated situating the research space as best as possible.

To do so, however, we have to start at the beginning. I first introduce Dilgeş, my relationship to him and why I saw him as being particularly important, before I move on to describe setting and the everyday activities of the council we were a part of. I relay what Dilgeş considered to be the greatest obstacles to the movement, and the means he saw for overcoming them. Central to his concerns, I argue, was the lack of ideological schooling and self-criticism needed to become a good revolutionary. I then show how being committed to engaging with these practices was contingent upon appreciating the martyrs, whose cultivation I then describe as one of the council's most central activities. From cultivating personal relationships to martyr families in the neighborhood, to organizing public commemorations and demonstrations for the martyrial dead, I show the focal issue for the council (and indeed the movement) was connecting the sacrifice of the martyrs with the activities that were seen as propelling the revolution. I then move into a more in-depth description of what projects dominated the Dilgeş' and the councils' activities, and how Dilgeş used his position to drive them forward. By virtue of his own revolutionary history, measured against the background of the martyrs' sacrifice, I show how he could effectively utilize shame as a mechanism for committing people to their 'obligations.' Towards the end, I reflect briefly on what I saw as the difficulty in making people de-individualize themselves in favor of the collectivity in contested situation, which was the epicenter for both the struggle and its hinderances in Bakûr.

Heval Dilgeş

When I turned up at the economy commission's office in Wan in August 2015, Dilgeş was already present, having been called in by the representative due to his proficiency in English and knowledge of the council system and the ideology of the project. After I had conducted my interview with the representative for the economy commission, and Dilgeş had helped me with the Kurdish I didn't understand, he invited me to stay at his place. He said that he would help me get an understanding of the everyday function of the project, and help me get a foothold in the movement. It was a rather brash suggestion, I thought, but I had read that it was both courteous and prestigious thing to have a guest stay with you (Barth, 1953; Leach, 1940), especially a foreigner.

Besides, he seemed to be in the need of company, so I accepted. Dilgeş and I would gradually become close friends, and I ended up living with him for approximately 3 months before I eventually found my own place.

Dilgeş was a primary school teacher in his mid-forties, married with two children, but lived alone for the time being. His wife and children stayed in his native Trabzon with his parents, waiting to come to Wan once he had gotten a job and made the apartment suitable for children. He did not seem in a rush, however. He said his family could take good care of them there, and his wife was not too keen on moving away from them anyway. Dilgeş, on the other hand, was not fond of Trabzon. He said that he had found it very difficult to 'be Kurdish' there, and had moved to Wan in his youth for studies in the 80's. However, he promptly dropped out of when he started working as a member of the youth wing of the then pro-Kurdish party, the DEP (*Demokrasi Partisi* in Turkish).[274] He had been responsible for recruiting people to the party, and was accordingly harassed continually, he told me. According to him, several times a month, he would get picked up by the police and kept under torture for several days. One could see this from his figure. He was a tall, malnourished man, weighing at most 60 kilos. On his back and hands were clear marks from whips, rods, and cigarettes. For the sake of security, now that he had a wife and children, he would no longer hold high official positions and preferred to be called *Mamoste* – 'teacher' – instead of his real name, in case the police would look for him again.

Who Dilgeş was as a person was very important for his (and later, my) part in the movement not only because he had long-term experience with how to organize according to the Apoist philosophy. What he had experienced and how he carried himself was central to the influence and power that he held. Although he had relinquished a public and formally powerful position in the movement – such as a party, municipal, or councilor co-leadership (which we shall elaborate more on below) – in favor of a more 'hidden' role as a leader of an Ecology Commission, he was still

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[274] This was one of the many Kurdish parties, which were founded in the early nineties and closed after a year or two of operation. He also worked with the predecessors and successors. Before DEP, there was ÖZDEP (*Özgurluk ve Demokrasi Partisi* 1992-1993), and before ÖZDEP there was HEP (*Halkin Emek Partisi* 1990-1993), for instance, and later, there were other instantiations of Kurdish political parties.

more influential than many of those who held such positions. His status partially derived from how he had responded to the repression of the state.

Torture and Humor

Surprisingly, talking about his torture did not bother him; in fact, the opposite seemed to be true. While we were eating or drinking during the evening after a day's work, getting to know each other, talking about these stories was almost like reminiscing to him – it was tied to many surrounding, happy memories, many indicating resistance, trickery and bravery in the face of personal danger.[275]

There were many stories he used to tell, but there were (at least) three that he would return to with irregular intervals. This was his favorite, which I took down in my notebook one evening:

> Really, they tortured me a lot. One time, the secret police (JITEM) had put a
> bag over my head and taken me to a cellar I hadn't been in before. In the white
> Camarros [Particular Vans], remember? My heart still jumps when I see them.
> They took me down there, and started to pour boiling water over me. I couldn't
> see but I could feel my skin peeling off. They asked if I knew him-and-him, but
> I said I don't know. Who is this? They tried to trick me into saying that I knew
> them, but whenever they said "I saw you with him," I said, "well, apparently
> you know better than me, because I can't remember", "Why do you ask if you
> already know what you are asking about?". They got really angry. One of them
> asked me if I wanted hot water or cold water. I said whatever they thought was
> best. Then he put a gun in my mouth and said I had to choose, so I said hot
> water. Then they poured ice-cold water on me. And, really, that was the worst. I
> almost fainted. It was so much worse than the boiling water. That's what they
> do, haha.

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[275] As this section is not really concerned with the phenomenon of torture as such – but rather its social currency for Dilgeş in the context that he was working, it is worth remarking that this field has been extensively researched. Neil Whitehead (2012), Lindset Dubois (1990), Elaine Scarry (1985), and Can Başak (2016), have all approached this topic in different ways in relation to its personal and political consequences.

What really stuck with him was the shock of the cold water, this was often the focal point of the story. To me it seemed this was so important because most of the torture he usually described was foreseeable according to him. If you did not say anything they would let you out again after a number of days, he would tell me, and he was accustomed to how they used to torture him: waterboarding, electric shocks, beatings, cigarette burnings, etc. The cold water, however, was unexpected, something that he had never encountered before. At the same time, it was told in such a humorous manner that it overshadowed the gravity of the brutality; it was more shock than sorrow which was at the center of the narrative. Inside some of these stories, however, were also strong themes of power and recalcitrance:

> One time, the secret police took me out into the forest. They took me out into the snow, without my clothes, and put a gun to my head. They said that I had to tell them what I knew, and if I did not they would kill me. They were finished talking to me, they said. I said, fine, kill me. Shoot me. He pressed the gun to my head and I heard the "click." They had pulled the trigger but the gun was empty. Really, they did this a lot. Then kicked and beat me a little, before they left me there and drove back to the city. But this time I had had enough, I was finished. I had to walk so far back to the city. I did not care if I lived or died. I was sick of it. When I got back, I went to the police office, really I did, and went into the police chief's office. I said to him, if anything happens to me again, you will die. He said he didn't know what I was talking about. He was very scared. He didn't know who was torturing me, and he had nothing to do with it, he said. I said, I don't care, but if someone takes me again, you will die. And then I left. Two weeks later the police chief had transferred to a different district, haha. He was too scared.

For him, the funny part of this story was that the police chief had been scared of him. According to Dilgeş, he did not have the capacity or power to have anyone killed, but the police thought he did, the stupid police, so he had used their fears against them. Stupidity of the police was also another central part of his stories:

One time, the police came knocking on our door. They came bursting in, looking for a guerilla they thought we were hiding. They sat us down on the floor and interrogated us. They asked us if we knew him, where he had been, and so on. They tried to shame us for being working with HEP. On the wall we had this big picture of Karl Marx. He pointed to the picture and said: "Why do you do this to your family? Why can't you be more like your *effendi* grandfather.

This was a story he would tell often when we had guests, because it was rather funny.[276] *Effendi* is a Turkish-Arabic word, which means 'wise' and is used for religiously schooled, older people, who would have studied the Quran. Mistaking Marx's beard for that of a Mullah's, the police were encouraging Dilgeş and his friends to follow Marx's 'straight and just path' of Islam, something everyone found incontrovertibly funny every time it was told.

These stories, i.e. his experience and telling of it, I believe, had something to do with the influence that he had in the movement. Although he would not tell these stories in public, many of the people in the movement knew about his experiences and framing of them, since he was quite close with many of the (*heval*s) comrades in the movement. In the stories he would tell me and other comrades who were visiting, he would create an atmosphere of trivializing and denigrating the state in a humorous fashion. Through his stories, and his nonchalant telling of them, he would illustrate that the state could, in a sense, be 'shrugged off,' or rather, that the violence that he had endured did not have to be considered as utterly destructive or personally annihilating.[277] In these stories of violence and brutality, he found humorous ways of denigrating the state and the people who worked for them. As was apparent in the *effendi* and police chief story, it was not so much a 'macho' narrative (Kanaaneh, 2005), where he, as a strong man, had the endurance to overcome great pain (as perhaps was the case in Palestine resistance) (Peteet, 1994), but rather one that

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[276] It was probably also not his story, since this was told to me by a different person much later, in a different place, indicating that this was perhaps a trope.
[277] Without going into depth, such an understanding may be seen as at odds with Scarry's promulgation of torture as alienating and fragmenting the victim's body and subjectivity (1985).

revolved around the idiocy of the state and its henchmen, and the process of *domesticating* it. By *domestication*, I here mean the process of not thinking of it as an equal contender, capable of inflicting serious injury. Rather, like a child, the state may be violent, offensive and hurtful, but a child's actions will and should not deter the adult from his convictions, business, and goals. By considering himself (and the movement) beyond the state, so to speak, he could both *infantilize* the state (as per the *effendi* story and the torture story)*,* and to a certain degree consider himself as *taming* it (as per the police chief story).

Nonetheless, the torture had made him into a slightly strange fellow, it seemed to me, talking out of turn and making sexual references that other people found slightly uncomfortable. Despite these idiosyncrasies, the attitude that he exhibited towards the state, and his own personal history, provided him with a central place in the day-to-day operations of the local council where he and I lived. He commanded a great deal of respect, and was the person who was called when decisions were uncertain in the council. *Qua* 'becoming martyrial,' as described in chapter 6, the stories and the marks on his bodies, and the way he carried them, testified to his 'spiritual' kinship with the martyrs, with whom he shared an attitude and outlook. Whenever people did not know what to do in council, they would invariable ask around for Dilgeş or try to call him on the phone. For the revolutionary program of Abdullah Öcalan to be driven forward and work in our part of the city, he was a key figure. By examining the anatomy of the council movement in our part of the city, it shall be clearer in which ways Dilgeş' position effectuated the project's cohesion and movement. We need, in other words to examine both the formal and the informal structure of the movement a bit more, before we can turn to Dilgeş' particular role in it.

The Neighborhood Council

The local council Dilgeş introduced me to was unassuming from the outside; it was hidden in a backstreet, and could easily be missed if it were not for the letters *Halk Meclisi* – the 'People's Council' – written in bold typeface on the outside.[278] For

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[278] The council had redubbed the neighborhood in the beginning of 2015, giving it a Kurdish name meaning "duty" or "role" in Kurdish, as opposed to the original Turkish name, since because the

purposes of legality, this revolutionary council was registered as an NGO, which permitted its activities. The first time he took me inside, I noticed that the open space, approximately twelve by seven meters, was adorned with pictures of several martyrs from the neighborhood, whom we shall return to. Behind a stack of chairs was a translucent wall decorated with an image of a woman breaking free from chains, creating a small office space. The first entry initially made me rather anxious. In my mind at the time (see chapter 2), this was the heartland of the radical project – the most grassroots institution in the revolutionary project of denying the state its sovereignty and constructing a democratic alternative. Once we entered and I shook the hands of the few people hanging around, however, it seemed much less intimidating. The co-leader of the council was a young man,[279] maybe thirty-something years old, who did not so much seem like a hardened revolutionary to me, from his BMW outside and styled hairdo. He was sitting with his phone, playing 'Angry Birds,' but stopped immediately when I came in, getting up to greet me. He sat me down, offered me some tea, and Dilgeş told me that I should ask him anything I wanted.

After making small talk for a while I asked him to tell me the story of the council, and he switched into formal-interview-mode, reciting sternly:[280]

> The council was opened in April of 2015, although there had been council structures predating this by three years. There are now approximately sixty councils in Wan. We represent the 18000 people who live in this neighborhood in this municipality, through 400 representatives gathered from each street. We have thirteen people working in the administration, and two co-leaders, one woman and one man. Like every other council, we have divided the work according to the prescription from leader Öcalan and the DTK,[281] namely into eight commissions for autonomy: Ecology, Education, Health, Economy, Peace,

original name of the neighborhood derived from an Ottoman reformer who contributed to the downfall of the autonomous Kurdish principalities in the early-1800's.

[279] Each movement institution has two co-leaders, one woman and one man, according to Öcalan's prescript on gender equality. This goes for everything from the neighborhood council to the leadership of the parliamentary party.

[280] This interview has been sorted and compiled for readability and anonymity.

[281] *Demokratic Toplum Kongresi* in Turkish, *Kongreya Civaka Demokratîk* in Kurdish, or 'Democratic Society Congress' in English, the aforementioned umbrella organization for the movement in Turkish Kurdistan which had its main seat in Amed, but had offices in all the different cities of Kurdistan.

Law, Culture, and care for martyr families. We offer education for women where they can learn skills and rights. In the ecology commission we collect garbage, go to the municipality to get them to fix electricity and roads. In the peace commission we help people find solutions to problems with their neighbors and family. The legal commission helps people know their rights, and helps women divorce their husbands if they have to and provide legal support, for example (…) People also come to suggest projects; we are open for this. The money for these projects normally comes from the people in the neighborhood who donate to the council and from the municipalities if we are working together. We are open every day, and help people solve their problems themselves; if we cannot reach a solution, we go to one level above this, namely in the town-level, where higher representatives will try to help as well. Every week people who work in the administration meet, every two weeks the representatives of the commissions meet, and every month everyone in the council meets (…) Self-governance is the ultimate goal. This is the most important for the anti-capitalist struggle. The government is using us and making us poorer and poorer. Unfortunately, due to the war the process is taking a long time. People are afraid and do not know how this council can help them. They need education, they do not, unfortunately understand Leader Apo's project, although their hearts are pure.

It was a talk very similar to the one's I had been presented with from many leaders from the movement—an account where everything, it seems, was sorted and worked flawlessly. In previous interviews with higher-up representatives both in Wan and Amed, the same narrative was presented; a formal system as in place, and the councils and representatives were all in place, and it worked according to the program – any delay was an issue with lacking education and repression. I expressed my desire to learn more about the everyday life in the councils and how the system was being built; what social mechanisms were involved in driving the project forwards, what did this project look like in practice? Probably because I arrived with Dilgeş, in addition to the excitement created by a foreigner taking interest, they were more than happy, the co-leader said, to show 'Europe' how the radical democratic revolution was taking place,

and how a new, more democratic life was being constructed. I was later placed in the ecology commission in the council, but would spend most of my days 'hanging around' in the office with the people there, and following Dilgeş on his various assignments. As expected, the council did not work entirely as according to the interview's formal schema, but was nonetheless expansive and effectuating.

The Council's Routine
The office was the hub of the council's activities. It would normally be opened at 10-11 in the morning by one of the two minders there, and would close at approximately 9 pm. One of the two minders had a handicap, and was therefore excused from salaried work – relying on his family and friends – providing him with the great opportunity to take care of the place. In addition, one of his cousins having joined the guerilla, providing him with a certain ascribed revolutionary fidelity by proxy. The other minder was an old man who had lived in the neighborhood for ages, and seemed to also be excused from work, although I never asked.

I would normally arrive around twelve o'clock, and spend a couple hours there, before finding out where Dilgeş was and tag along with him. Many others did the same. It was common to pop by the council at around twelve, either just to have a break from work, or merely tea and conversation with whoever was there. There would always be tea boiling, and rudimentary cooking equipment and food-wares, although they were not really supposed to be used. Contrary to the usual practice in Kurdish homes, old men would also make the tea, not only the women and young men. Normally, the congregation at twelve would not be more than fifteen people at most. There were not thirteen strict representatives who met and worked there systematically, as I had been told, but instead there seemed to be a network of fifteen to twenty dedicated people, irrespective of office and position, who took on projects and 'did what needed to be done' with a support network of approximately fifty or so, who turned up more or less sporadically. People in the movement would 'wear many hats,' so to speak, meaning that being a part of say, the ecology commission, did not exclude a person from working in the HDP, and simultaneously being a part of the 'board' of the council, as

well as being responsible for a given project undertaken at any given level in the level in the movement.

The female participation in these affairs was rather high, counting closer to fifty percent of the people who put down every-day work, which was uncommon in any organizing outside of the movement. After the mid-day conversation, people would disperse again, some for work, and some together for a council project, only to rejoin if there was an event in the evening or just to come back and talk some more. Conversations would revolve around normal topics, like how it was going with the family, what the state of the struggle was, where it was good to go for fresh produce, and who one should try to incorporate in the movement. When the groups disbanded in the morning, two or three people would remain in the council, and continue the conversation. Normally some people from the neighborhood would come in and have a one-to-one conversation with one of the representatives there. After exchanging pleasantries, they would talk about whatever specific issue they had, and would either be put in contact with someone who could deal with it, or the representative would do as best they could themselves. A common complaint concerned family disputes where one family member had taken issue with another. Council members were seen as a trustworthy negotiator who could chart a course of action that would be mutually acceptable; by virtue of their political commitments and having no stake in the dispute personally they were seen as ethically 'pure' and neutral. In one case, the older minder accompanied an older man to his house to have a conversation with his son, who felt that he was paying his father too much as a pension, and would rather save the money for a house for him and his newly-wed bride.[282] When he returned he told me that they had found an amicable solution by having one of the aggrieved brothers contribute to his father's pension as well. Coming back to the council after the day's work, Dilgeş and I would usually go to his place and make some food together before watching the news, maybe drink some beer, and go to bed.

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[282] Unfortunately, I do not have the data on how this turned out or was resolved, since I didn't participate in the meeting (and was not invited to do so). What I have written here is what I was told later.

On almost every day of the week, different quotidian events would normally be organized. On Thursdays, at around six, for instance, there would be an education class for the women in the neighborhood, where they were taught how to read and write in Turkish. Many of the women had not gone to school and rather spent the time child-rearing, and seemed very happy when they could bring their children and have them play together, while they worked and gossiped. The teacher was one of the wealthier women in the neighborhood. Her husband was a relatively well-to-do businessman who was out travelling most of the year, according to her, and it was her uncle who was pinned as a martyr on the wall next to Öcalan. He had been murdered by a state-supported death-squad in the 1990's for his support of the PKK, although the perpetrators never emerged.[283] With a makeshift blackboard, and syllabi from secondary school, she would teach the six or seven women who came regularly different verb tenses, phonetics and orthography. During this time, the men would usually sit in the common area, or go out to have a tea a few meters down the road. Prior to the civic engagement of the Kurdish movement, this was not a common practice, but had been started as it was considered a means of empowering women, and making them more than 'baby-machines,' as one of the council members put it. That the men took off was also to ensure that the women could have their own autonomous spaces, as per Öcalan's design and desire.

The main regular event was the general assembly, however. Every other Saturday, there would the general assembly for the neighborhood would meet, and people would show up to voice concerns, problems, and issues. These were comparatively well-attended with upwards of twenty five people coming consistently, and sometimes as many as fifty. In these meetings, the different commissions would present the progress of their projects and ask for assistance if it was needed, inform of other events taking place. Such events could be demonstrations, conferences, and meetings, but also weddings and funerals, or activities organized by other movement institutions. It was a hub for planning the coming activities and distributing information and labor power to events already under way. The supposed heads of these meetings were supposed to be the co-leaders, but they were rarely there together, forcing Dilgeş to step up and lead

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[283] This person is a fairly renown Kurdish politician in the area, but due to certain precautions concerning identity I am hesitant to state his name here.

the meetings. This infuriated Dilgeş, who saw them as shirking the responsibility they had taken upon themselves. "They only want this position for the status," he would say, "they don't understand the project" – "If they can't lead by being an example, how will other people learn?". This frustration would usually find outlet in two events, which for our purposes here with regards to the martyrs, the most central aspect of organization for him, namely the self-criticism (*rexne* in Kurdish) session and the education (*perwerde* in Kurdish) session.

Before moving on to examine these self-criticism and education sessions, however, it should be mentioned that it even though it now seems as though this was a marginal movement very much revolving around Dilgeş' activism, this was not the case. In Wan, there was an overwhelming support of the movement, where one could feel fairly certain that everyone in almost every space would be supportive of the movement in some way, and would follow instructions if they were given by a person they recognized as authoritative in the movement. When we canvassed the neighborhood for various events, it would take us hours, as a vast majority of the hundreds of houses would be authentically glad to see us, and often force us (through the weight of custom and guest relations) to sit and eat or have tea, making many visits take at least half an hour to complete. The generosity offered was not just formal, it was often deeply moving, with hosts attempting to give us gifts and regaling us with stories about their time and place in the struggle. When we went to drink tea at a shop, which we usually did multiple times during the day, Dilgeş and I would rarely pay for the tea, since the owners and the patrons of the place would know who he was and refuse to accept payment, or some bystander would come and pay for us. In addition, people would come and sit down and start up conversations without any pretext. The amount of political consubstantiality that could be assumed in any conversation was vast, taking for granted peoples' veneration and appreciation of Öcalan and the rudimentaries of his project.[284] In the first general election of 2015, approximately

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[284] 'The rudimentaries' here denoting the basic idea that Öcalan had made a project for the liberation of Kurdistan (whatever that meant), which involved a return to a 'democratic time,' and an appreciation for the ethnic, social and religious plurality of the middle east.

sixty five percent of the inhabitants voted for the HDP, and even more so in the city center.[285]

Education (*Perwerde*) and Self-Criticism (*Rexne*)

Dilgeş would usually hold self-criticism sessions during the weekends, since he wanted as many people as possible to participate, and invited everyone from the administration and leadership to attend - also from different councils in other neighborhoods.[286] Normally, there would be some ten to fifteen people participating in these sessions. Here he would bring up all of the things that had irritated him with the other people during the week, or rather, the things that people had done which he saw in opposition to the ideals, or the necessities, imposed by creating this project of autonomy. This was not a very popular event, and people were not happy about going, but did nonetheless, from my impression seeing it almost as a chore that needed to be done. A long time would be spent outside the council smoking intensely before the sessions started, and Dilgeş would be constantly on the phone, hearing where people were and why they were not coming.

During the sessions Dilgeş' critiques first and foremost concerned the laziness and lack of devotion among the members, but secondarily also 'taking on the role oneself,' meaning that he wanted people to reflect upon what having a position in the movement meant. It was nothing that irritated him more than people in leadership positions asking him 'what should I do.' It was not good enough, he would repeat, that people did only what they were asked to; they needed to take initiative and work without being delegated and told so. They needed to become 'democratic people,' meaning that it was not only about tasks, but about understanding and creating a way of living in accordance with the project. "In order for people to govern themselves, they have to understand *how* to govern themselves," he would say, repeating an Öcalan maxim. People would usually look down, not drink their tea, and hold their hands in front of

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[285] 'Elections 2015,' N.D. *Daily Sabah*. https://www.dailysabah.com/election/november-1-2015-general-elections/provinces-election-results?utm_campaign=secim_2015_kasim&utm_source=anasayfa_10lusehir_tumu&utm_medium=anasayfa_10lusehir_tumu

[286] The timing was not entirely consistent. Often the self-criticism sessions overlapped with other events and were therefore dropped. Other times, they were worked in as a prelude to other meetings.

them, during these speeches. Some people, however, like the male co-leader of the council, would have trouble getting into the spirit of this when criticized directly. Instead of taking the criticism and promising to get better, reflecting on the ways in which he could improve – which is what Dilgeş wanted him to do – he would often make up excuses, raising his hand both after and during the sessions. "My grandmother came to town", "there was a lot of work," "my car stopped working," and so on, he would say, which infuriated Dilgeş even more. He would try different tactics for getting the message of how to receive criticism across, but would inevitably end up frustrated at the end of the meetings. He would often complain to me afterwards: "This is not how we do in the movement." To help people better understand "how we do it in the movement," Dilgeş would chair the weekly education sessions (*perwerde*), intended to re-frame the practices people were already doing.

Once during the week at the council, there would be a seminar devoted to ideological education, which was also most often provided by Dilgeş. Since Dilgeş had a good command of Öcalan's philosophy, having worked in the movement for many years, read most of his books, and had himself received education from 'above' (*jor*), he would lecture about the history of Kurdistan, what the goal of the system was, and how people should behave in order to achieve this. Everyone was invited, but it was not a large turnout for this, either. Many of the people who would meet up in the evening would disappear when Dilgeş was making these talks. Between eight to twelve people would normally turn out, but not consistently, some people joining and dropping out between sessions. Like the meagre attendance at the self-criticism sessions, this also bothered him quite a lot, and he would complain in private about the lack of enthusiasm and understanding of the project among the people. To encourage more attendance, Dilgeş would often invite speakers from the outside, people who were in an objectively more powerful position than himself. Representatives from the Kurdish party the BDP would come,[287] or representatives from the mayor's office, for instance. Then more people felt more compelled to come, and the turnout would be

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[287] The BDP was one of the constituent sub-parties of the aforementioned HDP, but took aim at implementing Öcalan's system through the local elections, where they would not run as the HDP. It was considered a more militant electoral popular party in the sense that its education in and affinity to Öcalan's philosophy was stronger there than in the HDP. Additionally, many of its members were (expected) to have received education from, or being connected to, the *kadros* themselves.

higher, but the enthusiasm would not exactly be palpable. The people listening would sit respectfully and listen – which mean not crossing one's legs or lifting one's feet from the ground – but could drift into a snooze in the warm room, something I myself would do as well.

The discourse would usually be a more or less direct citation from Öcalan's works; it would involve theoretical posturing, calls to think about the good of Kurdistan, the martyrs, and the political project. People were excepted to sit in rows and pay attention to his speech, while he stood in front, sometimes in front of a pulpit, and spoke to them. More similar to a lecture than a seminar, Dilgeş or whoever else was there talking would either re-iterate the importance of 'Democratic Autonomy' and 'Democratic Confederalism,' and draw big lines concerning how this had been a system organization for thousands of years, and that in order to free Kurdistan, it was necessary to build ground-up relations and politicizes those relations that one had, making this, rather than the state, the foundation for governance and the re-production of social life. The revolution, he would say, as Öcalan started with the liberation of women, which was the *ursprung* for the hierarchies later perverted into state forms. More than intending to deliver crucial information, however, it seemed to me more as a political ritual that one participated in by virtue of respect for the movement and the person talking rather than profound and genuine interest. For Dilgeş and the other speakers, this was a way of 'disciplining' the people, meant in the sense that they would attempt to 'give them energy' (*hêz didin*) to take on more responsibility or purse and invent new projects. The aim was to encourage people to do more, and engage themselves more fully, which they attempted to do through providing and describing a political/revolutionary framework for the activities they were already doing; investing the practices of the council and the movement with myth, we can say, recalling the chapter on Maxmur.

Even though these were the most scarcely attended meetings, however, the reason why they were attended at all, and why people accepted Dilgeş criticizing and educating them in this way to begin with, I believe was intimately tied to his personal history and his reputation. Literally carrying the scars of the state's oppression on his body,

manifesting in revolutionary speech and not resignation, made him into a figure that could not easily (or without excuses) be disregarded. On the back of his long and violent history of entanglement with the state, he was afforded the capacity to not only hold education sessions but also shame and denigrate people who did not come or did as he liked. Formally, as we have said, Dilgeş held little power, which was also the reason he invited other speakers, but at the same time, informally, due to his personal trajectory in relation to the struggle and the martyrs (and their ideal), he was a greatly important person. The power that Dilgeş possessed by virtue of his proximity to the 'truth' of the movement, superseded power the formal positions accorded. His particular position did not mean that people had to 'engage' with the things that he was saying, however; the respect was given be merely being there; by showing up, the members of the council showed their appreciation.

Although these were tiresome sessions that drained more than gave energy, it was not only boredom that withheld people from participating, according to Dilgeş. Dilgeş' explanation for this lethargy, was that the people were afraid; many had lived through the terror in the 90's and were afraid that it would repeat itself. Not stemming from what I saw as the sheer tedium of doing democracy, Dilgeş argued that their non-participation stemmed from not being brave enough to thwart what they saw as the possibility of being harassed, tortured, arrested, or disappeared by the police. This especially became the case after the aforementioned Cizîre massacre and the last election. People were seeing participating in the movement as a more and more serious personal threat, he argued. For him, the excuses with the grandmothers, cars, and so on, were excuses made so that they would not have to say that they were afraid; this was a less shameful excuse than the excuse of being afraid for one's life. This was also a reason, Dilgeş argued, that 'we' (like everyone else who were nominally and/or factually leading figures within the movement) needed to re-double on the education. If they could not understand and see what was being built, and what was demanded for this, then why should they participate? Giving up the veneer of individual safety they could retain by being at the periphery of the movement, he seemed to argue, could only take place if they understood the purchase of their actions. They needed to understand that they themselves were not important, but that their actions would live

on through the movement. They had a duty. Dilgeş would often say to the co-leader in the sessions "Who are you? Do you think you are more important than the thousands of martyrs for Kurdistan?" when it boiled over for him, or they interrupted his self-criticism sessions.

Making the Martyrs Count

To phrase it differently, I think that what Dilgeş saw as the primary purpose of the self-criticism and education sessions was to 'make the martyrs count.' What they demanded, how important it was, and how they could be honored and repaid, was ambiguous – which was what I think Dilgeş saw the purpose of *perwerde* as being; assisting people in directing and understanding the martyrs and what they had been killed for. For him, I believe, he would think that if people understood what the martyrs had died for, the ideological frame, they would be more willing to put energy into the project. Seeing people as trapped in this uncertainty of not being able to 'place' the martyrs – or even the contradiction between desiring security personal safety and honoring the deceased – Dilgeş would utilize shaming as a way of making people contribute. Shaming people into work was rather effective when used by Dilgeş and others when to promote the council's work.

This worked, i.e. mobilized more people for particular tasks or meetings, in part because most of the people in the neighborhood had family or friends who had been killed by the state for (alleged) PKK-activity, in some regard. In my experience, literally everyone in the council and the neighborhood had some more-or-less distant family member who had been killed in the war; everyone shared a martyr, as we also saw in Maxmur. Without a close family relation to the dead who had been killed (or taken in under) the PKK banner, it is doubtful that many people would have felt compelled to contribute, at least from a background of duty. One of the most frequent attendees, for instance, was the woman providing the language education in the council, whose uncle's picture was hanging on the wall. The aforementioned member who mediated conflicts in the neighborhood, I was told, had recently lost a cousin in the struggle, who was a guerilla soldier. Although this is not a causal relation, the male

co-leader who Dilgeş was often dissatisfied with, was a young man who did not have any personal, close familial connection with the guerilla.

As such, it seemed that the contradiction between political duty and personal safety was rather deeply rooted, and the Dilgeş saw education and self-criticism as a means of transversing this chasm. It was in a certain way, a paradox. For the education to be accepted it had to have some resonance with the way the people could be prone to think, and for it to resonate it needed to be at least partially accepted. Without a social and individual resonance with martyrdom and martyrs, it would have been easy for people to disregard these calls for 'education' and 'rethinking' how to live, especially at the expense of personal safety, and without education with would be impossible for people to think of martyrdom and martyrs as effectuating. Between both, categorically, there was ambiguity, a straddling of the private concerns of the person and the family and the shame of setting oneself before those who had died for their family.

In order for the dead to remain close to the movement, and work as representatives of the PKK philosophy in their deaths – for them to become vehicles of shame, so to speak – which Dilgeş very much wanted, the council, and indeed the movement in general, needed to 'cultivate' and valuate the dead, which they very much attempted to do. They needed to make sure that Kurdish deaths would not remain in the individual realm – sorrow, regret, and paralysis – but rather become social markers and mobilizing symbols, invoking anger, recalcitrance, and *hêz* instead. Beyond the *perwerde* sessions, in other words, we should therefore first look at the practices they had for valorizing the dead, before we can move on to seeing how shaming worked as 'social currency' to be used by the right people, in the projects the council undertook. This took very much place through council's 'the martyr commission' (*Desteya Alikariyê Malbata Şehîdên* in Kurdish) and the organization and participation in funerals and marriages.

Private Death Rituals

Outside of the council's regular meetings and events, the council's martyr commission was one of the offices that was truly up and running. In the same way as the others,

however, it was not so much a delegated position, but rather a collection of people fulfilling a given role; whoever happened to be at the council, and would come frequently, would take on the task if they had time. The practice of the martyr commission consisted of visiting the families of martyrs in the neighborhood and bringing food, money, and generally just makings sure they had what they needed. The food consisted of basic household items such as tea, rice, oil, and lentils or beans,[288] and was often supplemented with food and groceries produced by other families, such as aged cheese and spring onions, but was not considered a 'special' food in any particular manner. The money came from a 'help box' (*Sindoqa Alikarî*) that stood the corner of the council, where visitors would put in spare cash on the way to and from the council, which the leader would collect – but also from personal, confidential donations. Many times, they were just mere social calls as well. The woman who led the commission, Leyla, was probably elected because her brother's picture was also on the wall; he had been a guerilla who had been killed by the state only a few years previously.

Leyla would often drop by the council around six or seven in the evening and select a few people she wanted to accompany her when she visited the families. She always tried to have a good selection of people joining her; some women, some older men, and preferably a religious person as well, but without it being to many so it would overwhelm the family. She wanted to show the plurality of the people, she said in a council meeting, encouraging people to join: "not only one group (*pêkhateyen* in Kurdish)[289] should care about the martyrs." It was important to have a good cross-section of people to come along with her, as this was intended to reflect the plurality of the project and of the people involved. Having people with different backgrounds was

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[288] This food was often brought from a local Kurdish NGO that provided assistance for the poor, and had a political profile, but the delivering and distribution to the martyrs' families was often done by the council, although I did not see this personally. The food produced by local families however, cheese, onions and pre-pre-prepared meals, I saw being taken on several occasions. An argument could possibly be made here about the nature of the food, but since this is tangential to the point being made here, and I am uncertain whether it is cosmologically relevant I will avoid it. Suffice to say that there were few luxury items on the food list, and that the food provided could potentially be seen as 'traditionally' Kurdish food; rice and tea in particular, and healthy, 'natural' food.

[289] Somewhat of a formal, so-called 'academic' Kurdish word, *Pekhat* is usually translated as 'group,' but in fact means 'component,' which I find to be interesting with regards to the totality pre-supposed in the word.

a way of signaling that the system was open and available to everyone, as well as spanned multiple 'components' of Kurdistan; women and/or religious figures, as well as foreigners were particularly appreciated, as to possibly ameliorate the image of the resistance being nationalist, male and secular. Even though I was not a part of that commission but would sometimes tag along with them.

On a cold winter's day in late November, she came into the council looking for someone to take with her. We were supposed to visit a family whose nephew/cousin had been killed in Rojava. Their neighbors had informed her of his death, she said. This was the second one in the family, a son had already been killed. Several people volunteered, two younger women with hijabs, an older man, the male co-leader, and I. Leyla showed us the way through the winding streets, to a small, concrete house, with smoke coming out of the chimney. She knocked on the door, and it was promptly opened by one of the mature sons in the family. We lined up in order of hierarchy and were ushered into the warm living room; the co-leader went first followed by the leader of martyr-commission, then the old man, and then me, and then two women with hijabs, and then the other men. Inside were the family members who rose from their seats to greet us. We shook all their hands in a circle from right to left, starting with the oldest man of the family. After we had gone around the room and said *serê te sax be*, meaning 'may your head be healthy' (the conventional condolence), to each other, the old man from the council held a short Islamic prayer, which he ended with a prayer for Kurdistan, as was conventional. The women in the group went into the women's room, and the men were seated in the living room and offered tea. The co-leader was offered a chair, which the old man moved away from, and I was offered one as well. It was very important to not extend one's legs – that would be disrespectful – and sit with a straight back, not leaning against anything. The oldest man in the family greeted us when seated, saying that we in the council were also his family, and that he was honored by our presence; it was our loss as much as it was his.

After finishing a glass of tea, starting quietly, the council's co-leader began talking about the family member who had been killed, or more precisely, about martyrdom. He spoke uninterruptedly for a good twenty minutes before he concluded. He said that

the martyrs had done a great honor to the movement, and that his sacrifice would live on in the struggle. The martyr, he said, is the one who truly brings us closer to the freedom of Kurdistan; it is with the martyrs' sacrifice and his blood that the revolution and the freedom of Kurdistan is being developed and spread: "The martyrs are the reason why the whole world is looking to Kurdistan for an example. Without them, we [indicating everyone in the room] would be nothing." The martyr's sacrifice stands as a shining example and inspiration to us all, and if more of us could follow your nephew's path, he said, Kurdistan would be free tomorrow.

The oldest man thanked him for his speech (or political sermon), and said that he appreciated the kind words, and was happy that his nephew had been able to support the movement. Although the interaction was strictly codified – there was more or less a script that the parts should respond with – they were not without emotion. It was clear that both the co-leader and the old man felt sad about the loss, apparent through the voice they used, the lack of energy, and the downwards looking gaze. We then broke into smaller conversations, and after we had all finished our second glass of tea, we passed through the circle again, shaking each-others' hands, saying *serkeftin*, 'victory,' to the bereaved, before we departed.

What initially struck me about the encounter was how the co-leader avoided using the name of the boy as much as possible, rather talking about what martyrdom meant, and not once mentioning his personal characteristics. There was no mention of his personality, his personal history, his education, or his accomplishments, or interests; his importance as a human being was encompassed by his martyrdom and his death. Interestingly, the co-leader also avoided saying 'we' as the visiting group, appreciated or thanked them for his sacrifice. Instead or referring to the group as 'us,' he was speaking *as* the liberation movement, for whom thanking would be out of the question due to the assumed common struggle and revolutionary life. In my interpretation, in other words, using it would have it have implied the 'we,' as in the visiting group, were the agents of the revolution, leaving the old man and his family outside of the struggle. The nephew's life was not a gift given from one stranger to another, but an exchange in the common struggle, purpose and foundation for life. Like in a familial

relation, the nephew had as 'a matter of course' given himself to the struggle, like a son would help a father, for which thanking would be awkward. Thanking would bring out an asymmetry in the relation, resting on a presupposition of disunity and hierarchy in task and purpose. Upon joining the guerilla, he had, through the leadership the visiting group represented, assisted in furthering and bettering the revolution, which, in turn was to the benefit of his uncle and his family; we were all the 'we.' In this context, it would be an inappropriate relation for us in the council to be sorry for their loss, since that would mean that we were somehow unaffected or in a supplicant position; Indeed, the only correct response, wherein the loss could be promised rectified, lay in the mutually achieved 'victory' in the future – '*serkeftin*.' The martyr had given his life for the cause: the cause that both the family and the council were (and should be) working towards, lest they disown his supposed last wishes. The Kurdish cause was what he died for, meaning that in terms of commemorating his life, anything else he had done was irrelevant.

Through quotidian events such as these, which would happen with a frequency of once a week, I would estimate,[290] the direct-democratic council would accomplish both 'inserting' itself into the every-day lives of the residents in the neighborhood, and at the same time assist in valorizing the dead. It was a ritual that spread the knowledge of and appreciation for the martyrs beyond the confines of the family, while still retaining a private valence, where the sacrifice the martyr had provided was re-affirmed within the Apoist ideology. As was apparent with the hierarchy and necessity of having the correct 'components' of the visit, this was a way of connecting traditional/private hierarchies and groups to the ideological project; partially erasing the division between the public sphere, and the private sphere. Instead of organizing a public festival under the aegis of the council for the deceased, for instance, the representatives would accord with traditional hierarchies of the household (dividing men and women, greeting families in a certain order, drinking tea before talking), and bring the ideology in the

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[290] When I say once a week here, it does not indicate that a family member of someone in the neighborhood was killed every week. Rather, it denoted the general meetings the martyr commission undertook, which could include visits commemorating the day when someone had been killed or social calls, but often also extended to participating in events organized by other councils or party branches in the city. In a city of 600 000 people, there were many funerals for people who had been killed in the struggle, which our martyr commission strove to attended and 'make noise' about.

private sphere, so to speak. The most appropriate place for a de-personalized speech about the familiarly deceased was, perhaps paradoxically, in the living room. It was, in other words, a way of bringing the ideology 'home' in the most literal sense of the word. This made the valorization of the dead in an ideological frame not only a public, codified practice, but a private and even intimate ordeal. This is not to say that valorizing the martyrs was not a public endeavor, however.

Popular Death Rituals

Beyond contact with individual families, offering support and reassurance, the council also worked as a facilitator for burials, funerals and commemorations, a practice further valorizing the martyrs in the public. There were three major institutions involved in the process of caring for the dead. The first was the local municipality, where the council was situated. The municipality would assist in the transportation of the body, and make sure that it ended up in the family burial grounds, as far as was possible. They would also provide money to the second institution, the NGO MEYA-DER,[291] which would prepare the logistics for the burial. MEYA-DER would organize a place for the mourning ceremony, cook food for the event, and inform the different Kurdish organizations of the person's death. The third was the local council, which would plan in accordance with the mosque in the neighborhood and mobilize people to come.

During my stay in Wan there were many such events taking place, on an almost weekly, or at least, bi-weekly basis. In fact, the frequency of people killed was so high that in my neighborhood alone seven different weddings took place on the same day, which had stacked up since there should not be held a wedding less than 3 days after a burial. It did not even have to be a person from the neighborhood to postpone the wedding, however; when the famous Kurdish Human Rights lawyer Tahir Elçi was killed in Diyarbakir (everyone was certain that he had been killed by the police), nobody in my neighborhood got married for three days, and I doubt in Wan at large.

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[291] As with the case of the council itself, NGO is here as somewhat misleading denomination. MEYA-DER was also a movement affiliated organization, meaning that it was voluntarily run with a strong underpinning in the revolutionary *Apoist* philosophy. I have not found what the acronym stands for, however.

Tahir Elçi was a very public figure in the Kurdish struggle, due to his openness in investigating the state for war crimes, his campaigning for minority rights, and general bravery in, what was considered, furthering the Kurdish cause. Where the boundaries went for which deaths were considered as relevant to preventing weddings however, I was not sure about; it could have been either people who were killed and were famous and people who were killed in the neighborhood, or it could be people killed from Bakûr, or even include Rojava, but it was most likely somewhere between the first and the second. My council's job in this respect, was informing people about the funerals and memorials taking place, and keeping the mosque in good shape. Mostly this would take place by telling people who stopped by the council, even shouting it to people as they passed, but also calling important people in the neighborhood on the phone.

As Wan was a relatively large city in the south-east of Turkey and many of the martyrs killed both in guerilla actions and in Rojava came from villages close by, sometimes a body would be brought to our mosque to be cleaned, blessed and draped before being sent to the village from which the martyr came. This generated a popular, very effervescent response from the people in our neighborhood. On one such occasion, the BDP sent an SMS to their list of 'subscribers' informing of the location, name, and so on, announcing the body's arrival on the same day. The arrival of the body was often announced rather abruptly, with less than a day to prepare, since the Turkish forces would often hold bodies at different checkpoints or border-crossings, where they would start to rot and deteriorate,[292] and pursue and attempt to disperse martyr demonstrations in the city the body was sent back to.

Even though the time was short, the council and neighborhood turned out in numbers to receive the body, even though it was not closely related to through kinship ties to anyone there. When the ambulance arrived, hundreds of people were in place, shouting "martyrs never die",[293] "Long live Leader Öcalan," crowding around the car, and

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[292] Sandal, H. (2015, December 12). 'Dead bodies of Kurdish fighters and the boundaries of the state.' *The Kurdish Question*. Retrieved from http://kurdishquestion.com/oldarticle.php?aid=dead-bodies-of-kurdish-fighters-and-the-boundaries-of-the-state.
[293] *Şehîd Namirin,* or 'martyrs never die,' is often translated as 'martyrs are immortal,' but I find this translation lacking. As the verb *mirin* is to die, and the prefix *na* indicates 'does not,' the closest translation which does not sound awkward is 'martyrs never die.' To say that that martyrs are

almost fighting to carry the body from the ambulance into the cleaning room. The shouting mass of people followed the body the thirty meters into the room where it was to be treated, and then wandered, drained and discombobulated, to the courtyard to wait and have tea. Conversations were scarce and muted, and groups of people went outside the mosque's grounds to smoke. Around us, the police sirens were blaring. When the body was finally released, the same procedure repeated itself, people combating the droning sounds of the police cars with slogans and shouts while escorting the body back to the ambulance. Some of the women would sometimes start crying on these occasions, although this was disparaged in public. Leyla was even overtaken, although she tried to hide it. At a later occasion I asked her why she tried to stop herself and she replied: "We don't cry because we don't want to show the state any weakness. We don't want to give them that pleasure" (as referred to in Koefoed, 2017a, my co-researcher at the time).

More often than the occasions of martyrs in transit, however, were the funeral and memorial rites taking place at our mosque. On the anniversary of a family's martyr, the council would arrive organize a memorial event for the person. We would arrive well in time before the memorial was scheduled, and start cleaning the place. The first step this was search the place for bombs, just in case the police or the MHP gangs had planted some there to disrupt the martyrs' commemorations, which I was never permitted to do. I had to wait outside while others would go in and search first. We would then sweep, brew tea, set up the sound system, and arrange the chairs, and make a space for MEYA-DER who would come with the food. We would also decorate the tables where pictures of the martyr in question was placed, and hang up the large pictures of the martyr, Öcalan, and PKK flags, which were illegal and had to be taken down quickly afterwards. First, the bereaved family would come, and we would sit with them and talk with them informally for a while, before ushering them into the anteroom. Half an hour later neighbors would slowly start filtering in, greeted by the highest representatives present from the council standing at the gate, shaking everyone's hand as the entered. At some events upwards of 500 people would come, so there was a steady flow of people entering into the ante-room of the mosque to pay

immortal would in Kurdish be closer to 'Şehîdên bê mirin in,' which translates to 'the martyrs are without death.'

their condolences, eat, and then leave, shaking the family's and the council representatives on the way out.

If it was a memorial event and rather than a funeral event, leaders from the Kurdish civilian parties would often show up and sit with the family. Who came was partly influenced by the importance of the martyr – whether the person had merely been killed or if he was killed in a spectacular manner or held a high position in the guerilla. If it was an important martyr, *qua* the *kadros* in chapter 5, who was to be commemorated the general co-leader of the BDP in Van might show up, whereas a 'lesser' martyr might only have the BDP head from the municipal branch, *qua* the civilian martyr. There was, however, not a systematicity. The party representative would also greet the people coming in, shaking their hands alongside the family and the Imam. Some of these events would pack the mosque with more than 500 people. Once the place was full, the ceremony would always start with everyone standing up, holding their hands to their sides, looking down, and holding one minute of silence for the martyrs. The family or the party member would then say *şehîd namirin* which was called back to them by the congregation, before the leader would say: "Martyrs light our path." There would be variations on what the leader of the congregation would say to finish; sometimes "martyrs are the soul of Kurdistan", "martyrs are our honor," or "Kurdistan will win." After the introduction, a short prayer held by the Imam would follow, before people were seated and given food, and speeches about the struggle, the importance of sacrifice, and Kurdistan were given.

Movable Ritual Generator

In my mind, these popular and public death rituals served a double purpose, both of which worked in favor of the movement. At the same time as the rituals were a means of generating 'groupness' of the movement, they were also rituals that moved the frontlines of 'war' into everyday life. By continuously celebrating the martyrs, the movement was not only creating trans-local and sometimes transnational connections, punctuating everyday life with explicitly political and effervescent rituals, but they were also bringing the war 'home.' As bodies arrived from far away, were commemorated, or indeed merely killed in a remote place, they carried particular

ramifications for my local community. The public practices surrounding the martyrs, in a sense, dissolved the spatial and temporal division of both war and Kurdistan; it folded the time and place of war onto the local community.

As deaths both physically remote and proximate were considered equally close and important, both Kurdistan and the war were re-constructed as isomorphic entities; their time and place overlapped completely, meaning that, through the martyrs, it became impossible for my interlocutors to think of war as being 'remote' in space or time. Instead of locating the 'frontlines' in more violent cities in Bakûr or in the struggle against ISIS in Rojava, the rituals surrounding martyrdom in my community brought the bodies 'home.' Regardless of whether a martyr had been killed in Amed or in Rojava, they would still nonetheless be commemorated and venerated, and shape the everyday functioning of everyday life, best exemplified with sequentialization of marriages. Neither temporally nor spatially could the people in my council say that the war was taking place 'far away'; the war was both at home, next door, close by, and far away at the same time. In this way, 'the frontlines were everywhere;' it existed simultaneously both at home and far away, in the present, in the past, the future, and across localities and borders.

At the same time as the public rituals (literally) brought the war to one's doorstep however, it also brought home *Kurdistan*.[294] By de-locating the places in which people died for Kurdistan, the rituals also brought Kurdistan everywhere. By attempting to make sure that the martyrs made in Rojava were just important in a small neighborhood in Wan as they were where they fell, what was being fought for in Rojava was also being re-discovered in this local community. What the martyrs had died for in Rojava, was just as much there in Wan. Kurdistan as an ideal, utopia and myth, as delineated by Öcalan, became considered as unfolding in a time-space shared with all the different locations in which the struggled was waged. Through the public

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[294] As an aside, an interesting conjunction can here be read with Finn Stepputat's work on the corpse as a vehicle for claiming sovereignty (2018, 2014a), which he claims is a central aspect of the state's ongoing endeavor to legitimize itself. The power to handle dead bodies, he asserts, is transformed into a testament to the power of the state. In the Kurdish case, we can see that claiming the body is contested, which is as much generative for the notion of sovereignty seen as belonging to Kurdistan, as it is to the Turkish state.

rituals Kurdistan was constituted as a totality, in other words, despite whatever spatial and temporal divisions might 'actually' exist. At the same time as the public death rituals assisted in taking war everywhere, they at the same time assisted in bringing Kurdistan everywhere.

In this way, it seemed to me that the body of the martyr served as a moveable ritual generator for the movement. Perhaps stretching the analogy, as Benedict Anderson (2006) takes reading the newspaper or listening to the radio as an act which makes a previously disconnected group of people move together in time, thereby creating 'groupness,' the entire infrastructure of converging parties, organizations and civilians surrounding the martyrs could be said to stimulate a similar process. The body that arrived to us from Rojava – greeted by women crying and shouting slogans – would have been celebrated in the same way when the body was transported from the frontlines to the border, and would in all probability be received in the same fashion when it arrived in the local village. Throughout this transportation process, people with little personal connection to the dead person would celebrate him or her as a symbol of the struggle – its virtue and cost – and, arguably, move together as a collective unit in time by virtue of the martyr's body. A spectacular case of this could be seen in the martyrdom of British-Kurdish Mehmet Aksoy, who was born in Bakûr, but killed in Rojava in 2017. His body was celebrated all the way to the Turkish border, received by large crowds, and greeted by thousands of mourners in London, as well as spurring pro-Kurdish demonstrations throughout Turkey and Germany.[295] Everywhere his body moved it would generate rituals constituting and re-constituting Apoist collectivities.

Irrespective of the international dissolution and temporal conflations I have outlined here however, what was truly important with regards to the every-day functioning of the movement in Wan was how invested people were in treating the dead correctly. The support of the martyrs enjoyed massive institutional and popular support, and was something 'everyone' was concerned with. Across institutional hierarchies, MEYA-

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[295] Khomami, N. (2017, November 10). 'Thousands attend funeral of British film-maker killed in Rakka by ISIS.' *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/nov/10/hundreds-funeral-british-film-maker-isis-raqqa-mehmet-aksoy

DER, the municipality and the local councils and communities worked in concert to fulfill the prescription for how to deal correctly with dead revolutionaries. Be it by sitting in a living room chair and talking about the meaning a family member's death, or by greeting grievers at the door of the funeral event they hosted, the council members were part and parcel of the process of caring for and valuating the martyrs. Due to the council and the movement's proximity and control over the dead – where the only correct way of paying respect to the deceased was to support what they had died for – they could also utilize shame as social currency for soliciting both practical and financial support for their other projects. The martyrs formed a background through which shame could be thrown into relief. I found shame as social currency most apparent in the three major projects the council was undertaking during my fieldwork, namely *komîns*, the co-operative, and the election, which were all seen as central components for the final disassociation with the Turkish state.

Shaming People into Work

Finalizing the municipality's new co-operative was one of first major projects I found the council to be working on. The co-operative had recently been opened, and was supposed to be run on a not-for-profit basis, where the local farmers in the outskirts of Wan could sell their goods to the co-operative for market price.

Wan Koperatif

The goal of the co-operative was basically to transfer the price of the goods given by the farmer to the public, with only a slight profit margin always measured against the prices in 'capitalist' stores. This meant that goods produced in the region could be sold at way under market price. Both local producers of honey from villages approximately sixty kilometers away, and women's co-operatives making pasta, composed of women who had suffered domestic abuse, supplied the store. I had the opportunity visit the women's co-operative, but was dissuaded from going to the villages since the police had set up roadblocks, and had allegedly shot at a car transporting goods from a helicopter. People who worked in the co-operative were not be paid a fixed salary, but would receive marginal economic support for their efforts by the people in the affiliated councils or the municipality, as well as split the surplus amongst

themselves.[296] It basically functioned on a volunteer basis after work or school, three of the seven people working there being full-time students or older people. The goal of this co-operative was to create a local infrastructure that could ween people off imported good and secure local food production, as well as being a more just way of distributing surplus; i.e. centrally linked to the Apoist philosophy. Finalizing this project was Dilgeş' main preoccupation when I arrived, since he was working in the economy commission, not only for our council, but also for the aforementioned Kurdish umbrella organization, the DTK.

To get all the infrastructure of the store in order (like racks, the initial supplies, and so on), it was necessary with some cash influx, which the councils, along with the pro-Kurdish municipality, had decided would come in the form of shares that people could buy in the co-operative. Collecting these shares was Dilgeş' job. Each share was 200 tl, which corresponded to approximately fifty USD– not an insignificant amount in Turkey, and some people had pledged to buy several. The people who were supposed to invest were promised to get their money back within a year by the council and the co-op.[297] Whether this would happen, however, was a very dubious affair, since the profit margin was intentionally made so slim and it was a new business. It seemed to me that the people who had promised to buy shares were painfully aware of this. Many times, they were 'unable' to meet up with Dilgeş to give him the money, doing something else, which irritated him profoundly.

One day, Dilgeş decided that he was finished with trying to call people, and rather started to seek them out where they worked in person. I tagged along, and for a couple days we spent most our time trying to 'track down' the people who had promised money. Our first stop was our local municipality building, conveniently situated across from the co-operative. When we arrived there, we went straight into the building, and sought out the office of the transportation minister, who had promised to buy two shares. We found his office, and sat down outside. Immediately when he saw us

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[296] I am not sure exactly how much economic support was given not how much surplus was re-distributed, as the people I interviewed did not have a precise figure for me. Having spent several hours in and around the co-operative however, the prices, especially for local goods were remarkable lower than in the supermarkets.

[297] How this was promised, and who had promised it, was not clear to me.

through the glass window separating us, he put down his phone and quickly ushered us in. He called on his secretary to get us tea, and struck up a conversation, asking about his family, brothers, daughters, etc. After the tea, Dilgeş brought up the topic of the pledge, and he put some money in an envelope that he passed on to us, apologizing profusely for not having it before. He came with some excuses and followed us to the door patting us on the back, making physical contact. To me, he seemed concerned that he had caused Dilgeş any irritation or distress. We did not count the money after we left, and went on to the next place.

Along the way, Dilgeş explained to me that he had helped put him in office. Contrary to 'normal' elections, where anyone could in principle be elected, how it worked in the municipality and in *Partî*, i.e. the movement, was that you needed a nomination to get into a position – often without an election. This decision was taken by the people "who really worked for the movement," in other words, the seniors of the struggle. They would talk, Dilgeş said, to find out which person could be trusted to "serve" (*xizmetkar*) the movement well, on the basis of family and personal characteristics. It was important that the person had shown devotion, and had a good family background. There were several "ignorant people" working in the municipality, he said, who would take money from their budget either for themselves or spend it on projects that were not "for the people"; "Some people want it for the status, and some people want it for the money." The transportation minister had received a nomination from Dilgeş, who, although in no formal position of power himself, had conferred with people 'high up' in the municipality and suggested him to be 'tapped,' so to speak. This was also the issue with the co-leader of the council, he said. Dilgeş told me that he had been approached by the co-leader who wanted to move up into a position in 'the party' or the municipality. Dilgeş did not recommend him for any position, he said, because he did not feel he had proven himself. He was too restless in his position as co-leader, not doing a good job there – i.e. not talking in the right way, not showing up to all the events, and taking initiative – and besides, he said, his clan was rich; he did not need

the money. There were too many from his clan in the municipality as it was; if one was not careful they would turn it into a "Celalî tribe municipality."[298]

The other people we visited to collect the pledges had different strategies for dealing with Dilgeş – some being unavailable, some being sick, some already having prepared the envelope – but in all the cases, it was clear that they assumed a deferential position in relation to him. More than the general politeness in Kurdistan, there was supplication, and a visibly strong intent to placate Dilgeş' wishes. This went for even those people that Dilgeş had not assisted in putting into office, and spanned positions, quite high into the general municipality of Wan. Although in no formal position of power, it was clear the Dilgeş had the opportunity to demand and receive services from his 'superiors.'

The only reason I could find for explaining this relation, was that the municipal workers felt torn between the self-interest of keeping the money, and the shame of not paying. To me it seemed like this conflict became actualized when a person who had visibly 'suffered so much' for the movement came to collect the money they had promised for the greater good. As they had often been elected on the implicit promise made to Dilgeş (and the movement) that they would serve the cause selflessly, when he came *in person* to ask them for the money, indicated that they had not done their jobs well enough; it should have been given without any hesitation. They had skimped on paying, one may only assume because they would rather have had the money for something else, and perhaps hope to 'get away with it' (as saying 'no' is impolite), but when Dilgeş showed up, they understood that would not be possible. Instead of then merely giving the money over to Dilgeş, and us being on our way, it was important for people to supplicate him in other ways, to ensure that this avenue of contact had been destroyed. Questions about family, long tea visits, physical contact, new promises, seemed to me to all be ways of dealing with the shame that Dilgeş imparted upon his arrival.

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[298] The Celalî were a massive tribal configuration apportioned one of the major principalities in the North-East of the Ottoman empire.

More explicitly, the role of shame, became very apparent in a conflict the co-leader had with Dilgeş over an election activity. After the aforementioned bombing in Ankara, where more than one hundred people had been killed by ISIS the HDP had become more cautious about holding election rallies.[299] Demirtaş had gone on TV after the previous bombing in Suruç (which killed some thirty people) and said that he found it very strange that with all the surveillance the government had, they were still unable to prevent suicide attacks taking place *only* against organizations affiliated with the Kurdish movement. The government, he said, had "blood on its hands."[300] The aforementioned massacred in Cizîre had also emerged, where more than 150 civilians had been burnt alive in basements lit on fire by state forces. People were gradually becoming more frightened about participating or assisting in the election.

In this context, one day Dilgeş received a phone call from the BDP. We were sitting in the council, and after the conversation was finished, he told us that the other co-leader of the HDP, Figen Yüksekdağ, was coming to Wan to hold an election rally. We had been delegated, he said, to find and prepare a location. It was rather short notice to make sure that the police or the terrorists did not have enough time to plan an attack, so it was to happen the next day. The BDP had also changed the planned venue, and moved it from a large cultural center, to our small neighborhood mosque. Dilgeş spent the next couple of hours on the phone, calling everyone at the council in for a general assembly. At approximately six pm, we had approximately sixty people sitting in the council, listening to Dilgeş, but the co-leader was not one of them. Dilgeş said that we were to split into groups and go through the neighborhood informing the people about the meeting. It would be best to do this face-to-face, he said, to make people feel more obligated to go than just sending messages or calling, but I suspected it was a hopeful way of keeping the information out of the hands of the police. Concordantly, we split into smaller groups, where Leyla, once again, creating groups that would be diversified to make the propaganda more suitable (men, women, religious people, and

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[299] Letsch, C. & Khomami, N. (2015, October 11). 'Turkey terror attack: mourning after scores killed in Ankara blast.' *The Guardian.* Retrieved from
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/10/turkey-suicide-bomb-killed-in-ankara.
[300] 'Ankara bombing: Who is behind Turkey's deadliest attack?' (2015, October 12). *BBC*. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34504326.

older people in equal groups), and started canvassing our delegated portion of the neighborhood. It was important, Dilgeş told me, as an offhand remark when we were leaving, that we weren't too many people, because then the police might think something was suspicious, like a demonstration was brewing, and also not too few so that someone could call for help if someone was abducted or attacked.

Knocking on the doors, people would try to lure us in for tea most of the time, when we presented ourselves, but we managed to stave off most of the offerings. Some people even came out to join us, walking with us from house to house. Dilgeş would pull me along with him, and be proud to stand next to me while he talked. He even wanted me to talk, in my (at that point) relatively poor Kurdish. He would say:

> Hi, we are from the neighborhood council, and just wanted to inform you that our party leader, Figen Yüksekdağ, will be coming to the Mosque tomorrow at 6 to hold an election talk, and we would very much like for you to come. Please bring the women and children as well, it is good if as many as possible could come, and could you tell your neighbors if you see them?

Although the people would try to pull us in for tea many times during this short speech, very few of them promised that they would come. They would do their best, they said, but they weren't sure they could make it. During that evening, in around negative fifteen degrees centigrade, we went to at least fifty different houses. When I complained about the cold, Dilgeş would run off, jokingly shouting slogans: "Will needs no food or comfort!", "Belief is its own warmth!".

The next day, we arrived early at the mosque – at approximately five o'clock in the afternoon, and started getting it ready. After Dilgeş had checked for bombs, we put out the chairs, put up the banners, and the tables. People gradually started filtering in, and soon we were approximately 500 people standing in the courtyard – not an impressive number by any normal account (other demonstrations I had been to had been attended by thousands). By six thirty it was dark, and Yüksekdağ had not arrived. On top of the mosque, and standing on the corners a few blocks down, were youth dressed in black

with *kefîyê*s covering their faces.[301] Although they were not armed – as far as I could see – they were indubitably a part of the YDG-H, the newly formed militant youth organization created to protect the neighborhoods from the police, later to become the YPS mentioned in chapter 6.

Suddenly five different cars arrived – they must have taken a detour – and drove up to the mosque. Out of one of the cars came Yüksekdağ, surrounded by her bodyguards looking conspicuously every which way. People were overjoyed, and started shouting slogans: "Long the HDP's resistance! Long Live Leader Apo!" Dilgeş ran in to check for bombs again, without greeting or being star-struck by Yüksekdağ, and ushered her and the security detail into the anteroom. People quickly filtered into the anteroom except for approximately twenty people, standing guard outside. At this point, I could see that at the front stage Yüksekdağ was sitting next to representatives from the HDP, the DTK and the BDP, but at the same table the co-leader of our council. He was seated along these people at the front row, looking very serious, while Dilgeş and I were sitting on the second row in the audience. Yüksekdağ was introduced by the other politicians, and held a very short speech. "They will not break us, they try to repress us, but we will not go away," and so on. The speech was quickly concluded, and after people had given her a standing ovation for five minutes, the security detail was hurriedly trying to get her back to her car. At this point our co-leader stepped up to Yüksekdağ and asked her for a selfi.e. Being courteous, she obliged while he fumbled with the camera. He finally got her picture and she was hurriedly escorted into her car.

After she left, it was imperative to leave as quickly as possible. There was always the possibility the youth would use any event to turn it into a demonstration. Groups of people were already marching down the street yelling *Bijî Serok Apo,* a slogan that could easily get you arrested or attacked if the police found the opportunity. Also, getting caught with the banners would be very bad, leading to people getting detained, beaten up or arrested. We hurried to the co-leaders' BMW, and asked if he could give us a ride. In the car, after we had gotten away from the mosque, the co-leader started

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[301] The black and white scarf, famous from the Palestinian struggle, but also commonly used as head gear or a scarf in the Middle East.

complaining absentmindedly that he had been seated so far away from Yüksekdağ. This was the final drop for Dilgeş. He started shouting at the co-leader: "Have you no shame?! Who are you?! You are nobody! You don't take a picture with her – you are her servant (*xizmet*) and her equal! You work for her and she works for you! What kind of leader are you? You bring shame to our council – this is not what we do in the movement!". The co-leader once again tried making excuses and apologizing, but Dilgeş was not having it, and we excited the car far from where we lived.

Komîns

As a part of the decision from the DTK, all the different neighborhood councils, were instructed to start creating *komîns*, which were supposed to function as councils on the street-level. In one street with twenty to fifty households, the council wanted people to have a miniature council, wherefrom delegates could be sent to the neighborhood council, and in general attempt to tie the respective families in the neighborhood more strongly together. There were intended to be different commissions there as well. In the weekends in particular, we would go around from arranged meeting to arranged meeting and hold seminars on the virtues and necessities of *komîns*. Depending on where we went there would be between eight and thirty people coming to listen. Usually it was one of the people who worked in the council who would come and talk with their neighbors and set up a meeting at their place. Probably more out of courtesy rather than revolutionary fervor, people would come to the council members' house, and be served tea, while the delegates talked and laid out their designs. Although reminded of the duty to Kurdistan by the speakers, the people tasked with creating their own *komîns* did not seem to be very engaged. After a while, since our mobilization was going rather poorly, Dilgeş arranged it so that a *kadro* would come to speak for one of our prospective *komîns*, alongside other BDP and DTK representatives.

Although shrouded in uncertainty and secrecy, *kadro* was as mentioned a term used to designate someone who was a guerilla (in this case, in civilian employ) 'full-time' as Dilgeş said, although asking about such things was strictly forbidden (see chapter 5). This person would have received schooling from the PKK in the mountains, and was

sent to assist and instruct the civilian struggle. It was also generally assumed that people who were *kadro* had fought in the war. I had met our *kadro* several times before at an office, and he had to me what seemed to be typical guerilla characteristics. He was extremely formal, correct and well-dressed, yet simultaneously interested in what I had to say. When I had found out that he was central to coordinating the *komîns*, I had once asked him in the office if we could meet sometime and if I could have his number. He seemed a bit uncomfortable. He said that he would love to meet and discuss with me, truly, but that it would be better if I got in touch with him through our common acquaintance who had his number. He then re-iterated again how nice it was to meet me, and took off. Puzzled, I asked Dilgeş what that was about, and he told me that there were some numbers I was better off not having. By asking I had really broken etiquette; one was only supposed to have the numbers that were necessary for one's task. If police arrested him, he told me, they would check his phone, and if my number was on there, they would come and get me too. I had clearly not understood 'knowing what not to know.' Having too many numbers would also immediately put one in suspicion if one was 'taken in,' and one should never ask – for one's own safety and others – if it was not necessary.

The meeting with the *kadro* was supposed to take place in another council than where we usually went, in a more dangerous neighborhood, according to Dilgeş. The same black-clad youth who were protecting our meeting with Yuksekdag had a stronger presence there, and there would be clashes almost every other day with the police there. We spread the word as much as we could, face-to-face, and showed up at the designated location. It was completely anonymous, with no signs or markings – merely through the backyard of a housing complex where people were waiting. When we arrived, there were approximately sixty people standing around in the cold outside, smoking, and being quiet so as to not draw unwanted attention. We funneled inside when all the people had arrived, up a tight pair of stairs into a spartan room, decorated with cheap posters of martyrs and Öcalan. Before we entered, we were asked to put all our cell phones in a tin-covered box, so that no one would be inadvertently be surveilled by the police. They put on the heat, and we sat sweating in plastic chairs – women and men separate – facing a desk where the *kadro* stood in front smiling,

dressed in a North Face jacket and wearing sharp glasses. We started off with the usual minute of silence for the martyrs, and sat patiently down, listening to the *kadro* speak of the duty to Kurdistan. He said that although the times were tough, this was the time to buckle down; the Turkish state has once again proven that it will not permit Kurds to accepted and govern themselves:

> In fact, the recent barbarism by the state should only re-double our efforts to resist. The illusions are gone and it is now more pressing than ever. More and more people are dying. Remember the Dersim massacre, the uprising of Şêx Saîd – the same is happening now. History is repeating itself. Turkish state wants to repeat history of the Kurds. We need you to work, comrades. Tell us what is happening in your neighborhood. Come and receive education. Learn your history. Encourage the women and children to come; a free society cannot be made without free women. The first step is to make democracy at home and where you live. Therefore, we want you to construct *komîns*, so that you can learn together. This is Apo's ideology, and this is what he [asks] wants from us. People have died for this. In Rojava, this system is working by the blood of the martyrs. And what has happened now? The process of freedom is [walking] moving there (…)

He concluded the meeting on a strong note, and people got up from their chairs and gave him a standing ovation, some of the young people shouting *Berxwedan Jîyan* repeatedly – 'resistance is life.' This effervescence carried out into the street after the meeting as well. Dilgeş, his driver and I, separated from a group of approximately forty, mostly young men, and headed towards our car in the opposite direction. The group of started banging on garages with sticks and shouting, "Long live Leader Apo! Long live the PKK!". Some of the young men put *kefîyês* around their faces. Upon hearing this, the *kadro* quickly dispatched and jumped into a near-by car. The group's shouting culminated in singing the informal anthem of the PKK – *Çerxa Şoreşê*, the 'Wheel of the Revolution' – at the top of their lungs:

> Today the wheel of the revolution is broadly spinning

In all the corners of the world, playing loudly!

–

From between the prison walls to the top of the mountains
Raise the red flag, resistance is life

–

You gave us the leading light of the path, the blood of the martyrs
Our leader is the PKK
Our leader is Abdullah Öcalan!

Once they had turned the corner 150 meters away from us, we heard what sounded to me like a flurry of explosions. The sounds were at different pitches. We turned around, and I asked Dilgeş if we should run to the car. He said, "No, don't look back, and just keep walking. Put on your hood." Around the corner came two enormous tank-like police cars with machine-guns mounted on top. The shooting continued, and people scattered, although one could still hear the chants from different sections of the neighborhoods. As we were walking, the sounds close to us decreased in frequency, but came progressively closer. In the blocks next to us the distinct chugs of machineguns could be heard. We kept walking slowly, trying our best to be casual, but we could see that towards the end of our street, there were also tanks lining up and driving slowly towards us. The police had tried a pincer maneuver to arrest (or do god-knows-what with) the people who had attended the meeting. Somehow, they must have been made aware of the meeting. As the tanks got progressively closer, it seemed to me like they tried to frighten us, trying to make us run. They started shooting what sounded like guns to me up in the air and aimed teargas canisters at us. Dilgeş insisted that we did not run, so we walked calmly through the teargas. The tanks followed us, slowly, but gradually catching up, probably assuming that they would take us irrespectively, now that we were blocked in. When they were 10 meters behind and in front of us, the tanks stopped, and masked police with machine-guns exited the vehicles walking towards us. Fortunately, we were right next to our car, slipped in and sped away as fast as we could. In the car, Dilgeş' legs were shaking and he was paler than usual. When we were at a safe distance the driver started blaring revolutionary music, laughing, "That was close! Who's up for soup?".

In the car, Dilgeş said that he was very proud of me. "You were really not afraid!". He told me that it was very good that we did not run. If we ran, they might have shot us, he said, and because we did not run, if we had been taken in, we could just say that we were just walking home and had not been at the meeting. It was very good they could not see my hair, he said and laughed: "With that blonde hair they would have arrested us immediately! Really, if they had arrested us, it would have been a big problem."

What struck me in retrospect of the event was that no one was surprised or troubled by the fact that there was bound to have been a police informer there. None of the chat in the car after the incident revolved around speculating who had informed the police, or how they had found out. They mostly joked about the stupidity of the police and our luck. It seemed taken for granted that, despite the security precautions and the like, if the police wanted to, they could find out. To me, it seemed like the solution Dilgeş offered to this terroristic, (potentially) omnipresent presence of the police, was precisely what he had said to me: "to not be afraid." This initially seemed strange to me, since, on a personal level, I was petrified – although I had much less of a reason to be so than Dilgeş. However, I had not displayed it publicly; I had controlled myself. I had not shown fear, run away or panicked. This was what I later took to mean 'not being afraid.' Literally pretending, or performing in a way that made the police irrelevant to our activities, it seemed to me, was what was at the core of 'not being afraid' entailed. Indeed, this was what I interpreted as the desired ethos for the movement. If people could, in a sense, pretend, perform, or actually believe that it was not important if one was arrested or detained, that oneself was not that important, then people would offer the best resistance. This was the desired (and contradictory) way of bracing oneself against the eradicative violence pervading the Turkish state.

Conclusion

Irrespective of how frightened Dilgeş and I were personally, we had extinguished our public proclivity to 'save ourselves,' rather acting despite our individual desires to flee. This was also what I saw as the main complaint Dilgeş (and the *kadro* for that matter) made about the civilian population and the council's delegates. Our council

leader had displayed profoundly individualizing traits on numerous different occasions. As the frontlines of the war were everywhere, and everywhere in Kurdistan was equally important, such behavior was not to be tolerated. From taking pictures of Yüksekdağ to post on social media, to making personal excuses for not showing up to meetings, he had displayed that he had not been able to abnegate himself in relation to the collective movement. He had not performed in a way that was collective in spite of his personal predilections. "Who are you? You are nobody" as Dilgeş shouted at him was in this way not only a reprimand; it also pointed at the heart of the matter, namely that becoming 'nobody,' becoming mere performance in-and-for the collective, was something that he had not achieved, it seemed to me. On the background of the great sacrifice the martyrs had offered, this was a profoundly shameful way of comporting oneself. This is not to say that to relinquish one's self-importance was an easy task, as Dilgeş well understood and was frustrated by, but rather that this was what Dilgeş (at some level) saw the movement's shaming mechanisms as designed to rectify. Devaluing one's own individual life through making death an 'externality,' so to speak, could only be achieved by truly understanding what the struggle was about and how it was to be achieved (i.e. through *perwerde* and *rexne*), but this in turn relied upon an intent and commitment not to shame or do wrong by the martyrs. Although no one was perhaps able to live up to the ideal of setting oneself aside entirely, shame worked as a strong 'mover' in this context, straddling the individual and the collective, precisely due to the fact that people felt they *should* be able to do this.

However, what I have described so far still makes the movement seem as a totalizing, centrifugal force, which very much weighs heavily on its participants. Even though we have seen in Wan how this may manifest differently, and the difficulty and ambiguity inherent in 'applying' the martyrs to diverse social phenomena, we have not yet seen paths of escape, radical re-appropriations, and 'conservative' uses of them. We have seen that shaming was an effectuating mechanism through which the martyrs were made relevant, but we have not seen how someone would shame someone else for even *daring* to use the martyrs. In order to better grasp the escapes, the multifarity, and even the pride revolving around martyrial death, we may turn to Berlin, Germany. How does one manipulate this system to suit oneself rather than the movement, and

indeed, how can one 'escape' from the bonds martyrs tie people to the movement with?

9: Martyrs Beyond the Party: Transforming the Struggle in the German Diaspora

Introduction

During the last period of my fieldwork, towards the end of 2016, I was working in the PYD's foreign commission in Berlin. Alongside the PYD's foreign representative, who had been 'tapped' to work there,[302] there was an ensemble of important Apoist representatives, who had similarly been appointed to sit in the council overseeing the activities and contributing to particular projects.[303] Although most of the activities we undertook were mundane in nature, assembling news briefs from the region, writing letters, and attempting to organize forums and meetings with Germany politicians and NGOs, we once received a visitor from Syrian Kurdistan, who came to check in with what was happening in the German office. Fresh from the airport, central people in the Syrian Kurdish revolutionary leadership (who I for security reasons will not disclose the identity of), arrived in our little office at the outskirts of the city. In addition to the leadership bringing their own security detail, all my friends from the youth center had stood outside or inside the hallway, keeping guard. As I was tasked with writing the minutes, I was permitted to sit in on the meeting.

After the pleasantries had been exchanged and the tea had been served, the PYD's Syrian leadership asked about what projects the German office had undertaken and what projects they wanted to continue with. Although a host of interesting issues were raised, the one that stuck out to me the most, was the disastrous proposal of one of the important diaspora council members. Being an older man, dressed in what looked to be an expensive suit (as compared to the business casual attire of the rest of the participants), he proposed that one of the top priorities should be establishing export

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[302] People would often be nominated by leadership in Northern Syria or Turkish Kurdistan, and if nominated – for reasons usually having to do with signs of devotion, such as money donations, activism, or family connections – no one felt that they could turn it down. If tapped, many people in diaspora leadership positions felt as though they were obliged to take on the responsibility.

[303] Important people were discerned by the qualities described in the previous footnote. Not all of the people were Kurds, however, as the council was often proud to pronounce, there was a leader of an Assyrian Christian diaspora organization, a Turkmen, and an Arab as well. All in all, there were approximately ten to twelve people who turned up regularly at the council meetings.

connections for Syrian Kurdistan so as to sell slate rock to Europe. He also argued that the most important thing that the movement could do now was to form connections with wealthy institutions and individuals, so that they could either invest in Syrian Kurdistan or donate money to the cause. At one point he mentioned that the movement should try to make inroads with the German Rotary Club, since this was a center of and for wealthy individuals. This would be the best way of furthering the revolution (*şoreş pêş keve,* in Kurdish), he argued. Upon hearing the last comment respectfully to the end, one of the top leaders from the Syrian Kurdistan responded forcefully. He shamed the businessman, arguing that they were revolutionaries, they were not businesspeople; they were there to build a new Middle East, not secure profits for Europe. He should not forget the guiding principles of *Serok Apo,* and the great human cost the war had demanded. [304] This was not what the revolution was about. The businessman became flustered, and tried, unsuccessfully, to retort before he remained mostly silent for the rest of the meeting.

In this short event, we see that revolution – what it entailed, who it enticed, and how it was envisioned to progress – was not a unified or one-sided affair. Undoubtedly, the businessman had Syrian Kurdistan's best interest in mind, and had, indeed, agreed to sit on the council, as well as confessed to Apo's revolutionary ideology. But what this meant for him was radically different from what the Syrian leadership saw as being pertinent, or indeed as belonging to the domain of revolutionary activity at all. This short vignette reveals that revolution may hardly be said to be a fixed set of practices or attitudes. Despite the fidelity to the martyrs, the devotion to Öcalan, and the appraisal of the natural Kurdish way of life, transforming these ideals and commitments into living, working practices, was a multifarious, and often contradictory affair – particularly in the diaspora. It was not like in Maxmur, where everyone more-or-less knew what was demanded, nor was it like Wan, where those who were 'educated' could use the martyrs to great effect on their subordinates – it was a different dynamic altogether. In a place where expressions of Kurdishness were less controversial, the violence exerted less direct, harmful and physical, and where family relations were often either reconfigured or lacking, what the martyrs were seen

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[304] The person from the Syrian Kurdish leadership in question, it was known, had been physically disfigured in the war, and had lost a child in the struggle as well.

as demanding, what revolutionary activity would entail, and indeed what martyrdom in itself signified, was often more unclear and ambiguous.

Martyrs between Homeland and Diaspora

Despite the very different interpretations of what the martyrs demanded, disseminating the ideology (and adherence to it) to Kurdish communities was very important for the PKK's continued existence, and extremely so in the diaspora. Aside from the Kurds in Kurdistan, there are Kurdish diasporas not only across Europe but also extending worldwide. PKK-affiliated parties have their own offices in Australia, Russia, Japan, and even South Africa. In Germany, the country with the largest diasporic community, it is estimated that there are approximately four million Turkish people, a good portion of whom are Kurdish, and upwards of 600 000 people who self-identify as Kurdish (Eccarius-Kelly, 2000). As in most parts of Kurdistan, it is not unreasonable to assume that almost everyone in the diaspora have relatives or friends that have been killed by a state in one of the parts of Kurdistan. All the local struggles in the 'homeland' (*welat*) rely heavily on resources provided from the outside to further their cause (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003). The diaspora provides a bridge in terms of diplomacy, financing and international solidarity work. For instance, the HDP – the pro-Kurdish party in Turkey – would not have been able to overcome the electoral threshold of 10 percent if it were not for the diaspora voters. Similarly, without the constant diplomatic work and outreach, is highly doubtful that the hundreds of foreign fighters joining the struggle against ISIS would have come to assistance. On the academic side, Abdullah Öcalan is now being read in social studies courses in several universities in Europe due to the labor and propaganda from the diaspora community. This is also not even to speak of the immeasurable financial support the Kurdish struggle receives from the Kurds outside of Kurdistan. Some academics working on the Kurdish issue have even gone so far as to argue that there were would be no movement in Kurdistan, if it were not for the support of the diaspora (Eccarius-Kelly, 2002; Lyon & Uçarer, 2001).[305] For the PKK, then, in order to maintain its momentum – if not its existence – it is imperative to nurture these critical connections to the outside world.

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[305] 'Movement' here broadly understood, not indicating resistance as such.

One of the central ways the movement aims to conjoin the diaspora with the 'centers' in Kurdistan, is through de-territorializing the figure of the martyr as part of constructing a flexible Apoist Kurdish identity. Due to the global span of the movement, it is important for the PKK to keep the ideology of martyrdom somewhat open, so it is adaptable to the contextual state-formation the community lives under, while, at the same time, not losing the moral debt the martyrs provide the participants. While the role of martyrs provides participants with a vehicle for self-understanding and revolutionary practice within the PKK's framework, it is simultaneously extremely important for the movement that the figure of the martyrs does not ossify, or become a figure with merely site-specific reach, closed for everyone except a specific local community. Rather, the figure of the martyr must be *mobile* and malleable, so that it can both connect globally, while being still relevant locally. This can be considered as one of the functions of the martyrial logic, namely, the role of martyrs in territorializing while at the same time de-territorializing the Apoist resistance and identity, amending the contradiction between scale and coherence in the movement. As such, this chapter will investigate the relationship between spatialization and effectuation in the movement – what are its limits, and if there are none, how do we conceptualize limitlessness?

Martyrdom and the (De)Territorialization of the Struggle

Both in the mountains and in almost all movement spaces all over the world, as I have argued, one will find pictures of martyrs adorning the room, and it is a constantly available conversation topic, everywhere, to talk about which martyrs have been killed where and how. In all parts of Kurdistan and in the diaspora there also exist martyr-organizations who specialize in taking care of and treating the families of martyrs psychologically, financially, and ideologically. No matter where you are, if attending a well-organized political meeting, everyone will be asked to commemorate the martyrs with a minute of silence before activities commence. Some aspects of the martyr 'culture,' however, are highly site-specific. In the Qandil mountains bordering Turkish Kurdistan, for instance, there is both a *şehîdlik*, as we saw in chapter 5, and purportedly several disorganized archives where memorabilia from famous martyrs have been collected. The kalashnikov of Heval Egîd, the first guerilla who opened

fired on the state, and the notebooks of Sakine Cansiz, the most famous woman commander, as well as a host of organizational documents, are supposedly to be found there. In most of the democratic councils, which existed in almost every Kurdish village and city in Bakûr, and still exist in Rojava, there are both pictures of universally important martyrs for the movement, and of martyrs who were more locally important, mostly related to family members in the neighborhood. Likewise, in Germany, European martyrs, preferably from the specific city in question, adorn the movement spaces, next to pictures of Kurdish martyrs who were killed in Europe, as well as pictures of international revolutionary figures such as Rosa Luxembourg and Che Guevara. By locating the 'martyr culture' in both an international and in a highly specific setting – syntactically, if you will – the movement maintains relations to the particularities of place, but also to the universality of the struggle. Hence, I believe one of the martyrdom logic's functions is connecting the struggle universally while at the same time directly playing off the specific context of the struggle.

However, configuring what the martyrs *mean* across different contexts, or what debts are owed them, and how their path of resistance can be followed, is not easy to determine. If the same path was followed in, say, Turkey and Germany, this, rather obviously, would quickly lead to unwanted and dramatic consequences for the movement. 'The Party' (*Partî* in Kurdish), that is, the diasporic administration 'up high,' therefore attempts to guide participants in how to best make resistance and support the Kurdish struggle.[306] As the *Partî* in the diaspora would be very well aware, it would not take more than a few bombs at German police stations before the German state would be significantly less lenient with the Kurdish movement. As I have argued in chapter 3 concerning Turkish Kurdistan, the state there operates on a logic of eradication with regards to the Kurds. But how should one conceptualize the German state? Naturally, there would be a different set of responses to Kurdishness there, and a different set of articulations of its power – which not all diasporic Kurds would disagree with or feel unambiguously towards. The question for the movement then, and the question we are to explore here, is how the German state intersects between

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[306] See the glossary for a more nuanced description of the term.

the territorialized and de-territorialized figure of the martyr, and how the diasporic pro-PKK Kurdish community is to react to this intersection?

In order to answer these questions, I believe it is necessary to examine *how* the territorialization and de-territorialization takes place, which I will examine through an ethnographic case surrounding the planning and execution of a demonstration in Berlin. Departing from the life-stories of three participants, Sinjar, Jihat and Serfiraz, I will show how the demonstration crystallized three different ways of relating to the diasporic administration (the *Partî*) and the broader Apoist cosmology as such.

The *Partî* Line

After finally being included as a member of the PYD youth, the hegemonic party in Syrian Kurdistan, which has one of its foreign offices in Berlin, I was invited to participate in planning a demonstration, organized by the *Partî*. I arrived at the cultural center together with a friend from my neighborhood in Neukölln, who unfortunately had to leave only a few minutes into the meeting, due to an intervention for his cousin, for which he apologized profusely. Coming into the hall, there were pictures of guerillas killed in Europe sitting on a table draped with the HPG's flag, with some flowers decorating the table, making it almost into a little shrine. Three of them, Sakine Cansiz, Fidan Doğan, and Leyla Söylemez, had been kidnapped and executed in Paris in 2013, before being dropped at a Kurdish center close to Gare du Nord.[307] Who actually stood behind the killing, is still unknown. Speaking with activists and members in both Kurdistan and Germany, they both hold a rather serious grudge against Europe in this case, since the judicial process has been closed without finding any conclusive killers or people responsible. Some speculate that it was the Turkish 'deep state' set on derailing the incipient peace process with the PKK, while others blame radical right-wing Turkish groups. What is certain for all, however, is that either the secret service in Europe participated, or that the process of discovering who the real killers were had been deliberately compromised. This left people with a certain anger directed towards European states in general, due to their assumed implication in

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[307] 'Who murdered Sakine Cansiz?'. *Amnesty International.* (N.D.). Retrieved from https://www.amnestyusa.org/who-murdered-sakine-cansiz/

the repression of the Kurdish cause. Keeping these three pictures in the German center, rather explicitly connoted Europe's implication, as an entity, in killing or betraying the guerillas. Beside the pictures of the three women, however, was a picture of a white man from Berlin, who had been killed in Syria after joining the YPG. He had joined only a few years before, and had been commemorated in several meetings in the past. The picture of this man, I recalled, was not one that I had seen any other places in Başûr or Bakûr, meaning that he had not become a universal symbol, containing a large entity, like Sakine Cansiz, but was rather a lower ranking martyr, carrying significance mostly for Berlin, and perhaps Germany.

Getting a tea from the kitchen, I met up with a few of the activists in the center who had come from different Kurdish associations that I prefer not to mention by name. We were led by a female *kadro* into a separate room for the women's organization, where we locked the door and took out our pencils. Our phones were left in a drawer in a kitchen, to be returned to us upon our departure. On the walls were pictures of Rosa Luxembourg and western revolutionaries, among others, commemorated for their struggle against the state. Before we started however, the guerilla asked us for a moment of silence for our fallen comrades (*heval*s), everyone standing up, looking down and holding their arms tightly against the thighs of their bodies, military style, emulating the guerilla on the videos played on PKK television stations. After the minute of silence had passed, we all said *şehîd namirin*, and sat down in a circle, as is the common way of teaching among the guerilla in the mountains, and the *kadro* started the conversation.

She said that it was important for us to have a demonstration in the Wedding neighborhood, since there had not been one there for several years and it was an infamous stronghold for Turkish fascists. Many of the secret police in the 'deep state' in Turkey, responsible for the disappearances of thousands of Kurds, had sought asylum in Germany during power contestations within the state, and many of them lived in Wedding. Most of the demonstrations I had participated in started around Hermannplatz and continued upwards towards Kottbusser Tor. They were rather uncontroversial spaces, where there were plenty of antipathic Turks, but also plenty of

supporters. During these demonstrations, the marches would often halt outside of famous Turkish shops and buildings, where, for instance, Erdoğan ate when he visited Berlin, and the protestors would shout out lists of Kurdish people who had been killed by the government, or play loud Kurdish music supporting the PKK. With regards to Wedding, we went through the logistical matters; where to meet, how long to go on for, who should bring what, who should speak to the police and so on, but only afterwards did we talk about what the demonstration should be about. I found this interesting at the time, since the reason for meeting was not for a specific cause, nor spurred by a recent event, but rather secondary to the objective of organizing a demonstration in Wedding in and of itself.

To me this signaled two things. Firstly, that what the demonstration was really about, was not about achieving as specific goal, but more about re-claiming a territory, politically, that belonged to the enemy. To show, in other words, that there was not a solidified, safe space for people who supported Erdoğan and/or the Turkish state; that they could stay there uninterrupted, feeding their ideology without contestation. Secondly, it accorded, for me, with the deeper sentiment that this was a part of creating Kurdishness in the PKK's way. As Kurdishness connotes never-ending resistance for the PKK, it was necessary for its adherent to do *something*, irrespective of what the lasting political outcome of this would be. Having a clear goal was not of primary relevance, since it did not, for instance, target passing a certain claim in government, but rather aimed at building the continual 'resistance' into the everyday life of people. This was to me also apparent by the pure frequency of demonstrations in Berlin; there would be a Kurdish protest almost every other day, with varied topics, literally exhausting many of my friends who were committed. This differed very much from the Kurdish solidarity demonstrations I had heard about from my 'ethnically' German friends. They were obviously not as frequent, but, for instance, during the siege of Kobanê, an organized group of German activists occupied a transmitting station for a pro-state Turkish television channel, with the clear goal of shutting it down for several hours. They wanted to make sure that it would disrupt the normal flow of news and propaganda, while at the same time making more uninformed people

aware of the situation in Bakûr. What the demonstration in Wedding would accomplish on the other hand, was unclear, but unnecessary for its planning.

After a while of debating, three slogans were agreed upon. The first one, which made us all laugh, untranslatable to German, was: *Bi rûhê tolhildana şehîdên, emê kapitalizme parçe bikin*, loosely translated to 'With the soul of martyrs' revenge, we will divide [sever] capitalism.' The second one propagated freedom of Öcalan, and the third for stopping the immigration deal between Turkey and Germany. The first slogan, I recalled, I had seen hanging on a poster at the youth center in the PKK-protected refugee camp, Maxmur, in Başur. We also agreed that the people walking in front with the banner should hold up three pictures of martyrs who had been killed by Turkish forces, with the intention of both shaming and confronting the Turkish fascists with the faces of the people who had been murdered by the state. However, it was important for the progress of the demonstration, we all agreed, that it should be mobile and dynamic, and not led by a car, just in case the Turkish fascists decided to attack or there would be a 'provocation.' This was also an important part of planning, since the diasporic *Partî* had shifted its tactics in relation to Turkish opponents during the revolution in Rojava (Northern Syria), or perhaps a bit before, becoming and presenting themselves to the German state as law-abiding victims of massacres and injustices committed by Turks and Arabs, rather than uncompromising revolutionaries.

In Germany, there exists a special legislation, infamously known as paragraph 129a and b, which legislates for terrorist activity, making it a lot easier to arrest, repress and hold Kurdish activists without according them the rights offered to other offenders (Krasman, 2007; Lepsius 2004).[308] The logic of the paragraph is that people who are affiliated with terrorist organizations, such as the PKK, can be treated the same as members of terrorist organizations, which has led to increasingly absurd scenarios where, where, for instance, a man who had held the money for organizing a Kurdish youth football tournament, had been convicted of supporting terrorism, and therefore

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[308] Although paragraph 129a was ratified in the 1970's to deal with Germany's 'internal' terrorism issues, like the *Rote Arme Fraktion,* paragraph 129b was passed in the aftermath of 9/11 in 2002, but was suspected by my informants as being particularly directed towards the Kurdish movement, somewhat supported by Vera Eccarius-Kelly's conclusions (2002).

implicating everyone in his phone directory being as terrorists.[309] In addition to the precedent set by the terrorist attacks of 9/11, this was arguably also a consequence of the extremely militant Kurdish movement in Germany in the 80's and 90's, when the worst ethnic cleansing was happening in Bakûr. At this time in Germany, Kurdish activists self-immolated, blocked highways, fought against the police, attacked Turkish shops and people, and attacked foreign embassies, leading the German government to, among other things, outlaw the PKK's flag and declare it a terrorist organization in 1993 (Ehrkamp & Leitner, 2003; Lyon & Uçarer, 2001). However, after the revolution in Rojava started, or sometime before, the *Partî* line for how to agitate against the state changed. Since it was necessary for the Kurdish movement to present themselves as stable, reliable, reasonable partners, capable of governing and administering regions, in order to procure diplomatic inroads as well as material support, the Kurdish movement scaled back both the illegality and the intensity of their protests. Nonetheless, several of the Kurdish organizations are still on the terrorist watch-list, including some of the youth organizations, and there is always a disproportionate amount of police at every Kurdish demonstration. At one such demonstration, where the HDP gave its support for the party Die Linke ('The Left' in English), before the local elections in Germany, I could count 8 different police trucks, containing approximately ten to twenty officers in each, surrounding the little square where perhaps fifty people were sitting peacefully listening to speeches and eating baklava.

Now then, for us, in planning the demonstration, it was very important that we were polite, acquiescent citizens, conversing with the law, using our freedom of expression in a respectable way; it was important that if the fascists attacked, we would not respond, but rather be seen as the victims of the fascists' aggression, merely demonstrating against the crimes against humanity that Turkey was perpetrating. The German state had, for us, somehow and sometime, intervened in how we could claim the space from the fascists, due to the international state of the movement. To make sure that the revolution in Rojava would have an easier time negotiating and being taken seriously in Europe, we had to mitigate the ways in which we could prove that

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[309] See Albrecht (2006, pp. 9-10), for an in-depth discussion of the reach of the paragraph.

we were making 'resistance life' (*berxwedan jîyan*). To this end, we decided that we would set up our own security detail, which would check for fireworks and rocks in the participants' backpacks, to make sure that provocations or symbolically violent retaliations were out of the question. After we clarified this last point, we finished up the last remainders of the meeting, and packed up our things, getting ready to leave. As they do in the guerilla, we all shook each-others' hands in turns, and told each other *serkeftin*, as if we were leaving for a mission in the mountains.

Territorializing and De-territorializing According to the Partî Line

In this event, I saw the *Partî* as attempting to guide the martyrs as a means to territorialize Berlin, while at the same time drawing on and re-working the de-territorialized constrictions and potentialities, constructing a flexible Kurdish self-identity in the process. To me it seemed like the *Partî's* movement was politicizing Berlin by contesting the symbolic space of the Turks, marking an effervescent intrusion into 'their' territory, for the sake of ideological disruption, with a demonstration poly-semiotically related to martyrdom. However, perhaps dialectically, this intrusion at the same time also marked an event for the continuity of the Kurdish self-identification in a de-territorialized sense. By 'living' their commitment to resistance and the path of the martyrs - apparent through the slogans, pictures, and the goal's secondary nature in the demonstration - the participants were both understanding themselves within the PKK's general ideology and de-territorializing their frame of politics. They drew on the international effects of the movement, and related their struggle to the international resistance, but must at the same time configured these ideals or commands to the specific situation they were in. They had to, for instance, bear the burden of the martyrs killed by Turkish forces in Bakûr, a de-territorialized effect, while at the same time configuring their resistance to the specific legal conditions in Germany, according to *Partî* guidelines, in order to not upset the state of affairs in Northern Syria. In other words, the burden of the martyrs worked as a 'glue' capable of holding together both the territorializing and de-territorializing effects while providing the drive for the re-constitution of a malleable Kurdishness in the different sites, according to a *Partî* delineated plan.

However, I would be wrong if I were to subject this to a purely structuralist analysis without variations and contradictions within how the logic was configured for people who participated, how people struggled to keep the logics of territorialization and de-territorialization together, and what consequences arise from it. I will therefore, in the next section detail the demonstration itself, as a form of event, and what outcomes and political subjectivities sprang out of the situation.

Martyrs Beyond the Party

The previous section presented a rather static vision of how the martyrs both territorialize and de-territorialize resistance for the movement, while functioning as a vehicle for self-construction of identity. This is, however, not to be considered a closed system. The logic of the martyrs moves in time, and continuously interacts both with people and the state in unforeseen ways, keeping a certain potentiality - not always in line with the *Partî* - always open for the people trailing of the martyrs' debt. It would not be true to the reality of the lived life of participants if the logic of martyrs was just presented as a macro-effect, stable and immutable, in how it is forced itself upon its debtors. I will therefore examine the actual event of the demonstration, and attempt to detail how people were confronted with contradictions within it and what some of the aftermath of the demonstration was.

Without going into a discussion of what an event means again, one might say that, as a general characteristic, something unexpected within a situation opens up, leading to a contradiction which cannot be resolved within the conventional, historical, ways of thinking and acting. This has also been more thoroughly discussed in chapter 2. The aftermath of the event, entails an unsuspected change in status or thought-practice, which may be permanent or merely an effervescent phenomenon. I will attempt to use this way of thinking to illustrate some of the experienced contradictions internal to the demonstration (since the *Partî*'s program was not isomorphic to people's desires), and highlight some of the consequences of the aftermath, as well as how the German state intersected with how the role of martyrs played out.

For the sake of simplicity, I highlight three different political orientations springing out of events of protest - namely retraction, excess, and escape - and attempt to show how these orientations may still be seen as relating to martyriality as a central node. I argue that instead of a disaffection with the movement, despite the different ways of conceptualizing one's place in the struggle, the new political subjectivities rather generated commitment in a transformed and variegated form, that might paradoxically be seen transfiguring the very project itself. I conclude that the martyrs work both as a territorializing and de-territorializing forces, but not exclusively in the way that the *Partî* would like it; that martyrs extend beyond parties, and are themselves subject to transmogrification.

Taking Back the Wedding Neighborhood

On the day that the demonstration was to take place, several things had changed without my knowing about it. It might have been decided in a meeting that I did not attend, but I suspected that someone in a higher position, perhaps in the *Partî*, had intervened changed a few things to their liking. For instance, when I arrived, we were stuck there for quite some time, at least an hour, waiting for the truck with the music to arrive. We stood around on the sidewalk, in relatively few numbers, people slowly filtering in. The feeling that this would be a grand event gradually dissipated.

Surrounding the demonstration, police had encircled us in riot gear, black helmets, armor and batons, several times our numbers, and were checking everyone coming into the group. They were arbitrarily confiscating things from people who wanted to attend. Some of the German supporters who came, had their paroles confiscated and the police attempted to check the ID cards of the all the protestors. Some of the German punks in black block, donning their conventional subcultural attire, were playing punk music and drinking beer inside the group, eyeing the police suspiciously. I recognized a Kurdish acquaintance among them, Serfiraz, who was holding a red flag, conspicuously similar to a cudgel.

As time passed, the Kurds played Kurdish music through the megaphone and danced *govend* to 'keep the morale high.' Finally, the truck arrived, but was immediately

swarmed by police. They sorted through the flags to see which ones were acceptable and which ones were not. Even though we were more than fifty people, the police decided that the demonstration could not fly any flags of Öcalan. This was another specifically German mode of repression, on the stranger side of the ones I had encountered, namely, that one needed to be at least fifty demonstrators in order to have a flag of Öcalan. Whether this is encoded in law is beyond me, but it is irrespectively a regular practice amongst the police, always negotiated by a demonstration's organizers. However, there is always a certain attempt from the police's side to intervene and make the demonstration less militant. Not following any strict code of law, they would gauge how much bureaucratic repression they could get away with in relation to the numbers of protesters there; taking away megaphones, telling people that they could not march, or encircling the demonstration to ensure no contact with the public, were common strategies. In my experience, this micro-regulation pertained particularly to the Kurds. Fortunately, the PYD is still not considered a terrorist organization by the state yet, but everyone was anticipating it changing pretty soon. The Turkish lobby in parliament is stronger than any Kurdish diplomatic committee, and if they get their will, the government will shut down all Kurdish associations, and put all Kurdish organizations on the terror-list, activists would argue. People would often say, therefore, that everyone who works in the Kurdish movement has 'one foot in prison.'

I had called my friend from Rojava the day before to let him know about the demonstration. Sinjar was an Ezidî refugee from the mountain of Şengal ('Sinjar' in English), close to Mosul. In 2014, ISIS had committed a genocide against the Kurdish Ezidîs living there, slaughtering literally thousands of civilians before the PKK and the YPG/J had come to the rescue. In order to protect his family and his village, he had joined the YPG (the PKK-affiliated armed forces of Rojava) and fought to reclaim the mountain from ISIS' grip, losing several of his friends and family members in the process. After the partial liberation of the mountain, he, along with his family - his wife and his two daughters - had been smuggled into Turkey by the PKK, from where they had taken an illegal boat to Greece. His wife and children were still there waiting for him, but he had decided that he would go to Germany to look for work, and see if

the conditions for refugees were better there. When I called him on the phone, he said something along the lines of, of course he would come, he owed the PKK everything; whatever the PKK would ask, he would do.

He was a smallish fellow, with old clothes from the 1980's that were always too small, skinny and always smiling. I saw him coming from the subway station in the distance, and waved him over. I could see that he became slightly perturbed when passing through the circular line of police surrounding us, and looking questioningly at the German punks drinking beer and being rowdy. This was perhaps a bit unexpected for him, I suspected, since he was otherwise very law abiding, and attempting to become a smooth part and integrated part of German society. Several times when we were walking together, I made fun of him for not crossing the street on a red light, even though there were no cars in sight. He would always wait for the light to turn green before he passed. He said that it was very important to respect the laws of Germany; they had, after all, welcomed him in, given him both a place to stay, expendable cash, and a promise of a good life here. He even cited Abdullah Öcalan in this regard. One of the PKK's *kadros*, he told me, had been sent to France, to assist with the revolutionary work in the diaspora. The *kadro* had stayed there for some time, but later returned to the mountains, to give a report. Upon his return, Öcalan questioned if he had partaken in French culture, to which the *kadro* responded (my friend taking on a brusk, cragged demeanor to imitate him): "No, *Serok*, I have only organized and prepared for the struggle. I have not even visited the Eiffel Tower. Öcalan responded: You fool! How do you expect to be able to do good work if you know nothing about the culture you are a guest in?". For my friend this indicated that in order to be able to help the revolution as best as possible, thereby doing justice to the sacrifices the movement had made for him, it was necessary to assimilate and become a functioning part of the society he was a 'guest' in. "If we are good as Kurds," he asked rhetorically, "will not Europe favor Kurds more?" Coming into the circle, I thought it obvious that he was not comfortable. He was not striking up conversations with anyone, and trailing me around as I was talking to my acquaintances and friends, perhaps confounded by the seeing the duality of the state as *both* protector and repressor.

We started marching into Wedding, shouting slogans and flying flags, slowly progressing towards the centers of Turkish fascists there. The atmosphere was rather tense and provocative, since we were not as many people as we had hoped, and more people than usual were eyeing us on the street and stopping, either with looks of hatred, confusion, or indifference. Some of the people appointed by the movement to keep order, almost went off the cuff themselves when onlookers even made small gestures to 'move along.' The police were walking between the onlookers and us. When we passed famous Turkish sites, such as mosques funded by the Turkish government, with purported links to ISIS, we would stop, and make lots of noise there. Suddenly, a man came out on his balcony in the 3rd floor and started waving us along, flying a Turkish flag at the same time. When the demonstration saw this, it stopped, and a wave of sound hit the balcony: ululations, whistling, and slogans. The cacophony merged into the slogan, shouted by everyone at the top of their lungs, as well as in the megaphone: "PKK is the people, and the people are here!" followed by "Long live Leader Apo!" The person became so irate that he completely lost his temper, giving the finger to the movement, making the Grey Wolves sign, and flinging a plastic chair from his balcony down on the demonstration. Simultaneously, a rock hit a female acquaintance of mine in the chest, and the mass of protestors surged towards an external limit of the demonstration to confront the perpetrator. I saw Serfiraz grab the other end of his cudgel/flag, and sprint towards the extremity. The police restrained the confrontation, preventing the provocateurs from being beaten by the Kurds. Finally, the organizers, delegated by the central command, tasked with keeping the calm, managed to move the demonstration forward, the slogans resounding louder than ever, the excitement funneled into "PKK! PKK! PKK!".

When we were approaching the end of the assigned demonstration route, the police put down their visors, and a few of my German acquaintances told me that this might mean that they were going to arrest someone, and that it would be better for us to jump off the demonstration before it happened. During the entire demonstration, the police had several officers filming the protest so that they could post-factum observe the demonstration and have video evidence in court if they decided to arrest anyone there.

Usually, the Germans told me, they would just slip in, a group of five or six, and pluck out the people they wanted to arrest, without trying to disperse the demonstration in its entirety. I told this to Sinjar, and somewhat perturbed, we slipped away immediately when the demonstration ended. I did not invite him to any demonstrations after that, not wanting to put him in a position where his two responsibilities to the movement were conflicted - being cast, by his debt to the movement, both as a potential criminal, by virtue of the police surveillance and control, and as a law-abiding citizen. And he didn't come by himself to any others later. When I asked him why he didn't want to come to one of the Kurdish centers, to just have a tea and get to know people, he politely responded: "That is not my work."

Sinjar's Retraction

The situation I inadvertently put my friend from Şengal in when attending this demonstration, illustrates contradictions and movement inside the world of martyrs. Following in the path of the martyrs is not always a strictly uniform, directed affair, where it is clear what the correct manner of repaying the debt is. My friend's attempt at following the martyrs in becoming a part of German society and thereby being able to give more money to the *Partî* and function as a model for how Kurds can be trustworthy, was put in contradiction by the state's ambiguous framing of Kurds as potential criminals or instigators. By giving the Kurds 'special treatment' when they attempt to express themselves politically in the public domain, either by massively outnumbering the protestors or micro-regulating how the protest can take place, the state *splits* how following the martyrs can be manifested. Either, one will attempt to become functioning part of society, and contribute in this way, or one is cast as a potential criminal, with the overhanging threat of being arrested on terrorist charges. This creates a disjunction which is difficult to navigate without feeling that one is 'letting either side down,' thereby betraying Kurdishness in some order; maneuvering between either becoming 'assimilated' (meaning fully German, a great insult), or lacking *hêz* ('energy' in the sense of revolutionary zeal, as previously described)[310] is a difficult task to manage. For my friend, I would argue, this contradiction came to a

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[310] A correlate of *hêz* is *îrade,* meaning 'will,' or 'revolutionary will/discipline' more precisely in Kurdish and Turkish, which is often used somewhat interchangeably with *hêz.*

head in the demonstration: the contradiction could not be resolved within previous ways of thinking, so, instead, he retreated to the margins of the movement, not wanting to put himself in this conflictual situation again.

Of course, this burden of navigating the martyrs' imperatives was not always as difficult. Some people managed it fine, although finding it somewhat exhausting. A young man in the management of the one of the Kurdish cultural centers, managed to both attend language courses and at the same time be a vital part of organizing the day-to-day in the movement. However, it must be said that he did not get much sleep, and when there was an event happening, the German courses were the first to go. Nonetheless, the demands that the martyrs made on their followers, could also swing the other way, making them 'over-militant' – their *hêz* spilling over into chaos. The way of navigating between becoming 'assimilated' and having *hêz* was not something that was solely influenced by how participants reacted to the police casting the Kurds as a group. The navigation was also influenced by the unspoken guidelines the *Partî* provided, limiting and demarking what counted as 'assimilated' and *hêz*-ful, with respect to the martyrs.

Jihat's Excess

When I first arrived in Germany, coming from Iraqi Kurdistan, I firstly got acquainted with the movement by helping to set up a protest-tent outside of the Reichstag, denouncing the multi-million dollar arms deal Germany has with Turkey, as well as the immigration deal and special Kurdish criminal legislation. One of the most hard-working, and to my mind, most *hêz*-ful people there, was a refugee from Iraqi Kurdistan, who had learned German very fast. Jihat was also an Ezidî who had also run away from the Şengal mountain when ISIS took it. His family had not accepted his praise of the PKK after their assistance in the liberation, and he had been shunned as a consequence. Seeing no other alternative, being deprived both of a home and a family, he was smuggled into Turkey, from where he got into Europe through Bulgaria.

Once, when the police, in their usual disproportionate numbers, came by the protest tent in order to instruct us to take down one of the Apo flags, and just generally harass

us, Jihat pulled down a YPG flag we had pinned to a tree and draped it over himself, putting two fingers in the air and shouting *Bijî Serok Apo*, parading the square, once and again eyeing the police to see if he could get any reaction. Most of our friends found this gesture rather funny, although they had to contain themselves in the police's presence, because we knew, just as the police probably knew, that the YPG-flag was practically the same as the PKK-flag. There are literally scores of flags affiliated with the movement, new ones popping up all the time, all of them affiliated with the PKK. This was for him a gesture that he would not be thwarted by the absurd antics of the German police, and that our will would always find a way.

However, after returning from another trip to Iraq, I couldn't seem to find him anywhere when I started hanging out with the group again. I asked some friends about him, and he had apparently been banned from attending any demonstrations or visiting the cultural centers. I asked what had happened, and I was told that he was kind of an idiot. They said that he had done a lot of stupid stuff, which they could not tolerate, and some suspected that he had been talking with to police. For instance, they said, he had suggested burning a Turkish flag inside of a cultural center and filming it to put on the internet, and jokingly shouted *Bijî Serok Barzani* (the president of Iraqi Kurdistan, who is not on good terms with the PKK) at the protest tent after I left. They also claimed that he had responded to the threats from Turkish fascists by throwing rocks back at them, and had suggested bringing a bomb to a fascist demonstration. I thought perhaps that this perhaps had been a rather harsh measure for such seemingly symbolic gestures, but let it be and did not pursue it, and kept going about my work.

Some days later, taking the subway home, I met him and a group of his friends by chance. He was eager to tell me about the situation. As we sat on the subway and chatted, I noticed that he had either drawn with a permanent marker, or gotten a tattoo on his right hand, that said 'PKK' in bold letters. He said that the claims were exaggerated; Yes, he had thrown rocks at the fascists but only to protect a young girl who had been hit by a rock previously, and that the whole bomb story was a mere fabrication, which he had tried to convince the *Partî* leadership of at the biggest cultural center. He said that he had been invited to a mediation, which is common in

Kurdish culture as well as in the PKK, in order to correct his conduct through dialogue and compromise, but that he was only met with hostility, the committee only speaking Turkish, which he did not understand. Afterwards, without any true dialogue, he had been banned and told that if he ever came to any events again, they would beat him up. He said, that if this had *really* been the PKK, they would have seen the situation differently. They would not accept someone being banned for protecting the people, and showing the *hêz* that was demanded by the political climate. People were *being killed* in Kurdistan, he said, while we are here doing nothing. He furthermore suspected that his case had been so coarsely dismissed because there was a personal vendetta against him from someone high up in the leadership, but nonetheless pleaded with me to speak his case in the movement.

Although this might seem like a personal story, occurring after a series of events where he had stepped over the line, thereby moving too much in an independent direction away from the *Partî*, i.e. too keen on exhibiting his *hêz* in an incorrect manner, his case was not unique in this respect. Many of the Kurds coming to Germany in the 1990's – the decidedly worst decade for the Kurds in Turkey – shared the same excommunication. Stories circulated amongst people at the fringes of the movement detailing how, after the *Partî* changed tactics, many supporters became disenchanted with the movement due to its seemingly weak, conciliatory policies towards the government. People in demonstrations who pursued militant tactics in combating fascists, for instance, attempting to capture and pursue the provocateurs, were occasionally held back and beaten by the organizers of the demonstrations who came from *Partî,* it was said. A series of such events, where the movement shifted away from, say, blocking the autobahn, burning suspected fascists' shops, and self-immolating themselves, towards negotiating with parliamentarians, holding peaceful marches, and allying themselves with mainstream parties, disaffected a number of Kurds who felt they were betraying the cause, becoming too meek. According to my Kurdish acquaintance, Serfiraz, who was involved with an autonomous Marxist group, many of the people disaffected in this way, sought other radical milieus, some of them turning to Kurdish mafias, and others seeking out the German anti-fascist movement.

He said, irrespective of their current affiliation, they would, however, still give money to the party, and still hold Apo as their undisputed leader.

Serfiraz's 'Escape': PKK without Partî

When I pushed Serfiraz a bit on his own position, my Marxist acquaintance said: "For Kurdistan, Öcalan has the right idea, and I think that we can learn much from him here in Germany," somewhat eluding the question. As I was not entirely satisfied with his answer, he followed up: He did not like going to the Kurdish centers and working *in* the movement as such; that made him slightly uncomfortable, he said, but *Serok Apo* was still his leader. Despite being very careful about what he had stated, I found his answer to open up a yet another diversification of how to relate to the Apoist movement in the diaspora.

What I found Serfiraz's reply to indicate, was that *Serok Apo*'s importance should be considered in relation to regionalism: Although *Serok Apo's* program was the right direction for the Middle East, it was not necessarily so for Germany. Thus, although he argued one should learn from his program, this was a radical departure from the line of the *Partî*. What he implied, was that *he* could pick-and-choose from Apo's writings, to best see what worked with regards to other contemporary analyses in Germany. He, in a sense, set himself beyond Öcalan in determining what was the right course of action, not of course in any hostile way, but rather as a thinker to engage with (among others) in engineering a program for resistance in the diaspora. Abdullah Öcalan's thought was just one of many fragments of productive revolutionary thinking that had to be re-theorized and assembled to create a pertinent platform for Kurdish (and internationalist) resistance. Contrary to Dilgeş' desires, elaborated in the previous chapter, he did not have any ambition of becoming a *xizmet* of the movement, and, contrary to Jihat, he did not seek to assimilate into the movement again. In Germany, professed to by his actions and activist involvement, he saw the need for a harder line than what the *Partî* advocated; a line that would seek out and violently repress fascist tendencies.

This did not in any way mean that he did not appreciate Öcalan, however, or did not see him as an ideological leader and figure to be venerated and followed. Rather, it meant that he was merely seeing Öcalan in a different light. One could say here that he was appreciating Öcalan in a more 'German' way, than an Apoist Kurdish one. As testified to by his participation in the demonstration and pro-active stance on 'provocations,' he did not see his particular position as infringing upon his support. One could say he was re-situating Öcalan in an individualist cosmology, which actually did nothing to detract from its efficacy. At most, his actions could be seen as a statement regarding the *Partî* as the custodian of Öcalan's legacy and philosophy. Despite not following the *Partî's* guidelines, instead of his support diminishing, the re-appropriation of Apoism could be seen as generating a new, transformed mode of commitment. But this opens up a different question: If he was disaffected with the movement for its lack of militant tactics, why would he still feel responsible for the movement and feel the need to (give money to it and) support it physically?[311] Once again, I see this as connected with how death was managed.

Like all the aforementioned *heval*s, Serfiraz came from environments in Kurdistan where the eradicative violence and repression could not be escaped – either being experienced directly, passed down through collective memory, or permeating relations of kinship, the death surrounding Kurdishness had not escaped them in the diaspora. The dead would follow Kurds around, even far away from the homeland (*welat*). Despite disagreements with the *Partî* then, the PKK could still be seen as the best, or perhaps, only purveyor of martyrdom, and the frame through which much of

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[311] It should also be stated here that this might also merely be seen as a worthy leftist cause to commit to for Serfiraz, struggling for freedom for women, ecology, etc. However, I would nonetheless contend that if this was the case, i.e. considered a solid leftist cause with no more specific denominators needed for support, it would still rely upon the dead to make it so. Without the armed struggle, it seems unlikely that it would have garnered so much support both from the diasporic community, as well as from other internationalists. Other, more 'peacefully' inclined parties have not been able to rise to international fame, nor even to national fame in Bakûr or Rojava. Moreover, provided that Serfiraz represents a certain segment of the non-Apoist PKK diaspora, the aforementioned (alleged) Kurdish mafia's and gang's financial contribution to the PKK would not be explained by a shared ideological commitment alone. The diasporic Kurdish 'mafia' would not necessarily freely give money to a generic communist organization, for instance, nor would the successful businessman in the PYD's foreign commission. It seems like it is not so much the shared political ideology that commits them to the struggle, but rather than extra-political association, which I think of as being related to martyrdom; the gangs would not contribute financially because they found any particular affinity with 'communism.'

Kurdishness as connected with death could be imagined. Serfiraz's complaint could be rephrased as a charge against the *Partî*'s usage of the martyrs, rather than a complaint against the PKK as such; in his actions he seemed to re-construct the PKK in a different frame, without the *Partî,* but still fidelious to the deaths suffered for the Kurdish cause.[312] The martyrs, in other words, seemed to supersede even the *Partî* itself.

Fashioning an own way of paying back the martyrs seemed to be a common practice for groups at the margins of the movement. Although this verges on speculation, some of these groups might be seen as drawing inspiration from the street fighting in Bakûr, and the young, masked militants of the YDG-H or YPS - a perhaps more familiar image of Kurdishness for the diaspora, reminiscent of the 1990's. This form of Kurdishness can be very much seen in popular music and music videos in the diaspora. To mention an example, one may think of Muharrem, a relatively well-known Berlin rapper, who professes a devotion to the PKK, but someone whom I have never seen in the *Partî* offices in any of their locations. For instance in his song '*Stell von Dir,*' he both drapes himself with the *kefîyê*, hiding his face, and brandishes a Kalashnikov, mirroring the militant youth movement in Bakûr, and raps in Kurdish: "We will never forget our martyrs/ we always read their names/ country by country we are wandering/ seeing the leader (Öcalan) before our eyes."[313] As opposed to the music videos originating in Bakûr or Basûr, it is not a mass of people being portrayed as the subject in the video,[314] either triumphantly marching or collectively dancing, but mostly the singer, wandering in PKK garb, alone. Although not too much weight should be put on this particular song and video, it nonetheless illustrates a different aesthetic-cosmological view of the what the struggle is than can be found in *welat*, or, the physical parts of Kurdistan. It also recalls images of the urban, *autonomia* groups in

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[312] Perhaps 're-construct' is a bad word here, since the PKK exists organizationally. Other words like 'appropriate,' might seem better, or 'pay homage to' or 'support,' but the core intent of the word is directed at a re-tooling and re-conceptualization of the ideology of the PKK outside its party structures.

[313] One can easily find his music videos on the internet; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZB9adAvdRE. Vera Eccarius-Kelly has also written on the role of Kurdish rappers in the German diaspora (2010), but considers the music in a more straight-forward fashion of co-opting youth into the PKK.

[314] See for instance one of the most famous Kurdish guerilla songs *Oremar,* played by Awazê Çiya, for a contrast: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0yuJ1m0Ws0

Berlin in the 1980's, who would deploy masked direct-action tactics to secure neighborhoods from gentrification and police patrols (Katsiaficas, 2006), or Anti-Fa actions which actively seek out Nazi spaces to disperse them with violence.[315] This fusion of German-Kurdish modalities of resistance, did not preclude seeing Öcalan as a progenitor for an imagined utopian society, but in a radically different way. Serfiraz, as I saw it, was creating a path of resistance where the martyrial responsibility was taken on individually, rather than collectively.

The Limits of Martyrdom

The question here becomes, of course, to which degree these martyrs are the *same* martyrs as claimed by the *Partî,* and whether they are martyrs of the Apoist cosmology as such? As I see it, moving them into a personalized domain, responded to individually with a 'plurality of tactics' (and plurality of ideologies), indicates that the martyrs are no longer the same martyrs. Taken out of the *Partî's* domain, they become martyrs in a different way; their position in the cosmology shifts, and indeed, by being relegated to (a specific) outside of the particular Apoist universe, they themselves shift. Therefore, the fidelity Serfiraz and the militant Kurdish 'outside' would feel towards the martyrs, would be towards different martyrs than the ones claimed by the *Partî,* or indeed the movement in Başûr, Bakûr, Rojava and Rojhîlat. In some substantial ways they would no longer be able to demand the same from their followers, when removed from the cosmos constructed by the PKK to give them meaning – or even possibly be in a position to demand at all.

Nonetheless, these forms of subject transformations – in terms of becoming excessively militant, in Jihat's case, for instance, or withdrawing from militancy, like Sinjar, or indeed transforming militancy as with Serfiraz – partially vehiculated by the martyrs, may still be seen as keeping an openness in the movement; a potential for creating a multiplicity of ways to 'serve.' Perhaps paradoxically, the *Partî's* attempt at monopolizing the martyrs, and the state's attempt to repress the movement, does not mean that they exclude people from tending to the PKK ideology; rather, the martyrs

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[315] *Anti-Fascistische Aktion* was initially founded by the German Communist Party, but it is now hard to think of its historical backdrop as having any particular bearing on its contemporary international configuration (Bray, 2017).

transcend the *Partî* and the state and speak to individuals as themselves, opening up a new space for people to repay 'the whole' (the PKK's movement) in unexpected and novel ways. In other words, while one might suspect the *Partî* line and the state repression to enact a closure of the ideology, as well as regulate social relationships to the movement, the figure of the martyrs stands beyond, and works as a centripetal force for creating new and unforeseen subjectivities. Perhaps even in such a novel way that the PKK, and even the figure of the martyr itself, paradoxically disappears. Although the figure of the martyr can be seen *totalizing* in a variety of different ways—as I have shown in several preceding chapters—it can never be *totalized.*

Conclusion: The Dead and their Lives

Throughout the thesis we have seen how the martyrs intersect the social life of Apoists in a variety of different ways. From underneath the near-constant violence and repression from the Turkish state, the PKK gradually formed its own, counter-hegemonic way of conceiving of the relationship between life and death. Central for the PKK was shaping the relationship between the living and the dead so as they would complement each other in a political continuum, rather than work as categorically separated and mutually inaccessible spheres of the world. The PKK gradually imagined the martyrs as having the potential for being re-imbricated in life, shaping hierarchies amongst and between people and institutions, and effectuating the constitution and moving of time. In the PKK's cosmology, freedom and liberation became re-conceived within a world where the dead would have a great say in what this these categories would denominate and how they were to be achieved. Revolution itself became a process intimately connected with re-living the dead, in their best iterations, to the best of one's ability. It was, in a sense and as argued above, an attempt at creating a necropolis, a place where the living and the dead could govern together.

As we have seen, this could be more or less strict, and more or less directed in terms of what praxis it encouraged. In Maxmur, we saw that the martyrs were central to the socio-political order, built into the fabric of the functioning of the movement; a strong power bringing people into (and compelling people to act) within the gender-

liberationist, ecologist, and autonomist project of the movement. In Wan, we saw how the state interceded in the smooth operation of the struggle, and the martyrs were utilized as tools to effectuate projects, commitments, and personal re-considerations, shaming becoming a central means of driving the movement forward. In Berlin, we opened up to seeing the martyrs as being more ambiguous in their commitments, 'freeing' themselves from the bonds imposed by the diasporic administration.

We have seen that this centrality of martyrs and martyrdom has developed in conjunction with a very particular history. As we saw in chapter 3, the conditions the Kurds labored under in Turkish Kurdistan was very much informed by the specific eradicatory form of violence exerted upon them. Refused an acknowledgment or inclusion in the Turkish state as Kurds, any attempt at separate claim-making was met with an eradicative reaction, seeking to annihilate rather than engage with the demands made. Responding to this condition, while at the same time departing from the Turkish left, the PKK seized the opportunity to develop its own cosmology, as we examined in chapter 4. Through an inherited but also re-forged martyriality, the PKK set itself on the path for not only Kurdish liberation, but a liberation of the entire Middle East, and eventually the world. As we saw in chapter 5, this commitment to the martyrs engendered a stratification between the martyrs who were more or less important, which was mirrored in a stratification in the world of the living. It was through the sacrifice of the martyrs that the revolution was made, and accordingly, through the sacrifice of the living that the revolution could be continued. In chapter 7, we saw how this conceptualization of revolution as martyrdom engendered its own understanding of the nature of time, and how time was to be moved forward. The PKK's Newroz celebration showed that sacrifice not only continued the struggle, but also moved it closer to its perpetually elusive goal. Indeed, we have seen that for the Kurdish movement, in many ways, revolution was martyrdom, and martyrdom was revolution.

The question therefore arises, which I will leave open, of what happens to the configuration of sovereignty in places where the dead play a more active role? May not the revolution be seen as engendering a co-sovereignty between the living and the

dead where neither, and therefore both, are capacitated to rule?[316] If the PKK's revolution can be thought of as doubling a necropolis, where the order of the dead is always already imbricated in life, does this not contest a state-issued notion of sovereignty when it is enacted? May not the necropolis be seen as working in contradiction to hegemonic, statist modes of governance, in favor of a more democratic, popular and unfolding sovereignty? Does the order of the dead perhaps open up a revolutionary way of *alter-natively* restructuring the world and who is seen as ruling it – in a certain form of martyr-sovereignty? Or perhaps the movement's sovereignty and the state's sovereignty is mutually contingent or, indeed, both part of the same system? These questions point outwards from the work presented in the thesis, and are marginal to the main question sought addressed here—namely what revolution is in the Kurdish movement and how it is to be conceptualized. But if the comrades are correct, and the Kurdish movement is an example for the world, then these are questions pertaining not only to 'their' world, but also to ours.

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[316] A critical conjunction might here be found with Yarimar Bonilla, who could be seen as questioning whether 'sovereignty' is an analytic term worth of being explored in this context at all, since, according to her, it is so inextricably interwoven with a western, power-laden, epistemic. In future research, however, taking this avenue for inquiry might contribute to exploring what "a decolonial, rather than post-colonial, notion of sovereignty" might look like (Bonilla, 2017, p. 335).

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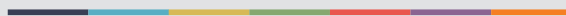
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