Kurdish Art and Identity

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Verbal Art, Self-definition and Recent History

Edited by Alireza Korangy

Foreword by Philip G. Kreyenbroek

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This Book is dedicated to
The brave Kurdish men and women who have struggled for centuries
and
Struggle today to stave off
Injustice, intrusion, and evil

&

And also dedicated to
My daughter Iran Ghazal Korangy
Who is my superhero, my best friend, and
My candle in the dark of the world:
My guide.

Philip G. Kreyenbroek

Foreword

'Kurdish Studies' is a relatively new subject that is managing, slowly but surely, to establish itself and to develop in an academic climate that is generally none too welcoming to the Humanities. It would be good, though perhaps utopian, to think that this gradual acceptance of Kurdish Studies is due to a public awareness of the invaluable services rendered to Western culture and politics by the academic study of other non-Western cultures. If governments, diplomats, journalists, businesspeople or academics need information about—or a better understanding of—the culture and history of Morocco, Thailand or Iran, that knowledge is readily available, largely because of the unremitting work of regional specialists. How valuable this is can be illustrated by comparing the wealth of our information on many non-Western cultures to the little that is currently known about the Kurds and the impulses and channels determining the politics of the (geopolitically vital) regions where they live. In other words, a glaring and perilous lacuna exists in the study of Near and Middle Eastern cultures as long as the Kurds are not recognized as deserving as much academic attention as other major ethnic groups of the region.

Admittedly, progress has been made in the field of Kurdish Studies since the final decades of the 20th century. In many Universities there is now at least an awareness of the subject, and academic output has increased in both quantity and quality. A few aspects of Kurdish cultural identity can now perhaps be said to be adequately covered.

Nevertheless, an enormous amount of factual information still needs to be collected before the next stages—the development of adequate theoretical approaches and the growth of a reliable body of knowledge—can prosper, and the general public will be able to acquire a realistic understanding of the Kurds and their view(s) of the world.

The current status of Kurdish Studies as a young academic pursuit with a firm toehold in Academia offers both challenges and opportunities. Whilst older and more established branches of non-Western Studies are currently grappling with the paradigm-change that was initiated by the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), Kurdish Studies can, so to speak, start with a clean slate. By the same token, however, it must find its own methodological approaches without the benefit of a tried and tested academic tradition.

A branch of Kurdish Studies that is perhaps particularly affected by the problem of finding new and appropriate methods, is the study of Kurdish Literature.

The study of comparative literature, as taught in Western Universities, tends to be remarkably Eurocentric in its focus and offers little support to students of Kurdish literature. Earlier 'Orientalist' approaches, moreover, are of little help. These generally assumed (perhaps unconsciously) the existence of an 'essential', unified and unchanging 'culture' (not unlike a Platonic ideal) underlying the various actual expressions of a given civilization. This essence was often implicitly taken to be directly reflected by literature, so that literary works could be studied without further query in order to elucidate the culture in question. The quest for 'essences' has largely fallen by the wayside in modern academia. While few would deny that literature can indeed provide information about common perceptions and historical realities at a given point of time, no overarching theory appears to exist today that would facilitate the process of interpretation of Kurdish literature. Add to this the scarcity of Kurdologists in University posts, and the fact that most students of other non-Western literatures focus on written texts whereas the literary traditions of the Kurds were predominantly oral—and one can see the difficulties faced by those who seek to build a structure of knowledge that can help us to interpret and evaluate Kurdish literary works in their proper context.

The present work, *Kurdish Art and Identity: Verbal Art, Self-definition and Recent History*, seeks to do just that, by bringing together a series of essays representing a range of subjects and methodological approaches. In doing this, it illustrates both the range of possible subjects of 'Kurdish Literary Studies' (Lakki Poetry and Zazaki folktales, the Kurdish great epics and *Dengbêjî*), and some of its methodological approaches (Orality and Folklore, the Oral-Formulaic Theory, Jungian Psychology applied to the Kurdish stepmother, the impact of *Dengbêjî* on Kurdish Theater). Perhaps to stress the fact that literature always exists in a particular political and cultural environment, the work's valuable study on ethnicity and politics in early Ottoman Kurdistan is a welcome contribution.

Dr. Korangy is to be commended for publishing this addition to the growing, but still limited number of academic works on Kurdish literary theory and practice. May the book give rise to debate and development, leading to a better theoretical understanding of a fascinating literature, and an increased awareness of the emerging discipline of 'Kurdish Studies'.

Göttingen, 23.11.2019

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Alireza Korangy

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Michael Chyet
Applying the Oral-Formulaic Theory to *Mem û Zîn*

Oral-formulaic theory was originally devised as a means of ascertaining whether or not Homer's Ancient Greek poetry was the product of an oral – rather than written – tradition. The main idea of the theory is that illiterate folk poets have a repertoire of formulas (a formula being "an expression that is regularly used, under the same metrical conditions, to express a particular essential idea") and that by linking these in conventionalized ways, they can rapidly compose verse.

Milman Parry and Albert Bates Lord conceived the idea of studying a living oral tradition, that of the South Slavic epic songs (*junačke pesme*), to see to what extent it resembled Homer's works. Their discovery is by now well known: the formulaic languages of both the Ancient Greek tradition and the living South Slavic tradition are indeed similar. Both exhibit formulaic structures on the level of the verse, the type scene, and the theme. Since the publication of Albert B. Lord's book, *The Singer of Tales* in 1960, oral-formulaic theory has been applied to such literary traditions as Old English poetry, Old French poetry, and Russian byliny.

In applying oral-formulaic theory to *Mem û Zîn*,[1] several clarifications need to be made at the outset. Firstly, the theory was originally developed by Parry and Lord as a way of trying to prove that Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* were the compositions of an oral bard. Whereas there was some doubt about the oral character of the Ancient Greek, Old English, and Old French poems before they were examined in the light of oral-formulaic theory, *Mem û Zîn* is, like the South Slavic case, unquestionably a living oral tradition.

Since there is no need to prove the oral nature of *Mem û Zîn*, it is tempting to assume that the problems confronting anyone trying to reconstruct a performance of, say, *Song of Roland* in Old French, do not exist for a living tradition such as that represented by *Mem û Zîn*. The frustrating fact is, however, that although the tradition of reciting the tragic romance of *Mem û Zîn* is entirely oral (Ehmedê Xanî's seventeenth-century literary poem is derived from this oral tradition), we possess nothing but text-oriented transcriptions of oral performances. Beginning with the earliest version collected by a Western scholar in

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1 The oral versions of *Mem û Zîn* are also known as *Memê Alan*.

1869 (PN)[2] and continuing up to the version I acquired on cassette tape in 1988 (MC-1), very little is known about the story of *Mem û Zîn* as performance; only recently has a study appeared on the art of the *dengbêj* who tell it.[3] Nor do we have more than one telling by any single *dengbêj*. Hence, in spite of the twenty or so versions that exist in print, and in spite of our total certainty as to the oral character of the tradition that spawned *Mem û Zîn*, anyone attempting a serious study of it is not much better off than the scholar of such long-extinct traditions as Old English or Old French.[4]

Whereas Homer's works, as well as Old French, Old English, and other traditions – be they epics, romances, or *chansons de geste* – are completely in verse, the versions of *Mem û Zîn* can be divided into two categories. Some versions are primarily in verse (PS, LC-1, OM, ZK-2, LT), but most versions consist of prose narration with sung verse inserted at key points in the story: this sung verse is the most stable part of the story and seems to be formulaic.

In applying oral-formulaic theory to *Mem û Zîn*, both verse and prose versions will be considered. Although some of the literature on oral-formulaic theory sets a minimum of two occurrences of a phrase (group of words) within one text as the criterion for being considered a formula,[5] I have taken liberties with this stricture, as will be seen below.

Three different contexts have been considered in examining the oral-formulaic nature of *Mem û Zîn*:

1. Formulas occurring only once in a version, but with unmistakable parallels in other versions
2. Formulas appearing more than once within one version
3. Formulas shared between one or more versions of *Mem û Zîn* on the one hand, and other stories belonging to the same genre (e.g., Xec û Sîyabend, Leyla û Mecrûm, Sêva Hacîê, Zembîlfiroş, etc.) on the other

Because we do not possess more than one version of *Mem û Zîn* per *dengbêj*, we are limited as to what we can say about the style of any particular *dengbêj*.

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2 Please see the bibliography at the end of the article: *Section A. Oral versions of Mem û Zîn* lists by alphabetical abbreviation all the oral versions of *Mem û Zîn* mentioned in this article.

3 Hamelink, *The Sung Home*. Although this is a study of the *dengbêj*s and their art, *Mem û Zîn* is mentioned only briefly in passing. See also Hilmî, *Antolojiya dengbêjan = Dengbêj antolojisi = The Antologie of the Dengbêj*; Hilmî, *Dengbêj û çîrokbêjên Amedê*, in which *Mem û Zîn* is also absent.

4 Recordings of performances of *Mem û Zîn* have only recently been made available to me, after this paper was written. An analysis incorporating them will be a future project.

5 Ritze-Rutherford, "Formulaic Microstructure," 72.

Fortunately, we do possess other orally composed texts collected from some of the informants. Hence, as a partial remedy to the problem at hand, I have examined other narratives by some of these informants in an attempt to isolate stylistic elements occurring both in *Mem û Zîn* and in other stories they tell, that may be unique to one or another of them. This may be considered a subset of (3) above.

In Albert B. Lord's *The Singer of Tales*, the *formula* is defined as "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea."[6] A line or half line of epic poetry constructed on the pattern of formulas is called a *formulaic expression.* In a discussion of the formula in a Middle English text, *the Alliterative Morte Arthure*, Jean Ritzke-Rutherford modifies Lord's definition of the formula by adding the condition that "two or more occurrences in the same poem are necessary to identify a phrase as a formula."[7]

Ritzke-Rutherford's addition to Lord's definition does not hold for the situation in Kurdish folk literature: although many of the formulas and formula clusters discussed here appear only once per version, the similarity of whole lines across versions makes their traditionality and cognation abundantly clear. Perhaps the real difference between Ritzke-Rutherford's material and that of the Kurdologist is that of orally derived written texts for which very limited numbers of versions are available, versus multiple versions of transcribed oral performances. My definition of the formula applicable to a Kurdish oral context, therefore, is as follows:

> A formula is a group of words, up to one whole line in length, that is regularly employed to express a given essential idea. One occurrence per version of a poem is sufficient to identify a phrase as a formula, provided that the phrase in question has clear parallels in other versions. To qualify as a formulaic cluster, two or more formulas must co-occur at least two times in a comparable context.

After all, such phrases as "Once upon a time" and "They lived happily ever after" occur once per folktale, yet the accepted terms for them are, respectively, introductory and concluding formulas. Thus, we see that the term "formula" can refer to a group of words occurring only once in a text, provided that it has analogues in other texts, be it different versions of the same story or different stories belonging to the same genre.

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6 Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, 30.

7 Ritze-Rutherford, "Formulaic Microstructure," 72.

Formulas Occurring Only Once in a Version

I begin with formulas occurring only once in a version, but with unmistakable parallels in other versions. The first set of parallels deals with a motif in which three doves, or fairies dressed as doves, ask God to send down a fourth dove's garb for Lady Zîn.[8] The numbers in parentheses at the end of each line indicate the number of syllables in the line.

I. *Three doves ask God to send down a fourth dove's garb for Zîn.*

(FK-1)	Xwedêo tu bikî ferware,	(9)
p. 261	Libsê kevotkekê bikî xare,	(10)
	Em sisêne, Zînê bi meṟa bikî care.	(13)

God, you make a command,
Send down a dove's gown,
We are three, make Zîn (our) fourth.

(FK-2) Kevotkek dibêje – Werin emê îsmekî xwedê serda bixûnin, em sisêne, bona p. 293 k'ele[ş] Zîn-xatûn ser me bibe çar.

	Ewana distirên:	
	Ay rebî tu bikî ferware,	(9)
	Zîna mîr Sêvdîn ser me bikî çare,	(11)
	Post jorda têne xare.	(7)

One dove says, "Let us cast a divine spell, we are three, let lovely Lady Zîn be the fourth."
They sing:
"O Lord, you make a command,
Make Mîr Sêvdîn's Zîn the fourth one of us,"
A doveskin came down from above.

(ZK-1)	"Xwedêyo, tu bikî ferware,	(9)
p. 46	Libasekî kewotka bikî xare,	(11)
	Em sisêne, xatûn Zîna delal bive çare,	(14)
	Siḧeta nîvê şevê, şeherê Muxurzemîn,	
	P'encera Memê delalda bikî xare."	(14 + 12 = 26)

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8 Motif F821.1.6. Dress of feathers.

"O God, you make a command,
Send down a dove's attire
We are three, lovely Lady Zîn will be the fourth,
At the hour of midnight, in the city of Mukhurzemîn, set
Her down at the window of Memê delal."

(EP-1)	– Yarebî, bikî ferware,	(8)
#6, p. 185	Postekî kevotka bînî xare,	(10)
	Em bi xwe sisêne –	
	Zînê ser me bikî çare.	(6 + 8 = 14)
	Xadêda bû ferware,	(7)
	Postek jorda hate xare,	(8)
	Sê horî bûne çare.	(7)

"O Lord, make a command,
Bring down a dove's garment,
We ourselves are three,
Make Zîn the fourth one of us."
God made a command,
Plumage came down from above,
The three houris became four.

(SHa-1)	Xodê bikira ferware,	(8)
p. 201	P'ostê kevotka jorda bikira xare	(12)
	Em sisêne, Zînê ijmeɍa [=ji me ɍa] bibe çare	(13)

If God would make a command,
Send down a dove's garment from above,
We are three, may Zîn be (our) fourth.

This set of parallel passages is a formulaic cluster, as it can be further broken down into three discrete formulas, each a full line in length, as follows:

a.

(FK-1)	Xwedêo tu bikî ferware,	(9)

God, you make a command,

(FK-2)	Ay rebî tu bikî ferware,	(9)

"O Lord, you make a command,

(ZK-1)   "Xwedêyo, tu bikî ferware,   (9)
O God, you make a command,

(EP-1)   – Yarebî, bikî ferware,   (8)
O Lord, make a command,

     Xadêda bû ferware,   (7)
God made a command,

(SHa-1)   Xodê bikira ferware,   (8)
If God would make a command,

b.
(FK-1)   Libsê kevotkekê bikî xare,   (10)
Send down a dove's gown,

(FK-2)   Post jorda têne xare.   (7)
A doveskin came down from above.

(ZK-1)   Libasekî kewotka bikî xare,   (11)
Send down a dove's attire

(EP-1)   Postekî kevotka bînî xare,   (10)
     Bring down a dove's garment,

     Postek jorda hate xare,   (8)
Plumage came down from above,

(SHa-1)   P'ostê kevotka jorda bikira xare   (12)
Send down a dove's garment from above,

c.
(FK-1)   Em sisêne, Zînê bi meřa bikî çare.   (13)
We are three, make Zîn (our) fourth.

(FK-2)   em sisêne, bona k'ele[ş] Zîn-xatûn ser me bibe çar. (16-prose)
we are three, let lovely Lady Zin be the fourth.

     Zîna mîr Sêvdîn ser me bikî çare,   (11)
Make Mîr Sêvdîn's *Zîn* the fourth one of us,"

(ZK-1)   Em sisêne, xatûn Zîna delal bive çare,   (14)
We are three, lovely Lady Zin will be the fourth,

(EP-1)   Em bi xwe sisêne –
            Zînê ser me bikî çare.   (6 + 8 = 14)

We ourselves are three,
Make Zîn the fourth one of us."

            Sê horî bûne çare.   (7)
The three houris became four.

(SHa-1)   Em sisêne, Zînê ijmeřa [=ji me řa] bibe çare   (13)
We are three, may Zîn be (our) fourth.

This cluster of formulas appears only in versions of *Mem û Zîn* in which Mem and Lady Zîn are brought together by three doves. In versions in which they are brought together by jinn or angels, this passage is absent. Cognates also exist in SHa-2, GNa, and EP-2, but they have been excluded from this textural analysis because the original Kurdish has been lost: only Armenian translations of the two former versions have been preserved, and the original Kurdish text of the latter version was destroyed in the siege of Leningrad during World War II; we are fortunate to have even the Russian translation of it.

The order of lines is a.-b.-c., except in FK-2, in which the order is a.-c.-b. Because these lines appear together, and in a fairly fixed order, I have adopted Ritzke-Rutherford's terminology and refer to them as *formula clusters*, although in the context of *Mem û Zîn* formula clusters also act as individual poems, clearly set off from the surrounding prose narrative.

Another anomaly in FK-2 is that formula c. appears twice, first in the prose narrative leading up to the sung verse, and that the prose rendering of formula c. is fuller than the verse rendering of it. If we include the prose formula c., the order is c.-a.-c.-b. The situation we encounter in this passage is anomalous because on the one hand, the first appearance of formula c. is in a prose passage, yet on the other hand FK-2 is clearly a traditional, orally generated text. Perhaps this occurrence of formula c. in prose should be seen as a preamble to the formula cluster (i.e., poem) to follow.

In reference to the formula as defined by Ritzke-Rutherford, specifically to the requirement that a phrase appear a minimum of two times in the same poem in order to be considered a formula, it could be argued that EP-1 meets that required minimum. In this version the order is: a.-b.-c.-a.-b.-c. If the first

a.-b.-c. cluster constitutes a *request* with the verbs in each line in the subjunctive mood, the second cluster furnishes the *result*: here all three verbs are in the simple past tense. The doubling is neatly parallel. EP-1 is one of the more embellished versions collected: it was told by 'Etarê Şero, a fine storyteller who will be discussed more fully below. A talented singer "can shorten or lengthen his songs at will according to his artistic personality"[9]: This type of parallel structuring is one of the strategies he might use to extend a short song.

As far as geographical distribution is concerned, all the versions exhibiting this formula cluster come from one continuous area, comprised of Soviet Armenia and the area contiguous to it across the border in eastern Turkey.

Table 1: 3 doves ask God to send down a 4th dove's garb for Zîn.

Version	Informant	Date	Place	Collector
SHa–1	Oskan Ohanian	1904	Şemsettin, Van	S. Haykuni
FK–2	Fekoê Mraz	1926	Gozeldere, Aẍbaran, Arm	E. 'Evdal
FK–1	Xudoê Qaşo	pre–1936	K'arvanserê, Aẍbaran, Arm	E. 'Evdal
EP–1	'Etarê Şero	1955	Nork, Erevan, Arm	Hajie Jndi
ZK–1	'Egîtê T'êcir	1963	Sîçanlû (=Avtona), T'alîn, Arm	Ordîxanê Celîl?

The second formula cluster we will examine is also from the beginning of the story of *Mem û Zîn*. This time, however, I have chosen formulas that exist only in versions told entirely in verse. The versions are: LC-1, LC-2, LT, and ZK-2. In the present analysis, the part of LT taken from Lescot's Mardin informant, Sebrî, will be used. LC-2 was collected in the same place and at approximately the same time as LC-1.

II. *Childless rulers and the arrival of the Feast of the Sacrifice.*

(ZK-2)	Rojekê ji ṛojê xudane,	(9)		
pp. 65–66	Bi ser vî bajarê hade hatî 'eydeke mazin, 'eydeke qurbane,		(21)	
	Xwarzî diçûne malê xalane,	(10)		
	Birazî diçûne malê apane,	(11)		
	Bûk derk'etin ji malê xezûrane	(11)		
	Berê xwe dane malî bavane,	(10)		

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9 Murko, "The Singers and Their Epic Songs," 14.

Ji xořa çûne zeyane,   (8)
Ev hersê milûkê ha k'urdê wan kore, warê wan undane   (18)

One day of God's days,
A great feast came upon this city, the Feast of the Sacrifice.
Sisters' sons went to visit their mothers' brothers,
Brothers' sons went to visit their fathers' brothers,
Brides left the homes of their fathers-in-law,
Headed for the homes of their fathers,
And went to visit their parents,
All three of these kings were childless, their houses
          were empty

(LT-Sebrî)   Rojekê ji rojê Xwedê,   (8)
p. 1, l. 11–19   Bi ser wan de hatiye Eydê Qurbanê,   (12)
  Xwarzî diherin malê xalane,   (10)
  Û birazî diherin malê apane.   (11)
  Elî begê, Emer begê û Elmaz begê derketine ser yazlixane (22)
  Digotin: "Gelî birano, em sê bira ne.   (13)
  Emrê me şêst in, dikevin şêst û pêncane.   (13)
  Rebê Alemê daye me malê girane.   (13)
  Emê warocax ê kordûnda ne.   (10)
  Rojekê ji rojê Xwedê, emê serê xwe deynin diyarê rehmetê, axê gorane   (26)

One day of God's days,
The Feast of the Sacrifice comes upon them,
Sisters' sons go to visit their mothers' brothers,
Brothers' sons go to visit their fathers' brothers,
Ali beg, Emir beg, and Elmaz beg went out onto their balcony.
They looked at each other and [started to] cry,
Saying, "Brothers, we are three brothers,
We are sixty going on sixty-five,
The Lord of the world has given us much wealth,
[But] we are without descendants or heirs.
One day of God's days we will go to rest in the kingdom of vmercy, in the
          dust of the grave . . ."

(LC-1) [Lakin sê begê vî bajarî hene ẖersê birayê hev in amma ewlad tunnin
      korê kor ocaẍ in warwenda ne,   (34)
p. 36, l. 3–15 Roekê <5> li bin rûyê xudê li bajarê moẍribê pyênc ʿîd geştine hev
      yek Ensarane,   (30)
      Yek ʿîda Yehûdiyane,   (8)
      Yek jî ʿîda Muslimanane,   (9)
      Yek jî roya culûs humayûn, yek jî roya nebiya we enbiya, roya înê ʿîda
            Peyẍamberane   (31)
      Ve ẖersê begane padişahê moẍribiyane   (15)
      Bi derketin ser textê sultana sêr û temaşe kirin
      le ehalî moẍribiyane   (26)
      Se kirin her kesekî xêr û we xeyrat diherine ser malê bavane (22)
      Bûka bi destê ewladê xwe girtin diherin ser malî bavane,   (20)
      Lawikê çardeh salî swar dibûne <10> li hespane]   (16)

But there are three begs in this city, all three are brothers;
they have no children; their households are empty their lineage lost.
One day <5> in the city of Mughrib five holidays coincided,
one an *eed* of the Christians,
One an *eed* of the Jews,
And one an *eed* of the Muslims,
One the day of the imperial session, and one the day of
the Prophets, Friday, *Eed* of the Seers,
All three begs, the rulers of Mughrib
[Sat] on their imperial thrones watching the people of Mughrib,
Hearing everyone going to visit their father's house
in goodness,
Young wives took hold of their children's hands and went
to their father's houses,
Fourteen-year-old boys mounted <10> their horses.

(LC-2) [Şev dihate ʿîdan û erafatane   (12)
p. 53, l. 1–4   Li bajarê moẍribê pê dibûne sê birane   (15)
      Korê kor ocaẍê war wendane]   (10)

The evening of the Festival of Arafat[10] came around,
In the City of Mughrib three were brothers,
Their households empty, their lineage lost.

From the preceding passages, three sets of formulas can be discerned, as follows:

a.
(ZK-2)   Rojekê ji řojê xudane,   (9)
            Bi ser vî bajarê hade hatî 'eydeke mazin, 'eydeke qurbane,   (21)

One day of God's days,
A great feast came upon this city, the Feast of the Sacrifice.

(LT-Sebrî)   Rojekê ji rojê Xwedê,   (8)
              Bi ser wan de hatiye Eydê Qurbanê,   (12)
One day of God's days,
The Feast of the Sacrifice comes upon them,

(LC-1) [Roekê li bin rûyê xudê li bajarê moẍribê pyênc 'îd geştine hev
        yek Ensarane,   (30)
        Yek 'îda Yehûdiyane,   (8)
        Yek jî 'îda Muslimanane,   (9)
        Yek jî roya culûs humayûn, yek jî roya nebiya we enbiya, roya înê
        'îda Peyẍamberane]   (31)
One day in the city of Mughrib five holidays coincided,
one an *eed* of the Christians,
One an *eed* of the Jews,
And one an *eed* of the Muslims,
One the day of the imperial session, and one the day of
the Prophets, Friday, *Eed* of the Seers,

(LC-2) [Şev dihate 'îdan û erafatane]   (12)
The evening of the Festival of Arafat came around

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10 That is, the Feast of the Sacrifice, also known as the Feast of Immolation, the most important festival in Islam, connected with the *ḥajj* or pilgrimage to Mecca.

b.

(ZK-2)	Xwarzî diçûne malê xalane,	(10)
	Birazî diçûne malê apane,	(11)
	Bûk derk'etin ji malê xezûrane	(11)
	Berê xwe dane malî bavane,	(10)
	Ji xoῤa çûne zeyane,	(8)

Sisters' sons went to visit their mothers' brothers,
Brothers' sons went to visit their fathers' brothers,
Brides left the homes of their fathers-in-law,
Headed for the homes of their fathers,
And went to visit their parents,

| (LT-Sebrî) | Xwarzî diherin malê xalane, | (10) |
| | Û birazî diherin malê apane. | (11) |

Sisters' sons go to visit their mothers' brothers,
Brothers' sons go to visit their fathers' brothers,

| (LC-1) | Se kirin her kesekî xêr û we xeyrat diherine ser malê bavane | (22) |
| | Bûka bi destê ewladê xwe girtin diherin ser malî bavane, | (20) |

Hearing everyone going to visit their father's house
in goodness,
Young wives took hold of their children's hands and went
to their father's houses,

c.

| (ZK-2) | Ev hersê milûkê ha k'urdê wan kore, warê wan undane | (18) |

All three of these kings were childless, their houses were empty

| (LT-Sebrî) | Emê warocax ê kordûnda ne. | (10) |

We are without descendants or heirs.

(LC-1) [Lakin sê begê vî bajarî hene ḧersê birayê hev in amma ewlad tunnin korê kor ocaẍ in warwenda ne]   (34)

But there are three begs in this city, all three are brothers;
they have no children; their households are empty their lineage lost.

| (LC-2) | [Korê kor ocaẍê war wendane] | (10) |

Their households empty, their lineage lost.

One feature common to all these versions is their end rhyme in -*ane*. These versions are almost entirely in verse, and the uniform rhyme continues for many pages in a printed text. The ending -*ane* appears most often as the plural of the oblique case of nouns, as is generally the case in formulas a. and b. above; at other times, it may consist of a word ending in -*a* plus the suffix -*ne*, which either serves as the plural copula (= we/you/they are), as in formula c. above, or performs no other function than to preserve the rhyme. Whereas in ZK-2 and LT the verses are arranged on the page in verses ending in -*ane*, in LC-1 and LC-2 the original text consists of one undifferentiated paragraph. I have transcribed the text into the Kurdish orthography and have arranged the verses on the analogy of ZK-2 and LT, with each line ending in -*ane* (or the appropriate end rhyme), so that visually it is easy to discern where each line of verse ends.

Formulas a. and b. are logically related and co-occur in the same order in all three versions (i.e., excluding LC-2). Formula c., while part of the same general theme, is not as tightly connected to the preceding two formulas, following them in three cases (ZK-2, LT and LC-2), and preceding them in one (LC-1). The underlying pattern is:

With one's hearth blind	with one's encampment lost
korê kor ocax̄ in	warwenda ne
1	2

In LT, the *dengbêj* seems to have made a slip of the tongue, saying {warocax ê kordûnda ne}, transposing the first element in each of the two expressions, where he probably meant to say {korocax ê war wunda ne}. *Warocax* means "dwelling" or "residence" (*war* = home; *ocax* = hearth), and *kordûnda* or *kurdonde* means "without offspring" (literally "blind of offspring"); *korocax* means literally "blind of hearth," but is synonymous with *kordûnda*.

The geographic distribution of the versions of *Mem û Zîn* that feature these formulas is indicated in the following chart. Although all the versions come from the same general area, LT-Sebrî and ZK-2 are from the two adjacent provinces of Mardin and Diyarbekir, making them closer to each other than either is to the versions from Zincirli in what is now the western part of the province of Gaziantep. LC-1 and LC-2 are unique in that they were collected by Le Coq from two men from the same village: the similarities between them give us some clues as to a regional oicotype, i.e., the form the story of *Mem û Zîn* assumes in a particular geographical area.

Table 2: Childless rulers and the arrival of the Feast of the Sacrifice.

Version	Informant	Date	Place	Collector
LC-1	Ja'far Oğlu Seidi Bīyā	1901	Zincirli (or Kilis?), Gaziantep	Albert von Le Coq
LC-2	Ali Gäwānde Dālika	1901	Zincirli (or Kilis?), Gaziantep	Albert von Le Coq
LT-Sebrî	Sebrî	c. 1940	Mardin	Roger Lescot
ZK-2	Ohanyan Israêl	1970	Ḧiznemîr, Diyarbekir[11]	Ordîxanê Celîl?

Formulas Occurring Several Times in a Version

In the second of the three contexts, formulas are repeated more than once within one version. This phenomenon is found in all Kurdish language versions encountered. The formula cluster examined below occurs several times within a single version, while having parallels in other versions as well.

The following are the repeated passages within each version. The first seven occurrences (three from PS, three from ZK-3, and one from ZK-2) include the formulaic phrase "a newborn dove," while the remaining fifteen occurrences lack it. Nevertheless, the two subgroups are obviously cognate, because: (a) they are used at the same points in the story; and (b) there are formulaic phrases other than the aforementioned one which are common to both subgroups. This suggests that in a formula cluster, not all of the constituent formulas need be present.

III. *Description of Zîn*.
(PS)a   [Ḧeçî Zîn e ji xwe Zîn e   (7)
p. 74, l. 7–8   Ew kevoka nû ferxîn e,   (8)
                 Ew xûşka mirê min e, Mîr Zeydîn e]   (11)

Zîn is just Zîn,
She is a newborn dove,
The sister of my emir, Mir Zeidin.

---

11 Although this version was collected in Soviet Armenia, the informant, an Armenian named Ohanyan Israêl, was born in 1910 in the village of Ḧiznemîr in the province of Diyarbekir, and lived there until age seventeen, when he fled with his family across the border to Qamîşlî, Syria. He remained there until 1966, when he moved with his family to the *sovkhoz* of Artenîyê in the district of Talîn, Soviet Armenia. According to the notes at the back of *Zargotina Kurda*, Ohanyan Israêl learned his material from Yahoê Mistê Qulo, a Kurd from the village of Bolind, adjacent to Ḧiznemîr (between 1910 and 1927).

(PS)b	[Ya dî ew bi xwe Zîn e	(7)
p. 75, l. 9–11	Ew kevoka nû ferxîn e,	(8)
	Ew xûşka Mîr Zeydîn e]	(7)

The other one is Zîn herself,
She is a newborn dove,
The sister of Mir Zeidin.

(PS)c	[Boçî nabêjî yarka min Zîn e	(10)
p. 80, l. 8–9	Ew kevoka nû ferxîn e,	(8)
	Xûşka mirê min e, Mîr Zeydîn e]	(10)

Why don't you say your beloved is Zîn,
She is a newborn dove,
The sister of my emir, Mir Zeidin?

(ZK-3)a	Dibê, ew stîya Zîne	(7)
p. 91	Kewoka nû ferxîne,	(7)
	Xuyê t'ac, 'embarê zêr̄îne,	(9)
	Xuka Mîr Zêydîne,	(6)
	Domama Qeret'ajdîne,	(8)
	Welat û memlek'etê wênekê li Cizîra Bota dimîne.	(19)

He says, this is Lady Zîn,
She is a newborn dove,
Possessed of a crown of golden amber,
The sister of my Mir Zêydîn,
The cousin of Qeretajdîn,
Her native land is Jizîra Botan.

(ZK-3)b*	Ewa pêşî ko tu dibînî, jêr̄a dibêjin stîya Zîne	(18)
p. 105	kewoka nû ferxîne,	(7)
	xayê t'ac û 'embarê zêr̄îne,	(10)
	xuka Mîr Zêydîne,	(6)
	domama Qeret'ajdîne	(8)

Do you see the one in front? They call her Lady Zîn,
she is a newborn dove,
possessed of a crown of golden amber,

the sister of my Mir Zêydîn,
the cousin of Qeretajdîn.

(ZK-3)c	Memo dibêje, "Ya mîrê min, wel, ko Bek'o digotî,	(16)
p. 108	P'eřîya dilê min disotî,	(9)
	Muḧuba dilê min ko heye, jêřa dibêjin Zîne,	(16)
	Kewokeke nû ferxîne,	(8)
	Xuka Mîr Zêydîne,	(6)
	Domama Qeret'ajdîne."	(8)

He says, "My emir, what Beko says
Has me quite upset
I do have a beloved, they call her Zîn,
She is a newborn dove,
Possessed of a crown of golden amber,
The sister of my Mir Zêydîn,
The cousin of Qeretajdîn."

(ZK-2)a	Memê dibê, "Beko, ya min Zîne, Zîne û Zîne,	(15)
p. 81	Kevokeke nû ferxîne,	(8)
	Waye, xu ji navkê û bi jorva ji miřa di p'encerêda dertîne,	(21)
	Ji ek'sê te û bavê teřa, xuka mîrê te Mîr Zêydîne."	(18)

Memê said, "Beko, the one I want is Zîn, it's Zîn and it's Zîn,
She's a newborn dove,
There she is, she's gazing down at me through the
window screen,
Unlike you and your father, she's the sister of your emir
Mîr Zeydin."

(HM)a	[Ez zanim dergistîya te kî ye. Xweşka Mîr Sevdîne."]	(prose:16)
p. 6	I know who your betrothed is. It is the sister of Mir Sevdin.	

(HM)b	["Erê lo lo Beko Ewano.	(9)
p. 10	Te şwîr û misḧef li ber me danîno	(11)
	Xudê 'alemê: surayê dostê me tunîno	(14)
	Ji xelefê yekê – nave wê Zînê ye.	(11)
	Qîza Xatûnê Qeretajdîn e,	(10)
	Xweşka Mîr Sevdîne . . ."]	(6)

"Yes lo lo Bako Awano,
You placed sword and Qur'an before me.
God knows that I don't have a herd of lovers,
There is only one: her name is Zînê.
She is the daughter of the lady of Qaratajdin,
The sister of Mir Sevdin."

(LC-1)a   [Min pirs kir ev qîza kî ye, digo qîza Mîrî 'Ezîm   (16)
p. 39, l.126–127   Xûçika Mîr Zendîn   (6)
                    Dotmama Ḥesen Çeko Qumsî-Beko Qeretaşdîn e   (16)
                    Navê xwe Dilber Zîn e . . .]   (7)
I asked, "Whose daughter is she?"
They said, "She is the daughter of Mîr 'Azîm,
The sister of Mîr Zendîn,
The first cousin of Hasan-Cheko, Qumsî-Beko, Qaratashdin,
Her name is Dilber Zîn."

(LC-1)b   [Zînê go dilîmin dîne   (8)
p. 40, l.175–76 Pismamê min Ḥesen Çeko Qumsî-Beko Qeretaşdîn e   (17)
                    Bavê min Mîr 'Ezîm e   (7 or 8)
                    Birayê min Mîr Zendîn e   (8 or 9)
                    Bi mira diwên Dilber Zîne . . .]   (9)
Zîn said, "Dilîmin dine,
My cousins are Hasan-Cheko, Qumsî-Beko, Qaratashdin,
My father is Mîr 'Azîm,
My brother is Mîr Zendîn,
They call me Dilber Zîn."

(SHa-1)a   [Ya ku ez dixwazim ne li vir e   (9)
p. 203   Navê wê Zînek, qîza Mîr Sevdîn e   (11)
                Nevîya Mîr Atlas e, velî Cizîr Botane   (14)
                Şaneşînê řengîne . . .]   (7)
The one whom I want is not here,
Her name is Zîn, she is the daughter of Mîr Sevdîn,
She is the granddaughter of Mîr Atlas, the governor of
Jezira Bohtan,
The colorful capital.

(SHa-1)b   [Yara Memê – Xatûn Zîn e   (8)
p. 214   Xûşka Mîr Sevdîn e, qîza Mîr Tajdîn e,   (12)

Nevîya Mîr Atlas e, (7)

Velî şaneşîna řengîne . . .] (9)

Mem's beloved is Lady Zîn,

She is the sister of Mîr Sevdîn, the daughter of Mîr Tajdîn,

She is the granddaughter of Mîr Atlas,

The governor of the colorful capital.

(FK-2)a   Ya ez dibêm ew xewn rojek nîne, (10)

p. 294   Ya ez dibêm ew Zîn e, qîza Mîr Sêvdîn e (13)

Baltûza Ç'ekan – Qeret'ajdîn e. (10)

Ya ez dibêm, ew qîzeke bûkîne, (11)

Bejna xweba kaẍezekî hêşîn e, (11)

T'ilî-pêç'îyê wê nermike-mijmi[j]kîne. (13)

Ciyê wê Cizîre, ew qîza Mîr Sêvdîn e. (13)

The one I speak of is no daydream,

The one I speak of is Zîn, the daughter of Mîr Sêvdîn,

The sister-in-law of Chekan and Qeretajdîn.

The one I speak of is a bride-like girl,

Her waist is [as thin as] a green leaf,

Her fingers are soft and tender,

She lives in Jizîra, she is the daughter of Mîr Sêvdîn.

(FK-2)b*   . . . [dibê:] ya ez dibêm, ew Xatûn Zîne, (11 or 9)

p. 295   cîyê wê dixazin, Cizîra Botane, (12)

ew qîza Mîr Sêvdîn e (7)

baltûza Qeret'ajdîn e. (8)

. . . he says, "The one I speak of is Lady Zîn,

if you ask where she lives, [it is] Jizîra Bota,

she is the daughter of Mîr Sêvdîn,

the sister-in-law of Qeretajdîn."

(FK-2)c   Ya ez dibêm, canikeke bûkîne, (11)

p. 295   Bejnêda k'aẍezekî hêşîn e, (10)

Navê wê k'eleş xatûn Zîn e, (9)

Bi xwe qîza Mîr Sêvdîn e, (8)

Ew bûka Qeret'ajdîn e. (8)

Ciyê wê Cizîra Botan e. (9)

The one I speak of is a tender bride,

Her waist is [as thin as] a green leaf,

Her name is lovely Lady Zîn,

She's the daughter of Mîr Sêvdîn,
The sister-in-law of Qeretajdîn,
She lives in Jizîra Botan.

(FK-1)a*	‒ Ez Zîn-xatûnim, qîza mîr Zêvdînim,	(11)
p. 262	xûşka Mîr Sêvdînim,	(6)
	nevîa Mîr Etlesim,	(7)
	ji Cizîra Bota me, xwedana koçik serê rengînim,	(17)
	k'exbê hêşînim,	(5)
	eger rast dibêjî ez bûka Qere-T'ajdînim.	(14)

"I'm Lady Zîn, daughter of Mîr Zêvdîn,
I'm the sister of Mîr Sêvdîn,
I'm the granddaughter of Mîr Atlas,
From Jizîra Bota, owner of a many-colored palace,
[and] a green gown,
If you speak truthfully, I'm the sister-in-law of Qeretazhdin."

(FK-1)b	Ya ez dibêm Xatûn Zîn e,	(8)
p. 265	Qîza Mîr Zêvdîn e,	(6)
	Xûşka Mîr Sêvdîne e,	(6)
	Ew Cizîrê dimîne.	(7)
	Koç'kada t'imê dimîne,	(8)
	Ew li vira nîne,	(6)
	Bûka 'Efîn ‒ Qeret'ajdîn e,	(9)
	Dest girtîa Ç'ekîn e,	(6)
	Xweya k'exbê hêşîn e.	(7)

"The one I want is Lady Zîn,
The daughter of Mîr Zêvdîn,
The sister of Mîr Sêvdîn,
Who lives in Jizîra.

She lives in a palace,
She isn't here,
The sister-in-law of Efin and Qeretazhdin.
The fiancée of Chekin,
She wears a green gown."

(FK-1)c	Memê: ‒ Bekir, yara min ew nîne,	(10)
p. 285	Yara min Xatûn Zîne,	(7)
	Qîza Mîr Zêvdîne,	(6)

    Xûşka Mîr Sêvdîne,   (6)

    Xudanê k'exbê hêşîne.   (8)

    Dîsa dibêm, Xatûn Zîne.   (8)

    "Mem: "Beko, that one isn't my beloved,

My beloved is Lady Zîn,

The daughter of Mîr Zêvdîn,

The sister of Mîr Sêvdîn,

Owner of a green gown,

I'll say it again, it's Lady Zîn."

(ZK-1)a★   Ez qîza Mîr Sêvdîn im,   (7)

p. 47   ji şeherê Cizîra Bota, bûka Qeret'ajdîn im,   (16)

    dergistîya Ç'ekan im, xweyê k'exbê hêşîn im . . . (14)

I am the daughter of Mîr Sêvdîn,

From the city of Jizîra Bota, I am the sister-in-law of Qeretajdîn,

The betrothed of Chekan, I am the owner of the green gown . . .

(ZK-1)b   Memê go: "Qîza wezîr, ewa, dilê min diħebîne, (16)

p. 49   Ew li vir nîne,   (5)

    Li Cizîra Bota dimîne,   (9)

    Ew qîza Mîr Sêvdîn e,   (7)

    Bûka Qeret'ajdîn e.   (7)

    Ew dergîstîya Ç'ekîn – serê zemîn e,   (12)

    Xweya k'exbê hêşîn e,   (7)

    Navê wê nazik, Xatûn Zîn e,   (9)

    Gelekê nola we qet řeng û řûyê wê nabîne." (15)

Mem said, "Vizier's daughter, the one my heart loves,

She is not here,

She lives in Jizîra Bota,

She's the daughter of Mîr Sêvdîn,

The sister-in-law of Qeretajdîn,

The betrothed of Chekan – lion of the earth,

She has a green gown,

The name of this beauty is Lady Zîn,

The likes of you will never see her color or face

    [=the likes of her]."

This formula cluster consists of the following constituent formulas:

a) Her name is Zîn (or: Mem's beloved is Lady Zîn)

b) A newborn dove (first seven occurrences only)

c) She is the daughter (or sister) of Mîr Sêvdîn (plus enumerations of other familial relations)
d) She lives in Jezîra Bohtan (or: Jezîr Bohtan is her abode)
e) She is the owner of [some green item]
f) She is not here (of limited occurrence).

Formula a. has several realizations: they all have as their final word the name Zîne (sometimes Zîn + e = is Zin). This formula often occupies only half of the verse, as in (PS)c, (ZK-3)b, (ZK-3)c, (ZK-2)a, (ZK-2)b, (HM)b, (SHa-1)a, and (FK-1) a: hence the term *formulaic system* may be used in this instance in exact accordance with Ritzke-Rutherford's usage of it. With the possible exception of (HM) a, every version includes one or another subtype of formula

a.
Subtype a1 is as follows:
<u>Her name</u>   <u>is [modifiers] Zîn</u>
1   2
This is found in (HM)b, (LC-1)a, (SHa-1)a, (FK-2)c, and (ZK-1)b.
Subtype a2 is:
     <u>To [her]</u>   <u>they call</u>   <u>[modifier] Zîn</u>
     1   2   3
This is found in (ZK-3)b, (ZK-3)c, and (LC-1)b.
Subtype a3 is:
     <u>[My] beloved *or* My [beloved]</u>   <u>is Zîn</u>
     1   2

This occurs in (PS)c, (ZK-2)a, (SHa-1)b, and (FK-1)c. In (SHa-1)b it is *Mem's beloved is Lady Zîn*, and in (ZK-2) it is literally *My female one is Zîn*.

Subtype a4 is:
     <u>[The one I say]</u>   <u>she/it</u>   <u>is [Lady] Zîn</u>
     1   2   3

This occurs in (ZK-3)a, (FK-2)a, (FK-2)b, (FK-1)b, and (FK-1)c – last line. In (ZK-3)a, element #1 is *He says, this is Stîya Zîn*. The element *The one I say* (Ya ez dibêm) occurs elsewhere in (FK-2)a and (FK-2)c: apparently it forms part of a formula in its own right, particularly since it tends to occur in the same context, descriptions of Lady Zîn. The attestation in (FK-1)a, *I am Lady Zîn* (Ez Zîn-xatûnim), could be seen as a variant of this subtype also: this would require the dropping of element #1, and expanding element #2 to include pronouns in other persons: the person

of the copulas (i.e., first, second or third person) in element #3 must agree with the pronoun in element #2 in person (and in number).

Formula b. occurs in all three versions of PS and of ZK-3, and in one of the versions of ZK-2. It displays the following pattern:

[She]	dove	newborn is
1	2	3

The first element occurs in all three attestations of PS, and nowhere else. The verse contains seven or eight syllables: the eighth syllable is either the pronoun *she* (*ew*) at the beginning of the verse (in PSa-b-c), or the indefinite article suffix *a/an* (*-ek*) appended to the word *dove* (*kewok – kevok*) in ZK-3c and ZK-2a.

As with formula b. in cluster II. above, formula c. is a series of enumerations consisting of several verses displaying the same formulaic pattern, which will be considered together as a unit. Any one attestation may have as few as one (in PSa-b-c, ZK-2a-b, HMa) and as many as four (FK-1a) verses with the formula, but most versions have two or three verses. This is perhaps the most distinctive formula in the cluster, and no attestation occurs without some form of it. The pattern for formula c. is:

[Female relative] of	[man's name]
1	2

The most common words appearing in the "Female relative" slot in element #1 are: *sister of* (*xûşka – xuka – xua – xweşka – xûçika*); *daughter of* (*qîza*); *granddaughter of* (*nevîya- nevîa*); *bride* or *sister-in-law of* (*bûka*); *sister-in-law of* (*baltûza*); *female cousin of* (*domama – dotmama*); and *fiancée of* (*dest girtîa*). Lady Zîn both describes herself and is described by Mem in terms of several of her male relatives. It is interesting to note that in (LC-1)b, Lady Zîn enumerates her male relatives, using the following terms: *my male cousin* (*pismamê min*); *my father* (*bavê min*); and *my brother* (*birayê min*). I would like to suggest that this is the same formula, seen from a female perspective.

Formula d. is of more limited occurrence, appearing in (ZK-3)a, and in all attestations for FK-2, FK-1, and ZK-1. Sometimes it is only part of the verse, as in (FK-2)a, (FK-1)a, and (ZK-1)a. It consists of the following subgroups:

Subtype d1:

Her place	is Jezîra [Bohtan]
1	2

This is the pattern for all three attestations in FK-2, although (FK-2)b interpolates *[if] you want [to know]* (*dixazin*) between elements #1 and #2.

Subtype d2:

Her kingdom	in Jezîra Bohtan	remains
1	2	3

This subtype, which is transitional between d1 and d3, contains an analogue of the first element of subtype d1, and the final element *remains* (*dimîne*) of d3. It is attested only once in the versions included in this study, in (ZK-3)a.

Subtype d3:

[She]	in Jezîra [Bohtan]	remains
1	2	3

This occurs in two versions, (FK-1)b and (ZK-1)b. The former includes the first element *she* (*ew*) and has *[in] Jezîra* (*Cizîrê*) as the second element, while the latter excludes the first element and has a fuller form, *in Jezîra Bohtan* (*li Cizîra Bota*), as the second. Both attestations are seven syllables long.

Subtype d4:

From [the city of] Jezîra Bohtan
1

This has two attestations, in (FK-1)a and (ZK-1)a. The former lacks "the city of" and adds the copula *I am* (*me*); the latter includes "the city of" and lacks a verb.

Formula e. in the cluster is even more limited in distribution, occurring only in (ZK-3)a and (ZK-3)b, and in all attestations for FK-1 and ZK-1. It consists of the following pattern:

Owner of	[item(s)]	[modifier ending in –în-]
1	2	3

In (FK-1)b-c and both ZK-1 attestations, *Zîn* is *the owner of a green k'exbe/k'exbe* [=wedding gown?]; in (FK-1)a, she *is the owner of a colorful palace and green k'exbe*. The modifiers in – *în*- are *green/blue* (*hêşîn*) and *colorful* (*rengîn*). In (ZK-3)a-b, *Zîn* is *the owner of a crown of golden amber*. Here the modifier in – *în*- is *golden* (*zêrîn*).

Formula f. occurs in only three passages: (SHa-1)a, (FK-1)b, and (ZK-1)b. All of them are at the same point in the story, when Mem is at the party thrown for him by his father in the royal garden. The pattern is:

[She]	here	is not
1	2	3

In (SHa-1)a, this forms part of a longer verse, and the order of elements is 3–2, *not here is* (ne li vir e).

The attestations of this formula cluster occur at fixed points in the story: (A) when Lady Zîn introduces herself (or is introduced for the first time); (B) when Mem tells his father (or others in his native land) about Zîn; (C) when Beko Awan tricks Mem into revealing who his beloved is during a verbal duel. (D) when a group of four or five girls is described, one of whom is Lady Zîn; and (E) when Mem speaks to Qeretajdîn about Lady Zîn. The following chart indicates which of the five scenarios is applicable for each occurrence of the formula:

Table 3: Description of Zîn.

Version	Page	Scenario A-B-C-D-E
(PS)a	p. 74, l. 7–8	E
(PS)b	p. 75, l. 9–11	D
(PS)c	p. 80, l. 8–9	C
(ZK-3)a	p. 91	A
(ZK-3)b	p. 105	D or E
(ZK-3)c	p. 108	C
(ZK-2)a	p. 81	C
(ZK-2)b	p. 80	E
(HM)a	p. 6	E
(HM)b	p. 10	C
(LC-1)a	p. 39, l. 125–28	A
(LC-1)b	p. 40, l. 175–76	A
(SHa-1)a	p. 203	B
(SHa-1)b	p. 214	C
(FK-2)a	p. 294	B
(FK-2)b	p. 295	B

Table 3 (continued)

Version	Page	Scenario A-B-C-D-E
(FK-2)c	p. 295	B
(FK-1)a	p. 262	A
(FK-1)b	p. 265	B
(FK-1)c	p. 285	C
(ZK-1)a	p. 47	A
(ZK-1)b	p. 49	B

Of the versions of *Mem û Zîn* in which this formula cluster occurs, PS, ZK-2, and LC-1 are primarily in verse, whereas the other versions (ZK-3, HM, SHa-1, FK-2, FK-1, ZK-1) are prose narrative with sung verse inserted at key points. Hence it cannot be said that this cluster is limited to one or the other type, unlike the clusters I and II above.

The version collected by Oskar Mann in Soujbulaq (modern Mehabad, Kurdistan of Iran) in 1903, which I have designated OM, is in a class by itself. As far as I know, it is one of only two versions of *Mem û Zîn* that have been collected in Mukri, a northern sub-dialect of the Sorani (Central) dialect of Kurdish: hence, shared formulas between the Kurmanji versions and this Mukri version, while not impossible, are unlikely. OM, recited by Raḣmanî Bekir, is extraordinarily elaborate: it abounds in recurrent formulaic phrases, and spans fifty-seven pages of print, and supposedly took four nights to recite.[12]

Formulas Shared Between One or More Versions of Mem û Zîn and Other Stories

Let us turn now to context (3) Formulas shared between one or more versions of Mem û Zîn and other stories. Formula cluster I above is not limited to *Mem û Zîn*, as an example of it has turned up in a version of another Kurdish story, *Memê û ʿEîşê*. One version of *Memê û ʿEîşê* ends with the following lines:

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12 To be studied in a separate essay.

[65] Ew bû ji 'emrê xadêye,   (8)
Jorda p'ostê gura k'etîye,   (9)
Wetê têda hilatîye,   (8)
Bûye gura serê çîyaye.   (9)

> This was by the order of God,
> From above a garment of wolves descended,
> *Wetê*[13] got into it,
> She became a wolf on the mountain top.

Only the first two lines concern us here though the poetic texture of the version as a whole must be understood. Unlike the versions of *Mem û Zîn* in which our formula cluster appears, this version of *Memê û 'Eîşê* is entirely in verse; the number of syllables in it varies between seven and fourteen, most commonly with eight or nine syllables per line. In the four lines quoted above, the first and third lines consist of eight syllables, while the second and fourth lines consist of nine syllables each. The end rhyme can change every couple of lines, or it can go on for a long time without changing. In the above case, the end rhyme *-êye* begins nine lines above, and in our four lines it varies between *-êye*, *-îye*, and *-aye*. This is an important consideration, because in all the versions of *Mem û Zîn* that include formula cluster I discussed above, the end rhyme is *-are* (*ferware*; *xare*; *care*). Although the texture of *Memû û 'Eîşê* features a different end rhyme, formulas a. and b. of our formula cluster I are discernible in the passage from it quoted above.

Let us compare the pattern for formula a. with *Memê û 'Eîşê* (henceforth ME). The pattern for formula a. is:

a. [O] God   [you] make   a command
     1   2   3

In ME, the same three elements are there, although the order of the pattern is different, dictated by the exigencies of the rhyme scheme:

Ew bû	*ji 'emrê*	*xadêye*
This was	by the order of	God
2	3	1

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13 *Wetê* is the name of Memê's mother in this story.

The second EP-1 line (the "response") is closest to the ME line:

Xadêda	*bû*	*ferware*
At/by God	[there] was	a command
1	2	3

In both, the same form of the word for God is used (*xadê*), and the same verb, *was* (*bû*), is used instead of *make* (*bike*). *By the order of* (*'emrê*) and *a command* (*ferware*) are paraphrases of each other. It would appear that the formula is flexible enough to adjust to different poetic environments while remaining recognizable.

Let us move on to formula b. of formula cluster I above:

Garment	of dove	from above	make	down
1	2	3	4	5

The parallel in ME is:

Jorda	*p'ostê*	*gura*	*k'etîye*
From above	garment	of wolves	descended
3	1	2	4–5

Once again, the order of the elements is different; in addition, elements #4 and #5 have collapsed into one: *descended/fell* (*k'etîye*). "Descending" is a paraphrase of "sending something down."

One significant difference between the *Mem û Zîn* versions and ME is the dove's garment (Motif F821.1.6. Dress of feathers) in the former which God sends down, while in the latter we have a wolf's garment (cf. Motif F821.1.3. Dress of raw fur). This formula cluster seems to be limited to the primarily prose versions of *Mem û Zîn*. There are two versions that have a motif comparable to this but belong to the group of versions that are told mainly in verse: they are OM and LC-1. As mentioned above, OM is unusual because it is one of two versions in Sorani (Mukri), whereas the rest of the Kurdish language versions are in Kurmanji. LC-1 is a version from the western edge of the continuous area in which Kurmanji is spoken and is heavily influenced by Turkish. What is lacking from both versions is the request that God send down a dove's garment: instead, the doves (or falcons in OM) simply "tied fairy wings onto Zîn" (LC-1) or "put a splendid outfit on her" (OM). It is perhaps no coincidence that these two versions are also the most heavily laden with Islamic religiosity, particularly if underlying the request to send down a dove's garment is a pagan belief

that the different animals have gods. In the Yezidi religion it is believed that different domestic animals have protectors (*pîr*) that look after them and speak to them in their own language.[14] Due to Islamic influence, such beliefs would then have been forced into a monotheistic mold, in which God himself looks after the various animals. For a truly religious Muslim, however, the whole ideal may still suggest paganism: this could account for the muted reference to this motif when the narrator is a pious Muslim, as in LC-1 and OM.

Formula c. does not work in the context of ME and is therefore absent from it. Nevertheless, the coappearance of the same two formulas (a. and b.) in two different stories is noteworthy. It is unlikely that coincidence alone could account for this. What I have just demonstrated argues for the validity of Ritzke-Rutherford's concept of formula clusters vis-à-vis Kurdish oral literature.

We have seen examples of the three contexts in which formulas may occur in *Mem û Zîn*: across versions, within one version, and between *Mem û Zîn* and other stories in the same genre. To expand on the third context, let us now examine certain formulas that a given informant uses in *Mem û Zîn* as well as in other stories collected from him. As mentioned above, we do not possess more than one version of *Mem û Zîn* per informant (*dengbêj*), hence we are severely limited as to what we can say about the individual style of any particular *dengbêj*. However, since other stories and poems have been collected from several of the *dengbêjes* who tell *Mem û Zîn*, we can look at these other stories in an attempt to isolate stylistic features peculiar to a specific *dengbêj*.

'Etarê Şero, of the Kurdish tribe Ortilî, which inhabits the Ashtarak region of the Republic of Armenia, was born in 1901 in the village of Soybilax (Soğukbulak)[15] in the county (*kaza*) of Surmelî, Kurdistan of Turkey.[16] A Yezidi by birth, he was a literate peasant who lived in Nork, a suburb of Erivan, the Armenian capital, until his death in 1974. He wrote, and collected most types of Kurdish folklore, including folktales, romances, and songs. Two versions of the story, from 1965 and sometime before 1976, of *Yusuf and Zulaykha* (*Ûsiv û*

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14 See: Jndi, *Kurdskie èpicheskie pesni-skazy*, 126n 28. Also: Rudenko, *Literaturnaia i fol'klornye versii kurdskoĭ poèmy "IUsuf I Zelikha*,*"* 53.

15 Or from the village of Damasxane, according to Kurdo, "Derheqa şovêd Mem û Zîna zargotî û şova Mem û Zîna Ehmedê Xanî," 83. The late Professor Kurdoev also states that 'Etarê Şero wrote down this version and gave it to Hajie Jndi [Hacîyê Cindî], a detail not mentioned elsewhere, and – although believable – is not verified.

16 Dzhalilov and Dzhalilov, *Zargotina K'urda = Kurdskiĭ Fol'klor*, 2: 501; Jndi, *Kurdskie èpicheskie pesni-skazy*, 242.

Zelîxe) have been collected from him,[17] as well as two versions of *Zembîlfiroş*, which he wrote down in 1933. The version of *Mem û Zîn* that he recited, EP-1, was collected from him in 1955. It is most closely related to ZK-1, FK-1, FK-2, SHa-1, and GNa, but in many places it is more embellished than these, as in the first formula examined above, in which 'Etarê Şero added a second set of formula clusters parallel to the first set, an example of how a skilled singer might lengthen an otherwise short song.

Let us now examine three passages in EP-1, which are similar:
Ew rojekê, [Zînê] pêşya carîê xwe k'et û hate nav baẍê Toṙkirî,
xweṙa seyrange kir (EP-1: #4, p. 184)
One day she [=Zîn] led her maidservants to the garden of Torkirî,
and made a picnic for herself.

. . . sibê t'emam werne baẍê minî [=yê Al-p'aşa] T'oṙkirî . . . (EP-1: #10, p. 187)
. . . all must come tomorrow to my [=Al Pasha's] garden Torkirî . . .
Ez u tu jî emê heṙne baxê T'oṙkirî, xweṙa k'êfkin (EP-1: #57, p. 198)
Let's you and I go to the garden of Torkirî and take pleasure in
one another.

The Garden of Torkirî (or the Enclosed Garden) is mentioned in three different contexts in one story. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say *a* garden of Torkirî instead. Upon close inspection, it turns out that at least two (possibly three) different gardens are intended. In the first and third cases, the garden in question is in Jezira Bohtan, while in the second case, it is in Mukhurzemin, Mem's hometown. How could the same garden appear in two different cities? If we look at other versions, we find that in ZK-1, for instance, the garden in Mukhurzemîn is called Xas-baẍçe (cf. Turkish Has bahçe), whereas the one in Jezira Bohtan is baẍê T'ûrkirî, clearly a variant of the name appearing three times in EP-1; in FK-1, the order is reversed: the first garden is baẍê t'oṙkirî, and the second is xasbaẍçe. We find 'Etarê Şero using this same formula in both of his versions of Yusuf and Zulaykha:

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17 1965 version: Bakaev, *Rol' IAzykovykh Kontaktov v Razvitii IAzyka Kurdov SSSR*, 189–211; pre-1976 version: Rudenko, *Literaturnaia i fol'klornye versii kurdskoĭ poèmy "IUsuf I Zelikha,"* 300–310, 336–47.

"Aqûb, řave em heřin nava baẍê minî t'ořkirî, wê derê hewzê minî
meřmeř heye . . ." (Bakaev: #4, p. 190)
"Agûb, řave, emê heřine nav baẍê minî t'ořkirî, wê derê hewzê minî
mermer heye . . ." (Rudenko: #27, p. 300)
"Jacob, come let's go to my garden of Torkirî [or- to my
enclosed garden], I have a marble pool there."

Apparently *the garden of Torkirî* (baẍê t'ořkirî) is a formula that 'Etarê Şero uses
whenever he describes a large, well-watered garden belonging to a dignitary or
ruler. This is an example of what Lord calls a *formulaic theme*, consisting of
"the repeated incidents and descriptive passages in the songs."[18]

The following examples deal with another aspect of 'Etarê Şero's style:

Çûn gotne Al-p'aşa, go . . . (EP-1: #9, p. 186)
They went and told Al pasha, they said . . .

. . . Bor k'êlimî, dîsa gote Memê, go: . . . (EP-1: #36, p. 193)
. . . Bor [the horse] spoke, once again he said to Mem, he said: . . .

. . . paşê Qeret'ajdîn gote mîr, go: . . . (EP-1: #44, p. 195)
. . . then Qeretajdîn said to the mir, he said: . . .

In all three cases, the sentence narrates what somebody said, and is followed
by a quotation. What is distinctive about the style is the repetition of the word
said (*gote – go*) in each case, appearing the first time in a full form (*got(n)-*)
plus a dative suffix (-*e*) (=they said to . . .), and the second time in a short form
(*go*) often used in introducing direct quotations. In colloquial English, one can
hear such analogues to this structure as the following: "So I says to him, I
says, . . . "

Once again, a similar construction can be found in 'Etarê Şero's tellings of
Yusuf and Zulaykha:

Rojeke Sixir divêje, divê . . . (Rudenko: #27, p. 300)
Rojekê Sixir divêje Aqûb, divê: (Bakaev: #4, p. 190)
One day Sikhir says [to Jacob] he says: . . .

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18 Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, 4 and ch. 4.

Ew diçe cem Meyanê û divêje, divê . . . Meyane divîne boşe, gerekê xwe aşkelake, divêje Aqûb divê . . . (Bakaev: #8, p. 191)
He goes to Meyane and says to her, he says . . . Meyane sees that it is no
    Use, she must reveal herself, she says to Jacob she says . . .

The only difference between the use of this stylistic feature in 'Etarê Şero's *Yusuf and Zulaykha* on the one hand, and in his *Mem û Zîn* on the other, is the tense of the verb: in *Mem û Zîn* he tends to narrate in the past tense, whereas in *Yusuf and Zulaykha* he narrates in the present tense. In both cases, the same verb is repeated, the first time in its fullest form (*gote*, *divêje*), the second time in its shortest form (*go*, *divê*). Other examples can be found in 'Etarê Şero's repertoire:

Ḧesenîko:
Xulam usa jî diçine divêjine Se'dûm-beg. Divên: . . .[19]
The servants likewise go and tell Sadum-beg. They say . . .:
Helan:
Xweyê male tê derxist, wekî diz xame, gote jina xwe, go: . . .[20]
The master of the house guessed that the thief was naïve, he said
to his wife, he said: . . .
Bûk û stûn:
Rokê xasî gote bûka xwe, go: . . .[21]
One day a mother-in-law said to her daughter-in-law, she said: . . .

As can be seen, sometimes the present tense is used, while at other times the past tense is. What do we infer from this? This stylistic trait is far from unique to 'Etarê Şero, as the following examples from other storytellers indicate:

Aẍa û xulam:
. . . dît wekî ḧalê wî boşe, gote xulamê xwe, go: . . .[22]
. . . he saw that his condition was helpless, he said to his servant,
he said . . .

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19 Dzhalil and Dzhalil, vol. 1, #21, p. 253.
20 Dzhalil and Dzhalil, vol. 2, #841, p. 200.
21 Dzhalil and Dzhalil, vol. 2, #844, p. 201.
22 Dzhalil and Dzhalil, vol. 2, #845, p. 201. The informant is Aḧmedê Mîrazî from the village of Qulîbeglu (later called Sovêtakan) in the district of Hoktêmberyan, Armenian Republic. He was born in Diyadin, in what is now the province of Ağrı, Turkey.

Kuřê feqîr:
Yekî gote hevalê xwe, go: . . .[23]
One [fellow] said to his friend, he said: . . .

So far the two examples we have seen of 'Etarê Şero's style – the way he describes a garden and the way he often builds up to a quotation – are taken from the prose sections of his narratives. Although Kiparsky finds prose material adequate for oral-formulaic theory,[24] stylistic clues can also be gleaned from the poetic passages of 'Etarê Şero's *Mem û Zîn*. In EP-1, the following two cognate passages occur:

Qeret'ajdîn bi brava hat derda,   (10)
Selam dane Memê di serda,   (9)
Hêja bûne çar bra hevřa xeberda (11)   (EP-1: #39, p. 194)
Qeretajdîn and his brothers came inside,
They greeted Mem first,
They became as four brothers speaking together.

Gava Memê çû derda   (7)
Selam da mîr bi serda,   (7)
Mîr selam 'elêk' veda,   (7)
Sivik-sivik rabû ji berda   (9)   (EP-1: #43, p. 195)
When Mem went inside
He greeted the mir first,
The mir returned his greeting,
Rising ever so slightly to his feet.

The first two lines of both passages clearly consist of formulas. Both first lines exhibit the following formulaic structure:

[Person]	came/went	inside
1	2	3

In the first passage, element #1 has the modifier *with his brothers* (bi brava), and in the second passage the conjunction *when* (*gava*) precedes the first

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23 Dzhalil and Dzhalil, vol. 2, #862, p. 207. The informant is Cerdoê Esed, from the village of Sabûnçî in the district of T'alîn, Armenian Republic. His parents fled from Kars in what is now Turkey.

24 Kiparsky, "Oral Poetry," 73–106.

element. The line is ten syllables long in the first, and seven syllables long in the second passage: the length of the former is explained by its containing the rather long name Qeretajdîn (four syllables) plus the modifier *with his brothers* (bi brava). Moreover, the second passage consists of a series of relatively short lines (seven to nine syllables in length), which accounts somewhat for the length of the second occurrence of the formula.

The second line consists of the following formula:

Greeting	gave [to]	[person]	first
1	2	3	4

In the first occurrence, it is nine syllables long, while the second is seven syllables. Other than this there are no striking differences between the two. The rhyme is in -*erda* throughout, with one irregularity: *he returned* (*veda*) in the third line of the second passage, in -*eda*. Thus far, two attestations of this formula within the same text have been demonstrated. In addition, the formula occurs in both versions of *Zembîlfiroş*, which 'Etarê Şero wrote down in 1933:

I. Zembîlfiroş diçû derda,   (8)
    Selam da xatûnê serda,   (8)
    Xatûn sivik ṝabû ji berda,   (9)
    Dest qisê kir û t'ev xeberda.[25]   (9)
        Zembilfirosh went inside,
        He greeted the lady first,
        The lady rose slightly to her feet,
        They spoke and conversed together.

As in the two passages from *Mem û Zîn*, the first two lines of this passage fit into the patterns for the two formulas outlined above. Line three is cognate with the fourth line of the second passage in EP-1, the only difference being that the first two syllables are (*sivik*) in EP-1,[26] and (*xatûn*) in *Zembîlfiroş*. The fourth line ends with their *speaking together* (t'ev xeberda), which resembles the third and final line of the first EP-1 passage. Hence, whereas within EP-1 itself, only the first two lines of the passage are cognate, the passage from *Zembîlfiroş* bears comparison to the last lines of both of the EP-1 passages.

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25 Dzhalil and Dzhalil, vol. 1, #10, p. 191, and Musaèlian, *Zambil'frosh*, #1, para. 18, p. 112. The verse is identical in both versions.

26 Which are repeated in the third and fourth syllables of the verse, yielding *lightly lightly* = very lightly (*sivik-sivik*).

The passage in ʿEtarê Şero's version of *Zembîlfiroş* has cognates in other versions, as is shown below:

II. Zembîlfiroş hate derda,
    Silavek dabû xatûnêda,
    Xatûnê silav alek veda,
    Go: "Ser-serê min hatî, ser herdu ç'ava."[27]
        Zembilfirosh came inside,
        He greeted the lady,
        The lady returned his greeting,
        She said, "On my head you have come, on my eyes."

III. Zembîlfiroş çû derda,
    Ewî silav kire serda,
    Xanûm ji evînya ravû berda.[28]
        Zembilfirosh went inside,
        He greeted [her] first,
        The madame, out of love, rose to her feet.

IV. [Dibê: "Zembîlfiroş, k'erem ke jor, xanûm te dixaze."]
    Zembîlfiroş çû derda,
    Ew xanûm bû, ṛabû berda.[29]
        [He says, "Zembilfirosh, please come up, madame wants you."]
        Zembilfirosh went inside.
        It was madame, she rose to her feet.

V. Zembîlfiroş hatibû ji derda,
    Slavek xatûnê veda,
    Xatûn got: "Tu ser serî, herdu ç'e'va."[30]
        Zembilfirosh had come inside,
        A greeting the lady returned,
        The lady said, "You are on [my] head, both my eyes."

27 Musaèlian, *Zambil'frosh*, #2, para. 8, p. 117. Collected in 1964 in Tbilisi, Soviet Georgia, from Tafûr Mamûd, illiterate, born in 1882 in Dîgor, Kars province, eastern Turkey.
28 Musaèlian, *Zambil'frosh*, #5, para. 5, p. 130. Collected in 1964 in the village Koryokhaz Aparansk, Soviet Armenia, from Oko Silêman, illiterate, born in 1891 in Kars.
29 Musaèlian, *Zambil'frosh*, #6, para. 2, p. 134. Collected in 1964 in Tbilisi, Soviet Georgia, from Şamo Davoev, illiterate, born in 1894 in the village of Mîrak Aparansk, Soviet Armenia.
30 Musaèlian, *Zambil'frosh*, variant Abdala #1, para. 9, p. 141. Collected in 1927.

VI.   Zemîlfiroş hatibû derda,
      Selamek xatûnê veda,
      Xatûnê got: "Tu ser serî, herdu ç'e'va."[31]

                 Zemilfirosh [*sic*] had come inside,
                 A greeting the lady returned,
                 The lady said, "You are on [my] head, both my eyes."

It can be seen from a comparison of all six versions that there is another formula that is not in all the versions: *You are on [my] head, both my eyes* = Welcome! (Tu ser serî, herdu ç'e'va). As for the rhyme, (*veda*) occurs in II, V, and VI. *Eyes* (*ç'e'va*) represents an even further departure from the rhyme in -*erda*. In fact, only I, III, and IV have rhyme in -*erda* throughout. In II, it is questionable whether one can speak of a rhyme scheme at all: each verse ends in something different, viz. -*erda*, -*êda*, -*eda*, and -*ava*. A similar situation obtains in V and VI, with a different ending in each of the three verses. The fairly consistent end rhyme, in this case in -*erda*, while not unique to 'Etarê Şero, is characteristic of his style: in both passages from EP-1 and in the cognate passage from his versions of *Zembîlfiroş* (I above), the end rhyme in -*erda* is strictly adhered to, with one exception: (*veda*) in the second EP-1 passage.

Conclusion

To sum up, in this article, oral-formulaic theory has been applied to the oral versions of *Mem û Zîn*. A definition for the formula and formula cluster vis-à-vis Kurdish oral literature has been proposed, and three different formulaic contexts have been examined. The three contexts are: (a) one occurrence of a formula per text, with obvious parallels in other versions; (b) several occurrences within the same text; (c) one or more occurrences in *Mem û Zîn* with a parallel in some other story. As a corollary to this last context, the style of one *dengbêj* has been scrutinized in the light of formulaic evidence. Although most of the formulas examined occur in verse passages, there are also examples of formulas in a prose environment.

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31 Musaèlian, *Zambil'frosh*, variant Abdala #2, para. 9, p. 146. First published in 1933. Very similar to Abdala #1 (see the preceding note).

Bibliography

Oral versions of Mem û Zîn

Here listed are all the published versions of which I am aware. They are presented
alphabetically by abbreviation.

EP-1= Jndi, Hajie, ed. "Mam i Zin." In *Kurdskie èpicheskie pesni-skazy*. Moskva: Izdatel'stvo
Vostochnoĭ Literatury, 1962, 66–97; 183–209. [Russian translation + Kurmanji in Cyrillic
script; includes bibliography of other versions]

EP-2= Jndi, Hajie, ed. "Mam i Zin." In *Kurdskie èpicheskie pesni-skazy* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo
Vostochnoĭ Literatury, 1962, 98–111; originally published by O.L. Vil'chevskiĭ in: *Skazki*
narodov Vostoka (Moskva & Leningrad, 1938, 99–119. [Russian translation only; original
was lost during the blockade of Leningrad]

FK-1= 'Evdal, E. "Məm y Zine = Mem û Zînê." In *Folklora Kyrmança*. Erevan, 1936, 261–292.
[Kurmanji in outdated Latin script]

FK-2= 'Evdal, E. "Məm y Zine = Mem û Zînê." In *Folklora Kyrmança*. Erevan, 1936, 293–301.
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See also HR-2 above. These are merely a selection of the musical renditions of Mem û Zîn:

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Leonard Michael Koff
Mem û Zîn as Court Literature

Ahmadi Khani's (Ehmedî Xanî's) *Mem û Zîn* (written ca. 1695) is set within the context of seventeenth-century Kurdish historical cultural awareness. But the work is more often than not read as historical foreshadowing, indeed as political prophecy. In modern politics, *Mem û Zîn* is appropriated to endow the Kurdish independent movement with a past. According to the modern nationalist argument, the work is said to speak for the establishment of an independent Kurdish entity – a nation-state – that Khani, a cultural and political idealist, anticipates: *Mem û Zîn* is said to point to nothing less than Kurdish political liberation. But *liberation* for Khani is cultural as well as Sufist and does not simply imply national independence from Arabs or Turks or Iranians, though independence of a certain kind is entailed in Khani's idea of liberation.

Hakan Özoğlu has explained that the political use of *Mem û Zîn* is the unfortunate consequence of the "penetration of the Western concept of nationalism into the Kurdish community in the twentieth century." As Özoğlu explains, Khani's "perception of the Kurds consisted mainly of the tribal Kurmancis. Consequently, it is [. . .] the political and the intellectual environment of the nationalist era that *retrospectively* qualified this piece of literature as nationalist."[1] Özoğlu responds to an array of scholarship that reads *Mem û Zîn* as adumbrating modern political ideology, and Özoğlu's repositioning *Mem û Zîn* in Kurdish cultural history is importantly on target.

We can see in two references, one in Plutarch and one in Xenophon (references that Özoğlu does not mention), the classical rather than the modern context for nationalist readings of *Mem û Zîn*. But when read in the context of Khani's seventeenth-century court poem, these references define Kurdish cultural politics as Khani understands them, rather than giving modern Kurdish politics an informing historical past. Plutarch refers to the site where Alexander defeated Darius. That site was not Arbela,[2] but identifying Alexander's defeat of Darius with Arbela speaks to the Kurdish historical imagination that enables Kurds to identify with victorious Greeks over an enemy that is also a Kurdish

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1 Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State*, 33. See also Özoğlu, "Does Kurdish Nationalism Have a Navel?," 199–222. See in particular Bruinessen, "Ehmedî Xanî's *Mem û Zîn* and Its Role in the Emergence of Kurdish National Awareness," 40–57.
2 Plutarch, *Greek Lives: A Selection of Nine Greek Lives*, 341. See also the note on p. 455: "Gaugamela was a village; Arbela was the nearest large city: both were used to name the battle, which took place on the plain of Gaugamela."

enemy. The reference, as it implicitly appears in *Mem û Zîn*, does not foreshadow Kurdish desired political liberation in the modern world; rather, the reference for Khani in the seventeenth century foreshadows Kurdish cultural liberation from unfortunate Persian, as well as Turkish, judgments of the Kurds. Xenophon's reference to Kurdistan as the place through which he and his army marched[3] identifies Greek conflict with people among whom live the Kurds. But in *Mem û Zîn*, where the Kurds are implicitly identified with the victorious Greeks, the conflict is not military nor political. Khani's notion of Kurdish liberation acknowledges Kurdish cultural and moral independence – and his notion of freedom speaks to his understanding that national political freedom for the Kurds is not a possibility, but cultural recognition is.

Khani (d. 1707), a member of a house of nobility, had a scholarly background. He was fourteen when he started writing poems, and twenty when he became a clerical secretary for Bayezid's princely court. He was "the most famous scholar and poet in Kurdistan in his time," well before he was made a literary figure of Kurdish nationalism.[4] Of his works, *Mem û Zîn* is the boldest in cultural and social terms. It is his attempt, as Khani explains, an official at Botan, to establish his court's cultural and moral place among the people of his region. *Mem û Zîn* highlights values that establish praiseworthy Kurdish presence among people who are not only enemies of one another, but also enemies of the Kurds. Khani speaks against what he calls Kurdish cultural and political deprivation, interlocking symptoms of powerlessness:

> The power of our art to be established
> The value of our pen to be confirmed
>
> Our plight to be remedied
> Our learning to be demanded
>
> If we had a proud leader
> Generous and a patron of literature

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3 Xenophon, *The Persian Expedition*, 28, 177–81.

4 Mirawdeli, *Love and Existence*, 4. See pp. 1–4 for what we know of Khani. On his works other than *Mem û Zîn*, see ibid., 4, and Saadalla's Preface to Khani, *Mem û Zîn*, 10: "Ahmed Khani was born in 1650 AD (as he has recorded in [*Mem û Zîn*]), in a village called Khan – hence his name – in the Hakari province of Kurdistan (in south-east Turkey now), and died at Bayazid, most probably in 1707, as most scholars agree. He completed [*Mem û Zîn*] at the prime age of 44 (again as he has recorded). In addition to *Mem û Zîn*, he wrote two more books: the *New Spring of Children*, a textbook, in the form of a dictionary for teaching Kurdish children, and the *Belief of the Faith*."

Our currency would be minted coinage
Not so a doubtful and worthless exchange

Though it is pure and distinct
More precious is the coin of the mint [. . .]

If a crown [by a king] has been obtained
Prosperity would certainly have been attained

He would have looked after us, the orphans
And would have protected us from the villains [. . .]

Notice that between the Arabs and the Georgians
[are the] Kurdish, becoming like the towers

Besieged by these Persians and Turks
In the four corners are all Kurds

The two sides have made the tribe of the Kurds
A target to eliminate with their arrows [. . .]

These seas of the Turks and the Tajik [Persians]
Whenever they move or stir

The Kurds become stained with blood
They keep them apart like a strait

Resolution, bravery and generosity
Courage, princeliness and endurance

That is the mettle of the Kurds
Shown by sword and equitable fervor[5]

The image of an ocean in Khani's description of the Kurds' landlocked region is noteworthy: the surrounding political powers are the seas between which Kurdish land is the isthmus, and when the oceans are aroused, the Kurds are awash in blood. In Khani's view, had the Kurds a prince (a Mîr) who would encourage the learning and the moral and spiritual virtues that sustain political power, Kurdish cultural autonomy, which for Khani is synonymous with a political autonomy, would be assured. Khani characterized the position of the Kurds with respect to their powerful neighbors as precarious. In light of their historical position – and their lack of a prince – Khani asks for cultural, indeed spiritual leadership, where cultural independence is political independence because it rests on spiritual presence. This is Khani's mystico-political logic, where spiritual values translate into cultural and therefore political power. Because Khani sees himself redeeming a Kurdish heritage by calling for a

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5 Khani, *Mem û Zîn*, 29–31 (section 5 ["Our Plight"]).

morally powerful Mîr, *Mem û Zîn* becomes the circulating coin of the Kurdish realm, that is, the token of Kurdish cultural and spiritual value in the historical marketplace where commerce stands for culture and presence.[6]

We should note that the manuscript and print history of Khani's *Mem û Zîn* clarifies the problematic claims about the poem's purported relationship with modern Kurdish nationalism. It was not, for example, until the end of World War I that Khani's *Mem û Zîn* was published.[7] Oral versions of Mem and Zîn circulated before the seventeenth century. Together they constitute the oral and folkloric *Memê Alan*.[8] These oral versions are Khani's immediate and local cultural context; but the intertexts that clarify *Mem û Zîn* as court literature of a mystico-political kind are, as Claudio Guillén puts it, "genetically independent" ones that, when brought to bear on a text, reveal its thematic and structural nature.[9] Once folkloric tradition establishes the continuous Kurdish cultural presence of

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6 See Khani, *Mem û Zîn*, 33–35 (section 6 ["Why This Book Is Written in Kurdish"]): "The Kurds do not lack much perfection / They are orphans lacking opportunities / In the whole they are not so ignorant and uneducated / Perhaps they are humble and unprotected / Had we but a leader! / High minded and a good speaker! / Learning, art, prudence and perfection / Poetry, love, book and verse collection / Such matters he appreciated / Such currencies he accepted / The flag of the measured word / I would have raised on top of the world / I would have resurrected the soul of Mela Kiziri / Put life back into Ali Hariri / And so pleased Feqi Teyran [These are famous Kurdish poets] / He would forever be a fan / However the market is stagnant / No one is buying our garment / Especially in this age when money / Is for us the darling and honey / Where the greed for the income and Dinar / Has made each of us an idolater / [. . .] / So do not say that our coinage has little value / That it is unminted by a king of kings / Had it been engraved when minted / It would be in currency not counterfeited." On Khani's cultural context in Jazira Botan, see Mirawdeli, *Love and Existence*, 38–39.

7 For the history of available editions, see Mirawdeli, *Love and Existence*, 53–59. On the number of manuscripts (not "more than a few thousand") of *Mem û Zîn* and its limited readership, see Bruinessen, "Ehmedî Xanî's *Mem û Zîn*," 46. On the effect of print on the circulation and influence of *Mem û Zîn* in the development of Kurdish nationalism, see Bruinessen, "Ehmedî Xanî's *Mem û* Zîn," 50–54.

8 See Chyet, "'*And a thornbush sprang up between them*,'" 54–62, on the differences between oral tales of Mem and Zîn and Khani's literary *Mem û Zîn* with respect to texture and content.

9 See Guillén, *The Challenge of Comparative Literature*, 69–71, on the models in comparative literature that Guillén calls models of supranationality, the third of which entails genetically independent studies of "supranational entities" (See Guillén, *The Challenge of Comparative Literature*, 70). *Mem û Zîn* falls into this category (Guillén, *The Challenge of Comparative Literature*, 88–89): "Perhaps the most promising tendency in comparative literature" is the one, citing René Etiemble (1963), "'that considers that even when two literatures have not had historical contacts, it is nevertheless legitimate to compare the literary genres they have elaborated, each one alone.'" Genetic studies imply "contacts or other relations between authors and processes belonging to distinct national spheres or common cultural premises" (see Guillén, *The Challenge of Comparative Literature*, 69).

Mem û Zîn, this folkloric tradition, unfortunately, becomes the site for arguments about nineteenth-century modes of Kurdish nationalism. Again, reading modern nationalism in Khani's *Mem û Zîn* is reading back into history. The aims of Khani's court poem are cultural, which is not to say they are without historical or political consequences. *Mem û Zîn* reveals a Kurdish amatory, social, and political imagination that rests on a mystical understanding of worldly presence and power, an understanding not present in the story's folkloric prototypes: in Etaré Caro's version of Mem and Zîn, for example,[10] and in various contemporary media, including film.

History and Genre

Although considered a national epic,[11] *Mem û Zîn*'s genre is not an epic in any meaningful sense.[12] It is neither like a Greek tragedy[13] nor a Shakespearean

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10 Etaré Caro, *Mem û Zîn*, 1968. According to Alan Ward's Foreword, Caro (b. 1900) was "a well-known story-teller living in Armenia, who dictated his version to Haciye Cindf in 1955," published in "Kurdskie Epičeske Pesni-Skazy" (Moscow, 1962). Note Ward's comment on the versions of the story of Mem and Zîn, which "like the myths of the Greek world," have been "born and reborn uncounted times in the mouth of a narrator or under the pen of a writer who has told his *Mem û Zîn*. There are potentially as many variants as there are Kurds capable of telling a story." See Caro, Foreword [by Ward], 1. Caro's *Mem û Zîn* is not discussed in Chyet. For translations of eighteen oral versions of the story of *Mem û Zîn*, as well as the text and translation of a nineteenth-century version of the story, see Chyet, "'*And a thornbush sprang up between them*,'" 9–556.

11 On the emirs of Botan who are responsible for the place given to *Mem û Zîn* in Kurdish national politics, see Bruinessen, "Kurdish Society, Ethnicity, Nationalism and Refugee Problems," 33–67, esp. 49: "[. . .] it was the Bedirkhan family, scions of the Kurdish rulers of Jazira Botan and prominent nationalists in the early twentieth century, who first adopted *Mem û Zîn* as the Kurdish national epic. The story of Mem and Zîn was situated in Jazira Botan and associated with the court of that emirate; it could therefore also be made to legitimate the Bedirkhans' hoped-for leading role in the Kurdish nation. It is a work of court literature, and Khani's Kurds are not peasants but belong to the 'feudal' elite."

12 See Mirawdeli, *Love and Existence*, 39–52, for his use of the term "epic." But that term does not, for Mirawdeli, define the *Mem û Zîn*'s specific literary genre. See Mirawdeli, *Love and Existence*, 70–80. See also Chyet, "'*And a thornbush sprang up between them*,'" esp. 73–82, on his textual analysis of the genre of *Mem û Zîn* that is not, according to Chyet, an epic in any literary definition of "epic." Calling its genre "epic" does not clarify its literary structure, though it does give *Mem û Zîn* rightly esteemed literary presence in Kurdish letters.

13 Mirawdeli has rightly noted the "dramatic" structure of *Mem û Zîn* and he argues that *Mem û Zîn* is a tragedy of an Aristotelian kind (see Mirawdeli, *Love and* Existence, 153–214). I would argue that the poem's dramatic structure rests on a spiritual dynamic rather than a dramatic

one. Although it is compared to *Romeo and Juliette* – *Mem û Zîn* is the story of star-crossed lovers united by means of a go-between[14]– that generic comparison obscures the work's larger use of the idea of star-crossed. Calling *Mem û Zîn epic* is meant to give to the work a place in Kurdish literary culture comparable to Homer's place in Greek culture, and those cultural historians who want to see *Mem û Zîn* as one among great *epic* works of world literature have indeed an admirable aim. Unfortunately, that aim does not address how *Mem û Zîn* refigures the motif of star-crossed lovers to make a redemptive Sufi argument about the socially transforming power of love.

Still there are, however, specific elements in the poem, connecting it to *Romeo and Juliette*, that speak to *Mem û Zîn*'s particular redemptive point: for example, Mem and the Mîr, with Zîn spiritually present, play chess,[15] a motif in *Romeo and Juliette* that locates the work in an international context, given the presence of chess in other literary works, including Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, where Miranda and Ferdinand play chess.[16] For Shakespeare, chess is the "symbol of courtly, aristocratic entertainment, even of sexual equality."[17] Moreover, chess in *The Tempest* points to political re-alliances that redress usurpations of power that sent Prospero into exile. The chess game between Mem and the Mîr is meant to trap Mem into revealing his amorous and mystical desire, which he does, a revelation that leads to Mem's imprisonment, later his and Zîn's death too. Indeed, this also leads to the triumph, post-mortem, of an eternal love that

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structure that is Aristotelian in nature, or even a special case of an Aristotelian dramatic structure. I think that arguing for such a structure, or indeed arguing that *Mem û Zîn* is a Shakespearean analogue, reflects Mirawdeli's admirable effort to give *Mem û Zîn* a wide and distinguished cultural context. This is, of course, my aim, too.

14 See Khani, *Mem û Zîn*, 81–82 (section 20 ["The Granny Talks to Mem and Tajdin"]) and 83–85 (section 21 ["The Granny Returns to Siti and Zîn"]) where, in Saadalla's translation, the "nurse" is called "granny": not only does she confirm that Mem loves Zîn and that his companion, Tajdin, loves Siti, Zîn's sister, but Zîn and Siti charge her with telling their lovers that they are loved. Granny is as much a confidante as a go-between: "Rise, go quickly and tell Tajdin / If you want Siti and Mem wants Zîn / Good tidings then, we do accept you / We are even unhappier without you / Your love is a halter we cannot hold / The veil of shyness guides our behavior / Yet that veil is for you non-existent / Un-veiling is for you a custom so ancient / The matchmakers with ways and means / Anyone from you, we shall be welcoming / So speak to those lovers / And all the friends and suiters / Some to intercede on your behalf / Some to pray on our behalf / Perhaps God has ordained / That our union be attained" (p. 85). Her unveiling means *telling*. See Chyet, "'*And a thornbush sprang up between them*.'" See Khani, *Mem û Zîn*, 82–101, where he defines *Mem û Zîn*'s literary genre as a romance.

15 See Khani, *Mem û Zîn*, 163–67 (section 43 ["The Chess Tournament"]).

16 See Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, V.i.172–74.

17 Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, V.i.122–23.

has, in Khani's view, moral effects in establishing just rule here on earth. Mem's vision of Zîn's divine purity causes him to lose the chess game with the Mîr: "His mind was fixed on the window / He was giving away his knight for a pawn."[18] Mem is also resisting the demeaning words of the Mîr's evil counselor, Bekir Mergewer: "[. . .] I have seen the one Mem loves / She is an Arab girl, lip-spotted / From head to foot is black as tar."[19] Mem's response to Mergewer is a defense of Zîn that reveals the aristocratic and transcendent nature of Mem's love. He calls his description of Zîn a "stabbing" and continues,

> He [Mem] said: "She is never as said
> My prince! the fairy that has captured my heart
>
> Is a princess, residing in the court?
> A fabulous bird, high nested
>
> She is princely, a pedigree offspring
> Divine, not of water and soil mixing"[20]

But the Mîr considers Mem's praise of Zîn "offensive / As he heard it he became quite angry."[21] A malicious counselor has ensnared the Mîr; the counselor has become, in Khani's explicit argument for just rule, an argument that derives from Khani's ontology, a pawn of evil.[22] Bekir Mergewer, who hates Mem – his

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18 Khani, *Mem û Zîn*, 165 (section 43 ["The Chess Tournament"]).

19 Khani, *Mem û Zîn*, 166.

20 Khani, *Mem û Zîn*, 209 and Mem's words to his heart (section 53 "Mem's Fate"). His argument is that Zîn is already a part of his soul: "The soul's secret which you are keeping / Like the light in the world, is a fit of heaven / O heart! Without the soul's torch don't go away / It is dark and as blind, you shall lose the way / If a lover is for you intended / Your lover is already part of your soul / Because you are self-exemplar of the soul / A mirror of the image of the attribute"; also see Khani, *Mem û Zîn*, 129 (section 25 "Mem Reproaches His Heart") and Mem's refusal to meet with the Mîr to save himself from death because he knows his higher fate: "He [God] has married us off in the invisible world / He has supported us with the undoubted word / We are the first fruit of the orchard of glory and grace / We can say thankfully that we are virgins and proud / God forbid that in this perishing mansion / Outside the immortal Garden of Eden / We commit adultery like animals / So foolish in this temporary world."

21 Khani, *Mem û Zîn*, 166.

22 See Mirawdeli, *Love and Existence*, 440: Khani "portrays the Mîr as a person suffering agony" at hearing Mem's revelation. The Mîr is "as a lion with wounded pride and as a restless stream. He is anxious, angry and is being instigated by Bekir, intent on revenge." See also Mirawdeli, *Love and Existence*, 469: "For the ruling power [for the prince] truth is allowed to the extent that it is used against its owners and actors. He draws and allows Mem through a deceitful plan to say 'the truth of love' in a way that makes it illegitimate, illegal and punishable. He allows the game of truth to silence the truth." On Khani's reflection on the nature of princes, see Khani, *Mem û Zîn*, 184 (section 49), where "Bekir Shows the Prince a Way Out":

hatred is an inexplicable given – devises the chess game at which Mem reveals his beloved. This speaks to Khani's indictment of a prince who cannot rule on his own, clearly and morally; Mem's praise of Zîn is honorable – and true. But Bekir Mergewer represents the embodied presence of evil, an aspect of reality that, for Khani, opposes the transcendent love between Mem and Zîn,[23] an aspect, moreover, that is an eternal aspect of reality and that is necessary for eternal love to triumph.[24]

Sufism and Its Social Vision

As a court poem, *Mem û* Zîn, set within a mystical Sufi context, argues for love's socially transforming power. The poem points to the practical appearance of love's mystical power, the emblems of which are the martyred lovers Mem and Zîn. In their deaths, they are victorious over necessary and inexplicable impediments to love. Mem and Zîn together witness love's truth, making it possible, in Khani's view, for the Mîr who acted against them to begin acting wisely and freely.

Again, the Mîr's behavior in *Mem û Zîn* speaks to the failure of Kurdish princes in general and of the Kurdish political establishment in the seventeenth century in particular. He aims to create a spiritually and politically viable independent Kurdish presence between Turkish and Persian power. Sufi values inform Khani's cultural politics: the recognition that an active response to Sufi metaphysical assumptions has practical moral consequences. Although evil is a necessary counterpart to good, "doing what is good for people and protecting them from the harm of evil" represents justified "resistance" to the necessary

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"There are princes who are wise and strong / Yet they may be naïve and undiscerning / This naiveté derives from idiocy and inadequacy / It does not give due weight to the source reliability / Their hearts are their ears, the ears are not receptive to the heart / Their eye sights are black, their pupils are white / Anything the malicious say / They believe [. . .]."

23 See Mirawdeli, *Love and Existence*, 317: "Khani constructs an epistemological system [. . .] based on the necessity of antithetical phenomena both in the natural and the conceptual worlds." This reflects, for Khani, "the universal system of opposites on which the dynamic structure of existence is based," for evil "is a necessary counterpart of Good enabling its diametrical differentiation and appreciation."

24 Khani's description of Bekir "as a bastard with no known origin is not intended to demonstrate a moral deficit but to establish the worldly nature of evil which has no origin, [no] real image, in the world of truth." Bekir is an earthly evil that exists "as an existential necessity to make the differentiation, recognition and thus protection of good against evil possible [. . .] and ultimately beneficial." Mirawdeli, *Love and Existence*, 319.

existence of good *with* evil.[25] Resistance entails "the responsibility of making a choice, of appreciating the beauty, the goodness, the hope that is already here inside [everyone]: [. . .] personal energy, [the] capacity [to] love, and [the] ability to will."[26] Responding to evil in this way provides everyone, but particularly Kurdish rulers, with a springboard to moral awakening and social action.

Khani wants his literary work to demonstrate and ensure that "Kurdish words" have value, that Kurdish "pens, science and art" are appreciated, that Kurdish "poor and orphans" are "taken care of," that Kurds no longer live "under the yoke" of those whom Khani believes do not recognize in the Kurds the "qualities of nobility, generosity and courage."[27] Khani's "dream is [thus] [. . .] the establishment of [. . .] independent [Kurdish] political power" grounded on Kurdish virtues: not nationalist power in a nineteenth-century sense. A "national culture including [. . .] language, literature, religion, science, philosophy" that moral values sustain enable Kurdistan to become "militarily a force-for-itself (for independence) rather than a force-in-itself (used by others)."[28] This requires "a dynastic ruler who would be just, compassionate and kind, learned, a scholar, and the leader who accepts total responsibility for the ruled."[29] This is indeed a

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25 Mirwadeli, *Love and Existence*, 155.

26 Mirwadeli, *Love and Existence*, 129.

27 Mirwadeli, *Love and Existence*, 104.

28 Mirwadeli, *Love and Existence*, 119.

29 Mirwadeli, *Love and Existence*, 116. Hassanpour argues that "[. . .] in seventeenth-century Western Asia, people were ranked according to their ability, rather than 'right,' to govern" and Khani's idea of Kurdish identity, not nationalism in a nineteenth-century sense, is tied to the idea that the Mîr's rule will speak to Kurdish linguistic and political identity ("If we had a king / God had seen him worthy of a crown / A throne, for him, was established / Our fortune would have brightened" [*Mem û Zîn*, 29–30 (section 5 ["Our Plight"]). Thus, according to Hassanpour, Khani argues that "if the Kurds were [. . .] orphans, their language was an infant in need of protection" and Khani emphasizes that [the] "inferior status [of Kurdish] was not intrinsic to the language but, rather, due to the absence of a patron or 'protector.'" Poets could "enhance the status of Kurdish, although they would succeed only under the patronage of a Kurdish sovereign. [. . .] Two tasks, political (i.e. formation of a Kurdish state [but not a Kurdish nation state in a nineteenth-century sense]) and literary (i.e. writing and compiling in the native tongue), were considered by Khani to be two sides of the same coin. [. . .] A prestigious language under the patronage of a sovereign king was the hallmark of a civilized and independent Kurdish state." See, too, Hassanpour's suggestion that Khani's "ideas and literary efforts resemble, on the surface, the beginnings of the linguistic and literary movement that is often referred to as the 'linguistic nationalism' of early modern Europe" and that "among the 'linguistic nationalists' of Europe, Joachim du Bellay speaks in a language that echoes Khani's." See for more Hassanpour, "The Making of Kurdish Identity," 118–28. The comparison reflects attempts, like my own in this article, to give Khani's literary innovations a broad context of understanding, and the theoretical parallels between Khani and du Bellay have a

transforming social agenda that links Khani's desire for social renewal with Kurdish values to which his words speak.

Cultural Connections

Martin van Bruinessen points to *Kalīla va Dimna*, *Khosrow va Shirin*, and *Yusuf va Zulaykhâ* as models for Khani. He favors Nizâmî's *Yusuf va Zulaykha*, but recognizes that *Mem û Zîn* has a more involved mystical meaning.[30] Moreover, Khani wrote his court poem in Kurdish rather than Persian which was the "appropriate language [in Khani's day] for refined literary expression,"[31] and this reflects for Bruinessen a literary assertion of Kurdish presence, part of Khani's "service" to the Kurds[32] that has had, alas, a certain narrowing effect, creating an insular and confined role for Kurdish literary culture and lessening an appreciation of *Mem û Zîn* as literature. But reading *Mem û Zîn* in a cultural context,where its mystical meaning is foregrounded, redeems *Mem û Zîn* as world literature. Bringing to bear literary models from that context on *Mem û Zîn* is not simply a mode of comparative literary criticism; in the case of *Mem û Zîn* bringing such models to bear on this work is a mode of literary critical restoration for a work that has not yet found its place in cross-national literary study.

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certain clarity just because they have given Khani a place in the cultural effect of literary nationalism. See Bruinessen, "Kurdish Society," 49: "A clear awareness of Kurdish ethnicity [. . .] existed among the Kurdish rulers and tribal élite at least since the late sixteenth century (and probably much earlier). This concept of ethnicity encompassed only the courts and the tribes and apparently excluded the subjected peasantry and lower urban strata."

30 Bruinessen, "Ehmedî Xanî's *Mem û Zîn*," 40.

31 Bruinessen, "Ehmedî Xanî's *Mem û Zîn*," 41. Bruinessen mentions that the work of Sharaf Khan of Bitlîs, whose celebrated history of the Kurdish chiefdoms and emirates, *Sharafname*, completed almost exactly a century before *Mem û Zîn*, and the work of another famous Kurdish scholar and statesman, Idris Bitlisi (late fifteenth to early sixteenth century), were both written in Persian. On historical and political reasons why Kurdish literature was written in Kurdish, see Bruinessen, "Ehmedî Xanî's *Mem û Zîn*," 42–43. On Khani's use of words that refer to political or historical "states" rather than to ethnicities see Bruinessen, "Ehmedî Xanî's *Mem û Zîn*," 44. But *Kurd* in this period, as Bruinessen reminds us, "appears to refer only to the Kurdish tribes and a part of the urban aristocratic elite, but not to the non-tribal peasantry" (ibid.). Moreover, *state* does not mean a national state in a nineteenth-century sense. The existing states in this region were "based on religious identity or on loyalty to a royal family." These states were "multi-ethnic" (Bruinessen, "Ehmedî Xanî's *Mem û Zîn*," 45). On reading nationalism in *Mem û Zîn*, see Bruinessen, "Ehmedî Xanî's *Mem û Zîn*," 47–50. On the development of Kurdish nationalism, see Bruinessen, "Kurdish Paths of Nation," 21–48.

32 Bruinessen, "Ehmedî Xanî's *Mem û Zîn*." 41.

The most lucidly pertinent classical literary contexts for the motif of star-crossed lovers in *Mem û Zîn* are, first, the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, a story that appears in the literature of the classical world and in Western literature in various incarnations and, second, Aristophanes' myth of love in Plato's *Symposium*, where *star-crossed* comes to mean there, and elsewhere in Plato, that self-division, a species of separation, is the result of the self's fall from Being into a state of being.[33] The story of Pyramus and Thisbe would have been available in Khani as folklore. As for Plato's *Symposium*, it would have been reflected in Khani, given its description of the union that is the ontologically redeeming power of love, a union that informs Khani's specific use of cross-dressing in *Mem û Zîn*. Cross-dressing speaks

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33 See Griswold, *Self-Knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus*, 126, where he describes the dynamics of the uniting and earth-transcending effects of love for which cross-dressing is the masquerade of both the desire for love and the finding of it so that self and its other are one: "because of the separation . . . between soul and Beings, the path of the soul back to Beauty is torturously complex. Now the lover does not just follow a god, he re-creates him in the beloved. The beloved is not, in fact, a god any more than the love is. The god is within (as the etymology of 'enthusiasm' suggests). In his initial response to the beloved, the lover in effect allows himself to be possessed by the beloved's beauty to the extent of forgetting himself. The lover loses himself in order to find himself at a deeper level. The lover unconsciously transfers his own character-ideal to the beloved to whom he has taken a fancy, and then sees himself in the beloved. The role of the imagination is crucial here; the lover in effect fantasized about the beloved and imposes the fantasy on the beloved, so externalizing his own self and thereby creating for himself a route to self-knowledge. *This illustrates how the soul can move itself through the excitation of eros.* The beloved eventually identified with the lover by, in effect, accepting as true the lover's fantasy about him. When the lover is overfull with the beloved's beauty, some of it streams back into the beloved through his eyes . . . . The wings of the beloved's soul then become moderately excited. It seems clear that the beloved is here enjoying his own beauty, not the lover's beauty; in particular, the beloved's desire is aroused because the beloved is desired by the lover. The lover manages to change the beloved's self-image. Hence the beloved's soul too moves itself. Eros is the synthesizing force uniting these star-crossed souls. Not surprising, the beloved 'loves, but is in aporia as to what he loves; and what he has experiences he does not know and is not able to articulate it, but like one who has caught a disease of the eye from another, he cannot account for it, not realizing that his lover as it were a mirror in which he beholds himself' (255d3–6). The lover reproduces in the beloved the experience the lover is undergoing, thanks to the beloved's presence. The lover does not know what he is looking for since he does not understand his own eros; he thus creates what he is looking for and then finds it . . . . We seem to have here a case of continual transference and countertransference, as it is called today." See also Socrates on love's power to return the embodied self to his real home in Plato, *The Symposium*, 48–50. See esp. 25: "For no one would suppose it to be only the desire for love-making that causes the one to yearn for the other so intensely. It is clear that the soul of each wants something else which it cannot put into words but it feels instinctively what it wants and expresses it in riddles," that is, through metaphors or stories or stories acted out like Aristophanes' myth of love imagined as acted out in *Mem û Zîn*.

to Khani's understanding that lovers gendered as their other gender points to love's mystical, genderless nature. Moreover, we can trace the presence of Plato's *Symposium* in an Islamic and specifically Sufi tradition available to Khani.[34]

The most telling international literary context that puts into focus *Mem û Zîn* as a poem about mystical love and social harmony, as well as the ontological clarity achieved through earthly lovers eternally kept apart after death, is the late twelfth-, early thirteenth-century, French court romance, *Aucassin et Nicolette*. Of course, this is a work Khani could not have known; it is, however, a clarifying intertext for *Mem û Zîn* in its imagined reconciliation between Christian and Saracen lovers. *Mem û Zîn* speaks to the profound reconciliation between lovers for the sake of spiritual good in this world and – this is essential to Khani's spiritual understanding of the force that keeps star-crossed lovers star-crossed – the necessary effect of evil on social transformation and ontological awareness. *Aucassin et Nicolette*, for which Pyramus and Thisbe is also an intertext, describes reconciliation between a forced disunion of lovers in the

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34 Gutas initially argues that "Plato's *Symposion* was very little known in the medieval Arab world" and "as far as it can be ascertained, no direct translation of the full Greek text was ever made; the Arab bibliographers say nothing on the subject, and no verbatim quotations that might derive [that] from such a translation have ever been recovered." Moreover, "the title of the dialogue also was almost completely absent from the Arabic lists of the Corpus Platonicum." Nonetheless, Gutas explains that "The *Symposion* [. . .] made its entry into Arabic literature and writings indirectly and unofficially – incognito, so to speak – in two independent ways: in a paraphrase apparently by Kindī and in gnomic fragments current in Graeco-Arabic wisdom literature." With respect to Sufi tradition, "it is not the *bodies* of the original humans which were created joined together (in a spherical form), but their *spirits*." Gutas argues that Aristophanes' myth of love "gained entrance" into Sufi literature "both from the literary (*adab*) tradition and through the intermediary of *hadīth* literature" and he cites, for example, Dailamī (fl. ca. 1000 CE) from the literary tradition: "Plato said: God Almighty created the spirits as a whole in the form of a sphere. He then divided them among all His creatures and lodged them in those bodies of His creation that He wished." Gutas also cites Dailamī from the *hadīth* tradition: "One of the philosophers said: God Almighty created the spirits of two people who love each other as one spirit. He then cleaved [*šaqqa*] it into two halves and made each half inhabit a body. When two individuals are cleaved, the cleaved part yearns for the other. 'Craving' [*šauq*] was so named on account of the yearning of one cleaved part [*šiqq*] for the other." In the *Symposium* itself, Agathon comments on Aristophanes' myth of love as narrowing praise of love's power, the subject of Socrates's speech in the *Symposium*. Gutas further elaborates, "All the earlier speakers seem to me not to have been eulogizing the god but felicitating humans on the good things of which he is the source." See Gutas, "Plato's *Symposion* in the Arabic Tradition," 28, 36–60.

context of social wish fulfillment. As a genetically independent intertext for *Mem û Zîn*,[35] *Aucassin et Nicolette* puts *Mem û Zîn* in its own light.

A Classical Intertext: Pyramus and Thisbe

The story of star-crossed lovers circulated widely in the classical period and beyond, in the Islamic as well as the Western world; it appears in Ovid, for example, the acknowledged literary version of this story. Ovid's version of the story of lovers connected and disconnected by a wall, and then a mulberry bush, is set in Babylon.[36] This speaks to Ovid's understanding that the story has an Eastern provenance; Romans located their cultural heritage in Asia Minor. For us, the presence of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in the Islamic world argues for its availability as an intertext for Khani's *Mem û Zîn*, which redefines the meaning of the motif of lovers kept apart. The separating wall and the mulberry bush of

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35 See note #9 above. See Guillén, *The Challenge of Comparative Literature*, 245: for Mikhail Bakhtin "man is a dialogic being, inconceivable without the other, impregnated with alterity; and the novel [or a court poem like *Mem û Zîn*] is 'heteroglossia,' a crossroads of many languages. It might just as well have been suggested that the text of a literary work is heterotextual, penetrated by alterity, by words other than its own." See further Guillén, *The Challenge of Comparative Literature*, where Guillén cites Julia Kristeva: "'Any text is the absorption and transformation of another . . . .' The word is not a 'point,' something fixed, a given sense, but an 'intersection of textual surfaces,' a 'dialogue among several writings.'" But see Guillén, *The Challenge of Comparative Literature*, 251–252 on the distinction between *allusion* and *inclusion*: "Certainly many intermediate positions exist. But in practice, it is clearly one thing to make a simple allusion or reminiscence, necessarily implying a memory from the past, or the externality of what is alluded to, and to include in the poetic fabric of the work itself – adding to its verbal surface, one might say, words or forms or foreign thematic structures. Such an act . . . [is] a tangible manifestation of the openness of individual poetic language to a plurality of languages – the heteroglossia so dear to Bakhtin. But it is also necessary to distinguish between the two extremes of *citation* and *significance* . . . . The intertext is limited to citing when its exclusive effect is horizontal, that is, when it consists in evoking authorities or establishing related links (or polemics) with past figures and styles, without intervening decisively in the vertical semantic structure of the poem [or work]. In such cases the function of the intertext is rather more contextual." See, finally Guillén, *The Challenge of Comparative Literature*, 294: "According to István Sötér, literary periods are polyphonic: 'Within a historical period there exists a *polyphony* of trends and events in literature and the arts.' This polyphony permits variations and differences not only between tendencies and new or novel events, but also between the new and the old, or rather between the new and the revitalized values that the old assumes through contact with the new."

36 Pyramus and Thisbe meet at Ninus's tomb (the eponymous founder of Nineveh). See Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, bk. 4, 111–15.

Pyramus and Thisbe reappear figuratively at Bekir Mergewer's grave; he separates Mem and Zîn as he is buried between them. Separation of this kind becomes for Khani the means for Mem and Zîn's post-mortem apotheosis, achieved through evil personified. For Ovid, the story of "star-crossed" lovers points to a socially transgressive and fated love. *Star-crossed* in Ovid – the phrase is Shakespeare's – implies separated and still connected.[37] This paradox gives to the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in *Mem û Zîn* its wonder, enabling it to support mystical readings, where eternal love has eternal influence for good on earth.

In *Mem û Zîn*, a thornbush, the transformed presence of Bekir Mergewer, appears between the graves of Mem and Zîn, keeping them apart and yet together in death[38]; it is "within the praxis of Sufist spiritual intoxication, discovery, journey and destiny" that the thornbush as Bekir Mergewer is the vehicle for a higher, permanent tie between Mem and Zîn, where separation on earth through death is an amatory victory that has transforming effects for the living.[39] Moreover, it is Zîn (the Thisbe of *Mem û Zîn*), and not Mem (the Pyramus of *Mem û Zîn*), who gives voice to Bekir's centrality as obstacle and vehicle in the metamorphosis of the love between her and Mem. Zîn insists that Bekir's evil doing is beneficial to her, to Mem, and to their love together.[40]

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37 Mandelbaum doesn't use the phrase "star-crossed" in his translation; the passage that implies secret, inevitable love is the following: "but marriage was forbidden by their parents; / yet there's one thing that parents can't prevent: / the flame of love that burned in both of them. / They had no confidant – and so used signs: / with these each lover read the other's mind: / when covered, fire acquires still more force" (Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, bk. 4, 111).

38 See Ovid on the mulberry as the conscious impediment to earthly love: "O jealous wall, why do you block our path? / Oh wouldn't it be better if you let / our bodies join each other fully or, / if that is asking for too much, just stretch your fissure wide enough to let us kiss!" See Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, 112.

39 Mirawdeli, *Love and Existence*, 174. See again Mirawdeli, *Love and Existence*, ibid., 549: "Khani uses the image of a supernaturally grown thorn-bush [*sic*] separating and preventing the entwining of the two shrubs of love, to comment on the eternal unchanging nature of evil." See Mirawdeli, *Love and Existence*, 539: "Once we understand the necessity of evil as the condition of the possibility of love, then evil at a deeper structural level can no longer be perceived just as something intrinsically bad. This will become only its surface or external mode of existence. What matters now is its function of existence. This function in the story is to make spiritual love possible. This is a greater gain for the lovers than the illusion and fleeting pleasures of physical love in a lifetime marked by the inevitability of decline and death."

40 See Mirawdeli, *Love and Existence*, 213: "It is his [Bekir's] evil eyes watching over them which kept their love pure and while depriving them of worldly pleasure and causing them infinite suffering, all this, as well as Men's suffering in prison, were the necessary states of their ascending the stations of spiritual love and unity with the universal truth."

The day he [God] gave love to the lovers
He gave hate to the censors

When he created us from nothing
He made us all needing and being needed

We are the red roses, for us thorns were created
We are the treasures, for us snakes were created:

Roses are protected by thorns
Treasures are guarded by snakes

Though at the beginning he [Bekir] alienated us
At the end he was loyal to us

Although he openly opposed us
Yet he secretly agreed with us

If he had not become for us a barrier
Our love would have been vain and perishable

Though he harmed himself terribly
Regarding us he acted correctly

He was the reason we found our truth
Inwardly he returned to our way

He too is the martyr for the cause
And he too is happy with no remorse[41]

For Zîn, Bekir Mergewer's benevolent evil enables Mem and Zîn to achieve the perfection of spiritual love.[42] She highlights the value of evil and its socially transforming power because evil makes pure love permanent through the death that the hatred of pure love causes.

A Medieval Intertext: *Aucassin et Nicolette*

In *Aucassin et Nicolette* the lovers do not die; their marriage represents social reconciliation. The mystical analogue of this outcome is the union of Mem and

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41 Khani, *Mem û Zîn*, 219–20 (section 55 ["Zîn Speaks Well of Bekir"]).
42 See Mirawdeli, *Love and Existence*, 319, on Bekir as "a bastard with no known origin [. . .] [intended] to establish the worldly nature of evil which has no origin, real image, in the world of truth. Bekir is an earthly evil that exists as an existential necessity to make the differentiation, recognition and thus protection of good against evil possible [. . .] and ultimately beneficial."

Zîn in heaven after each dies. But love as an imagined force of nature and of heaven, a force that compels, is present in both works. Mem and Zîn's mutual love, driven inexorably by love's pursuit of them, is comparable to the love between Aucassin and Nicolette; both loves entail a trial that characterizes similar episodes in each work. These episodes are both preludes to a transformation of social structure, as well as the eternal transformation of lovers, who, by their actions, invariably refigure social structure. *Aucassin et Nicolette* narrates – and equates – love's effects on social dynamics. In this work, love is embodied in Nicolette, whom Aucassin loves sight unseen. This suggests that the context for their love is the love that unites souls; and although Nicolette, an abducted Saracen princess living in Christendom, is deliberately kept from Aucassin, she waits for him once she has freed herself from her chamber. Her pursuit of Aucassin is imagined as steadfast readiness that tests him, a test he passes.[43] Aucassin is described as courtly, beautiful (mildly feminine) and, because he is in love, neglectful of his knightly duty. When Aucassin and Nicolette exchange words of love, they speak furtively and in circumstances similar to those in which Pyramus and Thisbe find themselves: physical impediments and parental refusal – Aucassin cannot marry a Saracen – should keep them apart,[44] but do not. Nicolette flees to the woods where Aucassin finds her;

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43 "Now it is sung [*Or se chante*] / Lovely, bright-faced Nicolette / . . . set / out upon her path, which lay / through the leafy woods. Her way / went all along an ancient track / until she took another tack: / she found a crossroads where she met / seven pathways. Nicolette, / at the crossing, thought she'd prove / the truth about her lover's love: / . . . / She gathered lilies from a bed / of native flowers there, in sheaves, / and added [to] them lots of leaves. / With these she built a bower green, a prettier I've never seen. / She swore to God, who, of course, would never lie, / that if her lover happened by, / and didn't pause to take his rest, / for love, here in this pretty nest, / he'd never love her – it's a test – / nor would she love him" (Sturges, *Aucassin and Nicolette*, 45). Aucassin, of course, rides to Nicolette: "Now it is sung [Or *se chante*] / Our hero heard his fair one's words [that shepherds told him] / and left the shepherds to their herds. / Her speech became a part of him. / He rode into the forest dim, / and gave the dashing horse his head, / and as he rode, these words he said: / 'Noble-figured Nicolette. / I neither hunt a deer, nor yet / a boar – I search these woods for you: / I trace your path and heed your clue. / Your lovely laugh, your lively eyes, / your gentle words and noble guise / have given me a mortal sore: / I'm lovesick! But we'll meet once more – / if it pleases God so pure – / my sister, my sweet love'" (Sturges, *Aucassin and Nicolette*, 53).

44 "Now it is sung [*Or se chante*] / When his father, Count Garin, / saw that his child, Aucassin, / had his heart entirely set / upon the fresh-faced Nicolette, / in a marble crypt he found / a prison for him. Underground, / in darkness our friend Aucassin, / on his arrival there, began / to mourn her loss . . ." (Sturges, *Aucassin and Nicolette*, 27). Nicolette hears his laments: "Now it is sung [or se chante] / Nicolette her face aglow, / by the pillar heard the woe / that weeping, grieving Aucassin / was making. Shortly she began / to speak of what was on her mind: / 'Aucassin, so high and kind / my lord, just what good can it do / to cry and

Aucassin's father frees his son from his son's "marble crypt" (*marbre bis*), where Aucassin was imprisoned. These same impediments and refusals – not parental, but courtly – make Mem and Zîn social outcasts. They do not flee the Kurdish court; rather the Mîr's evil counselor conspires against them and his hatred comes to represent the ontologically necessary circumstance for their union in death.

Although *Aucassin et Nicolette* is imagined as threatening social order because the dynamics of true love across cultures – Christians and Saracen – stand against social norms, *Aucassin and Nicolette* has a happy ending: the lovers are united and Christian and Saracen are reconciled.[45] The work allows its audience to imagine a religiously reconciled world in medieval Beaucaire, a utopia that love has made possible. *Mem û Zîn* explicitly says that true love disrupts social order as well: true love provokes Bekir Mergewer's ontologically necessary hatred. But true love for Khani is love that can establish social harmony and right political power: a fluffy Sufi ending. Blocked here in this world, love in *Mem û Zîn* has its consummation in the next world where it transforms this one; this is the beneficial social consequence of the Sufi amatory logic entailed in love thwarted. Indeed, the social game that details the way Mem and Zîn come together, a game that defines love's nature, reveals such logic. Through that game Mem and Zîn recognize each other as the other embodied in the self. This reflects Khani's mystical thinking about the full social effects of destined love figured in *Mem û Zîn* in cross-dressing. Such love, particularly after death (because it is true love), remains a continuous social presence. As lovers, Mem and Zîn maintain purity through the embodied evil that prevents their earthly happiness and thereby, according to Sufism's mystical arc, return to earth to purify it, enfolding the effects of evil within love triumphant. Although Bekir Mergewer is responsible for their demise, Mem and Zîn become icons of the apotheosis of love and the evil it encompasses as well as the values of right rulership.

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mourn? I'm not for you. / Your noble father hates me so, / and all your family, I must go / away, for your sake – who knows where?'" (Sturges, *Aucassin and Nicolette*, 33).

45 "Now it is sung [*On se chante*] / . . . / When she saw her darling man, / she was filled with joy and bliss / and ran to greet him with a kiss. / When he saw that it was she, / he embraced her tenderly, / kissed her on the eyes and face. / That night they shared just one embrace. / But in the morning Aucassin / married her; that noble man / made her the lady of Beaucaire. / They lived long lives without a care. / Now Aucassin and Nicolette / have found their joy, and I [the narrator] intend / to grant our story song its end, / for I've no more to say." See Sturges, *Aucassin and Nicolette*, 93.

Sexuality and Sufi Mysticism

In Caro's version of the story of Mem and Zîn, for example, the twentieth-century version in the tradition of the *Memê Alan*, Mem's masculinity has a natural lineage, the result of sea foam from horses coming across water to Mem's mother, impregnating her. The sea foam is figurative semen. Zîn, who is half as beautiful as Mem, is transformed with the skin of a dove and put into Mem's bed while he sleeps; as a woman she is dove-like. When Mem lifts his head, he thinks an otherworldly being in human form is beside him.[46] This meeting gives to Mem and Zîn, in Caro's version of the story, an eroticism that prefigures their inevitable union; Mem, whose mother was impregnated by horses, rides a horse to Zîn.[47] Although the sexuality in Caro's version of the story of Mem and Zîn has behind it powerfully imagined natural forces, Caro does not figure sexual encounter as Sufi amatory mysticism: Khani does. Khani describes a New Year's cross-gendered masquerade, intellectual and playfully erotic, at which Mem, accompanied by his companion, Tajdin, and Zîn, accompanied by her sister, Siti, immediately know – this is both the mystical and the psychological point – their gendered and spiritual other: Mem and Tajdin masquerade as women, Zîn and Siti as men. Such masquerading reveals, at a Newroz celebration, the self-identity of the men (as male and female) and the self-identity of the women (as female and male). Each gender performs a gendered completeness that enables his or her other half – female for male, male for female – to find his or her other. Masquerading in *Mem û Zîn* entails gender mirroring, which grounds the social game at which Mem and Zîn meet in a spiritually eroticized context; the limitations of physical gender are overcome at the Newroz

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46 See Caro, *Mem û Zîn*, 3: "One day she [Mem's mother] saw three horsemen coming there across the sea [. . .] She said: '[. . .] who ever saw horses coming across the sea and their feet not touching the water?' [. . .] We're the guides of fortune and desires.' [. . .] One of them put the girl on his crupper and out over the sea with them. When they'd gone half the sea, the girl got very thirsty [. . .] The horsemen took the girl by her arm, let her down to the water [. . .] The girl put her cupped hand three times into the water and drank. While she was drinking, the sea foam also fell into her heart. So the girl became pregnant of the sea foam."
47 See Caro, *Mem û Zîn*, 27:

> Mem led out his horse,
> put on it his father Al's jeweled saddle,
> rode on his way to the fountain.
> Mem rode up to the fountain,
> he greeted the fair maid Zîn,
> his horse set to drinking the spring water.

celebration. This marks the desire for re-creation, figured in *Mem û Zîn* as an amorous hunt that results in spiritual wholeness, the condition of creation itself and the promise of transcendence.[48]

> They realized that the hunt was not loose
> That they were the vanguard of the love force
>
> They stopped and looked carefully
> Their hearts compassionate and tenderly
>
> In short: owing to the grace of those gazelles
> Compassion filled the hearts of those boys
>
> The secrets of their hearts were conveyed to each other
> The lights of their faces were enamored to one another
>
> The road of acquaintance was passable
> And the souls henceforth were inseparable
>
> One pure kind of an invisible world
> Showing the bond without a double shred
>
> Tying them in a problem, mutual
> Beauty engulfed them in a desire, mutual
>
> You would say: the mold and the inverted
> All four: the desiring and the desired
>
> Were certainly one: flesh and spirit
> Were fully united as body and soul[49]

There are precedents in Sufi moral theology for connecting the masculine and the feminine in defining human identity, where the masculine and the feminine

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48 See Mirawdeli, *Love and* Existence, 251–53 where he correctly says, "Now Newroz moves from an external event to an internal experience, to the wishes and dreams of the heart. Thus it is time for the truth of love to be born out of all exhibitions of beauty, time for protagonists of love to appear; time for Khani to show his concept of love through actions and attitudes of lovers [. . .] Khani's [. . .] philosophical thinking combine[s] [. . .] to present the most possible impossibility, to enable the confusion between what is divine and what is human, what is rational and what is irrational, what is natural and what is metaphysical. In short, all those scenes of natural and human beauty suddenly and unexpectedly transform into a universal eruption of all spectacles of love [. . .] beauty has been generally transformed to love, and love like the beauty it loves, knows no limits and no end and more significantly for Khani no rules. It is universal. It is an equal right of everyone to love and to want to be loved irrespective of age, class and status. And it has its own mode of existence and unveiling."

49 Khani, *Mem û Zîn*, 59 (section 14 ["Mem and Tajdin Come Across Siti and Zîn"]).

are "already present in" Being itself.[50] Moreover, the *Symposium*, known in the Islamic world and available to Khani as a clarifying intertext,[51] describes Aristophanes' severed half achieving re-creation: a man with his other masculine half, a woman with her other feminine half, a man with his other feminine half a woman with her other masculine half (the hermaphrodite is a real species of being for Aristophanes).[52] Once love has made severed beings whole, they return to an ontological state in which ordinary love (heteroerotic or homoerotic) disappears. Then, once-severed beings are prepared to move up the ladder of love to a nonphysical state that becomes a state of being able to be represented as united.[53] Aristophanes provides the myth through which we can imagine a condition that confounds gender difference. For him, the union with one's other half is governed by spiritual recollection that is ontologically dynamic and that results in an ascent to a bodiless being.

Unlike Aristophanes, Khani does not imagine homoerotic connections, though he does imagine the striving within human nature for heteroerotic reunion that reflects the yearning for wholeness in humans; this speaks to the idea of love as an independent and sustaining force that lets us recognize Mem

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50 See, for example, Sahl ibn 'Abdallah Tustari (d. 896, Sufi teacher and Qur'an commentator), *Rawh* 85, in Chittick, *Divine Love*, 254: "'Fear is masculine and hope is feminine, and from the two are born the realities of faith.' Fear and hope are each other's mates. When they come together in companionship, the beauty of faith will show itself, for hope has the attribute of femininity and fear the attribute of masculinity. This is because the domination of hope gives rise to lassitude and laziness, attributes of the female. The domination of fear gives rise to briskness and toughness, attributes of the male. Faith subsists through the subsistence of these two meanings. When these two meanings disappear, the result will be security or despair, both of which are attributes of unbelievers. People feel secure from those who are incapable, but to believe that He has the attribute of incapability is unbelief. People despair of the vile, but to believe that He has attributes of vileness is associationism [ascribing attributes to God]. One must prepare a confection and make an electuary combination. When a lamp has no oil, it gives off no brightness. When there is oil but no fire, it gives off no illumination. When it has oil and fire but no wick to sacrifice its being to the fire's burning, the work will have no luster. Fear is like the burning fire, hope the replenishing oil, and faith the wick. The heart has the shape of a lamp holder. If there is only fear, this is like a lamp that has fire but no oil. If there is only hope, this is like a lamp that has oil but no fire. When fear and hope come together, a lamp appears that has both the oil that replenishes subsistence and the fire that is the basis of illumination. Faith takes help from both – subsistence from the one and illumination from the other. The person of faith travels with the escort of illumination and strides forth with the replenishment of substance."

51 See note #34 above.

52 See Plato, *The Symposium*, 22–27.

53 See Plato, *The Symposium*, 49–50. See also Morewedge, "The Neoplatonic Structure of Some Islamic Mystical Doctrines," 51–75.

and Zîn as awakened and driven by love. In their New Year's play, each lets its other see itself in the other and imagine the disembodied nature of the love that seizes both of them, as if play at veiling gender is the preparatory mirroring of bodiless love itself.[54] Indeed, Khani makes Newroz cross-dressing a species of Sufi veiling and unveiling that argues for the salvific nature of love. Veils hide and disclose, conveying the face that is unveiling itself in the very act of veiling. This is the mystical Sufi paradox where disclosure is occlusion.[55]

What Veiling Discloses

The particular way Khani figures cross-dressing in *Mem û Zîn* – as a species of Sufi veiling and unveiling (unveiling that depends on sustaining a veil) – enables us to place the mystical triumph characterizing the love between Mem and Zîn in a context where finding one's destined other is possible and where a Bekir Mergewer, buried between Mem and Zîn as the thornbush, is required to unite evil with good. Indeed, it is for the world's moral and social awakening that Khani tells the story of lovers whose union in death reveals the ontological truth of love's elevating power: the erotic and morally salvific nature of the love that lives forever:

> Love is a facet of God's mirror
> A sun trait, a light possessor
>
> Do not forget true love
> O, traveler seeking the shortest way!
>
> It is a fine jewel, a kind of chemistry
> Appreciate its value, it is very costly
>
> To a nature that is like unburnished brass
> To a heart that is false or calcified
>
> It is a jewel, that will make it shine
> It is a varnish that will make them polished

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54 The Qur'an (50.22) puts this in a metaphysical context, rather than an amatory one, as an unveiling that enables God to be seen: "(It will be said:) 'Thou wast heedless / of this: now have We / Removed thy veil, And sharp is thy sight. This day!'"

55 See Mirawdeli, *Love and Existence*, 264, who puts the display of love in a Sufi and Platonic context: "The lovers are attached to each other because their immortal souls are drawn towards each other because they are identical, and are in a state of desired union and harmony."

Anyone who is desired by someone
Either is a love-novice or the loved one

Unique is the reflecting mirror
And never ending is the secret treasure

No one is free from the love effect
Unless one is devoid of taste

Everyone in accordance with one's resolution
Shall expend one's determination

But the majority of the commoners are not acknowledgeable
They do not know what is profitable[56]

Like Mem and Zîn, Tajdin and Siti also cross-dress at the Newroz celebration; they find each other and marry. But nothing evil opposes them so that their love remains mystically incomplete and socially ineffective. Khani's use of a double pair of lovers, where each pair cross-dresses, sets earthly and other-worldly love, and the effects of love, local and universal, in perspective: the love between Mem and Zîn, for Khani, unites lovers eternally through ontologically necessary opposition that appears on earth as moral social rule and, as a consequence, as cultural and then just political power.

Mem û Zîn in Its Own Light

In *Aucassin et Nicolette*, informed by the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, the lovers' behavior runs counter to expected social norms, although this medieval French work's fortuitous ending is not used to suggest a new social order, as *Aucassin et Nicolette* is not explicitly revolutionary. *Mem û Zîn*, on the other hand, imagines a gendered masquerade, an enactment of self-conscious gender-doubling that situates *Mem û Zîn* in Sufi traditions informed by Aristophanes' myth of love. The love between Mem and Zîn, their continuing existence in death, with the thornbush between them, speaks to a mystical moral reasoning that regards death as renewal. *Mem û Zîn*, seen in international cultural contexts, reveals intertwining dimensions of Khani's conceptual horizon as a court poet. As a literary work, *Mem û Zîn* establishes Kurdish presence in its own cultural history and in the broad contours of literary culture: a circumstance that reflects Kurdish seventeenth-century aspirations for recognition that Khani gives voice to.

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56 Khani, *Mem û Zîn*, 234 (section 59 ["True Love"]).

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Vera Eccarius-Kelly

Cleansing the Galleries: A Museum in the Imagination of Kurdish Diaspora Artists and Activists

This essay explores expressions of Kurdish ethnic identity as discussed by a group of secular Kurdish diaspora artists and activists. Kurdish participants in this ethnographic project share how they would display their Kurdish ethnicity (Kurdishness) in an imagined Kurdish museum. While the participants live in the United States and in Germany, they maintain relationships with family members and friends in various predominantly Kurdish regions throughout the Middle East. The proposed museum exhibits highlight that diaspora artists and activists offer a wide range of ideologies as can be expected of any heterogeneous community.

The question examined is how mobilized diaspora activists and artists express their ethnic identity in the context of curating an exhibit without facing political constraints. Museum exhibits tend to be deeply political projects as professional curators (or state agents) select which artifacts and histories are displayed, and which communal behaviors and social interactions, political ideas and religious beliefs, languages and customs are portrayed to the public. Kurdish diaspora activists and artists rarely find representations of Kurdish communities in museums and frequently encounter cultural omissions and silences.

Depending on the geographic origin, educational level, cultural heritage, and familial experience with migration, members of Kurdish diaspora communities represent a wide range of socio-political perspectives. While Kurdish political views are diverse, an overarching theme among many diaspora Kurdish communities is the pursuit of an independent Kurdish state (although some diaspora members express a preference for autonomous Kurdish regions within current state borders).[1] Predominantly Kurdish regions are geographically located within the modern state borders of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, as well as small areas in Armenia and Azerbaijan.[2] Only the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) has been able to establish a semi-autonomous state in recent years.

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1 Annalena Sippl, "Die Unabhängigkeit ist zu einer Art Legende geworden." Also, see Bahar Başer and Ashok Swain, "Stateless Diaspora Groups."
2 The majority of participating activists and artists claimed familial linkages to the Kurdistan region of Iraq, to northern Kurdistan (i.e. Turkish Kurdistan), and to western Kurdistan (i.e. Syrian Kurdistan). This chapter incorporates fewer museum ideas proposed by activists linked to the Iranian part of Kurdistan.

Members of the Kurdish diaspora often rely on the terms Kurdistan and Kurdish homeland to assert their sociocultural belonging as well as to distinguish themselves from geographic areas controlled by Arabs, Turks, and Iranians. Kurdish diaspora communities have long engaged in transnational activism to challenge repressive policies towards ethnic Kurds. This transnational aspect of Kurdish mobilization has been of interest to diaspora scholars who noted that Kurds established highly politicized and often competing political structures abroad.[3] However, Kurdish cultural expressions (such as language, traditions and celebrations, art and music) can also provide insights into the ways in which members of diaspora groups reflect on, narrate and manage their own representations of identity, culture and history.

The following examination of proposed museum exhibits by Kurdish activists and artists indicates that some diaspora Kurds perceive themselves as cultural ambassadors and express a deeply felt desire to protect against the loss of communal knowledge. A commitment to Kurdish nationalism among a number of the participants appears to indicate support for a Kurdish cultural revival in the diaspora to prevent the erasure of Kurdish heritage and language in predominantly Kurdish regions in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria (hereafter Kurdish regions in the Middle East). Others emphasize narratives of multi-generational experiences of suffering as a means to process Kurdishness as intimately linked to communal repression and loss. Kurdishness in the diaspora undergoes a continual process of re-imagination and re-creation. As a result, hybridized notions of identity are frequently exported from the diaspora to various Kurdish regions in the Middle East.

Museological Omissions

Modern ethnographic museums distinguish their exhibitions today from the collection and exhibition practices common in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Imperialist states once empowered museum administrators in Western capitals to collaborate with anthropologists, missionaries, traders, and adventurers to amass vast amounts of materials about indigenous communities from "distant" and "exotic" locations. Intended for mass audiences, such collections often featured displays about peoples assumed to represent "dying races": Native American communities, Australian Aboriginals, nomadic Arab

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3 Diaspora scholar Östen Wahlbeck's work examines the formation of the Kurdish diaspora in Finland, while Bahar Başer has been exploring diasporic homecoming in recent projects.

Bedouins, and many more.[4] Collecting programs highlighted artifacts and relics related to religious, cultural, and communal practices, clothing and crafts, and often exhibited human remains.

Today, such ethnographic exhibitions are seen as having portrayed indigenous peoples as the "other," since these displays framed many communities through the lenses of "colonialism, cultural repression, loss of heritage, and death."[5] New museum practices require professional staff to more deliberately contemplate notions of communal inclusion, representation, and narration.[6] As cultural studies scholar Susan Ashley and others have argued, "[contemporary] museums have been called on to democratize their constructions of identity, heritage and community, to represent social and cultural differences as well as homogeneity, and to broaden their functioning as public stages for citizen participation."[7]

Yet it is still not commonplace today for minority communities represented in ethnographic exhibitions to control their own narrations and representations.[8] Cultural representations in museums often continue to reflect privileged colonial values, national bias, and exclusion. Bernadette Lynch, a scholar of museum studies with professional experience in museum administration, argues that minority cultures, including refugees and diaspora communities, can benefit from the attention that comes with a museum, but at the same time still lack agency related to the larger process of curating exhibitions, which persistently

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4 The notion of preserving information about dying races was based on Darwinian determinism for so-called weak races and peoples. A thoughtful and historically framed discussion related to ethnic collecting programs in parts of Europe can be found in Andreassen, *Human Exhibitions*, 33–82.

5 Simpson, "Revealing and Concealing," 153, 154.

6 Crooke, *Museums and Community*.

7 Ashley, "A Museum of Our Own," 153; Eidheim, Bjørklund, and Brantenberg, "Negotiating with the Public."

8 According to the Nordiskt Centrum för Kulturarvspedagogik/The Nordic Centre of Heritage Learning and Creativity (NCK), a research and development center owned by museums and archives in the Nordic and Baltic countries, "Ethnographic collections can no longer be considered and presented solely for their aesthetic appeal, they are embedded in political contexts, since many ethnographic collections have been assembled under colonial rule. Colonialism is still an issue today, as its effects linger on and have significant impact on many indigenous communities. Museums are no longer mere aesthetic temples showcasing the richness of culture; they fulfill an important social and educational rule. Exhibiting indigenous collections should therefore be connected to exhibiting their current socio-political situations." Vonk, *Indigenous Peoples and Ethnographic Museums: A Changing Relationship*, 12. Vonk's full report is available at http://nckul tur.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Report-Indigenous-communities-and-museums-L-Vonk.pdf.

represent authoritarian legacies.[9] Similar experiences or even complete silences dominate encounters between Kurdish communities and museums worldwide with only a few exceptions.[10]

While many major museums present variations on the theme of Mesopotamian collections to the public, these exhibitions tend to obscure the existence of Kurds through a mere mentioning of amorphous tribes in the region. Alternatively, the collections focus on less politically charged exhibitions related to Assyrian, Chaldean, Armenian, and Jewish communities in the region. Such practices have contributed to the erasure of particular social, cultural, and collective memories and undermine trust between museums and marginalized communities such as the Kurds.[11]

The International Council of Museums (ICOM) counts 30,000 museums among its members and reflects its global outreach through a continual process of revisions of what a museum should represent. Today's museum, as stated by ICOM, should be understood to include cultural centers and other facilities that preserve tangible and intangible heritage resources, including living heritage and creative activity such as recordings and transcriptions.[12] According to ICOM's Committee for Museology (ICOFOM), a museum "acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment."[13] While

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9 In her conclusion, Lynch states: "Despite the best intentions, the imposition of the institutions' coercive authority places people [. . .] in the position of being co-opted into supporting (often resentfully) the museum's goals, while silencing any potential resistance or opposition. Lynch, "Whose Cake Is It Anyway?, 76.

10 Kurdish museums exist in the Kurdish region of Iraq today and can be found in Erbil, Sulaimaniya and Halabja.

11 Privately organized and community-sponsored Kurdish exhibits have occasionally attempted to remedy this void. For example, a specialized tribal art and textile display, titled "Silver Sounds: An Exhibit of Kurdish Village Jewelry," was held in spring 2001 in the private home of Vera Saeedpour in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn, NY. Saeedpour founded the former Kurdish Museum and Library. Maria Six-Hohenbalken shared with this author that "Weltmuseum Wien" likely holds the largest collection of Kurdish ethnographica in Europe today. Some 1000 objects were brought back to Vienna by travellers in the 1880. The majority of the objects originated from Turkish Kurdistan (collector Werner Finke), while few items were from Iran and Iraq. This entire collection was exhibited in 1992 in Schallaburg (near Vienna) and curated by Alfred Janata (Weltmuseum Wien, formerly known as the Völker kundemuseum) along with his collaborators Karin Kren and Maria Six (today Six-Hohenbalken). The accompanying publication was titled "Kurden. Azadi Freiheit in den Bergen."

12 For ICOM's definition of intangible heritage resources, see http://icom.museum/programmes/intangible-heritage/.

13 Desvallées and Mairesse, *Key Concepts of Museology*, 57.

such exhibitions communicate and mediate ideas, they also represent deeply political projects. Carefully curated exhibitions tend to function as discursive tools to create and disseminate particular information. At times, exhibits emphasize selected cultural contexts for purposes of social inclusion – and exclusion.[14]

Exhibits can directly or indirectly enhance national agendas by dismantling existing stereotypes or by constructing new versions of them. Carefully curated collections sometimes endorse narratives that visitors perceive as representing messages of dominance and cultural superiority. Kurdish communities, denied autonomy following World War I, continue to encounter museological silences and omissions, as museum administrations have expressed little enthusiasm for current representations of the 'Kurdish voice.'

Methodology

A total of 18 self-identified diaspora Kurds in Germany and the United States provided suggestions for various museum exhibits. All participants were well educated and some held advanced degrees; most were deeply engaged in political work and media outreach projects and focused their efforts on advancing the rights of Kurdish communities in the Middle East. The participants described themselves either as leaders or spokespersons, or as deeply involved with Kurdish diaspora organizations. All interviews were carried out in English or German between August 2014 and July 2016. Snowball sampling was used to recruit additional interviewees among acquaintances of participating diaspora artists, activists and writers. All participants ranged in age from 25 to 45 years and were identified through a numbering system to guarantee confidentiality. Among the participants, 15 were male and 3 were female. They described themselves as supporters of secular and socialist organizations, and some identified as non-religious. While 10 participants lived in the German cities of Cologne, Düsseldorf, and Duisburg, 8 participants resided in Washington, D.C. and New York City. In loosely structured interviews, participants were asked to envision a public space that might encourage unrestrained Kurdish representation and voice.

During the interviews, the participants explained that a number of particular political moments enraged, inspired, and compelled them to fully engage in transnational activism. Among the most significant political events diaspora activists and artists highlighted was the genocide committed by the Islamic State

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14 Sandell, "Social Inclusion," 45–46.

(ISIS) against Yezidi Kurds; the broader assaults by ISIS against Kurdish communities in Iraq and Syria; the executions of Kurdish activists in Iran; the brutality of the Turkish government toward Kurds in the 1980s, 1990s, and more recently; and the al-Anfal attacks carried out by Saddam Hussein's regime against Kurds, which included communal loss of life, large-scale displacements and chemical assaults.[15]

Many participating diaspora Kurds expressed a deep sense of emptiness once they reflected on the state of Kurdish cultural representations in museums. Some stated that exploring how they would envision and portray Kurdishness was unfamiliar to them. The interviews revealed several patterns, which made it possible to broadly categorize the proposed exhibit ideas into three distinct groups: (1) diaspora political activists, (2) diaspora writers and artists, and, (3) diaspora interculturalists. As part of the semi-structured interviews, some Kurdish participants shared that they embraced socialist values, while others considered themselves to be Alevi Kurdish, Dersim Kurdish, and Yezidi Kurdish. Claims to Kurdishness in this context often enforced clear boundaries that separated Kurds with an ethnonational consciousness from religious Sunni Arabs and Turks, Iranian Shi'i, and others, whose cultural practices or political mindsets were framed as repressive by some of the participants.

The aggregated exhibit suggestions discussed below offer perspectives into what political, cultural and historical notions matter to activists and artists in the Kurdish diaspora. The exhibit ideas demonstrate that historical experiences and cultural narratives are essential factors that continue to shape diaspora perceptions about regional powers such as Turkey and Iran. Participants blamed these regimes for the ongoing destruction of Kurdish political and cultural life.

Transcending Boundaries

Kurdish diaspora communities live in numerous European countries, North America, the Middle East and Central Asia, Australia and Japan.[16] Public markers

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15 I summarized a number of comments made by Kurdish diaspora activists. Not everyone was motivated by all of the factors that are listed, but most participants mentioned several of these political moments as compelling them to engage with Kurdish groups in the Middle East. **16** Estimates for Kurdish populations globally range from about 30–45 million people. The Kurdish external diaspora (populations who crossed the borders of countries that control the traditional Kurdish regions in the Middle East) make up an estimated 4 million people. Between 1.5 and 3 million Kurds are thought to live throughout Europe today with up to 1 million Kurds in Germany. The Kurdish diaspora initially expanded during the 1960s, then again increased in

related to Kurdish culture and heritage or obvious signs of their presence remain elusive.[17] Even in societies that are presumed to have granted a voice to Kurdish immigrants, as the United Kingdom and several northern European countries, Kurds rarely encounter clearly labeled Kurdish objects in public spaces or museums.[18] This is not necessarily the case for all diaspora communities, since public markers that identify Jewish and Armenian communities, for example, exist in European countries and in North America (mostly to memorialize their suffering).[19] Markers can signify a public acknowledgment of the past and express aspirations for the future in the form of statues, structures, or monuments.[20] Over decades, Kurds have formed hundreds of professional organizations, cultural centers, and social or legal advocacy groups in diaspora, but they are rarely represented in museums. Access to digital technology initially made it possible for Kurds to transcend geographic and political boundaries. In the mid-1990s Kurds began to display political and cultural productions of Kurdishness in cyberspace, yet only a limited number of Kurds in the Middle East could access Internet sites of their choosing, depending on censorship laws and geographic locations (media restrictions have further increased in Turkey since the failed coup attempt in July, 2016).[21]

Today, some Kurds in the Middle East have gained access to recently established museums. Several permanent Kurdish museums exist in the autonomous region of Kurdistan in Iraq. The Kurdish Textile Museum in the historic Citadel in Erbil (Qalat Hewlêr), the Halabja (Helepce) Museum along with the Martyrs Monument and Cemetery, and the Red Museum (also known as the Amna

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the 1980s, and once more added refugees as a consequence of the civil war in Syria. Over time, sizable communities emerged in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and other European countries. Kurds also settled in Canada, the United States, Mexico, Australia, and Japan. Reliable demographic data for diaspora Kurds is not available since most countries recognize nationality based on passports rather than by ethnic background. Naturalized Kurds are often counted as citizens without keeping track of their Kurdish ethnicity.

17 For a discussion of Kurdish curatorial experiences, see Mellingen, "Norwegian Kurdish Virtual Museum."

18 Eccarius-Kelly, "Political Movements and Leverage Points."

19 For example, Stolpersteine (stumbling stones), which are cobblestone-sized concrete cubes bearing a brass plate that is inscribed with the names and dates of individual victims of Nazi Germany, can be found across German cities and towns.

20 Armenian and Jewish community members have access to such public markers in a number of countries, including the United States. This may be a reflection of the level of "maturity" of the Armenian and Jewish lobbies according to Natali, "Kurdish Interventions in the Iraq War."

21 Keles, "Re-invention of Kurdishness;" and Candan and Hunger, "Nation Building Online."

Suraka Prison Museum) in Sulaymaniya. The Halabja Museum is on the outskirts of town, while the Red Museum is housed in the former building of the Iraqi intelligence service, the feared Mukhābarāt: both museums commemorate Saddam Hussein's Kurdish victims. The Halabja Museum was inaugurated in 2003 on the outer periphery of Halabja and served to remind of Hussein's gas attacks on Kurds in 1988. While the Halabja Museum received significant international attention, local Kurdish populations felt increasingly aggrieved by the way Kurdish authorities discussed and portrayed their suffering under the Baathist regime. Kurdish residents of Halabja failed to benefit from infrastructure investments and felt disregarded by dignitaries who visited the Halabja Museum without entering the actual town. In 2006 enraged Halabja residents stormed the museum and set it on fire, destroying it in its entirety (before it was reconstructed several years later).[22]

Kurdish activists everywhere have experienced an escalation of hostility and persecution. Human rights and economic conditions for Kurdish communities are precarious at best, as violations suppress and limit political freedom and civil liberty, and, in some regions, the ability to sustain communal life. Diaspora activists remain committed to supporting Kurdish populations in the Middle East, but for many the emphasis once again has shifted to more surreptitious work to ensure the safety of family members, friends, and allies within predominantly Kurdish regions in Turkey, Iran and Syria.

The quotidian realities of Kurdish communities have deteriorated dramatically in recent years. The Turkish regime expanded its state of emergency and initiated vast anti-democratic purges against Kurdish communities and their political representatives following the coup attempt in 2016.

Just about two years earlier, in January 2015, Kurdish communities in Syria had experienced a moment of triumph. The rescue of Kobanî (or Kobanê) from ISIS became the most significant moment of a shared success for Kurds. In Iraqi Kurdistan, the September 2017 independence referendum weakened Kurdish hopes for statehood as Baghdad moved troops into the city of Kirkuk and took control of lucrative oil fields. In light of these trends, museum displays curated by diaspora Kurds may open up small windows into how Kurds prefer to represent and narrate their own identities and histories. Some of the proposed

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22 For a detailed analysis of the tensions that can emerge between official or authorized narratives and personal or collective memories related to Halabja, see Six-Hohenbalken, "Remembering the poison gas attack on Halabja: questions of representations in the emergence of memory on genocide." She argued that commemorative museums are contested spaces and that diaspora communities can contribute to the production of homogenized narrations or representations of genocide.

exhibits enhance our understanding of Kurdish national identities in the absence of a unified nation-state. We may be able to better grapple with how Kurds define and narrate their own heritage and culture by examining the types of imaginary spaces and displays diaspora activists propose.

Curating Kurdish Exhibits

Almost all participants struggled to define what authentic Kurdishness should mean in the context of a museum. For some participants a claim to authenticity was clearly linked to the past in the sense of acknowledging shared pain. Some relied on politicized narratives and cultural repertoires (symbols, meaningful behaviors) to distinguish themselves from other diaspora Kurds who were "not real Kurds" because of their religious or political affiliations. While most political activists embraced a narrower and more restrictive interpretation of Kurdish identity and Kurdish authenticity, artists and writers focused more on protecting indigenous cultural and artistic expressions.

Diaspora political activists – collectively included in Group 1 – were mostly involved in media projects and homeland-oriented politics. They expressed a clear preference for narrative components in Kurdish exhibits. While some endorsed displays of antiquities or models of fortifications, citadels, and nearby towns, these activists argued that their museum should tell a Kurdish-centered civilizational story. Several participants suggested a large gallery or hall that would place Kurdish populations at the core of Mesopotamia, which represented for them the cradle of civilization. "The Kurds are an ancient people of the Middle East," one participant stated, proposing that it would be essential to contextualize the Kurdish heritage within a broader historical narrative from early times to today.[23] This group of participants also emphasized the significance of documenting and preserving Kurdish culture by highlighting architectural marvels (such as the citadel of Erbil and Diyarbakır's old neighborhoods). They recommended establishing archival collections for scholarly research and educational displays to teach about the use of farming tools, traditional trades, and animal husbandry practices.

One of the most significant themes emphasized by Group 1 activists was a process of "sanitizing" or "purifying" Kurdish history from colonial domination so that the homeland could be reimagined without the humiliations that were commonplace. "For centuries regional powers have cancelled our stories . . . we never gain access to our own history. We are nothing; we are nobody . . .

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[23] Participant #3 (male; familial link to Turkish Kurdistan).

We should have the right to study and speak about our common history."[24] Another participant asked, "What was invented by Kurds? We have writers and poets but Iran and Turkey are the worst erasers of heritage and history."[25] A third participant remarked that "the homeland nourishes the emotional needs of the diaspora and we in turn support Kurdistan [. . .] it is a living connection, like a pulse, that must be felt in a Kurdish museum."[26] Some of the participants had not been able to go to any part of Kurdistan in years and stated that "it is so important to preserve what we know about our communities in a museum. I want to see the clothes, the kitchen, what the insides of houses look like, and see images of houses of worship."[27]

Group 1 participants expressed a sense of urgency to protect what they claimed to represent real Kurdishness, which revolved around their communal memory and cultural heritage. Members of this group seemed vigilant about what ideas were discussed for a museum exhibit, careful not to overstep invisible boundaries or sociopolitical expectations. Several participants in this group lacked personal experience in Kurdish regions but seemed perfectly comfortable sharing their ideas of Kurdishness based on what they had absorbed at political events.

Group 2 participants, predominantly Kurdish diaspora artists and writers involved in (re)producing and preserving Kurdish cultural traditions and language, focused their exhibit ideas both on high culture art and literature, as well as on folkloric expressions,[28] including songs, group dances, and musical performances with traditional instruments. Several participants mentioned the importance of dengbêj performances, which are recital songs performed by singer-poets at communal celebrations and gatherings. One participant stated that "dengbêj songs allow you to learn about your past and appreciate your connection to the natural environment,"[29] referencing an interwoven and mythical relationship between folkloric Kurdish traditions and nature.[30] Cultural

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24 Participant #3 (male; familial link to Turkish Kurdistan).

25 Participant #12 (male; familial links to Iranian and Turkish Kurdistan).

26 Participant #4 (male; familial link to Turkish Kurdistan).

27 Participant #8 (female; familial link to Iraqi Kurdistan).

28 In this context, folkloric expression relates to orally transmitted stories, poetry, and communal practices.

29 Participant #11 (male; familial link to Turkish Kurdistan).

30 For more clarity regarding the idea that Kurdish culture is close to nature, I rely on Hamelink, *The Sung Home*, 297: "The birds were walking around the stage, sometimes making sounds and chirping. At a certain point in the show Güneş started singing a song himself, and while he was singing, one of the birds joined him. This caused excitement among the people present on stage . . . Güneş used this as an example to demonstrate how close the Kurdish traditional singing style is to nature, as even birds recognize the sounds and join in."

anthropologist Wendy Hamelink, in her comprehensive study on dengbêj song traditions, argued that in the more recent ethno-nationalist understanding of dengbêjs, they "were supposed to transmit a sense of authentic Kurdishness, of what a Kurd was in past times, when Kurds were still 'original.'"[31]

Authenticity in representative expressions of Kurdishness, of course, was also an essential component in museum exhibits advanced by Group 1 participants. The difference between the two groups, however, was that the artists emphasized preserving specific cultural practices such as language use and traditions, while the political activists favored a more decisive focus on a "cleansing process" to liberate Kurds from what they perceived as superimposed histories leading to practices of heritage erasure. Some political activists asserted a claim to Kurdishness based on a practice of "Othering" and feelings of enmity toward countries that had denied Kurds national statehood. In this context Turkey and Iran were mentioned repeatedly. In particular, the Turkish government's threat to invade Syrian Kurdistan was seen to present an effort to weaken Kurdish traditions and cultural life.[32]

One of the artists remarked that "we already see so much violence and how difficult it is for Kurds. We know Kurds are suffering and dying. I need to listen to beautiful songs and learn about life stories through music."[33] He also highlighted that female dengbêjs had performed frequently in the past, but "that the repression of Kurdish culture by the regional powers made Kurdish people forget that women had also memorized and recited songs."[34] Hamelink's study confirmed that female dengbêjs had existed, but that they experienced practices of silencing within communities under siege. A growing nationalist Kurdish consciousness in the 1980s and 1990s, however, allowed some women dengbêjs to claim a higher status. Some women managed to link their singing abilities to a political environment that embraced resistance and gender equality.[35]

Group 2 participants also emphasized the significance of other art forms, including acrylic and oil painting, filmmaking and photography, and claimed a long literary tradition. The preservation of literature and literary contributions was emphatically highlighted by Kurdish writers and poets. One participant

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31 Hamelink, *The Sung Home*, 145.

32 Federici, "The Rise of Rojava."

33 Participant #11 (male; familial link to Turkish Kurdistan).

34 Participant #11 (male; familial link to Turkish Kurdistan).

35 Hamelink, *The Sung Home*, 218–30.

commented that "we have written literature, too, and a lot of poetry, and a tradition of exceptional contemporary novels in all Kurdish languages."[36]

Several participants strongly affirmed that Kurdish literary traditions were not exclusively reliant on orality. Kurdish diaspora members asserted a position of cultural strength by rejecting attempts to devalue Kurdish culture through claims that it was squarely set on folklore and orality. To counter long-standing discriminatory practices against Kurds by regional authorities who defined them as "backward and with an inferior language," some artists proposed extensive book collections, themed book displays, and libraries as part of Kurdish exhibits or museums (the Kurdish Library and Museum in Stockholm was mentioned in this context).[37] Similarly, a Kurdish painter stated that "just because you don't see our art in museums, it doesn't mean that we can't show Kurdish paintings or sculptures to the public," suggesting that access is often denied because of museological preferences for less political art.[38]

Finally, Group 3, the interculturalists, embraced the existence of multiple and evolving Kurdish identities. This group differentiates itself by emphasizing the significance of a heterodox and interwoven character of Kurdish communities in the region. By focusing on linkages between Alevis, Armenians, Assyrians, and Yezidis, for example, these diaspora activists seemed to expand the boundaries of what ethno-nationalists might define as authentic or original Kurdishness: "our souls have been touched by blood. Every poor Alevi and Kurd has suffered; every mother lost a son. Now the screams of Yezidis fill the air as the newest genocide tries to erase our heritage."[39] Some participants also highlighted the cruciality of

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36 Participant #1 (male, familial link to Syrian Kurdistan). The four main Kurdish languages are Zazaki, Gorani, Kurmanji and Sorani. According to Philip G. Kreyenbroek, "Written, "elevated" poetry traditionally played a less prominent role in Kurdish society than folk poetry (q.v.) did. The number of written literary works in Kurdish is far smaller than in the surrounding cultures, but it is comparable to that of Pashto (q.v.). The written literary output in Kurdish consisted mostly of poetry until the twentieth century, when a prose literature developed in both major dialects of Kurdish as a result of social and political developments." http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kurdish-written-literature.

37 Participants #11 and #7 (both male; familial linkages to Syrian and Iranian Kurdistan). For information about the Foundation of Kurdish Library and Museum, see http://www.kurdishlibrarymuseum.org/.

38 Participant #7 (male; familial linkage to Iranian Kurdistan).

39 Participant #5 (female; familial link to Syrian Kurdistan).

women being in charge of exhibition spaces to demonstrate that Kurds support gender equality.[40]

Another participant thought that it could be a new form of oppression if Kurdish exhibits failed to incorporate diversity in showcasing all ethnic groups that lived in predominantly Kurdish regions in the Middle East: "The more we can learn about who we are as Kurds, the more we have to realize that many different influences have shaped Kurdistan. To claim otherwise is to be like the repressor AKP [Turkish] government."[41]

In essence, all three groups articulated a deeply felt motivation to free themselves and Kurdish regions in the Middle East from long-standing patterns of manipulative or humiliating representations. Frequently, the participants' understanding of their own Kurdishness was defined in opposition to other ethnic or religious communities. Most argued in favor of re-imagining Kurdish histories in museum exhibits. No consensus emerged, however, as to where Kurdish museum exhibits should be permanently housed. Several possible locations were mentioned including Cologne, Germany; Hasankeyf, along the Tigris River in Batman Province, Turkey; Erbil, the largest city in Iraqi Kurdistan; and, finally, one participant suggested that there should be a traveling exhibit to reach wider audiences.

A noteworthy difference between earlier interviews, conducted with non-elite diaspora Kurds (with familial connections to Turkey), were their preferences for a more visceral sense of ethno-nationalism than these groups of activists and artists. A high number of non-elite diaspora Kurds focused their exhibit ideas on Kurdish collective memories of pain and suffering and showed deep admiration for various forms of resistance against state repression.[42] Kurdish diaspora activists and artists made no mention of honoring guerrillas or displaying images of Kurdish martyrs. Instead, they preferred to exhibit high-culture products (such as antiquities, paintings, literature, etc.), and also hoped to display them alongside aesthetic folkloric expressions, including traditional song and music, poetry, and vernacular practices.

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40 Participant #14 (female; familial link to Turkish Kurdistan). She recommended that I examine the work of JINHA, a Kurdish women's news agency, http://jinha.com.tr/en (The agency has been closed down by the Turkish government).

41 Participant #1 (male; familial link to Syrian Kurdistan).

42 Eccarius-Kelly, "The Imaginary Kurdish Museum."

Delineating Kurdishness in the Diaspora

Kurdish diaspora communities have long maintained cultural, political, and economic relationships with their brethren beyond state borders.[43] As can be expected, they construct their identities in relation to particular historical and political moments that have shaped their communal experiences.[44] In essence, the Kurdish experience with expulsion tends to intensify the desire to control the representation of historical experiences to the broader public.

In April 2016, to the surprise of everyone involved in this project, a well-known U.S. architecture firm, Studio Libeskind, unveiled the design for a future Kurdistan Museum at the Bloomberg Business Week Design Conference in San Francisco.[45] No public discussions for such a museum had taken place in any of the Kurdish regions (or in the diaspora) prior to its announcement. The massive 150,000-square-foot Kurdistan Museum was proposed to be constructed next to Erbil Citadel in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. Architect Daniel Libeskind envisioned four distinct parts or "fragments" for the Kurdistan museum to give voice to the disparate Kurdish legacies from Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey.[46] The museum complex's design, breathtaking in its ability to link the tragedies of the past to the hopes of the future, faced numerous challenges, the least of which continues to be its $250 million price tag for a profoundly politically fragmented and economically battered region.[47] How would this proposed Kurdistan Museum portray the complex and interwoven histories and experiences of the heterogeneous Kurdish peoples? What items should fill the museum's expansive galleries?

The Kurdish participants involved in this project had not been aware of the museum plans and expressed dismay that the design process seemed to have been veiled from the Kurdish public. Some of the activists and artists considered the museum a prestige project that had been envisioned by the powerful leaders of the Barzani tribe in Kurdistan Iraq and felt that it should be more inclusive (or democratic in its original inception), especially if it was meant to be for all peoples of Kurdistan. Other activists inquired who would be in a position to determine or decide what items or collections should be displayed in the

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43 Sheffer, *Modern Diasporas in International Politics*. Also, Demir, "Battling with Memleket in London" and Başer and Swain, "Diasporas as Peacemakers."

44 Cohen, *Global Diasporas*.

45 For further design details, see https://kurdistanmemoryprogramme.com/kurdistan-museum/.

46 Neuendorf, "Libeskind Studio to build Kurdish Museum in Northern Iraq."

47 Reportedly, Daniel Libeskind had been approached in 2009 by Nechirvan Barzani, then prime minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, to develop the museum concept.

galleries, while others criticized that "Kurdish architects had not been approached to produce a museum design."[48]

Diaspora political activists from Group 1 expressed extreme suspicion as per the Libeskind Kurdistan Museum project. They emphasized the notions of "purifying" and liberating Kurdish history from colonial narratives, yet the secretive nature of the planned Kurdistan Museum stirred up distress. They also suggested that the museum enhanced elitist conceptions rather than grassroots participation that would promote a process of democratization. In addition, Kurdistan Iraq had established close economic ties with neighboring Turkey, and some of the political activists suggested that the museum could be a neo-colonial project requiring Turkish approval.

Members of Group 2, comprised of diaspora artists and writers, questioned the acquisition process for the Libeskind project. Kurds from Iraq and Syria often dominate artist and literary circles in the diaspora, while Kurdish migrants originating from the Turkish countryside are often perceived as less educated and therefore unfamiliar with the arts. In addition, Kurdish women writers feared that the patriarchal cultural context in Iraqi Kurdistan could lead to their surreptitious exclusion.

Similarly, Group 3 members, the interculturalists, expressed concern that the secrecy surrounding the Libeskind project pointed to a lack of interest in public discourses related to interactions between Kurds and diverse ethnic and religious communities in the region. Cultural centers such as museums, in this group's view, should instead embrace notions of living heritage that more fully include the interconnectedness between regional populations.

It is obvious that Kurds want to be able to determine their museological representations and thereby define their own expressions of ethnic identity. They challenge exhibits controlled by modern elites just as much as they reject narratives that enhance colonial notions of Kurdish identity. Participants in this project clearly hope to liberate themselves from superimposed and demeaning depictions of Kurdish peoples.[49] The aggregated exhibit ideas, expressed and presented here, demonstrate that particular cultural and historical notions distress members of the Kurdish diaspora. Kurds feel a strong need to publicly demonstrate cultural novelty in their visual, artistic, and aesthetic representations. They deeply value their literary traditions, and embrace multifaceted constructions of identity, heritage, and community. Therefore, it is not

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48 It is possible that Kurdish architects were approached at some point, but I was unable to find or verify such information. In addition, no detailed plans appear to be publicly available about the future collections that may be displayed in particular galleries.

49 Bayir, "Representation of the Kurds by the Turkish Judiciary."

surprising that highly political, ethno-nationalist Kurds find agreement with Kurds who seem predominantly interested in preserving their cultural heritage. Most participants feel strongly about pushing back against regional powers such as Iran and Turkey as these governments are seen to be either focused on erasing Kurdish markers of identity and culture, or on practices of "civilizing and taming Kurds." Yet, simultaneously, some political activists also monitor their ethnic brethren's expressions of Kurdishness to assure that linkages to past grievances remain firmly in place.

Marginalized communities increasingly demand more control over how they are publicly represented in museum exhibits.[50] Museums today are expected to do more than simply contemplate communal inclusion; they also must collaborate with communities to question existing historical and cultural narratives. Some galleries and even yet-to-be-built national museums such as the Libeskind Kurdistan Museum in Erbil may need greater transparency to end practices that privilege colonial representations and elitist curatorial practices that create omissions and silences such that those experienced by the Kurds.

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50 McGee, "Restructuring South African Museums."

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Suat Baran

From Fairytale Character to Lost Goddess: The Archetypal Representation of Stepmother within Kurdish Folklore

The interpretation of fairytales under the rubric of psychoanalysis is a *terra incognita* in Kurdish studies. Despite a recent increase in the popularity of folklore studies within the context of nation-building, particularly in Northern Kurdistan, the content, as the collective unconscious of these tales, has not been examined as thoroughly as it deserves. Here, three divergent variations of a Kurdish[1] fairytale, in which the character of the stepmother is a central archetype, will be psychoanalytically scrutinized. Based on the use of the recurring and variedly disguised stepmother character in these tales, the roots of this archetype can arguably be traced back to a collective unconscious, whereby Shahmaran, the queen of snakes, is introduced as the embodiment of a lost goddess or Mother Earth, stemming from Jung's "anima archetype." In Jung, the collective unconscious, beyond the personal one consisting of our childhood experiences, fears, repressed traumas and parental influences, comprises numerous archetypes, as denoted by Joseph Campbell.[2] Though all archetypes function differently, as well as interrelatedly, *animus* and *anima* are archetypes that are much more prevalent in all life phases of the individual: "[N]o man is entirely masculine that he has nothing feminine in him," which can be applied to woman as well, in whom we can trace a psychic masculinity. The feminine side in a man's psyche is archetypally called "anima" and the masculine side in a woman "animus."[3]

When examining folklore, researchers have employed an array of approaches, with divergent perspectives, in order to reveal their content, but the comparative, national, anthropological, and psychoanalytical are the main underpinnings of their work.[4] As stated by Dorson, the psychoanalytical approach is the most speculative body of current folklore theory, as well as the mode of interpretation that is least desired by orthodox folklorists.[5] Its openness to over-interpretation may shift the focus of these folklore scholars from

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1 From this point onward, the word "Kurdish" is used to refer to the Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish – that is, northern Kurdish.

2 Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, 60–61.

3 Jung, *The Basic Writings of Jung*, 158–59.

4 Dorson, "Current Folklore Theories," 93.

5 Dorson, "Current Folklore Theories," 105.

what in these tales provides understanding as per the tribal, ethnic, national and historical facts that have led to a folk's development. In these studies, the psychological needs of groups are often overlooked as per creation of fairytales.[6]

Freud's psychoanalytical paradigm and its derived episteme afforded him and his successors to study myths and tales as a pathway into human unconscious. Bruno Bettelheim, a renowned Freudian analyst, explored the inner conflicts of the child in his book *The Uses of Enchantment*. He viewed fairytales as a means to alleviate emotional suffering and overcome the conflicts originating from a child's bond to their parents.[7] Despite the criticism Bettelheim received for this,[8] it is still regarded as the most comprehensive attempt at fairytale analysis á la Freud.

The friendship between Freud and Jung ended only when counterarguments arose about the essence of libido and Freud's emphasis on sexuality as the main source of all psychological problems.[9] Despite their varying and different methods in accessing the unconscious, their outcomes overlap. Dorson emphasizes their commonality as per folkloric symbolism being an integral part of their discipline, and ultimately their insight into myths. Furthermore, Freud and Jung equate myths and fairytales with dreams and psychotic fantasies.[10] As their methods are not incongruous, Campbell, an exponent of Jung, incorporates Freudian readings into his exegesis of world mythology. Despite their bilateral perspectives regarding the content of fairytales, here the Jungian approach is chosen in examining meaning and the subsequent formation of the human psyche.[11] For Jung, fairytales are like dreams: the primary source for elucidation of the unconscious and its deepest deep. In *The Interpretation of Fairy Tales*, von Franz argues for fairytales as the bare bones of the psyche and the purest expression of the collective unconscious.[12] Collective unconscious, as Jung argues, seems antithetical to individual unconscious. While personal unconscious is seen as, more or less, a superficial layer of unconscious, the collective unconscious rests upon a deeper layer,

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6 Though Campbell emphasizes mostly the potential of myths and prefers to draw a distinction between fairytales and myths, their affinity, based on psychological reality of groups, is indispensable. See Campbell, 5, 38–39, 41; von Franz 1–23.

7 Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*, 12, 150–56.

8 Williams, "Who's Wicked Now? The Stepmother as Fairy-Tale Heroine," 255–71.

9 Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 169–93.

10 Dorson, "Current Folklore Theories," 107.

11 For a detailed list of the scholars who are interested in and have worked on the meaning of the tales from the psychoanalytical standpoint, see von Franz, *The Interpretations of Fairy Tales*, 20–23.

12 von Franz, *The Interpretations of Fairy Tales*, 1, 26.

the source of which is beyond personal experience and personal acquisition. It is innate and universal: "it [. . .] is identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a supra-personal nature which is present in every one of us."[13] As such the Jungian school relates fairytales to collectivity rather than to individuality,[14] as the tales contain collective elements prevalent in all folktales.[15] In elucidating the psychic processes of man, which, in Jungian terms, appear as archetypical elements of the collective unconscious, Jung points out that fairytales in which the elements are visually revealed are the best material for research into the comparative anatomy of the psyche.[16]

An Interior Mirror of the Human Psyche: Archetypes

In *The Power of Myth*, Campbell highlights archetypes as elementary ideas, arising from the unconscious.[17] In Jungian terms, the psyche displays a great variety of archetypes: anima, animus, orphan, trickster, shadow, savior, mother, etc. These archetypes, each with a different function, lead to an individuation process and the psychological wholeness of individuals. Thus, every individual, consciously or unconsciously, follows a life-long path aiming to overcome split archetypes, complexes, and internal traumas so as to reach a unified path.

Man is psychologically hermaphroditic in a sense that every human being has a feminine side (anima) and a masculine side (animus). In mankind's sexual and psychological development from childhood onward, one of these archetypes begins to dominate sexuality, mostly in compliance with our physical sexual characteristics, on subduing the other, as stressed by Jung and his circle.

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13 Jung, *The Basic Writings of Jung*, 287.
14 von Franz, *The Interpretations of Fairy Tales*, 1.
15 Birkhèauser-Oeri and von Franz draw attention to the difference between a fairytale and a dream, albeit both are unconscious products of the imagination. However, a fairytale is not a creation of a single mind but of many, possibly of a whole folk, which is to say, it cannot be attributed to the problems of one individual due to its diverse character. For more see Birkhèauser-Oeri and von Franz, *The Mother: Archetypal Image in Fairy Tales*, 9.
16 Birkhèauser-Oeri and von Franz, *The Mother: Archetypal Image in Fairy Tales*, 15. Also see Jung, *Memories*, 412; again see Birkhèauser-Oeri and von Franz, *The Mother: Archetypal Image in Fairy Tales*, 10.
17 Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, 60–61.

In a Jungian sense, the mother archetype derives from the Great Mother, the Mother Earth, the Goddess of ancient times, which prevailed prior to the advent of the patriarchal system and monotheistic religions. The mother archetype takes myriad of forms in fairytales, all in the unconscious realm. On the divergent appearances of mother archetype, Jung points to the other disguises: mother and grandmother, stepmother and mother-in-law, a nurse, a governess, or even a remote ancestress. The figurative category includes the goddess, the Mother of God, the Virgin, and Sophia.[18]

As the matriarch, the stepmother is recognized as one of the mother archetype forms. Therefore, archetypes can be all at once positive, affirming, constructive, and evil, destructive, and dissenting:

> The Great Mother is most to be feared when she shows her purely destructive side [. . .] When this trait is uppermost, she often appears in fairy tales in the role of the evil stepmother, representing the annihilating side of the maternal principle. This dark urge to destroy is as much a part of the archetype of the mother as is its light, life-giving side.[19]

However, in fairytales, these negative characteristics are often overcome, resulting in positive change and renewal as implied in the story's positive ending.[20]

In *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, Pinkola Estés points to the paths the victims of a stepmother can take to achieve a holistic goal, leading to the Jungian individuation process. Despite her malicious persona, a stepmother can be a catalyst for maturity and independence. Estés points out that girls and boys in stepmother stories do not choose to be victims and they are merely born into it. Estés alludes to nine steps by which means children can attain a higher plateau of maturity: (1) accepting the death of their exceptionally good mother; (2) exposing the crude shadow[21]; (3) navigating in the dark; (4) facing the wild hag[22]; (5) serving the irrational; (6) bifurcation of two things (this/that, dark/light, good/evil); (7) recognizing the mysteries (asking questions, curiosity); (8) standing on all fours; and (9) recasting the shadow.[23]

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18 Jung, *The Basic Writings of Jung*, 332–3.

19 Birkhèauser-Oeri and von Franz, *The Mother: Archetypal Image in Fairy Tales*, 26.

20 Birkhèauser-Oeri and von Franz, *The Mother: Archetypal Image in Fairy Tales*, 27.

21 With the word "shadow" the author addresses the Jungian "shadow archetype." The shadow archetype can be manifested both in individual and collective form. It consists of all repressed traumas, unwanted desires and emotions. Jung, "The Shadow," 8–10.

22 The wild hag here is used as a general substitute for all evil characters displayed in myriad forms in fairy tales.

23 Estés, *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, 76–120.

The Search for 'Self' through an Archetypal Clash

Von Franz speaks to crucial factors in interpretation of fairytales: one such factor is the emotional aspect of the archetype. Emotions, alike to dreams, play a significant role in depicting the path of fairytale characters, perhaps in a similar ways dreams are navigated and subsequently interpreted.[24] Von Franz points to the number of characters in a tale. Symbolically, the number four holds great importance in the Jungian interpretation of fairytales.[25]

"Elo û Fatê," has three variants, each hailing from a different region.[26] Two of these plots are quite similar, while the other is more complicated (see Table 1):

Table 1: The Chart of Three Variants of *Elo û Fatê* Tale.

	Variant I	Variant II	Variant III
Region	Armenia	Diyarbakır	Mardin
Characters	Elo and Fatê, father, mother, stepmother, seer, Perî, dwarf, prince, queen, king	Elo, Fatê, father, mother, stepmother, giant, anonymous bride and groom	Alik, Fatik, father, mother, stepmother, imam, giant, the wife of Alik, pasha's son

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24 von Franz, *The Interpretations of Fairy Tales*, 8–12.

25 In Jungian psychology, when a baby is born, the Self in him/her is complete. It is un-split and not yet divided into ego formation, traumas, complexes, and the archetypal forms, which can also be influenced by and embodied in the parents, family, and social surroundings. Distorted archetypal manifestations and personal angst force all individuals to take a long journey where they face the dark and complex within their divided psyche. The ultimate goal is to make their psyche whole, as it was upon birth.

26 Due to inattentive compilation, particularly, of the two variants recorded by Yıldırım, Akyol and Zarg, we do not have any clear information about the date of recording and the identity of the storytellers. Yet Akyol and Zarg indicate that they recorded their variant in "Reşik" village of Silvan County in Diyarbakır, from Emin Agha (Axayê Emîn), of whom, except for his name there is no other specific information, such as his age, and educational background. Similarly, in her short introduction, though Yıldırım clearly states that all the fairytales compiled in her collections are from Nusaybin County in Mardin, she too does not give any further information about the identity of the storyteller, and the date of recording. However, the invaluable work of Heciyê Cindî gives us more accurate information about the background of his recording. As stated at the end of his fairy-tale collection, the source of Cindî's variant is a man at the age of 70, named "Şîrinê Çopo Xudayî," who is illiterate but worldly-wise, and nesteemed resident at Çobengermesê (now Avşên) village in the region of Aragats, Armenia. The year of recording is 1979 (Cindî, "Elo û Fatê," 345). Last but not least, in none of these variants the religious and ethnic background of the storytellers is mentioned.

Table 1 (continued)

	Variant I	Variant II	Variant III
Number of Characters	Beginning: 3 + 1 (stepmother) End: 4	Beginning: 3 + 1 (stepmother) End: 4	Beginning: 3 + 1 (stepmother) End: 4
Plot	Mother's death Father's remarriage Wheat seeds spoilt Starvation Child sacrifice advised by seer Children escape Elo kept prisoner by a dwarf (androgyny) Perî, the king's daughter, taken prisoner previously Fatê saved by the hunter-prince Perî helps Elo destroy the dwarf's soul kept hidden in a box under ground His soul consisted of three eggs Elo breaks all and also unlocks all rooms Captive men released	Mother's death Father's remarriage Children left to starve Blood sacrifice in the fields The scheme revealed by a bird They cloister in a cave They kept prisoner by a giant (blind, androgyny) They locked in a hive Giant feeding them to cook later They play tricks and outwit the giant They find a key in her hair and unlock all rooms Other captive men released	Mother's death Father's remarriage Wheat seeds spoilt Starvation Child sacrifice advised by imam A bird guides them They escape and get into a cave, A blind woman locks them in a hive They outwit her and escape They grow up and the brother marries Alik's wife giving her sister-in-law water with snake larva in Fatik's belly swollen She gets accused of pregnancy out of marriage Fatik is left in a mountainous area She is saved by the son of a pasha They get married Starvation at Alik's house Alik at the pasha's palace to ask for wheat
Setting	field, mountains, well, locked rooms, king's palace	field, mountains, cave, hive (inside the cave), locked rooms	field, cave, hive, mountainous area, river, pasha's palace
The Wicked Elements	stepmother, dwarf (androgyny)	stepmother, giant (androgyny)	stepmother, blind woman, sister-in law
The Saving Elements	Perî, Fatê, hunter-prince	bird, Fatê	bird, Fatik, pasha's son (prince)

At the beginning of the three variants, two of the characters are male (the father and Elo) and two are female (the mother and Fatê), while at the end one female is lost and replaced with a wicked substitute: a substitute who is diametrically opposed in every aspect to a loving mother. In other words, the number of characters (four) is constantly maintained in the story, and each gender is represented equally. Therefore, given that the Self can be symbolized by number 4, the integrity of psyche is still apparent, even if it might be weak and ready to fall apart due to the destructiveness of two of the archetypes – that of the stepmother and a weak father. Despite these unsteady corners of the rectangle, the weakest links, the developing anima and animus (Elo and Fatê), keep fighting to substitute them with healthy archetypes as a means of reaching the Self. In addition, there being two main characters of different genders signifies wholeness attained through the individuation process. On the other hand, some tales may feature only one gender as the main character; even so, in such cases their aim is to prompt the reader to focus on one side of the individuation process. Still, many tales, like the one analyzed here, include both genders to emphasize the strengthened relationship between the animus and anima as *hieros gamos* ("sacred wedding"), which is meant to lead the individual to experience the unified Self in the end. Regarding the symbolism of the number four, in the first variant of the story there is an anecdote which requires attention. While Elo is instructed by Perî as how to find the dwarf's soul and destroy it, the dwarf's soul is displayed as three eggs in an iron box under the seven spheres of the earth. Here, existence of a fourth egg would be expected, in conjunction with the symbolic number 4. In the beginning of the tale, the dwarf describes Elo as "[. . .] a chick in the egg."[27] This implies that the fourth (or rather the first and foremost) egg is the realm of hostility, destructive powers, and abandonment by parents and experienced by him. Hence, unlike the other three eggs, this egg is gradually broken while the story unfolds. Another significant remark speaking to the vitality of number 4 in the tales is illustrated in the third variant wherein the story moves further and narrates the aftermath of outwitting the wicked woman in the cave. Alik marries an anonymous woman found by Fatik to be the perfect match for him; and as such described as "a girl who has been raised with the milk of a gazelle."[28] This implies that *any creature* who has not had human milk would be a better match than a human being. Yet the sister remains unwed, implying that the number four has not been attained. The stepmother, who was earlier disguised as the old witch, is

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27 Cindî, "Elo û Fatê," 25.

28 Yıldırım, "Alik û Fatik," 74.

now embodied by the brother's wife, who, out of jealousy, wants to get rid of her sister-in-law. Therefore, since the tale is left unresolved as the reach for number 4 or the Self is not achieved, this variant unfolds in another phase, which ends up with Fatik's marriage to the son of the pasha, and Fatik's forgiving of her sister-in law, which changes the disguise of Alik's wife from that of the wicked stepmother into a positive and constructive anima. In this way, in the last variant, Alik and Fatik and their spouses complete the number four, the symbol of the Self.

In his work on folktales, Jung emphasizes that all archetypes have a positive, favorable, bright side, as well as a negative, unfavorable, and partly chthonic side.[29] In line with this explanation, in fairytales, the mother and stepmother are both associated with the anima, representing its good and evil aspects, respectively. The beginning of the tale, when the children lose their loving mother, who is then replaced by a wicked stepmother, illustrates the duality of the archetype. From that standpoint, having a stepmother constitutes a great opportunity for Elo and Fatê to develop and mature. As Pincola states, "the time during which the childhood 'positive mother' dwindles – her attitudes die away as well – is always a time of great learning."[30] At this juncture, the father, the embodiment of animus, procrastinates and makes poor decisions concerning the fate of his children, instead of protecting them from the wicked stepmother. Accordingly, having a weak animus but a stronger evil anima leads the siblings – the developing animus and anima – to run away to fight the crude shadow, who is symbolized in the tale, first by the stepmother, and then by the dwarf, the giant, and the wife of Alik. Parallel to this explanation, according to Estés, in order for evil deeds – like cannibalism, killing the child, or assigning an arduous task – to take place, the father must be absent or weak/passive, as portrayed in this tale.[31] Therefore, due to the father's inability to intervene, the stepmother, the negative anima, destroys the family's source of ration, resulting in their psychological starvation and barrenness.

Taking into consideration another important element of the tale, which is the change of geographical space or environment in a general sense, von Franz notes that "[o]ften when the figures go down into the earth or the water in a dream, people interpret that as a *descensus ad inferos*, as a descent into the underworld, into the depths of the unconscious."[32] As such, mountains are a frequently encountered archetypal scene in Kurdish folktales and serve a function

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29 Jung, *Four Archetypes: Mother, Rebirth, Spirit and Trickster*, 123.

30 Estés, *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, 85.

31 Estés, *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, 76–120.

32 von Franz, *The Interpretations of Fairy Tales*, 71.

similar to that of forests in European tales and of a desert in Abrahamic faiths. Sara Maitland, on the function of environmental space in fairytales, highlights that "landscape informs the collective imagination as much as or more than it informs the individual psyche and its imagination."[33] Hence, being lost in mountainous areas and caves represents the unconscious realm, which is where one encounters oneself, faces the fierce shadow, and turns inward with loneliness and psychic barrenness. To put it another way, the sojourn of Elo and Fatê to the mountains symbolizes a path toward the ascetic experience and full realization of their own lives. During the dark, lonely moments of introversion, they cloister themselves in a cave, i.e., the primitive dwelling of our ancestors and the dark side of our primitive instincts.

The evil of the stepmother does not dissolve when the children run away from her malicious intentions. Instead, in all three variants, the stepmother is successively present in several guises – the dwarf, the giant (both of which are hermaphrodite figures), and the sister-in-law in the last variant. The androgynous attributes of the evil characters, i.e. dwarf (who disguises in a gazelle form) and giant (who is displayed in the beginning as "he" turns out to be "she" by the narrator's slip of the tongue) is worth mentioning to emphasize how these two evil characters can be a disguise for the stepmother: as they are featured as mostly male their feminine side is cleverly subtle. This can be interpreted as a sign of abundance of female power and scarcity of male power throughout all the variants. On the other hand, there is the size change of the evil characters. In one tale it is a dwarf, in the next one a giant, the opposite of the former in size. Jung points out that "[i]t seems to me more probable that this liking for diminutives on the one hand and for superlatives – giants, etc. – on the other is connected with the queer uncertainty of spatial and temporal relations in the unconscious."[34] That is, when the excessive and exaggerated form of the complexes and ill-driven psychic forces are emphasized, size entirely loses its significance.

Along with the dominance of the anima, as Jung explains, we are presented with its darker influences and deeper meanings in the tale:

> With the archetype of the anima we enter the realm of the gods, or rather, the realm that metaphysics has reserved for itself. Everything the anima touches becomes numinous – unconditional, dangerous, taboo, magical. She is the serpent in the paradise of the harmless man with good resolutions and still better intentions. She affords the most

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33 Maitland, *Gossip from the Foresti,* 7.
34 Jung, *Four Archetypes*, 121.

convincing reasons for not prying into the unconscious, an occupation that would break down our moral inhibitions and unleash forces that had better been left unconscious and undisturbed.[35]

The appearance of the stepmother is not the only reminder of the anima. The shadow, another archetype, has dark forces and pushes the characters into the darker realms of the unconsciousness: the cave, hive, pit, or well. The shadow is what is subdued, repressed – anything that is regarded as negative by the conscious mind. Facing and assimilating the shadow is important in achieving integrity; and in the individuation process in reaching the Self. The shadow can be embedded within the anima, animus, and other archetypes, since all archetypes can be interwoven within the psyche.

As the leading archetypal power, in these different variants of the stepmother tale, the anima becomes the *pneuma*, the spirit, much closer to the psyche – the beginning and the end of everything, the female principle, the goddess, the Earth Mother – that is, the archetype that draws the individual and the collective conscious much closer to the Self.

Shahmaran: The Lost Goddess

Highlighted in the beginning, fairytales are presented as basic structures of the psyche, the simplest expression of the collective unconscious, which is regarded antithetical to personal unconsciousness from the standpoint of Jungian analytical psychology. Therefore, having fairytales as one of the main sources reflecting collective unconscious, we can benefit a great deal from them. To be more precise, in discussing the Kurdish stepmother tales from an archetypal standpoint, as a hypothesis, the anima's struggle might lead us to Kurdish people's collective unconscious, which Jungian analysts emphasize constitutes the essence of tales, unlike dreams, which are more personal.

As pointed out above, at the beginning of three divergent variants of the Elo and Fatê tale, the death of their loving mother and the arrival of the stepmother into the family turn everything topsy turvy. Under such circumstances, the children escape from the cruelty of the wicked stepmother, although she keeps haunting them by appearing in new forms, as discussed above, who stand between the wicked stepmother and the benevolent sister. The evil anima shadows the positive, constructive, and healthier developing animus and anima.

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35 Jung, *The Basic Writings of Jung*, 312.

This recurrent evil anima may represent something else in the collective unconscious of the Kurdish people, perhaps the image of a goddess cult, of the Earth Mother, who has long left folk cognizance and is for all intents and purposes a *distant memory*. In their work, Sibylle Birkhèauser-Oeri and Marie-Louise von Franz emphasize the fact that "a masculine logos principle began increasingly to dominate cultures, and the feminine archetype receded into background. The feminine principle can be found [. . .] in the alternative forms of the unconscious, such as fairy tales."[36]

In terms of the Kurdish collective unconscious, answering the question of where the Mother Earth is hidden may not be easy, since the answer is more elusive and has not been well studied as an academic and folkloric subject. Yet, regarding the collective cultural elements shared in the Middle East in general, and in Kurdistan in particular, the image of Shahmaran stands out as the most likely manifestation of the lost feminine archetype, or the Mother Earth. She is a powerful mythical figure in the region, and her image also appears on every traditional rural dwelling in the Kurdish prairie as a part of their collective culture and identity through the ages.

The Shahmaran myth is mentioned in such Middle Eastern canonical texts as "The Story of Yemliha: An Underground Queen" in *1001 Arabian Nights* and in *Camasb-name* [The Book of Jamasb] by Nasir-i Tusi.[37] It is a well-known story with strong cultural connotations for those living in the southeastern and eastern parts of Turkey, which is mostly populated by Kurds, Arabs, Assyrian and Turkish communities. Images of Shahmaran are mounted on walls to protect people from the negative energy (omen) of the evil and to bring prosperity.[38] According to the Shahmaran myths, despite her love for mankind, Shahmaran is repeatedly betrayed by human beings. That may be the most recurrent image of Shahmaran in various Shahmaran myths, drawing our attention to Shahmaran's latent, forgotten, and ignored characteristics.[39] Despite the lack of information about the anthropological roots of Shahmaran, her image tells us much about her (see Figure 1).

First, she is the ruler of snakes, the queen with two heads, one belonging to Shahmaran and the other to a snake whose tongue sticks out. The latter arguably

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36 Birkhèauser-Oeri and von Franz, *The Mother: Archetypal Image in Fairy Tales*, 18.
37 Demir and Şahin, "Reinterpreting the Story, 'Shahmaran's Legs' by Murathan Mungan with Reference to Values Education," 289–98.
38 Demir and Şahin, "Reinterpreting the Story, 'Shahmaran's Legs' by Murathan Mungan with Reference to Values Education," 290.
39 Indeed Shahmaran as Mother Earth and an ancient goddess, who has been erased from religious rites following the intervention of male-dominated religions, has been rarely studied.

Figure 1: Shahmaran.

represents masculinity as a phallic figure, in contrast to Shahmaran's feminine traits. Though both Shahmaran and the snake wear crowns, Shahmaran's crown is more elegant, intricate, stylish, and has two penetrating horns, which arguably points to another masculine feature on her snake body. She lives underground, hidden, as if waiting to be discovered, or to protect herself from mankind. Despite her dual sexual characteristics, the female element in Shahmaran is much stronger, more visible and more dominant. It can be inferred from her hermaphrodite character that the feminine side of Shahmaran has retreated into the unconscious, although it is still a powerful symbol in people's daily lives: a picture decorating their walls to remind them of something they lost a long time ago.

Having the animus in animal form in Shahmaran's depictions may indicate that, in the collective unconscious of the Kurds the integrity of animus/anima as a hermaphrodite being fails because they are not pictured as equals; rather, one trumps the other. This depiction of Shahmaran (Table 2) is sexually unbalanced in terms of consciousness and unconsciousness because, while the goddess, as an

Table 2: The Archetypal Equilibrium in Shahmaran.

Conscious Realm	Male +	Female −
Unconscious Realm	Male −	Female +

eros drive, is kept captive in the depths of the unconsciousness, the male maintains his hegemony above the ground, in the realm of consciousness, as a *logos* drive.

This formula explains why the female is always persecuted, ignored, and belittled, and the male is overly exaggerated above the ground. The female residing underground is strongly emphasized, even though she is not in possession of her full sexuality, while the male assumes a more primitive animal form. This duality reflects the psychological equilibrium of the collectivity, i.e., the clash between the upper and lower worlds, the conscious and the unconscious realms. Moreover, two of Shahmaran's four eyes are on the crown looking up, as if observing something from above. Owning four eyes seems to correspond with the number four – the symbol of the Self.

This analysis aimed to elucidate the motif of the wicked stepmother from a Jungian perspective by means of the archetypal concept. The orphan characters running away from their evil stepmother encounter her other derivations in several disguises, eventually gaining their maturity, marrying, and starting a new family. Hence, the main archetype becomes the realization of the anima in these fairytales, the female part of the psyche, which has both evil and good attributes. In fighting her, the weaker characters – that is, the unconscious elements – become more conscious and stronger, which enables them to undergo the individuation process in order to realize the Self to the fullest. The stepmother figure in the tale might arguably refer to the lost feminine archetype, or Mother Earth, who has retreated into the unconscious with the intervention of both cultural and religious male hegemony.

Although the other Kurdish stepmother tales are beyond the scope of this study, the findings here should aid in the interpretation of Kurdish tales from a Jungian viewpoint, which thus cannot be presented as the only interpretation of the fairytales since psychoanalytical interpretation does have a wide variety of reading exercises. Yet ideally, these findings should instigate a debate about the Kurdish people's collective unconscious and identity since ancient times. The Kurdish people's collective unconscious reveals the prehistoric cultural and religious values of Kurdish society in their use of fairytales, despite their universal characteristics. It is hoped, then, that this study also sheds light on the national and cultural problems that Kurds struggle with today.

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Duygu Çelik
The Impact of the *Dengbêjî* Tradition on Kurdish Theater in Turkey

Introduction

The First National Kurdish Theater Conference was held in Diyarbakır (December 17–19, 2012). On the last day of this event, which was particularly significant for Kurdish theater in Turkey, Kurdish actors held a closed-door meeting. They unanimously agreed that Kurdish theater does not yet embody a national identity. Thus, they provided various proposals as to how an authentic "theater language" might be established, suggesting that it was necessary to rely on Kurdish culture and traditions as a means of formulating it. They especially emphasized the living tradition of *dengbêjî*.

Of course, debates such as these are not exclusive to matters of Kurdish theater as per *dengbêjî*. Similar debates took place as per Turkish theater, when it was argued that the tradition of the public storyteller (meddah), the shadow play (Karagöz and Hacivat), the improvised light comedy or theater-in-the-round[1] (orta oyunu) and the village play (köy seyirlik oyunu) should be actively utilized to hightlight Turkish identity. Although members of both Kurdish and Turkish theaters came to terms with their respective traditions there is a distinguishing factor to be considered. It is too late to summon upon the stage the last masters of the tradition as part of a nationalization of Turkish theater. New performers, who have never experienced the traditional master-apprentice relationship, may not be able to create the dynamic structure necessary to that end. In traditional theatre, a performer's role is pivotal. In modern times it has changed. Sometimes stage design, sometimes lighting, or even the director take center stage. Traditionally, performers learned the essence from the masters.

Although Turkish theater played a pivotal role in nation-building in Turkey, few, if anyone, revisit that episode of Turkish theater. Contrarily, Kurdish theater is merely beginning to do what Turkish theater attempted long ago. In 1998, the First Kurdish Theater Festival, organized by the Kurdistan Culture and Art Academy in Berlin, was held.[2] This was followed by a meeting in Munich in 2006,[3] and

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1 For more see And "The Turkish Folk Theater," 155–76.
2 Bengî, "Festivala Şanoya Kurdî Gihişt Armanca xwe ji Şanoya Kurdi Pêngavek."
3 Han, "München'de Kürt Tiyatro Konferansı."

the Second Kurdish Theater Conference (Munich, 2007), organized by actor Hawre Zangana and Kurdish-German Friendship Association's Christopher Balme.[4] Another event with an emphasis on a national Kurdish theater was held in Erbil (2007). As guests of Felakettin Kakeyi, Minister of Enlightenment of Southern Kurdistan, Aydın Orak, Kemal Orgun and Murat Batgi attended the meeting from Turkey. Sabah Abdulrahman, Director of the Department of Theater at the Ministry of Culture stated that they should and will take advantage of these invitations as to inform their decisions for creating an initial platform for a national Kurdish theater.[5]

This study elucidates how *dengbêjî* has impacted Kurdish theater's search for national identity and how it affected the actors, the script, and the staging of national theater's productions.[6] Case studies of six plays are presented in order to emphasize the impact of the *dengbêjî* tradition on the Kurdish theater in Turkey.

The New *Dengbêjî*

While it is difficult to define *dengbêjî* in addressing all of its societal nuances, Yusuf Ziyaeddin Pasha describes the concept in his 1892 edition of the Kurdish-Arabic dictionary as "the artist of voice (in some regions it is also called stranbêj)."[7] This definition deems the *dengbêjî* narrative a song. Yücel speaks to *kilam*, the *dengbêjî* narrative: "For the dengbêjs I met, however, the term *kilam* mainly referred to the *dengbêj* songs, whereas the term *stran* mainly referred to other songs (for weddings, for instance, and with musical accompaniment)."[8] In the same vein, the *dengbêj*s interviewed for (2012–2016) in İstanbul, Diyarbakır, Bingöl, Muş, and Van also consider *kilam* categorically different from a song: they all deem it a *dengbêj* narrative. There is no consensus as to the genre of these

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4 Özkan, "Münih'te 2. Kürt Tiyatro Konferansı Yapıldı."

5 Fırat News Agency, "İstanbul'dan Hewlêr'e Tiyatro."

6 Mindful of the changing features, in this study, the contemporary practices are denoted as the "new *dengbêjî*" because the interaction between the performer and the audience constitutes the essence of the dynamics of *dengbêjî* in its traditional sense and what constitutes the parameters of the "new" generally does not share that feature. The term "Kurdish theater," on the other hand, designates theater performances in the language of the Kurds.

7 Ziyaeddin Paşa, *Kürtçe-Türkçe Sözlük*, 65.

8 Yücel, "The Invention of a Tradition: Diyarbakır's Dengbêj Project," accessed June 12, 2010, https://journals.openedition.org/ejts/4055.

narratives and this ambiguity is particularly evident in 'the act' of the *dengbêjs*: is it song or narration? Wendelmoet Hamelink uses the expression "to sing kilam,"[9] whereas in his dissertation, Serhat Resul Çaçan emphasizes that "*dengbêj* does not 'sing' but 'tells' the *kilam*s."[10] The consensus is, however, that *dengbêjs* "tell" and do not "sing,"[11] since narrative supersedes musicality in *dengbêjî*.[12] *Dengbêjî*'s relationship with music is that of vehicle of transmission with mode of remembrance.

    Dengbêjî as a mode of performance considers the following elements: *dengbêj* (the performer), *kilam* (the narration), *dîwanxane* (the performance space), and *civat* (the audience). As a narrative tradition, what makes *dengbêjî* unique is that it still preserves its idiosyncratic *performance* duration whereas the other narrative traditions in Turkey turn into folkloric performances.[13] As such, some believe that contemporary *dengbêjî* performances are not authentic.

    Radio was instrumental in dissemination and revival of *dengbêjî*. *Dîwanxane*s were jettisoned for this new, more effective, performance space. Kurmanji broadcasts on Radio Yerevan started in 1955 allowing people who lived in eastern Turkey to listen to them. As a result, many songs (also *kilam*s) have been recorded and archived. As "the tradition became less local, people heard songs from many regions."[14] The interactive rapport between the performer and the audience changed:

> When a *dengbêj* told *kilam*s, he also encouraged the audience to join in the performance by asking them some questions or reminding them of something, etc. As historical sources, these old recordings have always been more valuable when compared to those

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9 Hamelink, "The Sung Home: Narrative, Morality, and the Kurdish Nation," xx.

10 Çaçan, "The *Dengbêjî* Tradition Among Kurdish-*Kurmanj* Communities: Narrative and Performance During the Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," 24.

11 It should be mentioned, however, that when people request a *kilam* from a *dengbêj*, they use the Kurdish verb *bêje*, which means "to say." We nonetheless insist on the verb "to tell" due to our argument with regard to the classification of the *dengbêjî* in the narrative tradition.

12 Çaçan "The *Dengbêjî* Tradition Among Kurdish-*Kurmanj* Communities: Narrative and Performance During the Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," 46.

13 Throughout this article, the term "duration" (*la durée*) is used in the sense it was conceptualized by Henri Bergson. Theatre theoretician Ismayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu (1886–1978) used Bergson's term "duration" combined with the term "performance" and stated that the essence of theater is "performance duration." Baltacıoğlu argues that performance duration is not the actual duration of performance as the perception of that duration by the audiences can be construed shorter or longer than the actual duration. The length of the duration perceived by the audiences depends on factors such as their own past, experiences, and expectations.

14 Hamelink, "The Sung Home: Narrative, Morality, and the Kurdish Nation," 43.

recorded in radio-studios, as it is possible to hear the different reactions the audience gives to the performance. The majority of the *dengbêj* recordings made in studios have taken place in Yerevan radio. *Dengbêj*s performances which were recorded in local recording studios in Turkey, especially after the 1970s, have a better sound quality. However, lack of audience interaction in these recordings is obvious, because they isolated the performer from the audience.[15]

Even though radio broadcasts assumed an important role in transmitting *dengbêjî* to younger generations in a restrictive Turkey, not all aspects of the narrative were transmitted. Due to the time restrictions imposed on radio programs, *dengbêjs* could only perform some parts of the *kilam*, which, if performed in its entirety, would have lasted for many hours. These shorter versions become commonplace and were deemed complete performances by many of the listeners. This is why the long narratives of the past are indeed of the past. The introduction of instruments to accompany *kilam*s was yet another significant change. The *dengbêj*s interviewed stated that they prefer not to use instruments during a performance because it does not fit the essence of the tradition:

> The most important instrument of the dengbêjs is their voice. Because of the lack of a musical instrument, and the solo performance, they train their voices until they are loud enough to be heard even by the listeners sitting in the furthest corner or outside attentive. The second equally important instrument of the dengbêjs is their memory. A dengbêj performance is based on the principle of continuous repetition of sound and words that should not be forgotten. The transience of the oral word is crucial for grasping what it means to be a dengbêj.[16]

This begs the question of whether the essence of a *dîwanxane* performance is lost when there is no audience and the medium is the radio as the visual aspects of a *Dengbêjî* performance are as important as the auditory ones. As such, television becomes an important medium for the *dengbêjî*,[17] albeit, there is of course a disconnect in this audio-visual mode – of television and radio – when compared with the intense dynamics of the live performance, as per communicating with the audience. A similar issue is faced at cultural centers, as well as in meetings and events organized for the promotion of *dengbêj* as Kurdish identity. Bedrettin, a *dengbêj*, states that he had difficulty deciding what to narrate in an event at İstanbul Bilgi University because he

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15 Çaçan, "The *Dengbêjî* Tradition Among Kurdish-*Kurmanj* Communities: Narrative and Performance During the Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," 19–20.

16 Hamelink, "The Sung Home: Narrative, Morality, and the Kurdish Nation," 161.

17 A good example is *Dengbêj*, a Kurdish show on Turkey's TRT Kurdî channel.

was not familiar with the *civat*.[18] On the other hand, during the Bingöl Days, a festival in recognition of the culture of this city in eastern Turkey, held at Feshane in 2014, Mehmet Çağ, "looks [just] like a *dengbêj* from the past" by wearing traditional clothes, narrating his *kilam*s in a tent where multitude of external sounds mingle with the *dengbêj*'s voice.[19] These examples indicate that, this is a presentation of the *dengbêj* tradition, not the performance itself. In addition, the *dengbêj*, who used to be a traveler, now introduces the tradition to the visitors who come to him. As part of the 1st Kurdish Culture and Art Festival held in 2015, the *dengbêj*s, who were hosted by the MED Culture and Arts Association, wore local costumes and narrated their *kilam*s with a microphone behind tables that were covered with throws with traditional motifs.[20] As a result, the performance turned into a show.

Radio, television, and activities at festivals and cultural centers have influenced the performance duration. As *kilam* turned into a *piece* narrative, the *dengbêj* began to "look like a *dengbêj*." While this is the fact how can we say that the *dengbêjî* tradition is still alive? Walter Benjamin's words in his 1936 article may still be relevant today, for they may explain why the *dengbêjî* tradition is still alive: "Death is the sanction for everything that the storyteller can tell."[21] Prior to this statement, Benjamin explains how death, which used to be a public process, has transformed:

> Today people live in rooms that have never been touched by death-dry dwellers of eternity; and when their end approaches, they are stowed away in sanatoria or hospitals by their heirs. Yet, characteristically, it is not only a man's knowledge or wisdom, but above all his real life – and this is the stuff that stories are made of – which first assumes transmissible form at the moment of his death.[22]

According to Benjamin, storytelling diminished since death is no longer experienced in the public space. Unlike the West, death is still a part of public space for the Kurds as an armed conflict still persists in eastern Turkey.

The incorporation of language, culture, and history affords this tradition its staying power under the rubric of the nationalization process of the Kurdish movement. The *dengbêj*s interviewed invariably seem to agree that the *dengbêjî*

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18 Dengbêj Bedrettin, "Dengbêj Dîwan."
19 Dengbêj Mehmet Çağ, "Bingöl Publicity Days."
20 *Dengbêj*s from Botan Region, "Dengbêj Dîwan."
21 Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Observations on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," 151.
22 Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Observations on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," 151.

tradition is part of the national cultural movement and Kurdish identity[23] and by extension *Dengbêj* Houses are examples of spaces of resistance.[24]

A *Dengbêj* House is seen as an authentic space, as it is often a renovated old Diyarbakır house with its décor resembling the *dîwanxane*, where the *dengbêjî* performances used to take place. However, the *dengbêj*s who used to be travelers are now hosts performing on a judiciously designed stage. Thus, we ask if it is possible to have an authentic *dengbêjî* performance in this space. We argue that this is just an imitation of the tradition, such as those on radio and television, or at promotional events, meetings, and cultural centers. Serhat Resul Çaçan explains the regeneration of the tradition in the *Dengbêj* Houses as follows:

> This case, which could be defined as the return of the *dengbêjî* tradition, does not exactly fit what has actually been happening. Yes, *dengbêj*s have returned with their *kilam*s, but this is not the same as it was in the past. Firstly, the location is different. The tradition has moved from villages to an urban environment, where it is being performed in cultural centers and stages. Secondly, the audience has changed completely; young people who remained distant to *kilam*s especially after the 1980s are now interested in it. Thirdly, the *dengbêjî* tradition is not politicized; this is not as weak as it was before. Fourthly, in the *dengbêjî* tradition, performance has stepped up while narration has faded into the background.[25]

Çaçan's assertion that the *dengbêjî* tradition is "not the same as it was in the past" may arguably imply that performance today is not the true *dengbêjî*. The evolution of the performance from a narrative to a 'show' is, of course, evident. We have already tried to establish what aspects of the *dengbêjî* performance were lost when transmitted over radio and television – and incorporated into cultural events. If the space, the audience, the performer, and the narrator are different, how can one talk about the existence of an experience called the "new *dengbêjî*"? An example from our visit to the Diyarbakır *Dengbêj* House in November 2015 might provide some answers.

No local – or foreign – tourists were at hand at the *Dengbêj House* that day. I was recording the *kilam*s narrated by *dengbêj* Alicanê Pasûrê. Suddenly, door opened and someone, presumably a local, requested a *kilam* from the *dengbêj*.

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23 Statements such as "the *dengbêj*s gave a history to Kurds" by dengbêj Selahattin from Varto/Muş, and "the *dengbêjî* kept the Kurdish culture on its feet" by *dengbêj* Mukaddes from Van speak to a firm social cognizance of this art form. For more see Dengbêj Selahattin Güçtekin interview by Varto, 2014; and Dengbêj Gazin, et al. "Vanlı Kadın Dengbejler Açık Dergi'de."

24 The first Dengbêj House was founded in Van in 2003, followed by another in Diyarbakır in 2007. In other cities and towns, there were also initiatives to establish a *Dengbêj* House, and if not in their own designated House, *dengbêj*s were invited to perform at local cultural centers. See Hamelink, "The Sung Home: Narrative, Morality, and the Kurdish Nation," 339.

25 Çaçan "The *Dengbêjî* Tradition Among Kurdish-*Kurmanj* Communities: Narrative and Performance During the Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," 143.

As Alicanê Pasûrê began the *kilam*, there was murmuring among the *civat*. Other *dengbêj*s were accompanying the *kilam* with different interjections, and the *civat* members were shaking their heads at various parts of the *kilam* as if they were sighing: some were moved to tears and some were in a trance-like state. At that exact moment, the person who requested the *kilam* left his seat, and, holding his head in his hands, crouched down on the floor. He listened to the rest of the *kilam* in this position. This was the first time I had attended a performance in which the *dengbêjî* tradition did not need to emphasize Kurdish identity. People in the *civat* were no strangers to the space, to the performance, or to the other attendees of the *civat* and everyone was focused on the narrative.

Though perfectly alive, "new *dengbêjî*" has adopted a new modus operandi. This change is particularly prominent in big cities such as Istanbul because the audience, motivated to remember their traditions past, are now mere spectators. However, the *dengbêj*, tries to poignantly pronounce the Kurdishness of the performance by infusing himself into all aspects of the Kurdish quotidian. In this performance, the new *dengbêjî* takes on a traditional form, albeit in a new space with a new audience.

A Brief History of Kurdish Theater in Turkey

On September 12, 1980, a coup d'état in Turkey, the third in the history of the republic, resulted in a great schism with regard to Kurds. Kurdish identity was blasphemed as part of a new propaganda. Proportionally, with a robust focus on Turkishness[26] that espoused a policy that lacked recognition of any 'other', matters got worse. Following the coup d'état, the Barış Derneği (Peace Association) was closed. The founders of the association and its executives were arrested in 1982.[27] As a result, in 1985, Nobel Prize-winning playwright Harold Pinter came to Turkey with Arthur Miller. Pinter described his experience as follows:

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26 In the abstract of his article Ünlü says: "By Turkishness, I mean certain unrecognized ways/ states of seeing, hearing, feeling, perceiving, and knowing – as well as not seeing, not hearing, not feeling, not perceiving, and not knowing. Turkishness is also a world of privileges – in relation to the non-Turks – that has been enjoyed by the Turks without their acknowledgement." For a detailed overview of "Turkishness," see Ünlü, "Türklük Sözleşmesi'nin İmzalanışı (1915–1925)," 47–81.
27 Harold Pinter Organization, "Letter from Ali Taygun."

> In 1985 I went to Turkey with Arthur Miller, on behalf of International PEN to investigate the situation of writers in Turkey, which was pretty deplorable in fact. It was a very vivid and highly illuminating trip in a number of ways. One of the things I learnt while I was there was about the real plight of the Kurds: quite simply that they are not really allowed to exist at all and certainly not allowed to speak their language. For example, there's a publisher who wrote a history of the Kurds and was sent to prison for 36 years for simply writing a history of the Kurds.[28]

Despite these repressive policies, during this period, Kurds continued to be outspoken and making their presence known and worked in different platforms against various back-breaking pressures. The idea of opening the Mezopotamya Cultural Center (MKM), which would be the first corporate platform to sponsor Kurdish theater, was also envisaged during those years. In 1985, İbrahim Gürbüz, who was imprisoned at the time, stated that "if I ever get out of here, I will first organize my finances, and then work to restore our destroyed cultural values."[29] In later years, when MKM's door were opened in Istanbul (1991), he did just that as the first chairperson of MKM's executive board. Gürbüz explains the idea behind MKM as follows:

> The first bullet for the Kurdish struggle was fired in 1984. The Kurdish struggle had a prominent military aspect. In addition, political organization was also widespread. A nation may have very strong armies, it also may have very strong organizations, but if that nation does not have a cultural, artistic and scientific organization, those armies and political organizations may be destroyed in just one day with a bolt of lightning out of the blue. The lifeblood, the blood vessel of a nation is the art, the culture, the literature, the novels, the scientific and archaeological values of that nation. We needed a cultural center for the centralization, collection, and redemption of our cultural values that have been plundered due to assimilation. We set off with this awareness.[30]

Three departments designated for Science, Culture, and Art were established in MKM. The objective of MKM was to promote national awareness of Kurdish culture.[31] As Mamoste Cemil (Master Cemil), who lived a life of theater was the head

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28 Harold Pinter Organization, "Harold Pinter's Introductory Speech."

29 Gürbüz, "20. Yılında MKM'den Büyük Kutlama."

30 Gürbüz, "20. Yılında MKM'den Büyük Kutlama."

31 Performances used to be staged during the time of the Ottoman Empire and the early Republic era in which Kurdish words were used in the play. The plays featured a Kurdish character, had a playwright who was Kurdish, or whose subject matter was based on Kurds: all under the umbrella of Kurdish theater: "With the foundation of Mezopotamya Cultural Center in 1991 in İstanbul, *Mişko* (The Rat) was performed by MKM actors and *Dawiya Dehaq* was performed by 'Şanoya Roja Azadî' actors in the same year in İstanbul. As part of MKM, the 'Teatra Jiyana Nû' (New Life Theater) began its theater work in 1992." For more see, Zêdo and his introduction in Zêdo, *Kürt Tiyatro Tarihi*, 13.

of the first theater group at MKM, his experiences and accomplishments are highly pertinent to this discussion. Together with Diyarbakır, a group he was working with in Silvan during summers, Mamoste Cemil staged "Buzlar Çözülmeden" (Before the ice melts) by Cevat Fehmi Başkut when he was at teachers' training school. During the eastern meetings between the years 1967 and 1969,[32] Kurdish intellectual Mehdi Zana asked Mamoste Cemil to perform this play in Kurdish and to arrange a tour of villages, but this idea was never realized.[33] Mehdi Zana talks about the Theater Club he founded while he was the district head of the Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP) in Silvan:

> In this way, I wanted to instill in the youth both socialism and class awareness. I also tried to put a continuous and particular emphasis on the Kurdish Problem in order for them to have national awareness. We had devised this Theater Club as a tool to address these and put them it into action.
>
> I wanted to utilize everything. I had so many plans to reach the public, to draw them into the struggle, to increase their awareness, to make them claim their problems; theater was one of these [plans].
>
> We started rehearsals as we formed troops. We used to do rehearsals when we had the time, and, subsequently informed the youth as to the conditions in Kurdistan.[34]

It is clear from Zana's statement that the theater club was seen as a mediator for establishing national awareness. When considering theater in Turkey between 1961 and 1970, it may be argued that the aesthetic approach was often accompanied by a political awareness. Especially due to the spread of Marxist-Leninist views, Turkish theater became very political, staging mostly political plays. With regard to the Kurds, the first legal Kurdish organization, the Revolutionary Cultural Associations of the East (DDKO), was established in 1969. The organization hosted several nighttime events and picnics during which sketches on contemporary events were performed in Kurdish.[35] These sketches point to a political performance on a path to Kurdish nationalism. Therefore, it may be argued that the political and aesthetic elements of the Kurdish theater, which were founded on agitprop (agitation and propaganda), were established in Turkey during these years.

1971 marked another coup d'état in Turkey. In 1973, together with trade union members, Mamoste Cemil founded a workers' theater in Alibeyköy, and dramatized and staged the play on Kavel boycott, which took place in

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32 Meetings were held in various cities of eastern Turkey, and in Ankara, between 1967 and 1969. For analysis of the eastern meetings, see Beşikçi, *Doğu Mitingleri'nin Analizi*.

33 Mamoste Cemil, Interview (by author), İstanbul, 2016.

34 Zana, *Bekle Diyarbakır*, 56–57.

35 Mamoste Cemil, Interview (by author), 2016.

1963.[36] In 1975, Mamoste Cemil left Ankara Art Theater and joined the Revolutionary Ankara Art Theater (DAST), which was founded by Erkan Yücel. Mamoste Cemil stated that DAST was involved in public drama and that the group had an agitprop approach but emphasized that this did not imply a foregoing of theater aesthetics.[37] Mamoste Cemil later assumed an administrative role at DAST, which worked collectively with the theater group members in the devising of performances. He also put special emphasis on this during his years at MKM. While at DAST, Mamoste Cemil also gained experience in fieldwork.[38] The topic of the play *Deprem ve Zulüm* (The earthquake and the cruelty) is the 1976 earthquake in Muradiye/Van, where the majority of the inhabitants were Kurds. He stated that "it was the best, most aware play on Kurds,"[39] and that it was written as a result of fieldwork.[40] In this play, the Kurdish songs and elegies are recited by Mamoste Cemil. During these years, several other plays had Kurdish subjects or they included a few Kurdish words or songs. No documentation exists to imply whether plays performed solely in Kurdish existed. An exception to this is *Dawiya Dehaq* (The end of Dehak), written by Kemal Burkay and directed by Celal İpek. It was staged in Kurdish by the actors of the Revolutionary People's Culture Association (DHKD) at Diyarbakır Dilan Theater from 1978 until the 1980 coup d'état.[41]

After 1985, Mamoste Cemil performed in chamber theaters in Istanbul. During this period, two plays were staged: *Axa Sor* (Red Soil) which is about the village ranger organization, by the group Demhat, comprised of amateur actors; and *Heci Amer* (Hadji Amer), a play of irony about a man who thinks that

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36 The strike, initiated by the 220 members of the Mineworkers' Union in Turkey, took place when there was still a prohibition on strikes in the Labor Act and lasted for thirty-six days.

37 Mamoste Cemil, Interview (by author), 2016.

38 Mamoste Cemil, who went back to MKM in 1995, describes the work he did during those years: "We began talking about how to write plays. We commissioned everyone; they went to different parts of İstanbul and gathered information on what people were talking about, what they were discussing, and what they needed. They came back with different cases. We brought together the ones that were close to each other and applied them in Rojbaş." See Mamoste Cemil, "Mamoste Cemil ve Halkçı Kürt Tiyatrosu Denemesi."

39 Mamoste Cemil, "Mamoste Cemil ve Halkçı Kürt Tiyatrosu Denemesi."

40 Şıhali Yalçıner went to Van with Asaf Çiğiltepe. All the information was transcribed and they wrote a play titled *Deprem* (The earthquake). When they went back to Ankara, as Erkan Yücel asked for some changes, they added revolutionary and political dialogues to the text. See Yalçıner, "Introduction," 11–12.

41 Zêdo, "Kürt Tiyatro Kronolojisi," 256.

he needs to give up Kurdish identity in order to be rich, put on by the members of the Revolutionary Democratic Kurdish Association (DDKD). Watching plays in their own language had more than just an aesthetic value for Kurds, as it was a dramatic manifestation of their identity struggle. Before the plays began, the actors would sing Kurdish anthems with the audience. During the play, children were told fairytales in Kurdish in another room. Since it was dangerous to leave the house at night, the actors would stay overnight at premises where they performed, conversing with the audience members and answering their questions. During these conversations, the theme of the next play was also discussed. These organizations lasted for about five years.

The associations also held rehearsals. The 1990s were years where mass exodus of Kurds was taking place. Those Kurds who migrated to bigger cities came together under various associations, such as the Tuncelililer Association, the Cizreliler Association, and the Kiği Karakoçan Adaklı Yayladere Yedisu Social Solidarity, Aid, Improvement, and Culture Association (KAYY-DER). The main aim of these associations was to preserve memory as fellow townspeople came together and tried to keep alive their traditions and culture by organizing events. Those in these associations resisted the Turkish assimilation policies against Kurdish identity and were actively involved in theater practices.[42]

In 1998, in Diyarbakır, sketches in Kurdish were rehearsed and staged in the basement of a building that would later become the Diyarbakır branch of MKM.[43] Gıyasettin Şehir from Teatra Yekta Hevî states that, since performing in Kurdish was illegal, often they had to act with their faces hidden. Yet, despite all the difficulties, a drive for Kurdish nationalism brought them together.[44] It is interesting to note that state theaters in Diyarbakır also opened during this period. Diyarbakır State Theater was opened in 1988. In 1990, the Diyarbakır Municipality Dr. Orhan Asena City Theater, today known as the Diyarbakır Municipality City Theater, which had included plays in Kurdish and Zaza languages in its repertoire, also opened its doors under the direction of Ziya Demirel.[45]

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42 Kemal Ulusoy and Erdal Ceviz, discussion with author, İstanbul, 2013.

43 Gıyasettin Şehir, Interview (by author).

44 Gıyasettin Şehir, Interview (by author).

45 The City Theater, which had a Kurdish and Zaza language repertoire since 2003, entered a new phase on November 1, 2016 when new changes were introduced, whereby on December 14, 2016 some changes were made to its general regulations. Thereafter, on January 5, 2017, contracts of a total of 31 theatre artists were terminated. On February 11, 2017, a private theater company named Amed City Theater was established by a city theater troop in a Shopping Center in Diyarbakır.

It is evident from the examples given above that the first institutional examples of Kurdish theater had predecessors. The theatrical activities following the 1980 coup d'état were fundamentally shaped as a tool for resistance, aiming to promote Kurdish identity. What brought together the people involved in theater was not an aesthetical motivation, but rather the very same resistance against Turkish assimilation policies. The form of this resistance was not the theater itself but the language in which plays were performed–Kurdish. Their priority was the freedom to speak the language. Yet, it is clear that, while Kurdish theater developed organically, this agitprop theater met the needs of the period.

Kurdish theater began legal performances with MKM. Following their first play *Mişko* (Mice), MKM actors followed a different path after Mamoste Cemil left the company. Under Hüseyin Kaytan, the new director, the group was renamed Teatra Jiyana Nû (TJN) in 1992.

In 1993, the Democracy Party (DEP), which replaced the People's Labor Party (HEP), the first party of the Kurdish political movement, was established only to be banned by the Constitutional Court in 1994. This period was marked by unsolved murders of Kurdish politicians and journalists, who took part in the Kurdish national movement. Consequently, it became necessary to take risk aversive measure to perform Kurdish theater. There were intense pressures to ban the Kurdish language and culture in cities in which Kurdish population was a majority. Thus, it became almost impossible to pursue Kurdish theater in these cities. This is why Kurdish theater developed, instead, in the Istanbul branch of MKM. Ban on Kurdish language and culture after 2000s seemed to be easing. During the 1990s, many theaters were closed down. In 1995, when the Welfare Party won the local elections, the Diyarbakır City Theater was closed and remained shut until the People's Democracy Party (HADEP) won the local elections in 1999. In 1998, the theater of the Istanbul branch of MKM was locked and sealed. Yet, TJN did not stop their work and went on a fifteen-city tour of Germany with their play *Bridge of Culture*.[46] Kurdish theater experienced an important milestone in 2002 from the perspective of the Kurdish national movement. That year, a large number of actors left MKM and established a new group called the Seyr-i Mesel Theater. This split resulted in the founding of other theater companies. In the following years, some actors left the Seyr-i Mesel Theater, which used to be operated with a single aim and under a single roof in the past, resulting in the establishment of different Kurdish theater companies with different points of view.

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46 Ronî, "Teatra Jiyana Nû li ser Almayayê Axivî: 'Em Hatin Almanan jî Dîn Bikin!,'" 10.

The Kurdish Peace Process,[47] which was brought about by the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which came to power in 2003, also impacted Kurdish theater. In 2009, the Ministry of Culture, for the first time, provided financial support for Destar Theater for their play titled *Cerb* [Experiment], also performed in Kurdish.[48] However, such support did not last very long. For example, the Destar Theater, which received regular financial support from the Ministry until 2013, was subsequently included in the list of sanctioned companies due to claims that they supported the Gezi Park protests.[49] The theater company from Rojava, which was to perform at the 3rd Amed Theater Festival held in 2015, was also blacklisted and was thus not permitted to enter Turkey.[50] Similar incidents were widespread, indicating that being engaged in Kurdish theater has always been a political act for all parties involved.

In briefly outlining the history of the Kurdish theater in Turkey, the aim was to show the broader framework of the process that gained momentum in the early 1990s. Kurdish theater is not that independent from the Kurdish national movement. Although aesthetic values in Kurdish theater are now more prominent, theater is still politicized to a noticeable degree. Indeed, any political sanction would directly impact Kurdish theater. Even though there are companies who state that their fundamental motivation is to perform theater independent of politics, the fact that the performance is in Kurdish is in itself a political act, as such practices are yet to be normalized in Turkey. For this reason, in order to shift to a platform in which aesthetic concerns can be debated, Kurdish theater needs to shake off its marginal identity.

Debates on national Kurdish theater have always been sporadic at best. In the proceedings of the 1st National Kurdish Theater Conference, which was organized in 2012, it was decided that the conference would be held annually, but this was not achieved. The next step was the establishment of the Kurdistan Theater Assembly in Diyarbakır in 2015. The founding principles and the working program of the thirty-five-person group were announced at a press conference in Diyarbakır. This quote from the founding principles of the Assembly is striking: "It accepts as its primary duty to bring to the theater historical and

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47 In 2014, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey proposed the law on the peace process to President Abdullah Gül, and the approved legislation, called the "Law on the Termination of Terrorism and the Strengthening of Social Integration" was published in the Turkish Official Gazette.

48 Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Republic of Turkey, "Özel Tiyatrolar 2009–2010 Sanat Sezonu Yardımları."

49 Selda Güneysu, "Gezi Cezası."

50 Filmed by Press Statement of Amed Theater Festival Committee, Diyarbakır, 2015.

cultural values of Kurdistan such as epics, mythologies, legends, and tales."[51] This clearly sets out the idea that Kurdish theater should utilize traditional elements as a matter of principle. Performances that reflect this stance are found in Kurdish theaters in Turkey. This is also why Kurdish theater and the *dengbêjî* tradition have become inextricably linked in recent years. The Kurdish theater performers agree that this is the only way to create an authentic theater language on the path to nationalization. As a result, they either openly make use of the *dengbêjî* tradition in their performances or claim to do so.

The Impact of the *Dengbêjî* Tradition on Kurdish Theater: Case Studies

As an important vehicle of transmission for the Kurdish culture, the *dengbêjî* tradition, has recently attracted the attention of the Kurdish national movement. This tradition, which used to be considered archaic, has gradually gained popularity and has become a significant resource for Kurdish actors. The debates on national Kurdish theater emphasized that the *dengbêjî* tradition is a Kurdish form and the actors agreed to promote this tradition.

The *Dengbêjî* as a Cultural Code in Theater

The play *Yunus Emre*, written by Recep Bilginer, was staged at Diyarbakır State Theater during the 1989–90 season. The protagonist of the play was greatly applauded for his line "I want to speak my language." In order to prevent misunderstandings, the next day, that line was changed to "I want to speak my Turkish."[52] In 2007, state actor Turgay Tanülkü was prosecuted for directing a Kurdish play, *Sen Gara Değilsin* (You are not Gara) at Teatra Avesta. Only two years later, due to the changes in the state's Kurdish policies, a play titled *Ölümü Yaşamak*[53] that was staged at the Diyarbakır State Theater included Kurdish language as well as

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51 "*Diyarbakır'da Kürdistan Tiyatro Meclisi Kuruldu*" (Kurdistan Theater Assembly) was founded in Diyarbakır.

52 Saban, "Diyarbakır'dan Kürtçe Tiyatro İzlenimleri."

53 Although this play is not performed in Kurdish, it is included in this study because it exemplifies how *dengbêjî* is used as a cultural code.

performances of the *dengbêjî* tradition. Directed by Tamer Levent, the play is about blood feud and was originally written in Turkish by Orhan Asena. This was the first time Kurdish language was spoken in a state play. Orkun Gülşen, manager of the Diyarbakır State Theater, stated that the decision to perform the play in Kurdish was unanimous. He further stated that all involved in the play concurred that an example from the *dengbêjî* tradition would serve the artistic values of the play and create sympathy among Kurdish audiences in the region.[54] Director Tamer Levent, on the other hand, indicated that they made use of the *dengbêjî* tradition because it was suitable for the structure of the play. Levent also mentioned that he was very moved by the *dengbêjî*, which is performed with a specific guttural sound and no instruments.[55]

> We provide an example of the *dengbêjî* tradition, as the play takes place in the region. I am very moved by the narration of an event by a *dengbêj*. *Dengbêjs* narrate history, love and such events like vendetta. There is a bard (*ozan*) culture here. It would not be very nice if we translated this into Turkish; above all, it would not fit with the guttural sound. Therefore, we used this bard culture in its own language. This is the first time a Kurdish narration is included in a play at the State Theaters. It does add a nice dimension to the play.[56]

The *dengbêjî* tradition, which was included in the play for its aesthetic value, found a place at the state theater due to the political atmosphere at the time, even though it was emphasized that this was not a political move. Rather, the official stance was that it was a coincidence that it happened at the time when the resolution process was ongoing.[57] Kurdish was accepted at the state theater only as a result of the state's policy with regard to Kurds, making use of elegies and songs in Kurdish in some parts of the play possible. Indeed, Kurdishness is emphasized, as the events in the play take place in eastern Turkey, where the majority of the population is Kurdish. Moreover, the subject of the play is about blood feud, which is a social phenomenon among Kurds. The *dengbêjî* tradition is in fact attached to the play according to a generic formula. It is incorporated into the play as a cultural – rather than a theatrical – aspect. At no point in the play does it have an aesthetic function as per constituting the staging of the story: it exists by itself on the stage.

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54 Özkartal, "Bir Açılım Varsa, O da 21 yıl Önce Bu Tiyatronun Kurulmasıdır."
55 "Devlet Tiyatroları'ndan Kürtçe Açılımı."
56 "Devlet Tiyatroları'nda ilk Kürtçe Tirad."
57 Kartal, "Bir Açılım Varsa, O da 21 yıl Önce Bu Tiyatronun Kurulmasıdır."

The *Dengbêj* as the Narrator on Stage

Kurdish theater's decision to make use of *dengbêjî* was prompted by its narrative form. One such example is the 2013 play *Nêçîrvan* (Hunter), which was staged by the Figürsüzler Theater Company in Mardin. The play is about two smugglers and the backdrop is a picture of a smuggler pulling a mule carrying a load. Pictures of Ehmedê Xanî, the author of *Mem û Zîn*, and the famous Kurdish poet Melayê Cizirî, are also given prominent place on the set. The musicians and the *dengbêj* sit on the right side of the stage. During our interview with Ubeydullah Olam, author and director of the play, in Mardin, in 2013,[58] he stated that he used the *dengbêj* as the narrator. At the end of each scene, the *dengbêj* narrates a *kilam* that summarizes the preceding scene. When we asked Olam why the *kilam*s are narrated at the end of each scene, he said the *dengbêj*s usually narrate *kilam*s after the event takes place. This also reveals how the scene is interpreted by the *dengbêj* himself after the scene is played out. The tradition turns an actual event into a performance duration. In this respect, the actor who is playing the *dengbêj* is both in the theatrical performance and the *dengbêjî* performance, while he narrates the *kilam*: a double aesthetic phenomenon. Consequently, the *dengbêj*, who is the narrator, goes beyond being just a cultural element and contributes to the aesthetics of the play. Another play in which the *dengbêj* is a narrator is the Kurdish adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Performed in Kurdish for the first time, the play was staged by the Diyarbakır Municipality City Theater in 2012 under the direction of Celil Toksöz, art director of Theater Rast. Celil Toksöz, whom we interviewed in 2016 in Diyarbakır,[59] stated that they added two *dengbêj*s to the play. Pointing out that Shakespeare was also a narrator, Toksöz argued that, in the Kurdish version of Hamlet, it is natural for the narrator to be a *dengbêj*. Toksöz further shared that he envisioned the *dengbêj*s as narrators who tell about Hamlet in the play. Two actors, one male and one female, sitting on stools on the right side of the stage, play the part of *dengbêj*s. They take the stage at the beginning of the play and talk about Shakespeare with Ehmedê Xanî and the famous Kurdish *dengbêj* Evdalê Zeynike. Even though these two actors are playing the part of *dengbêj*s, they are not narrating *kilam*s. They do not relay their narratives in the *dengbêjî* style. When we asked why, director Celil Toksöz explained that, initially, he thought of working with real *dengbêj*s and thus visited the Diyarbakır Dengbêj House several times. He explained that, although *dengbêj*s are expert narrators,

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58 Ubeydullah Olam, Discussion (with author), Mardin, 2013.
59 Celil Toksöz, Interview (by author), Diyarbakır, 2016.

he decided not to include them in the play, as he thought that theater may prove unsuitable for them, because they aren't actors. Toksöz thus made two actors play the role of *dengbêj*, at which point they are incorporated into the play. Consequently, only actors who play the *dengbêj*s appear on the stage and they narrate the events in Hamlet as would any narrator. This means they do not use the inherent musicality and performability of the *dengbêjî* narrative style. The play is merely "Kurdicized" for having used the *dengbêj*s. Yavuz Akkuzu, who played Hamlet and whom we interviewed in İstanbul in 2016,[60] stated that localization and Kurdishness was always emphasized in the rehearsals. They also felt that, if there is a narrator in the Kurdish Hamlet, it has to be the *dengbêj*.

Another instance of utilization of *dengbêjî* tradition was in the Kurdish Improvisation Theater performance that took place in Diyarbakır in 2015. As a result of an improvisation theater workshop organized under the direction of Koray Tarhan, the DBBŞT actors staged a performance that also included a game called "*Dengbêj*." During the "*dengbêj*" game, which was presented in modern Improvisation theater, three actors narrate an improvised *kilam* according to directions from the audience. During the improvised segment, which was adapted from the *dengbêjî* style by Koray Tarhan, there is no straightforward *dengbêjî* performance on stage. This is an ironic interpretation (mimicking even) of the typical *dengbêjî*. The exclamations that take place at the beginning of the *kila*m, and the *dengbêj's* covering one of his ears up during the narration of the *kilam* and quavering his voice, are all satirized. Nevertheless, this localization strengthened the relationship between *dengbêjî* performers and the Kurdish audience. It must be noted that the fundamental motivation of the "*dengbêj*" game was not to make use of the tradition, but rather to give a unique improvised performance.

These examples show how this type of utilization of traditions promotes Kurdishness. Even though the impact of *dengbêjî* took shape as a narrative form which had a political and cultural twist, it eventually takes on an aesthetic value in these performances.

The *Kilam* as the Dramatic Text

The *kilam*s, the narratives of the *dengbêjî* tradition, are very important for Kurds, for whom they are not fables or tales. All the *dengbêj*s we interviewed stated that, as *kilam*s they narrate are based on real life, they constitute a rich

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60 Yavuz Akkuzu, Interview (by author), İstanbul, 2016.

resource for Kurdish national identity. They are also important for Kurdish theater, as it is challenging to create performances using only text as the source. Indeed, given the low number of dramatic texts in Kurdish, the importance of the *kilam*s for the Kurdish theater is a foregone conclusion. Their narrative structure provides a unique source for adaptation into a dramatic text. Kurdish theater either incorporates the people, events, and places embodied in the *kilam*s in the performances or builds the performance itself on the *kilam*s.

In 2006, the actors of the Dicle Fırat Cultural Center, who continue their theater work under the name Yekta Hevî in Diyarbakır, produced a dance theater play titled *Derwêşê Evdî* (Evdi's Derweş), written and directed by Giyasettin Şehir. Seyitxane Boyaxci, one of the most famous *dengbêj*s in Diyarbakır, also performed in the play, which tells the story of love between Edul, the daughter of the Kurdish *beg* Zor Temir Pasha, and the Derwêşê Evdî. Giyasettin Şehir said that he listened to the epic told by several *dengbêj*s during his field research before turning it into a dramatic text. He wrote the text scene-by-scene, giving each one a name. Throughout the dance theater, the *dengbêj* Seyitxan narrates the *kilam* between the scenes while strolling among the actors. The director indicates that they also gave stage directions to the *dengbêj*, but the *dengbêj* never actually followed them in any of the performances.[61] Consequently, the *dengbêj* is on stage not as an actor, but in his traditional role. Therefore, this performance style allows the *dengbêj* to take part in a dramatic performance, serving its own aesthetic purposes.

In this case, the fact that the legend of "Derwêşê Evdî" was performed with a narrator provided a bridge between theater and the *dengbêjî* tradition. Both performances came together in a joint project that enabled the audience to see not only the historical and cultural significance of the *dengbêjî* tradition but also its aesthetic value. *Dengbêjî* tradition was able to be wed to theater on an aesthetical platform without losing anything from its performance duration: *kilam* as the source of this dramatic text played a big role.

Another play that was adapted from a *kilam* is *Spîmend*, written and directed by Ghotbeddin Sadeghi, an Iranian Kurd playwright and scholar. This play, staged in 2015 by the DBBŞT actors, is about a Kurdish principality in Iran. The head of the principality, Mend's father (principal character) does not resist Persian, Sassanid and Seljukian invaders, but rather welcomes the three as guests. He asks Mend to feed their horses, which the director uses as a metaphor. The fact that the grass of Kurdish meadows refuses to be grazed by the horses of the occupying forces is a fine example of political referencing.

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61 Gıyasettin Şehir, Interview (by author), Diyarbakır, 2015.

Eventually, Mend decides to rebel and leaves his family. During his journey, he is killed by one of his countrymen: someone who was like a brother to him. At the end of the play, the spirit of Mend, the character who represents freedom, kills the spirit of his assassin. He thus becomes the symbol of resistance and freedom.

In *Spîmend*, the impact of *dengbêjî* varies markedly from that conveyed in the other plays. First, there is no *dengbêj* in the play or a character playing a *dengbêj*. The play is inspired by a *kilam* and the impact of the *dengbêjî* is evident throughout the entirety of the performance. In other words, in *Spîmend*, the performance duration of the *dengbêjî* tradition is transformed into the performance duration of the play itself. The play includes live instrumental scenes in addition to scenes mostly featuring dialogue. The instrumental scenes are thus akin to the *dengbêj* narration of the *kilam*; it is as if a *dengbêj* is narrating the action on the stage. By designing these scenes as such, each member of the audience is prompted to watch the action as though a *dengbêjî* is a listener. The elements of the narrative do not have an impact on the performance which itself becomes the narrative. For example, the repetitive actions in the *kilam*s are also found in *Spîmend*. Mend takes the horses to the meadows three times, each time the action picking up more speed. These repetitions are used by the director to create an infinite space for the audience's imagination. The relationship the *dengbêj* establishes with his audience finds its equivalent in a dramatic platform. The rhythm of the *dengbêjî* tradition is established in this play as such. It can be said that there is an aesthetic reckoning with the *dengbêjî* tradition. However, this was not intentional from the start. The aim was not to make use of this tradition, but rather to bring a *kilam* to the stage as an integral part of a play. In essence, *Spîmend* is a Kurdish adaptation of the narrative. Yet, the Kurdishness of the play is not due to any cultural, national, or historical element. What makes *Spîmend* Kurdish is the fact that actors act as Kurds and speak in Kurdish. Acting in the mother tongue enables the actor to use his/her body more naturally. One of the actors, Bora Çelik, stated that during and after the rehearsals they communicated with the director only in Kurdish. Since Sadeghi does not understand Turkish, only Kurdish was spoken during rehearsals. This is different from other rehearsals, where actors speak in Kurdish only during the play.[62] In this regard, *Spîmend* provides an example of theater in Kurdish that is beyond what we call Kurdish theater.

In conclusion, it is clear that both *Derwêşê Evdî* and *Spîmend* make use of the *dengbêjî* tradition to transform legends into dramatic texts. In this respect,

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62 Bora Çelik, Interview (by author), Diyarbakır, 2015.

adapting the *kilam* to the stage resulted in gravitating toward certain aesthetics. Whereas a real *dengbêj* takes the stage in *Derwêşê Evdî*, the action of the *kilam* is equated with the performance duration of *Spîmend*, because the dramaturgy of the play which constitutes of instrumental scenes as well as narrated parts and rhythm of the actors' narrations and uses of their bodies all evoke the *dengbêj* tradition.

Conclusion

Kurdish theater in Turkey should not be considered independent from the Kurdish policies of the state which are far from organic. Having an authentic theater language was never a priority for the Kurdish theater, which emerged publicly at the beginning of the 1990s. Ultimately, to be truly independent, Kurdish theater needed to be performed in a language that is not banned. Moreover, to be a truly Kurdish theater, it is not enough to stage performances in Kurdish. Since Kurdish performers in Turkey do not acquire the art of theater in Kurdish and do not speak Kurdish in all public spaces, we can speak of a Kurdish theater only when the actors speak Kurdish on stage. Kurdish actors have traditionally used theater as a tool of resistance against identity assimilation. Still, it is not possible to argue that Kurdish theater, which began with agitprop plays, went against the ongoing assimilation policies. Theater performances in Kurdish also have a political meaning beyond that of the aesthetic. In fact, in certain periods, political motivations eclipsed the aesthetic values. The changes in state policies after the 2000s regarding the Kurds has a noticeable effect on the Kurdish theater. During this period, the Kurdish theater, which resisted oppression during the 1990s, found new platforms. Since this change was not brought about by a cultural policy, it is on a slippery ground and subject to further change with each new political turmoil. Throughout its long resistance to the dominant culture, Kurdish theater prioritized its Kurdish identity. The search for an aesthetic language, on the other hand, has been discussed intermittently. Since, during meetings about a national Kurdish theater, consensus was reached that an authentic theater language might be created only by relying on Kurdish traditions, it was necessary to investigate contemporary performances of Kurdish theater in this context. The findings here delineate the social, cultural, and political circumstances that enable the *dengbêjî* tradition to continue. Moreover, we noted that, although the play is performed as an imitation of the tradition, the essence of the *dengbêjî* is well alive. For this reason, contemporary *dengbêjî* performances, different in structure, are called the new *dengbêjî*. This distinction is important because what

the Kurdish actors will experience today is the new *dengbêjî* and it beholds an aesthetic value for the Kurdish theater.

The term "Kurdish theater" is currently used in Turkey in reference to theater performances in the Kurdish language. This practice has persisted, even though the assimilation policies pressuring Kurdish identity prevent Kurdish theater from using their authentic theater language from time to time. Only by remaining authentic, will it be able to retain the tradition in the contemporary performance style.

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Djene R. Bajalan

Conservatives and Radicals: Ethnicity and Politics in Early Modern Ottoman Kurdistan

On August 23, 1514, the military might of two of the Middle East's most powerful dynastic states, the Ottomans and the Safavids, took to the field of battle at Çaldıran, a mountain plateau northeast of Lake Van. In the ensuing struggle – which pitted the Ottoman monarch, Sultan Selim I (r. 1512–20) against his Safavid counterpart, Shah Ismail I (r. 1501–24) – the Ottoman side emerged victorious. While further Ottoman advances into Iranian Azerbaijan, the base of Safavid power, were repelled, this victory was of great significance in the evolution of Middle Eastern affairs. On the one hand, it ensured that the westward expansion of the Shi'ite belief systems espoused by the Safavids would be hindered; on the other hand, it exposed the changing nature of warfare in the early sixteenth century. Shah Ismail's followers were primarily drawn from among Turkish pastoralists of Azerbaijan and Anatolia. They took to the field on horseback, fought as tribal units, and, without strong charismatic leadership, often proved difficult to control. Such forces had constituted one of the most successful models of military organization of the medieval period. In contrast, the Ottomans' military power was founded upon a large disciplined standing army loyal directly to the sultan and the extensive use of gunpowder technology – both hallmarks of military organization in the early modern world. Thus, Çaldıran, along with the Ottoman victory of the forces of Mamluk Egypt at Mercidabık (almost exactly two years later), might be seen – at least in military terms – as signaling the end of the medieval order and the beginning of an early modern one. However, from the perspective of this study, the most significant impact of the Ottoman victory at Çaldıran was that it laid the foundation for over four hundred years of Ottoman rule over much of Kurdistan, the home to the majority of the Middle East's Kurdish community.[1]

   This article seeks to uncover the role of ethnic identity in shaping Kurdish perceptions of Ottoman sovereignty between the early sixteenth and early nineteenth

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[1] Here, the term "Kurdistan" is used as shorthand to refer to the geo-cultural zone of Kurdish settlement in the highlands separating Asia Minor and Iran. This should not be taken to imply that the region was ethnically or religiously homogeneous. The fortress towns ruled by Kurdish aristocrats were populated by Armenian craftsmen and merchants. Kurdish pastoralists competed for lands alongside Arab and Turcoman tribesmen, and Kurdish-speaking Muslim villagers lived alongside Syriac-speaking Christian cultivators.

centuries. Examining the role of ethnic categorizations and ethnic awareness should be distinguished from the study of modern Kurdish nationalism. It also seeks to differentiate between, on the one hand, ethnic awareness or ethnic social and political solidarity prior to the nineteenth century and, on the other hand, modern nations and nationalism. When discussing manifestations of Kurdish ethnic consciousness in the premodern era, it is necessary to steer clear of anachronistically projecting present-day conceptions of Kurdish 'nationhood' and 'nationality' back onto a period in which 'nations' in the modern sense of the word did not exist.[2] To avoid this, Anthony D. Smith's concept of the *ethnie* is adopted. For Smith, the *ethnie*, which is distinct from our understanding of a modern nation, is defined as "named human populations with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory, and a sense of solidarity."[3] *Ethnie* ought to be understood as an ideal-type, which hardly ever occurs in its pure form: "it has to attach itself to other, more tangible forms of community."[4]

A clear example of this dependence, in the Kurdish case, pertains to the existence of an ethnic boundary between tribal and non-tribal elements of the Kurdish-speaking population. In many regions of the Ottoman Empire's Kurdish-inhabited east, Kurdish-speaking tribesmen dominated communities of settled cultivators who, although sharing a common language and religion with the tribes, lacked tribal affiliations. Indeed, Claudius Rich, a British East India Company agent who visited the Kurdish-inhabited region of Şehrizor (Shahrizor) in the early nineteenth century, observed the vast gulf separating the Kurdish-speaking peasantry from their tribal cousins. According to Rich, the distinctiveness of the peasantry went beyond their economic conditions to encompass differences in appearance, speech, and customs. Most importantly, however, this distinction was articulated, in terms of an "ethnic boundary," by the Kurds themselves. As one tribal boss noted to Rich, "the Turks call us all Koords, and have no conception of the distinction between us; but we are quite a distinct people from the peasants; and they have the stupidity which the Turks are pleased to attribute to us."[5] Thus, considering the close association between socioeconomic

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2 For an overview of modernist theories of nations and nationalism, see Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism*, 72–142.

3 Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 23.

4 Pohl, "Introduction: Ethnicity, Religion and Empire," 10.

5 Rich, *Narrative of a Residence in Koordistan*, 1:89. For an extensive discussion on the caste-like distinction between Kurdish tribesmen and the Kurdish-speaking peasantry, see van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 105–21. Also see van Bruinessen, "Kurdish Society, Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Refugee Problem," 39.

status and membership in the Kurdish community, the Kurdish *ethnie* might best be described as a "lateral" or "aristocratic" *ethnie*, namely, an ethnic community that encompasses only the highest tier of what we may regard today as the Kurdish community.[6]

However, this 'popular' understanding of ethnic differences is not the only context in which Kurdish distinctiveness was mobilized prior to the first manifestations of modern Kurdish nationalism toward the end of the nineteenth century. In order to illustrate this point, below, we will draw upon the works of Şeref Khan Bitlisi (1543–1600/1601) and Ehmedê Khanî (1650–1707). Şeref Khan was a member of a Kurdish house of nobles that claimed dominion over the town of Bitlis. He was also the author of the *Sharafnāma*, which details the history of the Kurds and Kurdistan's noble houses. Ehmedê Khanî was a religious scholar and Sufi mystic, whose poetry, written in the Kurmancî dialect of Kurdish, has earned him a prominent place in the pantheon of Kurdish literary history.[7] Here, by focusing on the works of these individuals, while perhaps sharing the 'aristocratic' conception of the Kurdish *ethnie* as a marker of socioeconomic status, Kurdish ethnic distinctiveness in relation to its larger imperial neighbors is emphasized. An examination of their legacy elucidates the way that the elements of the Kurdish political and cultural elite conceptualized their place within broader social and political order of the early modern Middle East.

Pax Ottomanica and the Kurdish "Renaissance"

Before examining the works of Şeref Khan and Ehmedê Khanî directly, it is necessary to provide some background on both the Ottoman Empire in general; and early modern Ottoman Kurdistan more specifically. Perhaps one of the most striking features of the sixteenth-century Ottoman polity was the *relatively* centralized nature of the feudal order the empire's ruling dynasty had established in their Anatolian and Balkan heartlands: the so-called *tımar* system.

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6 The aristocratic *ethnie* is contrasted to a demotic ethnic identity, which is not based on class but a strong sense of cultural (or religious) unity. See Smith, *National Identity*, 52–54; Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, 193–94. See also van Bruinessen, "Kurdish Society, Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Refugee Problem," 39.

7 In undertaking this research, I have relied on the 1860 edition of *Sharafnāma*, published St. Petersburg and for the works of Ehmedê Khanî, and specifically his epic *Mêm û Zîn*, I used 2004 Nefel edition, published in Sweden. The translations presented here are largely my own. However, I would like to thank Ms. Sara Zandi Bajalan for her assistance with the translations from Persian.

Imperial territories were organized hierarchically, with the *beylerbeylik*s (governor-generalships) at the highest tier, followed by *sancak*s/*liva*s (countries), and finally individual *tımar*s (fiefs).[8] The sultan assigned these fiefs to a variety of provincial officials, ranging from *siphai*s (provincial cavalrymen), who occupied the bottom rung of the feudal ladder, to higher-ranking provincial officials such as the *sancakbeyi*s (county governors) and *beylerbeyi*s (governors-general). However, the system was far less centralized than this outline suggests. For instance, low-ranking provincial cavalrymen were often members of pre-Ottoman notable elites and were, in practice, often able to pass on their holdings to their descendants. On the other hand, those within the upper levels of the provincial elite were generally drawn from among the sultan's slave retinue and, at least in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, did not generally enjoy the privilege of hereditary control over those fiefs assigned to them.[9]

The *tımar* system, which has been regarded as one of the defining features of the classical Ottoman state, evolved gradually during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Its development mirrored the gradual transformation of the Ottoman polity from a small tribal principality on the frontiers of the Byzantine Empire into the preeminent power in Anatolia and the Balkans. This was a gradual first phase of expansion, which commenced during the reign of the dynasty's founder, Osman Gazi (r. 1299–1324), and coming, in a certain way, to a dramatic climax in 1453 with the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople.[10] However, in the early sixteenth century, the pace of Ottoman expansion quickened. In the eight years of Sultan Selim I's reign alone, Ottoman rule was extended into eastern Anatolia, northern Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and western Arabia, more than doubling the size of the empire. Under Sultan Selim's son, Süleyman II (r. 1520–66), better known in the West as Suleiman the Magnificent, the Ottoman power and boundaries extended further into Iraq and Hungary – as well as North Africa. While this rapid rate of expansion outstripped the Ottoman state's ability to easily assimilate new territories, Ottoman leaders were adept at meeting these challenges, often proving to be extremely flexible in reaching political accommodations with local elites in provinces far from the empire's core territories.[11] As one historian of the

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8 It should be noted that the term *tımar* was used to refer to lower-value fiefs assigned to *siphai* cavalrymen. Those fiefs of greater value were designated *zeamet* or *hass* lands and assigned to individuals in the upper echelons of the provincial administration.

9 On the evolution of the *tımar* system and provincial administration, see Imber, *The Ottoman Empire*, 177–215. See also Matuz, "Nature and Stages of Ottoman Feudalism," 282–92.

10 Inalcik, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," 103–29.

11 On administration in the Ottoman Empire's outer provinces, see Ágoston, "A Flexible Empire: Authority and Its Limits on the Ottoman Frontier," 15–31.

Crimean Tatars astutely observed: "Almost everywhere one looks in the Ottoman Empire, relationships between a province and the centre were different . . . . Where one finds voivodes, amirs, sultans, beys, shaykhs, and Khans, one also finds different sets of ties between province and center."[12] This pragmatism and flexibility was also apparent in the relationship the Ottoman sultanate cultivated with Kurdistan's aristocratic elites.

While the Ottoman victory at Çaldıran was impressive, Safavid hold in Kurdistan was yet to be broken. Shah Ismail I's followers, the Qizilbash,[13] remained in possession of the fortresses of Kemah, Mardin, Urfa, and Van. The Ottoman position was further undermined by the fact that, following his retreat from Azerbaijan, Sultan Selim I moved his forces southward to engage the Mamluks in Syria, allowing Shah Ismail I to regroup and dispatch forces to recapture the fortress-city of Diyarbakır. Nevertheless, Safavid forces still had to contend with the hostility of many powerful Kurdish nobles in the region.

Prior to Çaldıran, Shah Ismail I had adopted the strategy of removing Kurdish nobles from their ancestral lands and replacing them with Qizilbash commanders. Indeed, this included those Kurds who were willing to accept Safavid rule. For instance, when a group of sixteen Kurdish emirs traveled to render submission to the Shah, all but two were imprisoned.[14] Mistrust between the two sides was likely intensified by religious differences. The Shiite Safavids proved to be anathema to most Kurdish leaders, who were Shafi'i. As one Italian visitor to the Kurdish stronghold of Bitlis observed, the Kurds refused to convert to the Safavid doctrine and bore "a deadly hatred to them."[15] Thus, the Ottomans were able to appeal to the religious sensibilities of various Kurdish emirs and tribal chieftains. Sultan Selim I further secured Kurdish support by directly mobilizing the Kurds in the fight against the Safavids. The sultan delegated the task of securing an alliance with the region's Kurdish elites to İdris Bitlisi (d. 1520), a Sufi mystic and experienced bureaucrat familiar with Kurdish affairs.[16] In return for recognizing Ottoman suzerainty and providing military

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12 Fisher, "Crimean Separatism," 57–58.

13 In the early sixteenth century, the term Qizilbash ("red-head") referred to the predominantly Turkish-speaking tribesmen who followed Shah Ismail I, regarding him as a semi-divine figure. The term is derived from the red cap worn by the shah's devotees. See Babayan, "The Safavid Synthesis: From Qizilbash Islam to Imamite Shi'ism," 135–61. Within the Ottoman context, the term gradually evolved to encompass not only pro-Safavid Turkish-speaking tribesmen but other communities with pro-Shi'ite beliefs. Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire*, 36.

14 Bidlīsī, *Scheref-nameh*, 411.

15 Grey, *A Narrative of Italian Travels in Persia in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, 157.

16 Sönmez, *İdris-i Bitlisi*, 29–60.

service, Bitlisi assured Kurdish emirs and tribal chieftains that their claims to dominion over their ancestral lands would be recognized.[17] Owing to Kurdish support, the mission was a success, proving pivotal in the consolidation of Ottoman rule across much of western and central Kurdistan.[18]

The outcome of this successful alliance was the evolution of a peculiar system of "condominial" rule, whereby Kurdistan's indigenous elites shared power with representatives of the Ottoman sultanate. As Ottoman rule extended deeper into the Kurdish highlands, newly acquired territories were organized into regular Ottoman provinces under the control of centrally appointed governors-general, and lands within these provinces were divided into fiefs. However, the standard *tımar* system was never fully adopted in the provinces of Kurdistan. Many districts remained under the control of Kurdish nobles, who were granted possession of their holdings on a hereditary basis (*yurtluk/ocaklık*). At the top of this system were the great Kurdish noble houses, the emirs (*mîr*s) of Kurdistan, such as the rulers of Bitlis, Hasankeyf, and Cezire-Bohtan.[19] Although subject to Ottoman governors-general, they were granted the status of regimes (*hükümet*s), which conferred hereditary rights over their lands and exemption from Ottoman taxation. In addition, districts enjoying regime status were also afforded a certain degree of religious autonomy with *kadı* (Muslim judges) being drawn from among scholars of the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence, predominant among the Kurds, as opposed to the Hanafi school favored by the Ottomans.[20] Lesser noble house and tribal leaders were also afforded a significant degree of security in their home districts. These Kurdish counties (*ekrad sancakları*) were, in terms of taxation and military service, similar to regular Ottoman counties (*Osmanlı sancakları*), albeit with the local ruling family as hereditary fiefs.[21] In short, the Ottomans did not remake

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17 Sönmez, *İdris-i Bitlisi*, 112. See also Saadeddin, *Tac üt-Tevarih*, 2:322–23.

18 See van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 136–45; Sönmez, *İdris-i Bitlisi*, 98–110; İlhan, *Amid (Diyarbakır)*, 5–14.

19 See van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 136–45.

20 Ateş, "Empires at the Margins: Towards a History of the Ottoman-Iranian Borderland and the Borderland Peoples," 64–65. This was a peculiar arrangement as the Ottoman administration generally appointed members of the *ulema*, schooled in the Hanefi *mezhep*, to the most important positions in the empire's judicial hierarchy, even in regions where other Sunni *mezhep*s (schools) predominated. Hathaway, *The Arab Lands Under Ottoman Rule, 1516–1800*, 46–48.

21 For a general overview of Ottoman administrative practices in Kurdistan prior to the nineteenth century, see van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 151–75; Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State*, 53–59; Öz, "Ottoman Provincial Administration in Eastern and South Eastern Anatolia," 145–56; Ágoston, "A Flexible Empire: Authority and Its Limits on the Ottoman Frontier," 17–23.

Kurdistan in their own image, but rather applied an Ottoman veneer to the preexisting tribal and territorial divisions among the Kurds.

As one might expect, relations between Kurdish elites and representatives of imperial authority were never entirely harmonious, and accordingly fluctuated the power of different Kurdish houses of nobility. Indeed, Şeref Khan's career is suggestive of the fluid political theater on the Ottoman-Safavid frontier. Şeref Khan's grandfather, Mîr Şeref, had been one of the principal figures in the anti-Safavid alliance, which had ousted the Qizilbash from much of Kurdistan in the early sixteenth century. However, he was removed from office by Süleyman II, who handed over his domain to Olama Beg Takkalu, a former high-ranking Safavid official.[22] Thus, members of Bitlis's ruling house were forced to seek sanctuary at the court of the Safavid Shah Tahmasp I (r. 1524–76). While in exile, Mîr Şeref and his descendants were treated with great respect and enjoyed a privileged life. Şeref Khan was educated alongside the Safavid royal family and was integrated into the Safavid governing elite at an early age. Significantly, it seems that the Safavids sought to groom Şeref Khan into a pro-Safavid Kurdish leader, granting him, according to his own account, the title of High Emir of the Kurds (*amīr al-umarā al-akrād*) and the responsibility of representing the nobility of Kurdistan at the Safavid court.[23] Indeed, his final administrative position within the Safavid Empire, to which he was appointed in 1578, was the governorship of Nakhichevan (today in Azerbaijan), a strategically located district on the Ottoman-Safavid frontier. However, while on the frontier, Ottoman general Hüsrev Pasha secured Şeref Khan's defection in return for restoring him and his family to their ancestral holdings at Bitlis. Şeref Khan subsequently supported the Ottomans militarily, launching several military campaigns against his former masters. Significantly, it seems that Şeref Khan's career in service to the Ottoman sultanate ended ignominiously when he died during a dispute with the governor-general of Van, Ahmed Pasha in 1600/1601.[24] Yet, despite the fall of Şeref Khan, Bitlis remained a bastion of Kurdish autonomy, retaining control of its native ruling house well into the nineteenth century. Thus, while the power and influence of individual Kurdish houses of nobility fluctuated, the broad contours of the political settlement that arrived between Istanbul and Kurdistan's native aristocracy in the early sixteenth century remained largely intact until the enactment of the *Tanzimat* reforms of the 1840s.[25]

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22 Bidlīsī, *Scheref-nameh*, 422–23.

23 Bidlīsī, *Scheref-nameh*, 427–28.

24 Dehqan and Genç, "Why Was Sharaf Khan Killed?," 13–19. See also Dehqan and Genç, "Reflections on Sharaf Khan's Autobiography," 46–61.

25 See Aydın and Verheij, "Confusion in the Cauldron: Some Notes on Ethno-religious Groups, Local Powers and the Ottoman State in Diyarbekir Province, 1800–1870," 1–54.

These institutional relationships are significant in that they provide a backdrop to a remarkable flowering of Kurdish civilization during the early modern period, attested to by travelers to the region. Evliya Çelebi, who visited Bitlis in the mid-seventeenth century, encountered a diverse and prosperous market town ruled by the noble Abdal Han, a man of culture and sophistication who had mastered "one thousand skills."[26] A century and a half later, a British visitor to the city of Süleymaniye (Sulaimani), the seat of the Baban dynasty, made similar observations.[27] The apparent material progress of Kurdish-held enclaves was matched by developments in the cultural sphere. Indeed, the courts of the Kurdish magnates often served as a fulcrum for Kurdish literary production. Significantly, the fragmented nature of the political order in Kurdistan came to be reflected in the development of Kurdish literary culture. For instance, during the eighteenth century, the pro-Iranian Ardalan dynasty promoted the use of the Guranî dialect at their court in Senna (Sanandaj), while their neighbors and rivals, the Babans, promoted the use of the Soranî/Babanî dialect.[28] Aside from the courts of Kurdish magnates, Kurdistan's network of *madrasas* (Islamic colleges) also played an important role in the articulation of Kurdish language and culture. During the early modern period, Kurdish *madrasas* enjoyed a reputation as centers of Shafi'i learning and institutions in which rational sciences, which had declined in other regions of the Ottoman Empire, continued to be widely taught.[29] Significantly, between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, Kurdish also emerged as an important medium of instruction.[30] Consequently, almost all major Kurdish literary figures of the early modern period, including Ehmedê Khanî, possessed a religious education and were members of the *ulema*. This would suggest that not only did the institutional relationship between Constantinople and the Kurdish population ensured the survival of the Kurds as a distinct community,[31] but it also provided conditions conducive to nurturing certain elements of Kurdish society, both in an economic and a cultural sense. In short, Ottoman hegemony over the highlands inhabited by the Kurds provided the context in which a veritable Kurdish renaissance could occur.

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26 Çelebi, "Part I," 90–140.

27 Rich, *Narrative of a Residence in Koordistan*, 85.

28 Mardoukhi, *Anthology of Gorani Poetry*, 11–15.

29 Çelebi, *The Balance of Truth*, 26. See also al-Rouayheb, "The Myth of the 'Triumph of Fanaticism' in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire," 196–221.

30 Leezenberg, "Elî Teremaxî and the Vernacularization of Madrasa Learning in Kurdistan," 713–33.

31 Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire*, 9.

The Conservativism of Princes: Şeref Khan and the *Sharafnāma*

Şeref Khan Bitlisi's lively political career provides a valuable insight into the Machiavellian nature of politics on the Ottoman–Safavid frontier. However, he is broadly known today for his scholarship. His magnum opus, the *Sharafnāma* (The Book of Honor), completed in 1597, constituted the first systematic attempt to write a history of the Kurds and, more specifically, Kurdistan's ruling houses. This has led some to attribute a nationalistic purpose to the work; most likely completely alien to its author. For example, the linguist and historian Amir Hassanpour has argued that the *Sharafnāma* represents a "conscious effort to assert Kurdish statehood."[32] This insinuates that Şeref Khan, the scholar, is a radical, longing to overturn Ottoman (and Safavid) rule and replace it with a Kurdish nation-state.

Certainly Şeref Khan regarded himself as a member of the Kurdish *ethnie* and took pride in his Kurdish identity.[33] Yet, Şeref Khan's work exhibits a remarkable pro-Ottoman élan. In a panegyric dedicated to Sultan Mehmed III (r. 1595–1603), Şeref Khan describes him as "the most magnificent of Sultans . . . the most honorable and illustrious of Khaqans . . .,[34] the protector of the people of the tradition and the consensus of the Muslim community [i.e., Sunni Muslims] . . . [and] the abolisher of the vestiges of heresy and perdition."[35] Indeed, despite the existence of pro-Shi'i elements among the broader Kurdish community, Şeref Khan seems to have been keen to highlight the religious affinities between the Ottomans and their Kurdish subjects: "All Kurdish communities are religiously Shafi'i, a branch belonging to Islamic jurisprudence and the Prophet's tradition."[36]

Şeref Khan's dedication to the Ottomans may have simply been a prudent political maneuver. Nonetheless, his perceptions on the establishment of Ottoman power across Kurdistan are significant. According to his account, İdris Bitlisi forwarded an appeal from the emirs of Kurdistan requesting that the

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32 Hassanpour, "Making the Kurdish Identity: Pre-20th Century Historical and Literary Discourses," 112.

33 For a further examination of Şeref Khan's understanding of Kurdish ethnicity, see Bajalan, "Şeref Xan's Sharafnāma: Kurdish Ethno-politics in the Early Modern World, Its Meaning and Its Legacy," 795–818.

34 *Khaqan* was a title initially reserved for the kings of Turkestan and China but came to refer to any Turkic king.

35 Bidlīsī, *Scheref-nameh*, 4–5.

36 Bidlīsī, *Scheref-nameh*, 14–15.

sultan recognize their rule over their ancestral lands and that one among them be appointed *beylerbeyi* to lead the fight against the Qizilbash. The sultan granted this request; however, Bitlisi advised that "there existed an inherent plurality amongst them [the Kurds] and none would consent to bow their heads to the others." Hence, he suggested that "someone from the Ottoman court should be appointed to this difficult task; so that the Kurdish emirs would be compliant and obedient towards him and this arduous and important task would be resolved swiftly."[37] Far from regarding the Ottoman advance into Kurdistan as a conquest, Şeref Khan highlights the consent of the Kurdish nobility as pivotal in the establishment of Ottoman rule. Moreover, Bitlisi's recommendation to entrust a member of the Ottoman court with the overall command of the Kurds due to their chronic rivalries is presented as an act of great political foresight, as opposed to a betrayal of the Kurdish cause. Indeed, Şeref Khan seems to have been phlegmatic regarding the divisions among the Kurds, claiming them to be the result of a curse placed upon them by the Prophet Mohammad. Interestingly, the apocryphal tale recounted by Şeref Khan also linked the Kurds to the mystical Turkic king Oğuz Khan, an individual from whom the House of Osman claimed descent.[38]

The *Sharafnāma* enjoyed a significant degree of popularity among the nobility of Kurdistan. Indeed, between the work's completion in the late sixteenth century and the abolition of autonomous Kurdish fiefdoms in the mid-nineteenth century, several other important Kurdish potentates commissioned copies of the original, often adding appendices describing events that had occurred in the years since the *Sharafnāma*'s completion, adding of course detailed histories of their own houses.[39] Hence, the *Sharafnāma* could be regarded as an articulation of the collective identity of Kurdistan's ruling houses. The idiom of Kurdish ethnic distinctiveness was mobilized in defense of the *existing* political order in Kurdistan, which afforded Kurdistan's noble houses a significant degree of power and influence in regional affairs. In this sense, the political message contained within it was a conservative one. It embodied a spirit of pragmatism inherent in the political culture of Kurdistan's elites – a readiness to collaborate with and

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37 Bidlīsī, *Scheref-nameh*, 416–17.

38 According to the story, when Oğuz Khan heard the Prophet of Islam's message, he dispatched a Kurdish nobleman named Boğduz whose "detestable appearance, a gigantic physique, an ugly countenance and dark complexion" so repelled the Prophet that he implored the "sublime and exalted Creator" to "prevent this community [the Kurds] from ever uniting, lest the world shall perish by their hand" (Bidlīsī, *Scheref-nameh*, 16–17).

39 For detailed information on *Sharafnāma* manuscripts, see Soltani, "The Sharafnāma of Bitlisi: Manuscript Copies, Translations and Appendixes," 209–14.

render submission to larger imperial neighbors in return for guarantees that their freedoms and liberties would be maintained and protected.

Nowhere is this political disposition more apparent than in a short passage in the introduction of the *Sharafnāma*:

> The great sultans and magnanimous khaqans alike have not coveted their [the Kurds'] districts and provinces, [and are] content merely with their tribute, subordination and acquiescence to heed the call to arms and prepare for campaigns, [an agreement made] without the condition of being conquered. And if, occasionally, some sultans have labored to conquer and occupy the lands of Kurdistan, they have suffered untold trials and tribulations; and in the end have become remorseful and filled with regret, and again returned [the lands] to their possessors.[40]

Clearly, while Şeref Khan sought to dissuade would-be imperialists from intervening directly in the affairs of the Kurds, he evidently regarded vassalage as an acceptable form of political relationship. Kurdistan's nobility was to serve as the interface between imperial power and broader Kurdish society. In short, the *Sharafnāma* is best understood as a dialogue between a Kurdish noble and his feudal overlord, one that outlined the appropriate relationship between the imperial state and the Kurds: a book of advice, a didactic manifesto.

A Kurdish Radical: Ehmedê Khanî and *Mêm û Zîn*

While the *Sharafnāma* may have represented the conservativism of Kurdistan's princelings, there was a more radical side to the Kurdish political culture of the early modern period, marked by an impulse to defy the authority of outsiders. This is evident in some of the themes in the Kurdish folkloric tradition, which often lauded individuals of great martial prowess, especially those who challenged imperial power. An excellent example of this practice can be found in *Beytê Dimdim* (The epic of Dimdim), a popular ballad based on historical events that took place in the early seventeenth century. The ballad, given literary form by the poet Feqiyê Teyran (d. 1660), recounts the story of Emir Khan, the ruler of the Biradost emirate in northwestern Iran, and his efforts to resist the encroachments of Safavid Shah Abbas I (r. 1588–1629). In order to secure his power, Emir Khan had rebuilt the ancient fortress of Dimdim in 1609, a move that had provoked concern among Safavid officials. Emir Khan was ordered to halt the construction work on the fortress, a request he apparently rejected. As

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40 Xani, *Mêm u Zîn*, 18–19.

a result, the Safavids marshalled their forces and attacked Dimdim, killing Emir Khan and his followers.[41]

Significantly, *Beytê Dimdim*, deems the struggle of the Biradost against Safavid power praiseworthy and portrays Emir Khan as defiant to the end. For instance, on the eve of the final attack, a fictionalized Emir Khan declares:

> We fear not your soldiers
> We fear not the Khan of Tabriz
> Our warriors will not flee.
>
> We were not vexed by the ruler of China [Mongols?]
> Who could not eradicate our people
> Nor were we concerned by Tamerlane
> Who failed to separate our people from our mountain lands.
>
> So damn your sect
> I will never accept your crown
> For I shall never bring such ill repute to Kurdistan.[42]

Emir Khan and his followers are depicted as heroes, who attained a martyr's death in a righteous defense of their lands.

Beytê Dimdim and Emir Khan puts on display a longer tradition of resistance to outside interlopers. However, the most radical manifestation of Kurdish ethnic awareness in the early modern period can be found in the work of Ehmedê Khanî. Although, as a religious scholar, Khanî can be regarded a Kurdish elite, he was of humble origins, hailing from the Khanî tribe of the Hakkâri region (southeastern Turkey). He received a thorough religious education in various *madrasa*s in northern Kurdistan (and, according to some sources, in Syria and Egypt). Thereafter, he went on to teach in the town of Beyazid (Doğubeyazit), where his mausoleum stands to this day. Over the course of his life, Khanî composed a number of works in Kurmancî Kurdish, including *Nûbihara Biçûkan* (The Spring of Children), a rhymed Arabic-Kurdish glossary, and *Eqîdeya Îmanê* (The Path of Faith), an examination of Islamic jurisprudence.[43] These works were highly influential and were used in *madrasa*s across northern Kurdistan until well into the twentieth century, however his masterpiece is *Mêm û Zîn*.

Mêm û Zîn, considered to be <u>the</u> saga in Kurdish literature, is the literary version of the folktale *Mêm-i Alan*. It recounts the story of a doomed love

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41 See Hassanpour, "Dimdim" . See also Beg, *Kürtler ve Kürdistan Tarihi*, 180–84.

42 Jalilov, *Koordskii geriocheskii epos "Zlatorookii Xan" (Dimdim)*, 110; Ghalib, "The Emergence of Kurdism with Special Reference to the Three Kurdish Emirates within the Ottoman Empire, 1800–1850," 68–69.

43 Mirawdeli, *Love and Existence*, 1–8.

between Mêm, a boy of humble origins, and Zîn, the daughter of the ruler of Cezire-Bohtan, "an emir of the Kurds of Arab descent (*nesla wê 'Ereb emîrê Ekrâd*)."[44] Although *Mêm û Zin* explores many themes such as love and religion, the nationalistic message in the work's introduction has proved to be its purple patch. In the section known as "our troubles," Khanî laments the geopolitical circumstances of the Kurds:

> Look, from the Arabs ('*Ereb*) to the Georgians (*Gurcan*)
> The Kurds have become like towers.
>
> The Ottomans (*Rûm*) and Iranians are surrounded by them
> The Kurds are on all four corners.
>
> Both sides have made them
> Targets for the arrows of faith.
>
> They are said to be keys to the borders:
> Each tribe forming a formidable dam
>
> Whenever the Ottoman Sea and Tajik Sea [Iranians]
> Flow out and agitate,
>
> The Kurds get soaked in blood
> Separating them like an isthmus.

It is clear that, for Khanî, the Kurds' status as guardians of the frontier was unacceptable. Indeed, he regarded it as an unbearable state of affairs for a people who could not endure dependency. Significantly, Khanî blamed *xalqê namdarî* (the elite folk) and *hakim û emîran* (the rulers and emirs) for the Kurds' subjugation. He asks, "What fault lies with the poets or paupers [*şa'ir û feqîran*]?" However, Khanî moved beyond simple criticisms of the existing political order in Kurdistan, hinting at what he regarded as a solution:

> If only we possessed an emperor [and]
> If God saw fit to grant him a crown,
>
> [And] If a throne were appointed for him,
> We would spread out.
>
> If only a crown were placed upon his head
> Undoubtedly we would find our remedy.
>
> He would sympathize with us, the orphans [and]
> Liberate us from the clutches of tyrants.

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44 Xanî, *Mêm u Zîn*, 61.

We would be not be vanquished by Ottomans (*Rûm*)
[And] we would not become ruined by owls.

We are condemned and impoverished:
Defeated and subjugated by the Turks and Persians (*Tirk û Tacik*).

God willed our destiny so
[And] those Ottomans (*Rûm*) and Iranians ('*Ecem*) dominate us.

Unfortunately, for Khanî, the chronic internal divisions within Kurdish society prevented them from realizing their true potential:

If only we possessed unity
Together we could bow our heads as one.

Those Ottomans and Arabs and Iranians
All of them would be our slaves.

We would perfect religion and state (*dîn û dewlet*)
[And] we would learn sciences of our time.[45]

Khanî's complaints regarding the subjection of the Kurds, his critique of Kurdistan's established elites, and his longing for a Kurdish sovereign have earned him a reputation as the "father of modern Kurdish nationalism."[46] Anthropologist Martin van Bruinessen recounts his first encounter with *Mêm û Zîn*: he suspected that its nationalistic lines might have been a contribution by a later copyist. However, after consulting early manuscripts of the text, he found that was not the case.[47] Nevertheless, while Khanî's words may permit a nationalistic interpretation, it is necessary to understand the historical context in which they were written. Although it is apparent that Khanî regarded the Kurds as a distinct people, he likely perceived them as a community of tribes rather than a (potentially) unified nation in the modern sense of the word. Moreover, his call for Kurdish unity under a Kurdish monarch should not be interpreted as a desire for a Kurdish nation-state, a central political objective of modern Kurdish nationalism. Instead, Khanî wished to see the Kurdish tribes unified under a Kurdish prince, as he believed that this would help reverse the terms of subjugation and create a *universal* Muslim imperium. Thus, far from prefiguring the demands of modern Kurdish nationalists for national self-determination, one might conclude that Khanî was calling

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45 Xanî, *Mêm u Zîn*, 43–47.
46 Hassanpour, "Making the Kurdish Identity: Pre-20th Century Historical and Literary Discourses," 118–31; also see Hassanpour, "The Pen and the Sword," 44–46 and Shakely, *Kurdish Nationalism in Mam u Zin of Ahmad-î Khânî*, 91–121.
47 van Bruinessen, "Ehemdi Xani's *Mêm û Zîn*," 40–57.

for one of the Kurdish emirs to rise up against the Ottomans and Safavids and establish a new imperial order based on martial energies of the Kurdish *ethnie*.

Conclusion

In examining the works of Şeref Khan and Ehmedê Khanî, therein delineates the varying ways in which ethnicity was mobilized to frame political arguments in the early modern period. Significantly, by juxtaposing the political message contained within the *Sharafnāma* with that of *Mêm û Zîn*, it should be apparent that different elements of the Kurdish elite understood the political implications of Kurdish ethnic distinctiveness in differing ways. For Şeref Khan, the idiom of Kurdish ethnicity was used to justify the condominial administrative structures that characterized Ottoman rule in Kurdistan. More specifically, *Sharafnāma* served to legitimize the position of Kurdish emirs within those structures, presenting them as the appropriate intermediaries between imperial power and the Kurdish tribes. In this sense, the late sixteenth-century ruler of Bitlis was promoting an essentially conservative political message, one that reflected his place within Kurdistan's political establishment.

In contrast, *Mêm û Zîn* draws on a more radical tradition, perhaps giving voice to elements of Kurdish society utterly discontent with their community's state of vassalage. Indeed, Khanî's arguments may imply that he saw a shared Kurdish identity as a potential basis for overcoming parochial tribalism, which may have yielded a wise Kurdish monarch who would engage in an honest-to-goodness empire-building. Just as Şeref Khan's conservatism reflected his social status, Khanî's radicalism implied his rank amongst Kurdish intelligentsia. As a member of the Kurdish literati Khanî perhaps believed that the formation of a new Islamic imperium, based upon the power of the Kurdish *ethnie*, would enhance the power and prestige of the Kurdish *ulema*, affording it further patronage and support.

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Amir Sharifi, Zuzan Barwari

The Oral Tradition of *Dengbêjî*: A Kurdish Genre of Verbal Art and Reported Speech

Introduction

Dengbêjî – literally meaning, "voice telling," or "sung narrative" – is a repertoire of cultural knowledge.[1] Imparted by a *dengbêj*, an oral narrator (a bard of sorts) who compiles and recites *dastan or çîrok* ("narratives") for public on various social occasions, these narratives chronicle events of the past, both remote and recent. They touch on social, political, historical, and personal elements of Kurdish life. Herein, it is asserted that these bards, in their role as narrators, are as instrumental to this practice, as are the stories they "revoice": à la what is a conductor to a composition. As such, reported speech can offer a rare glimpse into the dialogical as per *dengbêjî* discourse and performance. Bauman sheds light on the nature of performance as a cultural practice, whose aesthetics is grounded in a "dual sense of the artistic action – the doing of folklore and artistic event – the performance situation, involving the performer, art form, audience both of which are basic to the developing performance approach."[2] Here, *dengbêjî*, as an authentic expression of ancient Kurdish folklore, is treated as a "symbolic and expressive art"[3] reflecting the Kurdish moral and cultural order through time and space. Accordingly, the community shares and remembers a common legacy.

Several performances and an in-depth interview with a prominent *dengbêj*, conducted in Los Angeles in 2015 help emphasize the thesis. The *dengbêj* describes himself as an "animator, musician, composer, performer, linguist, and historian of Kurdish life," emphasizing the multidimensionality of the practice and his role as its practitioner. The oral tradition of *dengbêjî* and its reportorial metalanguage is said to encode and recontextualize sociocultural meanings and relations. This is true specially when it relates to Kurdish Kurmanji communities where *dengbêjî* proves to preserve, revive, and reclaim different aspects of Kurdish ethnolinguistic identity. By analyzing these performances with an emphasis on reported speech, the dialogic and reflexive as it reimagines and

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1 *Dengbêjî* highlights the high stature of language in Kurdish folk ideology, reflected in a saying that "the tongue turns and the mouth says; the mouth and tongue are distinctive human qualities, uncovering mankind's character."

2 Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance*, 4.

3 Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance*, 4.

reconstitutes social imagery and action for Kurds in the mainland and diaspora is highlighted.

Background

Kurds have a variably vast repertoire of verbal art, ranging from lyrical love stories to epic tales. These stories have survived and are an essential cornerstone of Kurdish folklore. They are often elaborate and imaginative with a panache for the exuberantly allegorical. In the contemporary context, these stories bring to purview Kurdish artistic traditions and their ability to embroil an audience. Although *dengbêjî* is rich in realities that stem from the lived experiences, not all the sung narratives are to be treated as historical facts and real events in specific times as Propp articulately addresses in his discussion of "historicity of folklore."[4]

In Turkey *dengbêjî* faced hostility and severe restrictions. For over eighty years, due to a discriminatory one-language policy, it was stigmatized and prohibited. In 2007, *mala dengbêjani* (House of *Dengbêjs*)[5] was established to nurture this art form and allow performers to practice this once-obscure verbal art. *Dengbêjî* enjoyed a revival, particularly in Diyarbakir. *Dengbêjî* has been recognized as a genuine Kurdish verbal art with a gusto for identity by Kurdish communities in Kurdish inhabited areas in Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Armenia

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4 For instance, in examples 2 and 3, both of which of "*evîniyê*" love lyric genre, there are references to Kurdish landscape, pastoral setting, gendered relations, and the case of forbidden love, and normative values of honor. In the third performance, however, "*tarîxî-siyasî*" Şerê tarxan is a historical-political text, wherein are projected scenes of war, and cries of *tarxan*, a tribal figure who incites his clan to rise and defend themselves against an impending attack on the clan by a Persian king. Although the plots, characters, and tensions represent aspects of reality, in none of these narrative accounts can we establish a direct link with a specific period in Kurdish history beyond premodern times. Propp argues that historicity of folklore "lies in the people's expressions of historical self-awareness and in its attitude toward past events, persons, and circumstances rather than in the songs' correct depiction of persons and relations of events considered real. Historical significance is an ideological phenomenon." Vladimir, Propp. *Theory and history of folklore*, 50.

5 *Mala dengbêjan*, literally the House of *Dengbêjan*, was formed in 2007 under the supervision of Diyarbakir municipality and funded by European grants to promote the Kurdish language and culture by means of free production and dissemination of *dengbêjî* cultural heritage, which until then was forbidden and repressed. It became a magnet for local talents and their performances. The center produced an anthology of famous *dengbêjs* as it promoted translations of text materials, albeit of poor quality, and promoted recordings and distribution of the revived tradition and its resurgence. As it rapidly grew in popularity, it became an important tourist attraction.

(hereinafter mainland) and diaspora since 2000. It has become a theater for ideological and political engagements and debates.

Yücel highlights the endurance and socio-political significance of *dengbêjî* by providing an informative discussion of the counter-ideological strategies and clashes of Kurdish political activists with the Turkish state in order to promulgate their values and voices: "whatever the motivations of the actors involved in the project may be, it seems that the policies implemented led to a deep transformation of the practice, making the *dengbêjî* a more 'frozen' than 'living' heritage."[6]

Hamelink, by questioning the stereotypical and often erroneous dichotomy between modernity and tradition, opens new possibilities for *Dengbêj* by piquing curiosity as regards its linguistic and cultural dimensions.[7] This is particularly important since information on the subject is at best scarce even though there has been growing interest and popularity as per its sociolinguistic significance in the construction of ethnolinguistic identity in Turkey through digital and social media as of late.

Kurdish identity itself is utterly bound to oral traditions. Galip observes, "Kurdish orally transmitted stories continue to be significant and strenuous efforts are made to maintain *dengbêjî* culture despite modernization and the supremacy of the written word over oral tradition."[8] Others note that national identities are invented as to protect boundaries and territories. Myths and historical bravado, whether real or invented, become central to this identity despite gaps in collective memory.[9] As O'Shea observes, "A remembered past can be used to explain and justify present circumstances [. . .] invented history can be spontaneous, such as the heroic sagas of the Kurdish *Dengbezh*."[10] Van Bruinessen argues that oral epics "still circulating in Kurdistan, and of which new ones continue to be composed, serve the same ideological function as the history textbooks used in European primary schools."[11] For Kurds in diaspora, favorable attitude towards *dengbêjî* has rekindled their love and nostalgia for their denied language and identity. The discourse-based investigation of *dengbêjî* can thus contribute to our understanding of this old art form as one of the most authentic Kurdish forms of

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6 Scalbert-Yücel, "The Invention of a Tradition," 3; Citing De Certeau, she continues, "[the practice] may be frozen and a representation of a lost but imagined past." For more see De Certeau, "Invention of Traditions," 9.

7 Hamelink, *The Sung Home*, 22.

8 Galip, *Imagining Kurdistan*, 71.

9 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 19.

10 O'Shea, *Trapped Between the Map and Reality*, 10.

11 Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 83.

cultural expression and tradition. In addition to the folkloric components and literary devices, the textual analysis of *dengbêjî* can be illuminating with respect to the dialogic and dynamic nature of reported speech, widely used in the recitations and performance of *dengbêjî*.

Literature Review

While the oral traditions and performing arts of the Persians, Arabs, and Turks have been recognized and extensively compiled and examined, Kurdish verbal art has remained largely under the radar. Authoritative sources that provide an examination of the rich repertoire of Kurdish oral traditions are rare.[12] Zargortina Kurda is a projected 25-volume encyclopedia by Celile Celil[13] on the Kurdish oral traditions, seven of which have been published since 2014. This collection would offer ethnomusicologists, folklorists, Kurdologists, archivists, and linguists a rich anthology of epic poems, stories (*dastenan*), love songs (*heyranok*), and fairy tales (*çîrok*). The monumental work on textual heterogeneity will fill significant gaps that the paucity of research has left behind.

Although Chyet defines *dengbêj* as someone who recites Kurdish romances in the context of his analysis of *Mem û Zîn*,[14] which is one of the earliest recorded repertoires of Kurdish folklore, a universally shared meaning for the term does not exist. Allison makes a distinction between "*stranbêj*" (song-teller) and *dengbêj*, stating that the *stranbêj* performs folk songs, *strans*, or *kilam*, which are often lyrical and are accompanied by instrumental music, performed using *saz, tembur, oudh, or kemance*.[15] Conversely, a *dengbêj* would usually sing without instrumental accompaniment and would complement the vocals with hand clapping or striking other available surfaces. However, the distinction does not always apply.[16] What is crucial to the practice is singing and reciting tales, both poetry and prose. Chyet takes a broad-brush approach in defining a *dengbêj* as a "reciter of romances and epics."[17]

According to our informant, Dilanar, who is a diasporic *dengbêj*, "A *dengbêj* is someone who has a good voice, [he] has compiled and memorized a

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12 Mann, *Die Mundart der Mukri-Kurden*.

13 Celile, *Zargortina Kurda*, Vols 1–7.

14 Chyet, *And a Thornbush Sprang Up*.

15 Allison, *Oral Traditions of Yezidis in Iraqi Kurdistan*, 61.

16 Allison, *Oral Traditions of Yezidis in Iraqi Kurdistan*, 68–70.

17 Chyet, *Kurdish-English Dictionary*, 131.

collection of tales about important events and people . . . from different regions, and in different styles. A *dengbêj*'s main sources are stories passed on about personal and historical events. This definition is in line with Öncü's observation that the musical style of *dengêbjî* changes "[. . .] from region to region. It is known that in lots of [. . .] regions like *Serhat* and *Botan*, the *dengbêj*s tell their stories without an instrument, but in the west of Firāt (Tigris) *dengbêj*s use a musical instrument '*tambur*.'"[18] However, research examining the correspondence between Kurdish oral traditions and music are extremely rare, making it difficult to make definitive conclusions.[19] Allison in highlighting the dichotomy between orality and literacy warns against etic, monolithic, and homogenizing generalizations about folklore as "speech communities are sensitive to the differences between various oral forms of communication."[20]

When examining the historical development and current status of Kurdish folk art, it is also necessary to explore the state of the Kurdish language in Turkey. This is because one perception of a *dengbêj* can be one that speaks or revoices language. For almost a century Kurdish has been absent in Turkish education and administrative apparatus of the state has promoted advancement of an official language ideology. This, combined with forcible displacement of Kurdish villagers in the 1980s and 1990s,[21] resulted in institutionalized assimilation and 'linguicide'.[22] Owing to language attrition, many Kurds have acquired Turkish as their mother tongue, yet consider themselves Kurds. Similarly, there are those that consider themselves Turkish while speaking Kurdish at home.[23] Ideologically, in the official discourse and mediatized representations of Kurds, language subordination has been the hallmark of the Turkish language policy and planning.[24] Throughout Turkey, Kurdish and its speakers have been vilified, denigrated, and stigmatized. In the words of Yegen, they are typically characterized as tribal, ignorant, bandits, smugglers, victims of feudal lords, and backward.[25] Historical and sociolinguistic studies have yet to address these adverse effects extensively. Yet, available evidence indicates that the language suffered a

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18 Öncü, "Introduction," 71.

19 Christensen, "Music in Kurdish Identity Formations," 13.

20 Allison, *The Yezidi Oral Tradition in Iraqi Kurdistan*, 61–62

21 Çeliker, "Construction of the Kurdish Self in Turkey Through Humorous Popular Culture," 148.

22 Hassanpour, Sheyholislami, and Skutnabb-Kangas, "Introduction. Kurdish: Linguicide, resistance and hope," 1–18.

23 Çeliker, "Construction of the Kurdish Self in Turkey Through Humorous Popular Culture," 92–95.

24 Lippi Green, *English with an Accent,* 66–76.

25 Yegen, "The Turkish State Discourse and the Exclusion of Kurdish Identity," 216–17.

tragic fate as a result of forced migrations to urban centers and relentless repression. Unfortunately, the relaxation of repressive policies and their outcome in 2000s, as studied by Çeliker, was short lived.[26]

The rapid revival and spread of *dengbêjî* during the political relaxation revealed its endurance and cultural significance as a symbolic and cultural capital for rural and urban, older and younger generations of Kurmanji speakers. Despite efforts to eradicate the Kurdish language and culture, *dengbêjî* has endured, an issue aptly addressed by Allison, who points out that "Kurmanji oral traditions are not dying out altogether; they are changing in form and becoming less varied, but remain powerful and emotive."[27] The continuity of the oral tradition is rooted in the clear relationship between language and culture, a cultural practice that has remained relevant even today, for it can evoke fond and reflexive memories, while also being applicable to new contexts, thereby creating a potent impetus for a new generation of performers. This ensures that its cultural values and symbols remain relevant for both rural and "urban Kurds."[28]

Seminal studies of different aspects of *dengbêjî* can inform our understanding of story types and structures, musical patterns, and speech types and cultural norms that can be described as "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of ritual or symbolic nature, which seek certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past."[29] Yet, in response to new contexts, the practice has assumed new dynamics and meanings: "all is not lost for traditional Kurdish verbal art. For the Kurds the heroic and often tragic world of life in the villages and nomad encampments of the past is very appealing."[30] *Dengbêjî* produced in exile and disseminated through the media, drawing on the old expressive and aesthetic elements and folklore, has proven to be a powerfully imaginative aesthetic resource for preserving and promoting Kurdishness.

Moreover, this verbal and poetic legacy is important both for its literary value and for the stories about the lived experiences of the characters that *dengbêj*s evoke, invoke, and reenact through their musical or nonmusical performances. If Kurdish cultural history is vague and unknown because of a cultural genocide,

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26 Çeliker, "Construction of the Kurdish Self in Turkey Through Humorous Popular Culture," 89–105.

27 Allison, *The Yezidi Oral Tradition in Iraqi Kurdistan*, 9–16.

28 Allison, *The Yezidi Oral Tradition in Iraqi Kurdistan*, 16.

29 Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, 1.

30 Allison, *The Yezidi Oral Tradition in Iraqi Kurdistan*, 209

the revitalization and recontextualization of *dengbêjî* may offer some hope for the future. Such works can bring back cultural and historical contexts that may be of interest to folklorists, linguists, historians, poets, ethnographers, and political analysts. Research conducted into *dengbêjî*'s primary mode of socialization, reception, transmission, and transformation can be equally revealing of the apprenticeship system. Indeed our informant, Delil Dilanar, was able to acquire the *dengbêjî* stock of knowledge under the tutelage of his father and uncle. The more recent performances also offer the potential for capturing and recording their textualization into archival knowledge, and hence contribute to their preservation through transcription and translation:

> the imagery of the oral traditions will survive, for the Yezidis as for other Kurds. Some performances will be preserved by repeated broadcast (in effect becoming a 'text'); other traditions will be incorporated into other types of performances, or other genres altogether . . . the Yezidi oral tradition will not die, but it will have a very different and probably much more 'textual' life in the future.[31]

It is essential to allude to perspectives that define verbal art as a culturally specific phenomenon that can best be understood through ethnographically and discourse-based analysis. Notable examples of this approach in the Middle Eastern verbal art are Abu-Lughod's study of women's poety among the Awlad 'Ali Bedouins who use two divergent and contradictory discourses: everyday language revealing honor and modesty, while the oral " . . . lyric poetry of love and vulnerability"[32] expresses genuine emotions of the heart in violation of shame (Hasham), thereby creating a counter discourse of morality that serves as a powerful ideology not only to express their discontent but to challenge hegemonic structures. If Abu-Lughad presents women's divergent discourses, Caton's ethnography in Yemen, by drawing on genre analysis delves into male poetic practices among the Khawalan in North Yemen and shows how each genre of poetry has ideological implications for the construction of tribal identity and the ways in which performances and their aesthetic renderings as communicative practices can be used "for persuasive purposes."[33]

The quest for understanding *dengbêjî*, despite its ancient roots is recent. Allison documents and analyzes the significance of this cultural practice through a methodology which combines authoritative ethnography with the study of folklore and fills the gap that the paucity of research has left behind. Rather than

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31 Allison, *The Yezidi Oral Tradition in Iraqi Kurdistan*, 210.

32 Abu Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments*, 10.

33 Caton, *Peaks of Yemeni I Summon*, 21.

providing a homogenous outlook on the relation between orality and identity; in essence, she situates the discussion of orality and folklore in a broader sociocultural settings thus contextualizing emically conflicting frameworks of interpretation and meaning on the relation between *dengbêjî*, identity, cultural maintenance, change, shift and adaptation.[34]

In extending her study of *dengbêjî* to include Sunni Muslims both in the homeland and diaspora, Hamelink in an ethnography of *dengbêj*s in towns and villages in Turkey, Istanbul, Germany, Belgium and Paris, documented and analyzed a myriad of songs in different genres and in a range of performances that members of the *dengbêj* community performed in different contexts to capture the depth of oppression and cultural erasure to which they had been subjected, leading them to their "repositioning" in the face of adversities they confronted. Hamelink illustrates that narratives are not only varied in their themes and structures but also in the ways in which they lend themselves to modes of narrations and interpretations. This framework provides a dynamic and critical basis to approach stories as sites of contradictory and contested perspectives of both colonizing and colonized notions of "history, modernity, and nationalism."[35]

Yüksel drawing on ethnopoetics, narratives, performances and recordings, spanning the period between 1925–1950s, explores the work of pioneering *dengbêj*s. Reşo and three of his followers reveal the plurality of voices found in the relation between artistic performance and narrative discourse as the performers enter the text as social actors. They do so in order to foreground the transmission, maintenance, and revival of Kurmanji through their poetic performances and assert their social and rhetorical relation with other voices and themes that constitute "songs of the heart,"[36] "intertribal conflicts,"[37] "heroic epic songs," and "historical figures in confrontation with Iranian and Turkish sates."[38]

Although these studies provide rich and revealing accounts of the multidimensionality of *dengbêjî* and the artistry with which they have been produced, performed, and transformed, our knowledge of *dengbêjî* can be expanded when we apply Bakhtin's theories of literary forms and speech types, particularly his notion of dialogue in communication with different aspects of the *dengbêjî* practice at micro level of discourse where aesthetics and functions of common

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34 Allison, *The Yezidi Oral Tradition in Iraqi Kurdistan*, *21–25*

35 Hamelink, *The Sung Home*, 444.

36 Yüksel, "Dengbêj, Mula, Inteligencis," 128.

37 Yüksel, "Dengbêj, Mula, Inteligencis," 127.

38 Yüksel, "Dengbêj, Mula, Inteligencis," 124.

language, literary and artistic creativity, literary mastery, theatrical performance, imagery, and genre come together at the locus of what Bakhtin calls a "plurality" found in "the human voice . . . "[39]

In all, *dengbêjî* affords us a useful framework to gain an insight into the nature and structure of reported speech following Vološnov's approach in the context of "the dynamics of the interrelationship of authorial context and reported speech. The linear style of reported speech, [and] the 'pictorial style' of reporting speech."[40] In essence, *dengbêjî* is a speech event in which different types of direct and indirect utterances establish the relation between the narrated events and the narrator's (*dengbêj*) report. The locus of different genres of verbal art and the dynamic site of reported speech, not in the traditional grammar and its prescriptive norms, is a phenomenon that Tannen has called "constructed dialogue."[41] Traditional grammar without attention to the pragmatics of discourse, presupposes that an utterance can be changed from direct to indirect through a number of fixed operations. Because reported speech is an area of Kurdish grammar that remains insufficiently analyzed, *dengbêjî* offers a fertile ground for such a preliminary study. It is important to note that English grammar relies on deictics to mark tense shifts in terms of what Declerck has characterized as "simultaneity," "anteriority," and "posteriority," in indirect speech.[42] On the other hand, we argue as Ebert has shown, like Persian, Kurdish does not make a clear-cut syntactic or morphological distinction between "direct" and "indirect" speech.[43] Indeed, during the performance, the *dengêbj* uses several roles (author, animator, figure, and principal) to change his footing as "a change in the alignment . . . ."[44]

A *dengbêjî* performance relies on the performer's ability to adopt multiple roles and, according to Dilanar, "produce and animate many voices."[45] Bakhtin's work gives us an illuminating framework for the study of *dengbêjî*, revealing how reported speech can show the richness and heterogeneity of what Goodwin calls "the dialogic organization of human language."[46] In addition, the interactive nature of such a discourse is found convincing and truthful by the members of the audience, who find them relevant to their lives.

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39 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 311.

40 Vološnov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, 115.

41 Tannen, *Direct and Indirect Speech*, 111.

42 Declerck, "Sequence of Tenses of English" 10.

43 Ebert, "Reported Speech in Some Languages of Nepal," 147.

44 Goffman, *Frame Analysis*, 128

45 Dilanar, Interview.

46 Goodwin, "Interactive Footing," 17.

Dengbêjî as Language

In the following transcription,[47] we can see how reported speech is designed and the ways in which the *dengbêj*, assuming the role of the male protagonist, establishes his footing interactively. The main purpose of this example is to show the blurry boundary between the direct and indirect discourse in *dengbêjî*. In this excerpt, the reporting verb *got* ("said") and the pronoun *m* [*min*] ("I") anchor the specific event to the past, as the male character speaks directly through the narrator. Present tense is used to highlight the simultaneity of temporal and spatial relationships, even though the sequence of the events did not occur at the same time:

> **Example 1:**
> "Erê Zeriyê **m [min] go [got]** ji kona digerî, kon a wê de konê me ne yar, yar, yar . . . konê me ne."
> [Yes Zeriyê, **I said** you are coming from tents (encampments), those tents that you are searching and coming from, among them are ours, beloved, beloved, beloved . . .]

While this example is insufficient to make any blanket claims, it can be assumed that such a phenomenon is not limited to literary speech but is rather a feature of the language as a whole. Differences in tone, voice quality, and the lively and theatrical style of speech during a verbal performance only pronounce the salience of direct speech. Although the performer uses the reporting verb *min got* ("I said"), animating what the character said, his use of prosody indicates how he manifests and stages different footing. Depending on the character he is animating, *dengbêj* can use different modulations of voice, pitch, and quality, accompanied by actions and positions such as gestures, facial expressions, and gaze. It is noteworthy that *dengbêjî* speech is not strictly literary: it is naturalistic as well. For this reason, reported speech, as envisioned by Bakhtin in the context of intertextuality,[48] offers a rich theoretical framework for a comprehensive inquiry into the discourse of *dengbêjî* in terms of its use of everyday language, and prosodic and embodied features of speech. Such studies would reveal a relation between meaning and verbal communication, including the narrator's actual narration and stylistic

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47 We have chosen the *Library of* Congress system for the transliteration of Kurmanji to transcribe proper and common names and texts of the sung narratives. The transcription follows Botani orthography, interchangeably called *hawar*. Free translation has been used anywhere that literal translation was found inadequate, or inaccurate, to convey meanings.
48 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 259–422.

devices. Moreover, the study of reported speech offers insight into relevant and meaningful speech acts about social structures in which verbal interactions as dialogue are integral to semiotic relations in which the speaker/teller and the listener semiotically inform and shape one another.

The multilayered nature of the speech acts, as reflected in the word *dengbêj* whom Hamelink and Barish call "master of voice,"[49] is precisely that of someone who revoices the speech of others within and across narrative genres, ranging from romantic encounters to heroic and epochal struggles, all of which are subject to the presence of an audience who listens to, participates in, responds to, and anticipates the unfolding events.

As Delil Dilanar states, performance involves "historical awareness, showing and telling, extensive memory, familiarity with stories of the past, storytelling skills, quality of voice, and character [where] all contribute to re-echoing competent telling."[50] A more poignant analytical framework was exemplified by Bakhtin's analysis of intertextuality and the polyphonic novel by emphasizing the double focus of dialogic discourse "both as the referential object of speech as ordinary discourse and simultaneously as a second context of discourse, a second speech act by another addressor."[51]

Given the above, it is possible to see *dengbêjî*, both in form and content, as the locus of predominantly reported speech in terms of attributed author's reported speech, the direct speech of the narrated characters, the speech of the narrator, and the performer's context. The *dengbêj*'s utterances are often imbued with multivocality originating from not just double, but multiple voiced utterances for both speakers and hearers, reflected in the aesthetic devices, stylization, modes of performance, and intentions. The mastery of the *dengbêj* would hence lie in his ability to host and occupy the varied range of the reported and reporting accounts to enact what Bakhtin calls intertextuality and polyphony. The author's (the performer's) voice is "the ultimate conceptual authority, [which] constantly regulates and ultimately resolves any interplay of other voices in the text; indeed it is from its unitary position that all the other voices are meant to be perceived and judged."[52] Here, the other voices in the narrative recitation emerge and interact among themselves and with the teller's voice. Such an interlaced relation

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49 Hamelink and Bariş, "Dengbêjs on Borderlands: Borders and the State as seen through the eyes of Kurdish Singer-Poets," 35.
50 Dilanar, interview.
51 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 176.
52 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 198.

provides a dialogic site that Bakhtin calls "speech within speech and speech about speech."[53]

Dengbêjî lives in and through language as social communication. As such, it epitomizes and embodies the core cultural practices and values of the ancestors of the Kurdish people. In fact, it mirrors cultural and epistemic systems. The most ancient cultural stocks of knowledge, conceptions of virtue, beauty, love, landscape, bravery, honor, social hierarchy, and tribal structures – in short, history – can be found in this verbal art form. In analyzing the *dengbêjî* verbal art sequences in relation to reported speech, we can show the dialogic nature of its discourse and intertextuality. As Vološnov observed, "it never rests with one consciousness, [but rather] one from one generation to another."[54]

To foreground the verbal aspects of the performances, the analysis will focus on literal and yet pragmatically meaningful translation and textualization of the sung stories with an emphasis on gaining an insight into the salient role of reported speech in shaping this oral tradition.

Our analysis is based on a two-hour long recording of a verbal performance, along with an hour-long interview conducted with the *dengbêj*, Delil Dilanar in August 2015, who thus served both as a performer and a consultant. Data triangulation was accomplished through semi-structured interviews and observing the *dengbêj*'s performance. Our data represents Dilanar as a young Kurdish artist who was socialized into the practice as a child before recontextualizing and transforming it in diaspora. Our interviews also attempt to chronicle both representative samples of the verbal art of *dengbêjî* and his musical journey. We translated the songs, broadly using the conventions of Conversation Analysis as outlined by Sacks, Scheglof, and Jefferson.[55] The texts of the songs and interviews were transcribed in the form of sequences or episodes. Although we also recorded Dilanar, who delighted and astounded the audience with his impressive multivocality and his ability to play multiple musical instruments to accompany his reciting/singing, the audience reactions will not be analyzed here.

The transliteration was not without its own challenges because of cultural gaps and archaic or regional use of certain words and syntax, cases of which have been put in brackets. Still, it is important to note that maintaining these very forms in performances imbues the work with more authenticity and authority, increasing the dramatic and illocutionary force of this kind of oral

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53 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 195.
54 Vološnov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, 199.
55 Sacks, Scheglof, and Jefferson, "A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-taking for Conversation," 731–34.

literature. On the other hand, one can never adequately emphasize the dangers of translations and inaccurate transcriptions in any act of textualization or production of translations. Because of dialectal heterogeneity and linguistic influences, Kurdish has developed different orthographies. We have stayed as close to the original telling as possible, focusing on the broad features and rhetorical organization of the recited texts. However, in every act of transcription, a rendition and hence a new representation emerges, which may depart from the original object of the verbal art. Furthermore, the very act of translation and transcription, despite critical scrutiny, reduces a performance to a text devoid of linguistic subtleties, aesthetics, and artistic values. Obviously, any performance is enriched by paralinguistic and embodied practices that have a direct bearing on its character. Most of these features are difficult, if not impossible, to transcribe. Through in-depth interviews with the *dengbêj* and attention to the texts of the narratives, we were able to refine and clarify our translations. Such a triangulation of text, context, and performance would be critical to an accurate and objective analysis.

Dengbêjî as an Analytical Sociolinguistic Frame

For Dilanar, his narratives as he remarked are "essentially personal, social, political narratives as sung in the old days in the absence of TV and radio, [when] *dengbêj*s would go from village to village to recite their tales of heroic acts or lyrics of love. These songs would both inform and entertain the audience about different events . . . the event may be short or take several days to finish, depending on whether the *dengbêj* follows the traditional narration and audience."[56]

In other words, the practice has the capacity to represent different speech types and acts across different registers and genres in free, musical, and literary forms. Jwaideh classifies the themes of typical narratives into three categories: (1) those that are the product of Kurdish experience; (2) those that are based on the folkloric heritage of the whole Middle East; and (3) those that are borrowed and/or adopted from neighboring peoples.[57]

This preliminary work will draw on "ethnography of speaking"[58] and verbal art as performance. Although we will treat the performances of the *dengbêj* as text, given the multidimensionality of the performance – theatrical, poetic, musical, oral, aural, gestural, and folkloric – we would treat *dengbêjî* as a macro-

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56 Dilanar, Interview.

57 Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement*, 22.

58 Hymes, "Introduction: Toward ethnographies of communication," 1–34.

genre of verbal performance.[59] Still, we will contrast it with micro-genres or variations classified by Jelil in *Zargotina Kurda* as follows: historical (*tarîxî*), dance (*govend*), lament (*şîn*), battle (*şeř*), love (*lawik or çîřok*ên *evîniy*ê), nostalgia (*x̌eřîbî*), and politics (*siyasî).* However, the analysis presented here will be limited to the discourse of two genres: *lawik or çîřok*ên *evîniy*ê (love lyrics) and *tarîxî - siyasî* (historico-political) *dengbêjî.*

Dengbêjî as Performance

In listening to a *dengbêj*, one can easily see the prominent role of language in achieving what Bakhtin calls "voicing." According to *dengbêj* Dilanar, it is important that "the *dengbêjs* have an expansive, long-term memory, possess a poetic knack, a good voice, [be] a man of *kilam* ('words'), and have a far-reaching understanding of history to express the joy and pains of the heart."[60] These remarks underscore the importance of metalinguistic reflexivity and the ways in which *dengbêj* draws on what Lucy calls "the reflexive language"[61] through narrated events and comments.

Traditionally, *dengbêjî* performance would begin with one performer, but it may include cross-performances by several performers. Performers use long-established stories and conventions of form and motifs that rarely allow for impromptu or extemporaneous performances, or they may develop variations of traditional forms and lyrics in competition or cooperation with one another. The audience's response is driven by the imaginative and performative power of the *dengbêj.* According to Dilanar, who performs for Kurdish diasporic communities in Europe and the United States, these performances can "invoke common understandings by reviving old but still relevant forms and symbols that bring back . . . lost collective Kurdish identity."[62]

Such an identity in prose or poetry – with or without music, and whether real or imagined – particularly for diasporic Kurds from Turkey, becomes central to building and recovering a common past. The oral performance becomes, as Boas has put it a "mirror of culture."[63] Given the relentless repression of

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59 De Marinis, *The Semiotics of Performance*, 178.

60 Dilanar, interview.

61 *Dengbêjî* relates to and represents the lived experiences of social actors and actions in the past and present; therefore, it reflects on the ability of language to represent itself through the metalinguistic act of reporting itself and activities associated with it.

62 Dilanar, interview.

63 Boas, "Tsimshian Texts," 393.

their language and culture, for Kurds, *dengbêjî* is not just a replica or remnant of the past, but a practice with present significance and relevance. Kurds in Turkey, have particularly been deprived of their identity, historical continuity, and linguistic vitality. Askoy's attention to the role of Kurdish diaspora in the production of music reflects how continuing "Political tensions between the Turkish state and its Kurdish citizens have resulted in significant exodus of Kurdish musicians to Europe. As a result, modern developments in nationalistic Kurdish music take place in countries like Germany and through the media . . . the history of Kurdish music closely parallels the history of Kurdish politics."[64] For this reason, *dengbêjî* for transplanted Kurds in diaspora has served as the symbolic site for redefining and reconfirming their ethnic and linguistic identity in a multicultural context. The arrival of *dengbêjs* such as Delil Dilanar in diaspora has created new cultural spaces for language maintenance, revitalization, collective historical memory, and public display of Kurdishness.

The broad discourse-based analysis of *dengbêjî'*, pertinent to the discussion here, focuses on the content of three performances in the context of diaspora. Dilanar in his interview discussed the transformation of the verbal art. In his view, the introduction of young and female *dengbêjs* and their performances in festivals and public places may bode well for the future of this oral tradition. Recent scholarly work in this field also points to this transformation and possible developments and modernization of *dengbêjî*, as exemplified by Dilanar. Our observations and interviews revealed the great wealth of his vocal art, instrumental repertoires, his musical versatility, and awareness of the importance of *dengbêjî* as authentic Kurdish verbal art and its historical significance. Over the years, Dilanar has continued to produce and present valuable work from famous masters whose work he valorized as the hallmark of distinct aesthetic and sociocultural identity while understating his own importance:

> I do not quite qualify as a *dengbêj* as these people are the living folklore and history of their people; they are well versed in the most extensive ancient and contemporary stories. Stories that they can tell with artistry and exceptional eloquence and bring alive the many characters found in the stories they tell.[65]

In the analysis that follows, framing will be applied with the aim of identifying, describing, and analyzing the role enactments of the *dengbêj*, while focusing on reported speech and the interactive nature of the sung narratives. This will be achieved by introducing and analyzing, taxonomically, four examples of *dengbêjî*. The first short excerpt introduced earlier was presented to describe

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64 Aksoy, "The music and multiple identities of Kurdish Alevis from Turkey in Germany," 102.
65 Dilanar, interview.

the form and function of reported speech, while the following transcriptions ground our analysis. The second and third are *lawik or çîrok*ên *evîniy*ê (tales of love), and the fourth is *tarîxî-siyasî* (historico-political).

Dengbêjî as Text

Love lyrics continue to be of great interest to Kurds. *R̄izgan û Nûrê* (*R̄izgar* and *Nûrê*) is a lyrical song allowing the *dengbêj* to recount a romance that culminates in a fatal end. In recounting the story, the performer depicts the key events and scenes by indexing the geography of the land, names of people, places, and animals, social relationships, and the prevalent moral order of the times. The story introduced below was performed on the Kurdish tanbur or lute, played by the *dengbêj* himself. The lyrics were transcribed and translated into English, following the broad principles of Conversation Analysis (CA). To insure accuracy and readability, Kurmanji orthographic transliteration and the Standard American English coupled with CA were used to represent the original text.

Example 2:
R̄izgan û Nûrê
(R̄izgar and Nûrê)
1. *Bê de lo lo lo . . .*
   R̄izgan [R̄izgar] go [got]: "Nûrê wa Nûrê were qasekê çoka xwe bide 'erdê ye, wezê serê xwe bidim (danim) ser çokê ye."
   R̄izgar said: "Nûrê, please come lay your leg down on the ground a little so I can rest my head on your knee [lap]."

2. *Nûrê çoka xwe dide 'erdê, R̄izgan (R̄izgar) serê xwe dide ser çokê ye. Kete xewê û xewnê ye.*
   Nûrê stretches her knee (leg) on the ground, R̄izgar lays his head on her knee (lap), and he falls asleep and dreams.

3. **B**ê *de lo lo lo . . .*

4. *R̄izgan [R̄izgar] wez [ez] bi qurban im, nizan im bextê min bû yan tal'ê te bû? Berfanî berfa nerm e. heyrano r̄ûkê 'erdê kiriye wekê [wekî] çem e.*
   R̄izgar, I sacrifice for you, I don't know if it was my luck or your fate. Fluffy snow, the snow is soft. My beloved, the surface of the earth has turned into a stream.

5. **Dê** *tu were m [min] por̄kura Xwedê ner̄evîne, nebe Şkefta Kulî, Şkefta Kulî şkeftek ciyê [cihê] bêwariya cangê kur̄-apê min nêçîrvan e.*
   Please do not elope with me and take me to Kulî [Grasshopper] Cave; Kulî Cave is my hunter cousin's destination.

6. *Sibê zû r̄adibe li pey kêvrûşka digêr̄ne [digêr̄e].*
   He gets up very early and hunts for rabbits.

7. *Ax R̄izgano [R̄izgaro] wez [ez] bi qurban, tu were îzê bîne ser me, m [min] bikuje, lo te jî bi ser de wax [ax].*
   O R̄izgar, I sacrifice myself for you, come and bring the dishonor upon us and kill me, on top of everything else.

8. *Bê de lo lo lo . . . wax [ax] de lo lo lo . . . R̄izgano [R̄izgaro].*

9. *Ji xewa şêrîn [şîrîn] bazda, go [got]: "Nûrê wa Nûrê! mala babê lê xerab bûyê! dê r̄abe minê xewnek dîtiye; wezê [ez dê] xewna xwe bêj im tu por̄kura Xwedê xewna min şirove bike wax [ax]."*
   He woke up with shock from sweet (deep) sleep and said: "Nûrê O Nûrê Woe unto you! Get up, I had a dream. I will tell you my dream and you the God's short-haired one, interpret it for me."

10. *Bê de go[got]: "minê dîtibû darekî li derê mala babê te şîn bûye. Wê darê du çiqil, her çiqilê sêvekê, her sêvekê kewekê gozel wa li ser e. Minê bala xwe dayê teyrê qereqûşî jor de lê de serê herdu kewên gozel wa difir̄in." wax [ax]*
    He said: "I saw a tree that grew in front of your father's house. That tree has two branches, each branch has an apple on it and each apple has partridge on it. I saw a black eagle coming down, attacking the partridges and beheading them." (sighs)

11. *Nûrê go [got]: "R̄izgano [R̄izgaro], ez bi qurban, Xwedê xewna te bi xêrke.*
    "Nûrê said: "R̄izgar, I sacrifice myself for you, may God let your dream be a good omen."

12. *Dara derê mala babê min ji bejna min e; herdu çiqilê pê ve bext û mirazên min û te ne.*
    The tree in front of my father's house symbolizes my figure; the two branches are our fate and fortune.

13. *Herdu sêvên li ser, memikên min in. Herdu kewên gozel 'eslê r̄ihê min û te ne.*
    The two apples represent both of my breasts. Both partridges represent our souls.

14. *Teyrê qereqûşa, Oco, kur̄mamê min nêçîrvan e.*
    The black eagle represents my cousin, Ojo, who is a hunter.

15. **S**ibê zû r̄adibe li pay kêvr̄ûşka diger̄ine [diger̄e].*
    He gets up very early and hunts rabbits.

16. *Ax R̄izgano [Rizgaro], wez [ez] bi qurban, tu were îzê bîne ser me, m [min] bikuje. Lo te jî bi ser de wax [ax]."*
    O R̄izgar, I sacrifice myself for you, come bring dishonor upon us and kill me: let yours be besides everything else."

17. *Bê de lo lo lo . . . wax [ax] de lo lo lo . . . R̄izgano [R̄izgaro].*

18. *Sibe bû, kubara sibê ye.*
    It was morning, early morning.

19. *Nûrê derdikeve ber derê şkeftê ye.*
    Nûrê goes out to the front of the cave.

20. *Dinêre Oco xuya ye, jêr de tê ye.*
    She sees her cousin Ojo coming up.

21. *Nûrê diçe pêşiyê Oco, "Oco, wezê [ez ê] di bextê te de me, were, R̄izgan [R̄izgar] nekuje, xurtek heyf e, takî, bi tenê ye.*
    Nure goes before him and says "Ojo, I beg you, come, do not kill R̄izgar, as he is a youngster and is alone.

22. *Were min por̄kura Xwedê bikuje. Poz û guhê min jêke, têke cêba xwe de.*
    Come kill me ye God's short-haired one. Cut off my nose and ears and put them in your pocket.

23. *Sibê r̄o [r̄oj] li nava ʿeşîrê de derxe hem ji te re nav e hem namûs e ax.*
    Tomorrow in the daylight, before the tribe, take them out of your pocket to earn yourself name and honor.

24. *Bê de lo lo lo . . . wax [ax] de lo lo lo . . . R̄izgano [R̄izgaro].*[66]

The narrative unfolds in phases: the lovers elope and take sanctuary in a cave; dreams and nightmares converge; the horror of honor killing haunts the lovers; and the romance ends tragically. The line divisions reveal the pace of the sung narrative through fixed recurring sets of evocative rhythmic structures foretelling misfortune (Lines 1, 3, 8, 24: *bê de lo lo lo . . .*), but the lines also mark the rhythm that accompanies and regulates the sequence and intimations of the narrative. The musical prelude, played on a tambour, sets the pitch and conveys prosody of the performer, who modulates his voice in reporting the speech of the two lovers, R̄izgar and Nûrê. The performer relates and recites the story through an abundance of direct speech by prefacing the story and communicating the chain of events from the viewpoint of the characters and the binary deictic center of social order. Throughout his narration, the *dengbêj* speaks as both lovers, using different types of "speech acts,"[67] such as constative (Line 2: N*ûrê çoka xwe dide erdê, R̄izgan*/Nûrê stretches her knee (leg) on the ground . . .); directive (Line 5: *dê tu were m [min] por̄kura Xwedê ner̄evîne . . .* /Please do not elope with me . . .); commissive when Nûrê vows to give herself up to her cousin (Line 22: *. . . min por̄kura Xwedê bikuje . . .* / . . . kill me, ye God's short-haired one); phatic (Line 9: *"Nûrê wa Nûrê! mala babê lê xerab bûyê! dê r̄abe minê xewnek dîtiye . . . "*/ "Nûrê O Nûrê Woe unto you! Get up, I had a dream . . .). These varied speech acts convey and communicate attitudes, social norms, and gendered identities in and through interpersonal interactions.

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66 Dilanar, *Rizgan û Nûrê,* performed Los Angeles, Aug 2, 2015.
67 Searle, "A Classification of Illocutionary Acts," 1–23.

These illocutionary utterances enter an interactive and semiotic relationship that the *dengbêj* uptakes to initiate and complicate the ensuing conflicts, both personal and institutional, driven by the form and force of reported speech.

The *dengbêj* initially appears as the narrator in Lines 1 and 11 to identify the focal characters, Ŕizgar and Nûrê, by highlighting the narrative through spatial and temporal deictic shifts (Line 1–2: . . . [Ŕizgar] go . . . /Nûrê çoka xwe dide erdê, *Ŕizgan [Ŕizgar] serê xwe dide ser çokê ye. Kete xewê û xewnê ye*/[Ŕizgar] said . . . Nûrê stretches her knee (leg) on the ground, Ŕizgar lays his head on her knee (lap), and he falls asleep and dreams). With the exception of the deictic past tense marker reporting verb **go [t]** ("said") in Lines 1, 10, 11, all the narrative and speech events are conveyed in present tense. The narrator, in his capacity to represent the lovers' emotional states, alternates between the frames of the narrator and those of the two characters. This is a clear example of how the same speaker inhabits multiple speakerships and characters through dynamic and dialogic voices. This delineation is identified in Goffman's framework[68] namely, as the animator of each character, the author of the characters' sentiments and thoughts, the figure performing the character's roles, and the principal (social and cultural agents, entities, and normative practices) revoicing the young girl's imagining punishment for her transgression of the moral code: eloping with a young man rather than marrying her paternal cousin, who according to the Kurdish patrilineal stratification and norms, as studied by Barth, has "the first right to a girl."[69] The varied prosodic patterns and multivocality enable the narrator to dramatize the focal characters' psychological and affective states and viewpoints about the unfolding tragedy. The prevalence of direct discourse as a semiotic resource is apparent through explicit indicators and deictic expressions, and first-person, second person, and present-tense verbs. All are associated with the here and now to convey the immediacy, intensity, and authenticity of the characters' lived experiences.

The illusory nature of reality comes through a dream that Ŕizgar recalls and relates in a soothing and sad manner (Lines 9–10). Ŕizgar narrates his dream in a recitative manner, describing the beauty and purity of Ŕizgar and Nûrê love. Dreams and nightmares are blended as the *dengbêj* revoices Nûrê, half-singing and half-speaking – interpreting the dream with nuance and affect (Lines 12–13: *Dara derê mala babê min ji bejna min e; herdu çiqilê pê ve bext û mirazên min û te ne*/The tree in front of my father's house symbolizes my figure/ the two branches are our fate and fortune/*Herdu sêvên li ser, memikên min in. Herdu kewên gozel 'eslê ŕihê min û te ne*/The two apples represent both of my

68 *Goffman, Forms of Talk*, 124–59.

69 Barth, "Father's Brother's Daughter Marriage in Kurdistan," 164–71.

breasts. Both partridges represent our souls). The segment is replete with symbolism and figurative language. The lovers are compared to "trees" and "partridges" to signify their tender and inseparable souls. "Breasts" are likened to "apples" with their familiar erotic associations in the language of Kurdish folk poetry, including *dengbêjî*, which can be the site of erotic sentiments "despite Islamic culture," as Dorian has argued.[70]

The audience soon realizes that the lovers are social outcasts, for they have sought refuge on a mountain after they eloped, only to see their dream shattered by the presence of a hunter, Nûrê cousin. Like other Kurdish love stories, there is an impending tragedy lurking in the shadows of the forbidden love: the upholding of *namûs* or honor in a patriarchal and traditional society. Nûrê's cousin is on the mountain in search of game. Soon, we discover that Nûrê would be his prey: to be hunted down by the cousin in order to gain fame and fortune by his upholding the tribe's *namûs*.

The authoritative voice of the cousin subverts the joy and beauty of the moment. The black eagle (Line 14) signifies the power of reality and normative practices of the moral and institutional order (Line 23) in which *namûs* indexes a high moral value, antithetical to love. Both characters speak of their affection and anxiety through the interpretation of the dream. Like other Kurdish love lyrics, greater attention is paid to the feelings of the girl and her conflicts.[71] Nûrê openly defends her love against her noble kinsmen, chooses love over *namûs*, and throws herself at her cousin's mercy to save her sweetheart (Line 21: " . . . *'Oco, wezê [ez ê] di bextê te de me, were, R̄izgan [R̄izgar] nekuje, xurtek heyf e, takî, bi tenê ye'''* /. . .'Ojo, I beg you, come, do not kill R̄izgar, he is a lad and alone'). Nûrê attempts to restrain her cousin from committing violence against her beloved (Lines 21–22). In other words, she is willing to die for love. Nûrê finally resigns herself to her tragic fate, projecting the horror of the crime that would be committed against her. In sum, the evocative voice of the *dengbêj* adeptly recounts, through mostly direct speech, the alienating power of social norms and the agony of forbidden love in a nomadic and patriarchal society, for a young girl is forced to give up her life to save her beloved.

The third example is another *lawik or çîr̄okên evîniy*ê (tales of love) interwoven with imagery of nature and lyricism of love caught in the shackles of a

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70 Dorian, "World Music: Africa Europe, The Middle East," 378. King stresses in her articulate essay that ultimately love falls victim to a relentless, regimented, and gendered moral regime, defined by King as "a show of reproductive sovereignty or a larger entity . . . that defines its composition patrilineally. King, The person is patrilineal: Namus as sovereignty.

71 Christensen, "Music in Kurdish Identity Formations," 13.

patriarchal society. The first narrative is told from the perspective of the young girl, here, the narrative is recounted through the young man's perspective.

Example 3
Zeriyê
Zeriye

1. *Erê Zeriyê m* [min] *go [got] ji kona digeřî, kon a wê da konê me ne yar, yar, yar . . . konê me ne.*
    Yes, Zeriye I said you are coming from tents, those tents that you are searching and coming from, among them are ours, beloved, beloved, beloved . . . ours.

2. *Tořînê, ji kona* [konan] *digeřî kona wê da konê [konên] me ne.*
    Beloved, the tents you are coming from, among them are ours.

3. *Qîz û bûkê* [bûkên] *mala Hecî Qero ser bi zêř in, enî gewer in, sûret sor, û wa bi delme ne.*
    Daughters and daughters-in-law of Heji Qero family have gold crowns on their heads, flat and beautifully shaped foreheads, rosy cheeks, and are very well dressed.

4. *Řamûsandarên dinê ře gelek hene.*
    There are many for the kissers in the world.

5. *Řamûsanên qîz û bûkê* [bûkên] *mala Hecî Qero jî řamûsanên dinê zêde ne felekê . . .*
    The kissing of Heji Qero's daughters and daughters-in-law is far beyond the world's kissers, O fate . . .

6. *Felekê wa felekê . . .*
    Fate, O fate . . .

7. *Erê Zeriyê, m* [min] *go [got] Kosê Daxê mîrê çiya ye, yar, yar, yar . . .*
    Yes Zeriyê, I said: "Kose Dax is the mountain prince, beloved, beloved, beloved. . .

8. *Tořînê, Kosê Daxê mîrê çiya ye.*
    Beloved, Kose Daxe is the mountain prince.

9. *Min û kewa gozel, milê xwe li milê* [milên] *hev xistiye* [xistine],
    The beautiful girl and I rubbed our shoulders,

10. *Hilkişyane zozanê* [zozanên] *jorîn, mexelê* [mexelên] *pezkûviyan e.*
    We went up to the highlands, summer pasture, the mountain goats' pen.

11. *Gelî malî cîranno* [mal û cîranan] *bextê we da me ketime henek û laqirdiya, ji bextê m* [min] *ře*
    All villagers and neighbors, I beg you, I started having affections for her, my poor luck.

12. *Morî û mercanê* [mercanên] *zenda zer qetiya*
    Her pearl and beads bracelet on her golden wrist broke.

13. *M* [min] *go [got] kewê kubarê tu netirse! Wezê* [ez dê]
    I said: "My beauty fear not! I will

14. *Sibe van çaxanan xwe bi-avême nava xerc û xeřacê* [xeřacên] *cîran û maliyan wa yê . . .*
    Go to the merchants' homes and neighbors tomorrow at this time to beg them . . ."

15. *Felekê wa felekê . . .*
    Fate, O fate . . .

16. Erê Zeriyê, m [min] *go [got] bila awirê te nekeve kêlê kevira yar, yar, yar . . . kêlê kevira* [keviran].
    Yes Zeriyê, I said: "let not your contempt be placed on the tombstone, beloved, beloved, beloved . . . the tombstone."

17. *Ez ê dikim kewa kubar bi řevîn im, xwe bi-avêjme her çar malê cidira*
    I am trying to elope with the majestic girl. I will throw myself at the mercy of the house of merchants,

18. *Ger* [eger] *bûye wê bûye, ger* [eger] *nebûye, ez ê xwe bi-avêjime her çar malê têciran.*
    Whether there is precedence or not, I will [still] throw myself at the mercy of all the four merchants' houses.

19. *Felekê . . . wa felekê.*
    Fate . . . O fate.

The fact that the segment is musically divided by three refrains contributes to the repetitive unity of the performance. Each phase varies in length as the refrain ("*felekê ê . . . wê . . . hê wê wê felekê*") occurs at the end of Lines 6, 15, and 19, respectively. Each repetition of the refrain bemoans one's terrible and inescapable fate contributing to the rhythm of the piece. The entire segment is recounted from the first person's perspective, that of the focal male character. The narrator has minimal, if any, presence, and serves only to animate the protagonist through direct discourse, as the deictic center of the narration remains in the domain of spontaneity of what the protagonist is thinking, feeling, and saying. The narrator here speaks directly for the character, rendering them inseparable. In reality, everything is represented and reported to the audience as the focal character's words and his mental and emotional state. Phase 1 introduces the setting. The scene is nomadic, pastoral, evocative of secluded life, with general references to the native imagery of mountains, pastures, and animals interwoven with love (Lines 7–10: *Erê Zeriyê, m* [*mini go* [*got*] *Kosê Daxê mîrê çiya ye, yar, yar, yar . . . /Kose Dax* is the mountain prince, beloved beloved beloved . . . / . . . *Hilkişyane zozanê jorîn, mexelê pezkûviyan e/* We went up to the highlands, summer pasture, the mountain goats' pen).

In Phase 2, more vivid details are provided about the plot. The male lover, who happens to be a guest in one of the tents, speaks about his sentiments and the affection he feels toward the girl named Zeriyê. The two lovers encounter one another in an encampment (Line 2). The girl is endowed with an unparalleled beauty and majesty for which the lover is ready to take immense risks by

eloping with her. The delight of love soon turns into the ominous danger of taboos and moral tribulations.

The use of direct discourse throughout the narration allows the invisible narrator to depict the story faithfully and to animate and heighten the spontaneity of uninhabited expressions of romantic and erotic sentiments. Imagery of beauty abounds in the captivating and visceral feelings (Lines 3–5, 9–12). During Phase 3, the narrative gives voice to gender dichotomy once again as the protagonist shows willingness to endure self-sacrifice and social humiliation to stand up courageously for his love against the moral order (Lines 14–19). This time, we see a young man caught in the chains of gendered social and moral order. However, in defense of love, and in defiance of normative moral order, he gives expression not only to his own intense desires, but those of their shared sentiments and spirit, to express his love publicly (Line 11: "*Gelî malî cîranno* [*mal û cîranan*] *bextê we da me ketime henek û laqirdiya, ji bextê m* [*min*] *r̄e*"/"All villagers and neighbors, I beg you, I started having affections for her, my poor luck").

Jewelry symbolizes wealth, status, and elegance, the loss of which would signal a complication, suggestive of sexual contact. The sheer force of affection ruptures the beads Zeriyê is wearing, thus violating the norms of modesty (Line 12: *Morî û mercanê* [*mercanên*] *zenda zer qetiya*/Her pearl and beads bracelet on her golden wrist broke).

The lover knows that his defiance against gendered power is punishable by death. In desperation, he appeals to the neighbors and clemency of the honorable — and notable — families to help them escape their dreadful end. With a sense of melancholy, the lover, hoping that neighbors and the merchants would feel sorry for him, throws himself at the mercy of the oppressive community (Line 18: *"Ger [eger] bûye wê bûye, ger [eger] nebûye, ez ê xwe bi-avêjime her çar malê têciran*/Whether there is precedence or not, I will still throw myself at the mercy of all the four merchants' houses).

The occurrence of lexical items and phonological variations, whether they are regional variants, archaic, or cases of elision, albeit incongruous with the modern use of the language, reasserts the authenticity and authority of the language through these unaltered forms and linguistic markers, i.e.,

- m for [min] ("I")
- Nûrê go [got]
- kon for [konan] (tent)
- bûkê for [bûkên] ("daughters-in-law")
- mercanê for [mercanên] ("beads")
- wezê for [ez dê]("I will")

In the end this narrated tale, told polyphonically, is about the aesthetics of love and its opposition to the fetters of ethics. The lyrics may mirror bygone days, a rural existence that is no more. Still, this idealized imagery of the landscape and patriarchal gender relations have persisted in some parts of the Kurdish-spekaing world. Their realistic rendition in contemporary contexts conjures up images intimately associated with how societal norms shape and reshape social and moral attitudes of a community whose voice is heard.

The fourth narration is an example of a *tarîxî-siyasî* or historical-political *dengbêjî*. According to our informant, this narrative is a much shorter version of a longer epic tale, a deep-rooted practice in Kurdish oral tradition across different regions and dialects. Although hero tales may vary in terminology and linguistic idioms, types, modes, genres, and traditions of verbal performance across differ-ent regions, *dengbêj*s play a stellar role in recalling and relating important histori-cal events. Dilanar, who had learned this art form from his late uncle Huseyno, a renowned, revered, and respected master *dengbêj*, would take several hours to tell longer and more complex stories. By adding his own musical composition and his rendition of the song, Dilanar aims to cultivate an interest for an old tradition in a younger audience. *Dengbêjî*, according to Dilanar, is both about "Kurdish societal norms and values; and the responsibility for safeguarding and defending the land and its people."[72]

The following performance is significant both for its form and content, as the story takes place at the intersection of Kurdish frontier and calls for a heroic combat against the invading and formidable forces of the Persian king. The ex-cerpt depicts an episode comprising a longer sequence, selected for its dramatic narrative features and force. The *dengbêj*, in the interview that took place after the performance, noted that this type of verbal performance is significant as it dramatizes a well-known battle. As such, the analysis will show the interaction of reported speech and historical memory.

Example 4
Şeŗê Tarxan
The Battle of Tarkhan
1. *De lo lo lo . . . tû kela mêran î.*
   De lo lo lo . . . You are a man with a fiery spirit.

2. *Lê lê dayê . . . ŗebenê ca ŗabe binêre şerê hanê şeŗê Terxane.*
   O, poor mother! Rise! This battle is the Tarkhan battle.

3. *Keko dê ŗabe mêze bike ev dewa hanê dewa Tarxan e . . .*
   Rise brother! Look! This battle is the battle of Tarkhan . . .

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72 Dilanar, interview.

4. *Tarxan bi sê dengan dike gazî "Ehmed bira tu ȓabe îro bi sê dengan*
   li Şahê 'Ecem bike qêȓîne. Bibêje 'lawo Xwedê dizane qetla te li ba min mina qetla du
   mirîşkan e.'"
   Tarkhan yells out with three voices (at the top of his lungs), "Brother Ahmad, rise!
   Scream with three voices (at the top of your lungs) at the Persian king. Say, 'Boy, God
   knows that killing you is as easy as killing two chickens.'"

5. *Çi bikim? îro li pêşiya te koçî qeleniyê ye, koma Celaliyan e, lo lo lo . . . tû kela mêran î, way.*
   What can I do? Today you are facing a battle of annihilation, it is the Jalalyan forces, lo
   lo lo . . . You are a man with a fiery spirit.

6. *Lê lê dayê . . . Ȓebenê ȓabe îro binêre sira qeleniyê bişewite ji bextê min ȓe çiqas sirekî sar e*
   wî. Lê keko, tu ȓabe mêze bike, sira qeleniyê bişewite, ji bextê min re sirekî çi qas sar
   e. Taxima di destê babê Cemilê, kekê Cewzo de ortê zêȓîn e momika serî karîbar e . . .
   O, poor mother rise and see the battle of annihilation today! May the annihilation battle
   be crushed! Brother, rise and see the battle of annihilation! How cruel an annihilation
   battle it is for my fate! The weapon in Jamil's father and Jawzo's brother's hands is
   golden in the middle; the flower at the tip is magnificent . . .

7. *'Eskerê Şahê 'Ecem giran e, dozdeh hezar e, bi ser milê me her du bira de hatî xware . . .*
   Ez ditirs im 'eskerê Şahê 'Ecem 'eskerekî zor e, zexm e, giran e. \'Eskerê birayê te hindik e,
   vê sibê pê nikar e . . . Lê bi raya xwedê emê lêbixin, 'eskerê Şahê 'Ecem derbas bikin ji
   sinorê 'Ebas Kentê . . . paşiyê li ava Erez di destê kekê Cewzo de zare zare de lo lo lo . . .
   The army of the Persian king is massive. 12,000 there are who came down upon both of
   us-brothers . . . I fear that the Persian king's army is a massive army: huge, heavy. Your
   brother's army is little and can't defeat them this morning . . . But with God's will we
   will fight them, drive Persian king's army from the Abas Canton's border to the end of
   Araz river, which is weeping in brother Jawzo's hands, lo lo lo . . .

The battle story is initiated and accompanied by the rhythm of metrical strings of tambour. Formulaic chants in a high-pitched preface with a series of rhythmic syllables constructed in the form of parallel structures *("De lo lo De lo lo lo"),* build up an unfolding tension in the orientation of the narrative in a loud, anguished, and affective tone. The plot begins with self-representation of Tarkhan: an independent tribal leader with battle cries and appeals to his clan to rise. As an omniscient epic narrator, the *dengbêj* reports directly on the events and dramatizes the internal psychology of the battle. It is only in Line 4 that the narrator informs us that "Tarkhan yells out with three voices at the top of his lungs," but his role is still quite limited as the direct speech is a dominant discourse realized through unchanged temporal and spatial deictic references to the urgency of the here and now emanating from the character, not the narrator (Line 2**):** . . . *rebenê ca ȓabe binêre . . . /. . .* Rise mother Look! . . .). Recurrent exclamations and imperative forms directly address the audience.

The setting is too sketchy to reveal much about the geography of the area, with the only geographical allusions made to the Araz River in the Caucus and an obscure "Abas canton" in Line 7. The story is probably traceable to the medieval period, as described by Bengio, when independent Kurdish principalities exercised great autonomy, free from foreign domination and exempt from transgressions. However, during the Safavid rule in Iran (1502–1736), these semi-independent principalities were attacked, and many folk were either massacred or displaced.[73] The war of Tarkhan most probably took place in this context during or after the siege and destruction of Dimdim fortress near Lake Urmia between 1609 and 1610, which afforded a prominent character to Kurdish "nationalism," as reflected in *Beytî Dimdim* that, along with *Mem û Zîn*, is the most famous Kurdish epic narrative. Dimdim "is the story of a desperate, unyielding band of Kurds who covered themselves with glory at the siege of the fortress . . . The defenders continued to fight until everyone of them was killed."[74]

The *dengbêj* draws the listeners into tense episodes by dramatizing the voice of the protagonist, who repeatedly calls on the tribe to take part in the resistance: passion play at its best. He summons tribe members through his invocations accentuated with parallel couplets (Line 3: *Keko dê r̄abe mêze bike ev dewa hanê dewa Tarxan e . . . /*Rise brother! Look! This battle is the battle of Tarkhan..). The bold imperatives intensify illocutionary force of the unfolding war drama through alliterations as terms of kinship are invoked in Lines 2 and 3. The direct storytelling is animated with a heightened sense of suspense as Tarkhan pleads with his kin in colloquial speech (In line 4 he draws his clansmen into the decisive battle to prevent a disastrous end). The verbatim repetition intensifies the effect as symbolisms embedded in the folk song are cognizant of the 'forthcoming' menace, and madness of war, and enhance the threat of the impending carnage (Line 5: **"îro li pêşiya te koçî qeleniyê ye"**/"This is our final battle, one of life and death!"). The omniscient teller's direct accounts of the courage and scourge associated with war elicit a response from the audience, who can visualize a chapter in their history as it unfolds with the narration. The know that the outcome of the fight depicted before them will determine the future that they now live. Listeners can, almost palpably, see and sense the tense situation in which the warrior and his people find themselves in the midst of preparation for an uneven war as the warrior calls on his kin (Line 1: *"tû kela mêran î"*/"You are a man with a fiery spirit") to rise against the invasive forces. The protagonist is aware of the

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73 Bengio, *The Roots of Kurdish Awakening*, 47.

74 Jwaideh, *The Kurdish National Movement*, 23.

power of his enemy (Line 7: **'*Eskerê Şahê 'Ecem giran e, dozdeh hezar*/** The army of the Persian king is massive. 12000. . .). The hero uses hyperbolic and boastful cries, mixed with a gusto-imbued colloquial Kurdish, to make a mockery of the king and likening his army to *mirîşkan* [chickens] in Line 4.

The fate of the battle is in the hands of tribal chiefs whose weapon handles are made of gold (Line 6). Although the telling appears to be annalistic, allusions to other wars and historic events and conflicts with other tribes, such as Jalaliāns, are interwoven into the storyline. The warrior reminds people of the outcome and the enemy's ferocity in inflicting misfortune and endless suffering upon them unless they drive them (the Persian King) away (Line 7: . . . *Erez di destê kekê Cewzo de zare zare de lo lo lo*/ . . . Araz river, which is weeping in brother Jawzo's hands, lo lo lo).

Although the episodes appear as fragments in terms of sequential narrative for the contemporary listener or reader, the narrator, whom we know as Tarkhan, is warning against an impending war. The use of the direct speech foregrounds the main character and intensifies the unmediated sentiments and entreaties of the epic hero to persuade members of his tribe to save themselves and their land from an impending adversity.

As shown through the examples, the *dengbêj* inhabits and revoices multiple textual spaces by mediating interrelated, yet distinct, discursive spheres and voices. Here, direct discourse, as the dominant mode of narrative representation, offers the performer a vehicle for navigating, negotiating, moving, and shifting within and across the interplay of multiple voices, both literary and vernacular, as he reechoes and represents personal, social, and institutional discourses. On the other hand, the use of indirect discourse is ambiguous and calls for a closer scrutiny. Nevertheless, the objectivity of direct speech offers authenticity and authority to the narrative voice and the different voices of the characters. Thus, the performances analyzed here provide rich examples of how direct discourse guides and contributes to the ways in which stories in folk art are dialogically constructed in two fundamental ways: *Dengbêj* achieves this by performing, reenacting, and giving voice to the characters through embedded voices while simultaneously evoking a past that has present implications.

Conclusion

In closing this analysis, it is worth delineating the reasons for the continued popularity of *dengbêjî*, despite constraints, as the material reproduction of Kurdish culture and language. The view of *dengbêjî* as a retrograde and primitive

expression is now starting to be seriously questioned. The form is being rediscovered for its authenticity and group membership, and linguistic heterogeneity. It is thus articulately captured in Clifford's illuminating analysis of Bakhtin's polyphonic novel "as utopian textual space where discursive complexity, [and] the dialogical interplay of voices can be accommodated" and transformed.[75] For *dengbêj*, the multilayered and embedded voices provide the authority to summon the past into the present as he enunciates, revoices, embodies, and allows the characters to speak for themselves and convey their lived experiences to the audience. This enduring practice shows the ways in which this once marginalized and almost forgotten oral tradition has once again become a significant factor in language revitalization and the revival of folkloric traditions. The examples discussed show how the limitations of traditional formal grammatical distinctions as the functions of reported speech can only be appreciated through dialogic discourse and style. The four cited examples provide a glimpse into the richness and variety of these emotionally charged texts and genres found in this oral tradition.

This research shows that *dengbêjî* is the key site for examining reported speech and further highlights its capacity to reflect the diachronic and synchronic pragmatics of language. In this sense, the primary function of a competent performer is to replay with authority, authenticity, and forceful vividness the narrated events and the actions of the central characters. The underlying shape of this phenomenon is determined by the interactional nature of discourse and the communicative necessities and participation frameworks that *dengbêj* draws on in signaling and shifting his footing polyphonically.

Although the interview data and performance transcripts would require a more elaborate and critical analysis, our preliminary investigation suggests that *dengbêjî* narratives can offer revealing possibilities for the study of reported speech in its naturalistic and historical contexts. The narrated events discussed here show how, in telling and retelling the lived experiences of the characters, we can see the embodiments of different interpersonal, moral, and national identities with multidimensional complexities. It is clear here that Kurdish traditional treatment of the topic s impoverishing and contradictory in relation to formal distinctions of direct and indirect discourse; nonetheless, some hopeful signs that reported speech, so ubiquitous in the Kurdish verbal art, can remerge as a rich cultural and scholarly resource. Our findings suggest that, while the boundaries between the two are not distinct, direct discourse seems to predominate in *dengbêjî* as a powerful essence and expression of folk-

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75 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 136.

lore. Clearly, multiple resources – syntactic, lexical, and vocal – are productive ways of showing shifting discourses:

> [. . .] before us are two events – the event that is event of narration itself (we participate in the latter, as listeners and readers); these events take place at different times in different places but at the same time these events are indissolubly united in a single but complex event that we might call the work in the totality of all its events, including the external material givenness of the work, and its text, and the world represented in the text, and the author-creator and the listener or reader; thus we perceive the fullness of the work in all of its wholeness and indivisibility, but at the same time we understand the diversity of the elements that constitute it.[76]

Our findings suggest that indirect discourse in Kurdish may be used as a meta-discourse or heuristic device by the *dengbêj* as an evaluative or interpretive frame that could show us what direct discourse tells us. Given the ubiquity of reported speech in discourse, the distinction between direct and indirect discourse in Kurdish can only be perceived metapragmatically. Perhaps Vološinov's observation about the Russian language is also true of Kurdish:

> The history of the Russian language knows no Cartesian, rationalistic period, during which an objective 'authorial context,' self-confident in its power of reason, had analyzed and dissected the referential structure of the speech to be reported and created complex and remarkable devices for the indirect transmission of speech.[77]

The examples herein clearly indicate that language is the site of sociocultural struggle. However, the analysis does not delve into the role of ideologies and contestations in which stories are embedded or claimed as cultural authenticity and heritage. This essay highlights *Dengbêjî* being reinvented to contribute to the revival of Kurdish ethno-linguistic identity, a celebration of the oral tradition and folklore in which now women *dengbêj*s play an active role in a contested history against both the Turkish State and the traditional Kurdish movement. As noted by Schäfers, women *dengbêj*s are capable of creating "a liberal imagination of *dengbêjî* free from politics . . . for women in particular."[78]

As bearers and transmitters of a vast and varied stock of knowledge, *dengbêj*s play a dialogic and representative role by means of invocation of voices and enduring stories that are made relevant to the Kurdish ethnonational and migrational identity. A more comprehensive and representative data would thus be more revealing. In recent years, *dengbejî* has been revived as a counter-

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76 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 255.

77 Vološnov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, 126.

78 Schäfers, "Being sick of politics: The production of dengbêjî as Kurdish cultural heritage in contemporary Turkey," 3.

discursive practice that reaffirms Kurdish oral authenticity against the entrenched single language system and institutionalized ethnocentrism: by creating a new understanding of the present and past. More recently, authors such as Hamlink have stressed the significance of the practice and the need for accurate study of its linguistic and performative qualities. They also stress the underlying epistemological implications for Kurds to learn the truth about the role of *dengbêjî* in recounting "the pain, and sufferings of people."[79] *Dengbêjî*, whose very existence in Turkey was denied, has served as an authentic cultural authority. The genre itself is being recontextualized and transformed to carry contemporary messages and meanings as shown through the work of Dilinar, the *dengbêj* who now travels from continent to continent to perform. As long as there is such a need, the musical tradition, as the intersection of "emotion, ideology, and identity"[80] rooted in antiquity, will live on.

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79 Hamelink, *The Sung Home*, 327.

80 Withers, "Kurdish Music-Making in Istanbul: Music, Sentiment and Ideology in a Changing Urban Context," 186.

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Eberhard Werner

Orality and Folklore: Reflections on the Folktale Tradition of the Zaza People

Introduction: Orality and Cultural Heritage (Anthropology and Relevance Theory)

This essay explores linguistic and cognitive features, including neuronal processes, to describe the tradition line in the Zaza community. The focus here is adopted from an anthropological and relevance theoretical point of view. Before looking at the Zaza traditions, I will focus on universals of orality and the handing down of tradition(s). In doing so, another ethnic group and their handing of traditions is explored: the Luri people. The socio-linguistic context of the different audiences of tradition are important to this study on orality.

In recent years "orality" as part of an academic endeavor has become a multifaceted term.[1] Orality, as considered here, describes the *oral-aural* transfer and receiving of social, cultural, and linguistic knowledge from one person to another or from one generation to another. Thus, the circle of lively traditions as a communicative string is constructed by the scope of orality in a threefold investigation that engages the *messengers*, as the creative and constructive producers; the *message* as tradition; and the *audience* as listeners and preservers. Orality further describes temporal communicative processes, as well as conserving ideas and thoughts in long-term ethnic memories. Life wisdom and the transmission of cultural heritage are both substantial human needs that were, and still are, initially communicated orally. The aims of this oral communication are either to enculturate the young or to express a linguistic or cultural identity by an ethnic group. In the end, orality enables an ethnic group to survive and distance itself from "the

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1 The 1980s saw a big breakthrough in the writing of the folklore heritage within the Zaza community. Until then the Zaza people did not write down their traditions, which were orally transmitted. Thus, oral traditions were interpreted freely and the same stories were used in many contexts and with much variation. Oral tradition became fixed when writing free interpretation decreased to some extent. At the same time, the rich source and variety of folktales became obvious. During the last thirty years, many publications were edited regarding Zaza folktales. Such materials, especially a trilingual folktale book of Zaza society and an English translation of forty-five Luri folktales (both in 2007), are sources for this investigation. Text discursive features, family, micro-cultural and gender issues, as well as the perspective on historical events are examined.

other," and thus becomes a tool to distinguish between insiders and outsiders. This can be called the identity function of orality.

Writing follows orality.[2] The main communication within an ethnic group is primarily oral and secondarily written, although this can be contested. Both kinds of communication formulate, store, receive, and perceive cultural heritage that differ in form and meaning. The processes of passing down traditions add to this difference. Orality describes two concepts. On the one hand, it is a general term for everything that contrasts with written communication (e.g., literature, notes, and newspaper); on the other hand, it describes a *specific form* of social interaction that is connected to a social group, for instance, the way the Zaza people hand down traditions or pass down narrations: both meanings of orality interrelate to each other.

Research on orality does not have a long history. It started with the discipline of linguistics, and ongoing research on spoken versus written communication. Linguists such as Saussure, Sapir, Hockett, and Bloomfield understood writing as a representation of spoken language. An initial, though not deeply investigated nor followed, distinction between written and oral communication began in the Prague Linguistic Circle. Following these distinctions, Ong describes them as a misunderstanding and adds that deeply literalized cultures misinterpret the oral states of consciousness due to false perceptions of knowledge storage. He states that in oral cultures "knowledge, once acquired, had to be constantly repeated or it would be lost: fixed, formulaic thought patterns were essential for wisdom and effective administration."[3] By contrast, in writing cultures the ongoing processes of discussing, developing, and storing knowledge leads to a never-ending comparable process. "Fixed, formulaic thought patterns" are hereby considered as "traditions."[4] Although research on oral versus written communication reached a peak in the past years, the above-stated, the simple but helpful definition by Ong, will do for a start.

Recently nongovernmental organizations and social Christian ministry aid began to focus on orality to address illiterate ethnic groups. Often organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and the Summer Institute of Linguistics provide the tools so that the illiterate can train themselves. The goal is thus to preserve language(s), cultural knowledge, and artifacts for future generations. In such approaches, the presenters tell a story, perform their dance, and show their cultural

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2 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 6–8.
3 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 23.
4 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 23.

artifacts, which are then recorded and stored in the World Heritage program or other official sites, mainly on the Web.

From a neurolinguistics perspective, the transmission processes are quite complex as oral information is multi-layered: with it go the words, the sounds, and the aural information. Often visual information is also handed down as in a dance performance, arts, and even the body language (e.g., gestures, mimics, or movements) that accompanies oral information. In all, there is oral, aural, and visual information. The three kinds of information are stored differently.[5] The *priming-sensory memory* is basic. The *procedural memory* stores automated processes. The *perceptual memory* reflects perceptions that go without an actual naming such as ideas, symbols or connotations that are part of communicative strings. The *semantic memory* stores all the facts. Finally, the *episodic memory* allows recall of whole episodes. The three different kinds of memory are interconnected but can also be disrupted due to defective biomechanical processes on a neurological level.[6] Visual information that goes with oral presentations is stored differently. Over time the neural connections get lost and the memory fades. Only then the basic contents of a tradition will be available to an ethnic group. With the fading of the memory the localization (adaption) on cultural-linguistic idioms starts as will be seen below with a reference to *Kelahmad – Gormahmed*. In orality, the messenger is asked to either transmit the *oral* information factual-informatively, and/or artistic-entertainingly. Within this scope the presenter varies their style of presentation. The *aural* part of orality lies in the flexible reception and processing of the information by the audience. Regarding the so-called *relevance theory* of communication,[7] the audience receives all contextual information included in the speech act, so they can decipher and understand the content. It is the communicator's responsibility to ensure a communication's success (the *ostensive-inferential* process). Again, relevance theory states that all information can be inferred by the audience and is thus incorporated in an ostensive way. This positive communication model supersedes the *information technology* model of communication, which builds on the conduit metaphor. The paradigm shift moves from a negative approach, until

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5 Schüle and Schneider, "Wie das Gedächtnis funktioniert. Die Grundlagen des Wissens," 61.

6 Schüle and Schneider, "Wie das Gedächtnis funktioniert. Die Grundlagen des Wissens," 61; see also Kess, *Psycholinguistics*, 141, 145.

7 Relevance theory developed out of the Speech-Act investigations and Grice's four maxims of conversation. The basic assumption is that "relevance is seen as the cost-benefit relation of processing effort spent versus contextual effects obtained." Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, 32–33; Gutt, *Relevance Theory*, 21–22, 24, cites Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, 124–25.

then undisputed, which is based on *noise* (disturbance; e.g., the code model),[8] to a positive success-oriented approach of communication. Thus it is the responsibility of the speaker to include all information needed for understanding the spoken message. Orality, under such circumstances, brings forward traditions in a well-understood and easily accessible way.

The audience reflects on the information and absorbs it into its *encyclopedic* or *world knowledge*,[9] filters out the culturally relevant information, and hands it down to the youth, foreigners, etc. The message itself is thereby dynamically conserved. The culturally relevant parts as well as the basic framework become fixed but can be adapted for specific needs. Details or secondary information are either dropped or transformed to the relevant context by enrichment or shortening. Over time, oral traditions within narratives and stories can change their setting. Sometimes only the main actor or actors, the essential moral or morals, or the basic lesson or lessons to learn remain. The transformation, in case of adaptation from outsiders, can be tantamount to a quantum leap. For example, the German folktales of the Brothers Grimm or the English folktales of Edwin Sidney Hartland crossed ethnic borders.[10] Both gathered the different versions of folktales stemming from traditions that vary, due to the neurological processes that are described here.

Over time the development of the written word generated a new oral milieu, such as oral presentations or the performance of arts *with* or *as* orality (e.g., dance, pictures, gestures). Writing is another way of keeping track of embedded traditions in a social group's conscience. Since societies use all manner of communicative forms, orality and writing do not exclude but rather complement one another.

Traditions and their transference from one generation to another are fundamental ethnic components that keep and express identity. What constitutes ethnic identity? Ethnic and cultural identity are derived from *descent* (at least by tracing back to shared ancestors), and secondly by a *shared language* (which includes dialectical variation); and finally by *geographical origin*. Shared ethnic

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8 Shannon and Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication.*
9 The term derives from the studies of Grice, Austin, and Searle in the years 1962 to 1985 during their long going discussion of speech acts. Moravcsik argues that the encyclopedic or world knowledge is where humans store the rules to derive the right elements of domains of behavior. This part of human storage is responsible to bring forth accepted forms of behavior. Misbehaviour is based on limited function of the encyclopedic knowledge. He calls that representational thought. Moravcsik, *Thought and Language*, 80–82. Kess also argues that comprehension is the ability to adapt the encyclopedic or world knowledge to life. Kess, *Psycholinguistics*, 6, 73.
10 Grimm Brothers, *The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales*; Hartland, *English Fairy and Other Folk Tales.*

memory and folk conscience is demonstrated in nationalism, wider social status (job, gender, class), and social status within the extended family or small-scale society (people group).[11] It is important to note that orality follows the ethical codes and rules of an ethnic group that both heed and perform this folk conscience. The ethnic folk conscience as such generates the ethical and moral program of a social group: their core values and belief systems. This process is always flux.

The Zaza

The Zaza have their origin in today's eastern Turkey, also known as East Anatolia. They originally settled there around the twelfth century.[12] Their mountainous homeland is formed by the headwaters of the Euphrates (*Fırat* or *Ro*) and the Tigris (Dicle) rivers. The rivers Munzur Cem, the Murat Nehri, the Pülümür Çayı, and the Peri Suyu also run through their homeland. The language, Zazaki (Turk.: Zazaca) or Zonê Ma ("our language"), is divided into three main dialects: (1) Northern Zazaki also called Kirmancki with its province Dersim (Turk.: Tunceli) includes the towns or provinces Tunceli, Ovaçık, Hozat, Pülümür, and Varto; (2) Southern Zazaki, with its center Cermik-Siverek, surrounds the towns or provinces of Çüngüş, Siverek, and Gerger; (3) Eastern or Central Zazaki, with its center Palu-Bingöl, comprises the towns or provinces of Palu, Bingöl, Hani, and Dicle. Muş and Kulp are linguistic exclaves. These locations are not solely populated by Zaza as will be further discussed. Historically there has been a potpourri of cultures. However, the named places are known to the Zaza and non-Zaza populations as the Zaza motherland. The Zaza shared territory with Armenians, Kurmanji-speaking Kurds and later with Turks who were there for political reasons. Smaller villages and clusters of villages were mono-ethnic, whereas towns were comprised of mixed ethnicities.

The language is coded *DIQ*, *ZZA* in the Ethnologue[13] and is part of the Northwestern Iranian Language group. The Zaza folk have always had a close relationship with other ethnicities: primarily with the Kurmanji-speaking Kurds to the east and north. Before the 1915 ethnical purges, they had close ties with the Armenians who lived in their proximity. Furthermore, there were close ties

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11 Stängle, "Don't Know Much about History," 281–312.

12 See http://www.zazaki.net, http://www.zazaki-institut.de, http://www.zazaki.de.

13 SIL ethnolinguistic world atlas; https://www.ethnologue.com./

with the Syrian-Arabic or Semitic-speaking language groups to the south; and, later in history, with the Turkish-speaking Ottoman Empire, as well as with the newly founded Republic of Turkey (1923) on the border to the west. Historically many rebellions and upheavals against the Ottoman Empire, and later the Republic of Turkey, can be traced back to the Zaza: the 1921 *Koçgiri* rebellion, the 1925 *Sheikh Said* rebellion, and the 1938 *Sheikh Rıza* upheaval, called *tertele* ("riot, tumult"). There were smaller rebellions as well, but the three aforementioned are indelibly stamped in the Zaza folk memory. None of them furthered any hope of political freedom, however all of them did lead to additional restrictions, mass executions, and mass deportation to the west of Turkey or outside the homeland area.

In the 1960s, many Zaza were invited to Europe as foreign workers. They entered their receiving countries as Turkish citizens, which caused long-term tensions for their own ethnic identity, such as inability to use their mother tongue in public or celebrating their holidays. Some moved to the United States; and some immigrated to Australia.[14] Today, the Zaza constitute a huge area of diaspora, mainly in Europe (Germany, Sweden, France, Switzerland, Austria), in the United States, and in Australia. The military coups in Turkey in 1960,[15] 1980, and 1997 led to mass migrations because of state abuses against the Eastern minorities within the Turkish Republic. The two big unsolved questions for Turkey – Alevism and the Kurds – continue to cause additional tension for the parties concerned, especially when there is a climate of political instability.[16] The Zaza basically had migrated under the rubric of being guest laborers, seeking asylum and or refugee stature; or were admitted to unite with their families. Over time, the Zaza, who were, for all intents and purposes illiterate, re-established their identity in the diaspora. In the 1980s, there was published in diaspora, for the first time, magazines and books that represented the beginning of the literacy epoch of the Zaza people; and still we see that the focus is on oral tradition and not literacy.

The Zaza's development in diaspora coincides with the Kurmanji-speaking Kurdish movement, and they both influenced each other. However, from an applied linguistic perspective, comparing Kurmanji with Zazaki, they are two languages as per morphology and grammar; not to mention general mutual intelligibility. There is a close sociolinguistic as well as social correlation between both groups. Today around 30 percent of the Zaza claim socially, as well as linguistically, to be non-Kurdish; about 50 percent claim to be Kurdish;

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14 Boz and Bouma, "Identity Construction."

15 It is no coincidence that around this time the Zaza immigrated to Europe as guest laborers, since political pressure more often than not leads to migration.

16 Steinbach, *Die Türkei im 20. Jahrhundert: Schwieriger Partner Europas*, 385.

and 20 percent don't have any opinion one way or the other.[17] The main group understands Zazaki to be one of the Kurdish *dialects* (e.g., *Karaman Maraşlı*) and part of the wider Kurdish languages continuum (e.g., Sorani, Behdeni, Feyli). Kurdish is understood as the wider term for all who claim the East Anatolian mountains and plains their homeland and who live around the Taurus Mountains, in northeastern Syria, northern Iraq, eastern Turkey, and northwestern Iran. Zazaki is a specific branch of the Indo-Iranian language group that connects these people, called the Zaza-Hewrami subgroup. The strongly political discussion within the Zaza community about split-ethnicity leads to two competitive parties. One party is proving the linguistic, social, and historical independence of the Zaza; the other party operates under the yoke of the Kurmanji-speaking Kurds and addresses Kurdish history based on an understanding that there exists social and linguistic dependence.[18] Starting around 2005, the new political development towards EU-partnership allowed for improvement of mother tongue educational opportunities. With pedagogical opportunities in training teachers, students and professorships in their mother tongue, from kindergarten all the way up to elementary years, the Kurmanji-speaking Kurds take advantage of a close relationship with universities and political parties due to their larger population (about 16 million Kurds compared to about 4 million Zaza). Since 2016, however, with the changes in political climate, the said progress has been somewhat hindered.

Folktale and Tradition

Intuition and interpretation are the motivating forces behind the re-juvenating discourse about oral tradition and expression as per traditions that rely heavily on them. It is difficult to reconstruct the origin of folktales because of reinterpretation processes. One could always question the initial sources of these tales and whether they are based on a need to enculturate descendants in the ethics and morals of ethnicity (e.g., Turkish identity in the diaspora).[19] In other words, do

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17 These assumptions are based on personal observations, as well as summaries given in publications, e.g., Arakelova, "The Zaza People," 397–99; Andrews, "Catalogue of Ethnic Groups," 121–23; Heper, *The State and Kurds in Turkey*, 1–2.

18 See Haig, "Book Review: Grammatik der Zaza-Sprache. Nord-Dialekt," 181–97.

19 Boz and Bouma's interesting study compares Turkish migrants livning now in Germany and Australia. The different political settings lead to different expressions of Turkish identity. However, Turkishness as such is always present. Boz, Tuba, and Bouma, "Identity Construction," 95–97.

traditions emerge out of existing ethnic and ethical needs or do they generate them?: both stand to reason. Yet, the origin is seldom determinable, and is comprised of myriad interconnected narratives needed – and kneaded – to fulfil communal needs (unity, identity etc.).

Tradition and Traditions

The terms "tradition" as a process and "traditions" as products differ vastly. "Tradition" implies "beliefs, objects or customs performed or believed in the past, originating in it, transmitted through time by being taught by one generation to the next, and are performed or believed in the present."[20] "Traditions," instead, are the specific communicative ethnocultural threads that lead to the overall concept of orality. In other words, every ethnic group has its tradition, based on its common history, a native soil – or common knowledge about such – and a language that may or may not include dialects. This tradition is memorized and developed within the shared encyclopedic world knowledge and folk conscience. Tradition is comprised of traditions, which are in turn modes of ethnic behavior that in of themselves are comprised of many things among which are folktales, narratives, and ethnic performances.

These essential components are often the first oral products that are written down when literacy begins. As an example, the Brothers Grimm in Germany and Edwin Sidney Hartland in England did not merely listen to the folk but also investigated the many early written versions of folktales, which often date back to times when there was very little jotted down. This is not to champion literacy as the best pathway to dissemination; however, it does highlight the natural succession of orality specially in illiterate and endangered groups.

In Zaza communities, traditions are used to resist loss of language – and cultural identification. In danger of being assimilated into Turkish society, the Zaza in Turkey are thus at the verge of losing most of their cultural identity. This applies also to the Zaza diaspora in general, who tend to lose interest in their history, religious affinities, and therefore a sense of restoring their cultural dynamics.

Religion, language and the perception of the world are parameters of folk conscience. As an example, the Northern group relates to Alevism in a unique way. Their religious beliefs are not compatible with the Turkish or

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20 Green, *Folklore*, 800.

Kurmanji-speaking Alevis.[21] For example, they have their own Alevitic *oçak* (herd) origin and feudal structure of *pir* (elder, religious teacher). The Southern and Eastern Zaza hold to Islamic Hanafi and Shafi'i traditions. There is a wide divide with traditional Turkish Hanafi *madrasa* (Islamic schools); at least in classes run by their own Islamic school systems. The *sheikh* or *hoca* (religious teachers) went to education centers in Baghdad and Cairo offering schooling in their own mother tongue: not appropriate for ethnically mixed education systems. Some of the other sects are motivated by mystical Islamic teachings. These religious divisions extend across all the different Islamic expressions of the Zaza people. The most well- known are the Dervishes or Mevlana. Very few Zaza are Christians – and are a recent phenomenon.[22] It seems that the Zaza were first pushed to convert to Islam in the sixteenth century, and again in the eighteenth century by means of an Islamic missionary push, led by Arabic Wahhabism. Since then the split of the Sunni group, the Alevis, and the mystical orders became distinct. This religious split is also obvious in some of the oral traditions as will be elaborated.

This pattern of religious segregation is found in many ethnicities of the so-called Fertile Crescent. Many Kurmanji-speakers follow the Shafi'i rite, while others are either Alevis or Yezidis. The linguistically related Hewrami, who settled across the border of northeastern Iraq and western Iran, are divided between Ahl-i-Haqq, Yezidi, and smaller Hanafi and Shia rites. Across the religious borders there are a few smaller monk sects like the Naqshbandi fraternity or the Mevlana. They use orality as a conduit – in sermons and catechism, etc. – to declare their interpretations of faith as they are often forced by the officials to live underground or as secret societies. Thus, orality becomes a means of identification for social groups.

Folktales: Topics and Interests

The Zaza collection comes from insiders who developed a writing system in the 1980's and started publishing small number of copies with small publishing houses. The main topics of the Zaza narratives and folktales are about the homeland[23]

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21 On Persian Zoroastrianism and Christian Armenian influences, see Asatrian and Gevorgian, "Zaza Miscellany: Notes on Some Religious Customs and Institutions," where they pinpoint ethnic roles as well.

22 Werner, "Considerations about the Religions of the Zaza People," 17–37.

23 Overall, these topics can be summarized as follows: (1) The longing for independent rule (control) of their own social and cultural affairs based in their homeland. Most ask for

(*welat*, e.g., *Welat ra şanıkê şani*[24]; *Xeribey ıd Keye dı*[25] *Safiya Pak*); family relations (*pi-lajê* [father-son]; *ma-lajê* [mother-son]; *ma-keynekê* [mother-daughter]; *demarr-keynekê* [stepmother-daughter]; e.g., *Lazê Axay*[26]; *Qolo Poto*[27]). Other topics revolve around unrequited love between man and woman, between husband and wife (e.g., *Şêx Biyayena Gawandê Çermugızi*[28]); and 2) overcoming fear (e.g., *Mêrdeko Tersanok – Camêrdo Zuray*).[29]

The Zaza do not hand down any nomadic experience. It can be assumed that they always practiced either a settled peasant or a seminomadic lifestyle, moving their cattle in the heat of the summer to mountainous pastures (*ware*), but dwelling in small villages. These villages (*dew*) or smaller compounds (*mazra*) were set up by extended family members or small-scale societies. Larger settlements became towns (*merkez*), and centers of trade and official political administration (tax collection, jurisdiction, etc.). Throughout their history, as reflected in their folktales, traditions, and narratives, they existed as self-sufficient farmers and secondary small traders or craftsmen (e.g., saddle makers, weavers, potters, blacksmiths, and millers). If we date the settling of the Zaza to the great mass exodus along the Danube River shortly before or at the beginning of the Common Era, we notice great political changes. Their minority status, reinforced by the surrounding larger groups (Armenians, Kurmanji-speaking Kurds), forced them to engage with powers that controlled the Fertile Crescent.[30]

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interdependence or a federalist system; (2) the quest for conservatism regarding core and extended family, as well as their small-scale societal relations.

24 Çelker. *Welat ra şanıkê şani.*

25 Pak, *Xeribey ıd Keye dı – In der Fremde zu Hause.*

26 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa* 26–32.

27 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 50–53.

28 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 54–58.

29 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 59–62.

30 Going back in history and starting with the most recent colonial powers, we see that France, Italy, and Greece had immense influence on the Zaza from the end of the nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century. They were preceded by the Ottomans who did the same from the fourteenth to the twentieth century. The Seljuks, prior to the Ottomans, ruled from the eleventh to the thirteenth century and had noticeable influence on the Zaza as well. Prior to that ruled the Byzantine Eastern Church of Caesar Constantine (fourth century AD) and the earliest Greek power performing an imperium by Alexander the Great (333 BC). From the fourth century AD onward, the Christian Armenians formed a political state in East Anatolia, which fluctuated in its power and reach. The Mongols (11th–13th cc.) had an immense influence in the region. The influences implied were not merely on the social and political dynamics of the Zaza but the region as a whole by these powers.

Folktales: History Meets the Present

A whole village would gather around when a *pir*, a sort of wandering bard, came to tell a tale. These regular gatherings highlighted the communal religious and political authority. *Pir*s had hereditary appointments, or were nominated for their outstanding accomplishments. A politically tinged *mir* (leader), or a religious *sheikh* filled this role. A *sheikh* symbolized higher social structures. As far as traditions go, women couldn't take on these roles, although the gatherings were gender neutral for all intents and purposes.

Justice was dispensed within the *cem* (social gathering), political decisions were made, and fellowship was practiced. The political leaders (*aga*s or *ağa*s) led micro-societies, villages, and compounds. They were appointed to their role by descent from within a specific small-scale society (tribe or clan) as part of the wider society. Musicians (*aşık*s) were invited to weddings or big celebrations. They were from among Kurmanji-speaking folk who lived within the larger Zaza community. The close interaction between the Zaza and the Kurmanji-speaking populace led to similarities in some of the folktales; and it follows some similar traditions. Malmîsanij presents in his *Folklorê ma ra çend numûney* (Some essence from our folklore) a compilation of Kurmanji and Zaza folktales. He does not differentiate one from the other and thus expresses his political stand that the Zaza are Kurds.[31] Less investigated are the Armenian influences on the Zaza folktales and vice versa. The University of Yerevan is currently working with the Zaza community on this phenomenon.[32]

Shared Points: Lori and Zaza

Folk Tales from a Persian Tribe: Forty-Five Tales from Sisahkht in Luri and English, is Erika Loeffler-Friedl's valiant compilation of translated oral traditions from the Luri-peaking people.[33] *Kelahmad*[34] has a different story line than *Keçel Ahmed*.[35] Specifically, *Kelahmad* differs from the Zaza variant in that it is set in

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31 Malmîsanij, *Folklorê ma ra çend numûney*.

32 Asatrian and Gevorgian, "Zaza Miscellany: Notes on Some Religious Customs and Institutions," 500–508.

33 Loeffler-Friedl, *Folk Tales from a Persian Tribe*. The Lurs, or Lors are a southwestern Iranian group, who speak Lori, and comprise of about 5 million people. Lori is closely related to Ancient and Middle Persian of the Fars province (Farsi [Persian in English]).

34 Loeffler-Friedl, *Folk Tales from a Persian Tribe*, 92–95.

35 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 21–25.

the real world, while the Zaza narrative plays with ideas such as the *dınida roşn* (the other world or the world of light), man-eating *dêw* (giants), speaking ʹ*heş* (she-bears), and a helpful *pır* (old woman): oft-considered evil entities. Generally speaking, in these Luri stories the central topic is adultery. Women have lovers and the folktales recount how their husbands learned about them and 'solved' the problem.[36] The stories were contextualized, i.e. Shah instead of Sheikh as per the added Iranian factors.[37]

Qolo Poto

The story of *Qolo Poto* (The mutilated) hands down morals, similar to the well-known western folktale of "Cinderella."[38] Envy is the driving force in this story, and a kingdom and the royal household are the backdrop. The ill-fated relationship between the *keyney* (daughter; Qolo Poto) and the *demarri* (stepmother)[39] leads the weak father to purport his daughter's death as he mutilates instead of killing her which the step-mother actually wanted. The thus mutilated girl meets the king's son and he is fascinated by her beauty and purity: they marry. Soon after, he heads to war. Then she gives birth to a son and a daughter. Jealous, his parents put her and the newborns in a box and into the *Ro* (river, synonym for the Euphrates River). While on the river, they spare a small speaking fish, which leads them to his father, who hands to the son a magic ring for sparing his fish son's life. The son gives the ring to his mother. A genie in a bottle, summoned by the ring, gives her arms and legs back. Due to the genie's intervention, on the demand of Qolo Poto, the king and his court come by her house and she takes revenge. In the end she is reunited with her husband and her enemies are killed. A similar plot is found in *The Shah's Son* from Luri folktales. Although, in this story the main actor is not handicapped and the story is from the hero's perspective, the plot is also about a prince rescuing and longing for a beloved with unbeknownst whereabouts.[40] The moral of these stories revolves around dealings with physical impairments or injuries and sympathy for the weak.

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36 Loeffler-Friedl, *Folk Tales from a Persian Tribe*, 94.
37 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 33–36.
38 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 50–53.
39 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 50.
40 Loeffler-Friedl, *Folk Tales from a Persian Tribe*, 73–78.

Naming Actors: Gender Observations

As in most Zaza folktales, people are nameless. Instead, descriptive terms express actions, modes, and conditions, i.e. *ardwan* (miller), *ʿHeso Çı'harçım* (Four-eyed Hesen), *Na Xal Xuma – hewna Keremata Gırda dıma* (Aunt Bertha and the Worst is Yet to Come).[41] In the narrative, descriptions become distinctive – and nuanced – names, even more so for women who seldom get real names.[42] Social status functions as a descriptive purveyor: the king (*qıral*), the prince (*lazê qırali*), the Arab is the genie in the bottle (*ʿEreb*) – and as mentioned, in most old secular literature women get no names at all, not even if they are main characters).[43] In Zaza folktales, actors are often named after their outstanding physical features: *Qolo Poto* (The mutilated), *Gorma Ahmed* (Shrewd Ahmed), *Keçel Ahmed* (Bald Ahmed); *ʿHeso Çı'harçım* (Four-eyed Hesen); or for their social markers such as: *Lazê Axay* (Son of the Agha), *Lu u Ardwaniya* (The fox and the miller), *Lazeko Zerez* (Son of the partridge), etc.[44] Orality focuses more on describing distinctive features than using proper names, as in written texts. Use of proper names is an outstanding distinction between Western and Mediterranean cultures. The different way of naming characters stresses individualism over collectivism. West has a tendency to limit orality's reach to details about events, actors, persons, and locations. In contrast, in oral presentations, Mediterranean cultures focus on embellishment and general descriptions to identify characters. This difference could be traced back to different conversation strategies in society. Thus, the *cem* (gatherings) offered everyone an opportunity to speak their mind and come to a mutually acceptable agreement. In these gatherings it was considered improper to interrupt others. Collective agreement was reached to keep social harmony and peace. A habit of rhetorical competition, as in democratic Western political or social discussions, was not practiced in the same aggressive way: It was not aimed at winning an argument, but at reaching mutual consent. This collective approach did not re-

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41 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 45–49.

42 This is different from the Luri folktales. Women in Luri folktales get names (e.g., Famekhanom in *The Ghoul and the Seven Brothers*; Loeffler-Friedl, *Folk Tales from a Persian Tribe*, 44–47). If an assumption can be made about this phenomenon, it has to consider ancient religious texts too. In contrast – to not naming women – Egyptian, Greek, Latin, and Biblical Scripture texts often name women. However, often in secular ancient texts it is common practice that the authors follow the convention of not naming women.

43 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 50–53, 3–7.

44 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 8–64.

quire names for individuals, clearly highlighting the triumph of collectivism to individualism in these societies.

Traditions: Conduit of the Zaza Core Values and Ethics

Zaza orality reveals some of the core values in Zaza culture. Over time, influenced by religious intrusion, the superiority of men denied gender equality, though less so in the Alevi areas.[45] Folklore, as a commonly shared practice, brings back some of these gender-equality practices. Gender equality here does not exclude gender-related responsibilities. Women are responsible for household issues and early childhood care as well as farming near the house. The heavy work with big animals, distant trading of goods, and administrative obligations with the officials (tax, registration, and property issues) are men's responsibilities. Women accompany men (e.g., their brothers) on their heroic adventures or they support their cruelty. Sometimes they force or initiate the cruelty, but always act as supporters, not as the main actors. Negative female characters could be: the *ma* (mother, e.g., *Ma'hmeşa*[46]); the *demarri* (stepmother, e.g., *'Elicanek u Warda Xoya*[47]); the *aşıq* (gypsy[48]). Here envy about family relationships is the main driving force. Positive female characters could be: the *wa* (sister[49]); the *keynek* (daughter/girl; *Keçel Ahmed*)[50]; and *dapir* (grandmother).[51] The *wa* (sister) has mostly positive qualities in all stories, with very few exceptions.[52] The driving force for positive female characters is the social protection of their relatives.

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45 Looking at religious developments in history, at least in the monotheistic religions, paternal structures lead to a patriarchal system that overlaps other-oriented existing social structures. During the early medieval ages, the Church intervened in the same way in German and anglophone societies. The overall Sunni influence in Turkey dominates all 'otherwise'-oriented gender relations.

46 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 63–64.

47 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 3.

48 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 6–7.

49 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 7.

50 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 22–23.

51 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*,15.

52 There are instances where she is not at her best with her older brother. It should be added that in the same story there is an older sister who is very good to Mahmeşa (Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*,

Political and religious leadership is firmly in the hands of men (e.g., *axa* (agha), *şêx* (sheikh), *pir* (religious leader). Women support and push forward their careers using their wits and courage, leaving behind the men, who are sometimes sluggish and inflexible. Men are sometimes clever, very straightforward without thinking much, and or goal-oriented. In the end their heroic deeds are central, without reference to any supportive females. Yet orality in folktales always bears some touch of irony and esprit to mirror reality versus the ideal. Such can be observed in *Lazê Axay*, where men take over women's responsibilities for their son(s) after childhood.[53] *Şêx Biyayena Gawandê Çermugızı*, where men make their fortune, while women support their careers[54]; *Axayo, Axay niyo?* where men make decisions but their wives bend these into practical shape are some prime examples. In *Axayo, Axay niyo?* the father refuses the son but his mother supports the outcast, focusing more on family and less on shame.[55] Overall, one function of orality in the Zaza community is to act as a communicative conduit to express the idealistic.

Linguistics, Text Discourse, and Cognitive Anthropology

In oral performance, intonation, mimicry, gestures, and even motionlessness have important functions.[56] Zaza folktales are performed orally by heart with much intuitional and interpretative freedom. To a good storyteller, the cultural characteristics that are considered important are quite complex. "Good" means socially preferred oral excellence, meaning flexible and richly varied use of words, repetition, and a good ending against any evil. The story follows specific text discourse features marked by different characteristics. Besides a strict story line, most folktales follow the pattern of introduction, climax, and end. Sometimes different climaxes lead to an overall and broader narrative climax. For example, in *Keçel Ahmed* the introduction leads the audience to a world where humans live with

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42–43). There is an instance of bad conduct towards her own sister due to envy as well (Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 18).

53 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 26–27, 31–32.

54 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 54–55, 58.

55 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 65–66.

56 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 66–67.

dêw (giants), who are killed because of thievery.[57] Three brothers plan to end this thievery after the father's death. The youngest turns out to be the bravest. However, fooled by his older brothers, he gets stuck in the other world, which he has entered through a well, located down in the *dınida tarı* (the dark world or world of gloom). He kills a *dêw* (giant) there, who eats *keyney* (girl[s]).[58] He rescues the daughter of the *axa* (agha) who helps him but cannot get him back into his own world. That is done by a *ʹheş* (she-bear) whose cubs Keçel Ahmed rescued from a *mar* (snake).[59] As the she-bear takes him into his own world, he finishes his task. In the end, he gets his wife back and kills his brothers by dividing them into four parts with his horses (a common punishment in Zaza folktales).[60] The story line has at least three climaxes, all leading to the main climax, which brings Keçel Ahmed out of the underworld. Temporal markers (*wexta*, *hma*, etc.), as well as location markers (*wuza*, *no*, *tiya*, etc.) function as points of departure. The story line further reveals background and foreground information to raise awareness and to lead the audience through the story. Zazaki has a rich variety of such points of departure with a very straightforward, and simple story line, leaving the storyteller to round off the story with body language.

In the Zaza folktales, tricking others has a social value. For instance, when something benefits the protagonists, even when it leads to killing, an action is emphasized as cleverness (examples below). Being tricked is regarded as a challenge in life. Consequently, one either expects supernatural help or shows bravery to overcome an evil dilemma. For example, the story of Mahmeşa reflects these motifs very well.[61] The hero Mahmeşa is not considered clever compared to Nasretin Hoca, a Turko-Persian sage, but he moves from one adventure to another, counting on problem-solving as the means to the end. After fleeing from the *pi* (father) with his *ma* (mother), because she gave birth to a *keyna* (girl) and not a *lazek* (boy), she tricks her son with the influence of a *dêw* (giant).[62] On a side note, as social preference for baby boys over baby girls is widespread in the Near East, this proves to follow suit.[63] The mother and the giant want to get rid of Mahmeşa. On the instruction of the giant, she sends him to fetch *şitê şêr*

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57 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 21; for comparison, see the folktale *Kelahmad* in Löffler-Friedl, *Folk Tales from a Persian Tribe*, 92–95.

58 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 22–23.

59 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 24–25.

60 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 25.

61 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*.

62 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 37.

63 Very similar to Luri. See more similarities in Loeffler-Friedl, *Folk Tales from a Persian Tribe*, 90.

(lion's milk) as a medicine for her simulated illness. On his way, he healed the leg of a *şêra maki* (lioness) that had three cubs. As a reward, she gave him and her three lion cubs *şitê şêr* lion milk. He kills one of the cubs to use its *poste* (skin) as a *firaq* (container) for the milk.[64] The other two *şêreki* (two lion cubs) accompany him. When he comes back, his *ma* (mother) gets another instruction from the *dêw* (giant) to conjure Ma'hmeşa. He is asked to go for a specific *zebeşa* (melon), not knowing that they belong to the giant's family. After killing *çewreş dêwa* (forty giants) with the help of the *şêreki* (two lion cubs), the *'hewt serrey* (seven-headed) leader-giant challenges him. Ma'hmeşa saves one head, not realizing that this restores the monster.[65] He brings the *zebeşa* (melon) to his *ma* (mother). Again he is tricked by her and the *dêw* (giant), with the help of his *wa* (sister), and he is asked to divulge *sırre xo* (his secret, synonym for power). At first he refuses, but later he gives in. He explains that his *sırre* (secret) is in the *muwa sıpı* (white hair) of his *poçıkda ıstor* (horse's tail). If it is cut and the *qelancık* (small finger) is bound, he will be helpless, which is what happens. His eyes are ripped out and he is thrown into a *bir* (well). A *karawan* (caravan) saves him with the help of his *şêreki* (two lion cubs). He is restored by the help of a girl's father. He rides back and takes revenge, killing the *dêw* (giant), his *wa* (sister), and his *ma* (mother).[66] Soon afterwards he is reminded of his *pi* (father) and his older *wa* (sister). He and his family are reunited in a happy ending.[67]

The story of *Ma'hmeşa* reveals that the numbers *hıre* (three), *hewt* (seven), and *çewres* (forty) have supernatural connotations.[68] The linking of numbers to the supernatural is found in many religious revelations. Specific numbers are considered magical because of the paranormal concepts they describe (e.g., Jewish Kabala, Christian eschatology, and Islamic mysticism). This play with numbers stimulates the religious belief system by educating the audience on morals and ethics. The specific numbers used in Zaza and Luri traditions hint at a close relationship between Western and Near Eastern traditions as the Arab world was a noticeable inspiration for the West in the Middle Ages.

As mentioned earlier, the birth of a male rather than a female is preferred (see above)[69]; As in many folktales of the Mediterranean and Asia, and,

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64 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 39.

65 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 39–40.

66 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 42–43.

67 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 44.

68 This holds true for the Luri stories as well. For more see, *The Lord of the Last Day* in Loeffler-Friedl, *Folk Tales from a Persian Tribe*, 88; and *The Old Man and the Shah* in Loeffler-Friedl, *Folk Tales from a Persian Tribe*, 86.

69 See also *The Shah's Son* in Loeffler-Friedl, *Folk Tales from a Persian Tribe*, 73.

unfortunately, in real life in some ethnicities, the birth of a female baby is considered bad luck.[70] However, in Zaza folktales the baby girl has to be saved against the *pi* (father).[71] Underlying this concept is a general paternalistic and patriarchal social system. In modern times many Islamic concepts can be found in the Zaza community: only men can divorce, and only the men can serve as *hoca* (religious representative). In the folktales, in contrast, the traditional social setting reflects blood feuds and strong family ties, regardless of gender.

In terms of cognitive anthropology, the motivations for the Zaza community's perceptions of the world are core values formed by conscience. In research, conscience is sometimes understood as a bodily organ.[72] Käser introduced the term "Sitz der Emotionen des Intellekts und des Charakters" (SEIC), also referred to as "Location of emotions, intellect and character/personality."[73] His research showed that ethnicities locate the conscience in different parts of the body. Conscience is inferred to be twofold, first as an active driving force to behavior, and second as a bodily organ or substance, the latter assuming either a real or imagined supernatural organ. Either way, the reality of this "organ" is not questioned but presumed and fixed in language and thought. Zaza society considers conscience to be in the stomach or intestines. Expressions about envy, anger, love, or hate reflect this.[74] These psychological expressions are often referred to as the *center of the body*. Having said this, in most societies that practice collectivism, socially speaking, the center of the body is located not in the head or the heart, but the stomach and intestinal area. In contrast, in Western individualistic (that is, not collectivistic) communities, the SEIC/LEIC is often located in the head. Thus, the distance between the life-action performing extremities, namely hands and feet, is dissimilar. In contrast, the stomach-intestine orientation senses analogous distances regarding the extremities. The person, its personality and thus its SEIC/LEIC is thought of acting out of the point of intersection regarding the straight lines crossing from left hand to right foot and from right hand to left foot.

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70 Regarding female *infanticide* or *gendercide* (not gynocide or femicide as for female society members in general), religious, economic, and prestige (status) have to be considered. (See: http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/abortion/medical/infanticide_1.shtml, accessed December 20, 2015.) In the Zaza community, a strong patriarch and paternalistic cohesion leads to male supremacy.

71 Hayıg, *Mahmeşa*, 37.

72 For example, Käser, *Animism*, 145–55.

73 LEIC; Käser, *Animism*, 181.

74 Werner, "Considerations about the Religions of the Zaza People," 4, 11, 14, 16.

What do these cognitive anthropological findings indicate? The Zaza folktales demonstrate a cultural and social affinity to Mediterranean ethnicities. Their tradition and traditions reflect, on the one hand, a small-scale societal collectivism, a religiously heterodox culture (Alevis, Mystics, and Sunnis), which is split in a diaspora (two-thirds of the population, including Western Turkish cities) and a minor homeland-settled group (one-third); on the other hand, they also reflect an increasingly progressive and developing outspoken community. The implied fortunes of the heroes are based on nostalgia for the homeland and past glory. All the heroes return to their starting point, locally as well as socially. The folktales also tell about the restoration of relationships (e.g., *Lazê Axay*, *Mêrdeko Tersanok – Camêrdo Zuray*), the regaining of lost honor and glory (e.g., *Gorma'hmed*, *Ma'hmeşa*, *Qolo Poto*), and the perception of the world as a physical *and* supernatural place (e.g., *Gorma'hmed*, *Ma'hmeşa*).

Conclusion

Oral traditions form identity, social cohesion and belonging. The cognitive, neuronal memorization is done in gatherings (cem or cemaat), by common sharing, group discussion and in arts. The core beliefs and values are conveyed and internalized. Their knowledge serves as their identity marker. Due to written texts these basic beliefs are revealed to the outside. They are part of an intricate paradigm of cognitive anthropology. In the Zaza folktales, the mostly male heroes serve as expressions to restore and preserve close relationships in the extended family or a small-scale society. Sources of family conflict include envy (e.g., stepmother syndrome), a thirst for power, or unrealized ethical expectation (e.g., the refusal to accept a baby girl; the denial of family responsibility) that break relationships. Cohesion of social (family) relationships instead is well symbolized in social protection of relationships between relatives, which functions as a positive driving force. This is found in the happy endings that bode well leading to restored families. The family thus functions as a metaphor for society. Coming back to the introductory question, cognitive anthropology performs as would a handy tool handy tool in describing the handing down of traditions orally and their function as social identity markers in societies.

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Mustafa Dehqan

Darceñge: A Lekī Poem by Miḷā Nawshād

Introductory Note

Trees convey a common symbol, as at times, in many parts of the world, the relationship between man and tree is seen as sacred. This is reflected in religion, magic, art, and even something as far-removed as fertility worship. *Dārjanga* (lit. "warrior-tree") poems embody this phenomenon as they resonate the wonders of a wise talking tree.[1]

Miḷā Nawshād: A Moving Identity

Little is known as to the biographical background of Miḷā (< Mullā) Nawshād, apart from the fact that he originated from Lekistan sometime during the reign of the Afasharids.[2] He is sometimes identified as a member of the Kulīwand tribe,[3] and sometimes from Alishtar.[4]

Although difficult to ascertain an exact origin,[5] we know his name was well known and his full name was Sayyid Nawshād Ṣārim al-Sādāt, and he likely

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1 See Altman, *Sacred Trees*, for a thorough study on why trees are so precious to man, including their meanings as per ancestral roots.

2 For details on the geography of Lekistan, see Farīdī Majīd, *Sarguzasht-i Taqsīmāt-i Kishwarī-yi Īrān*, 77–79, 349–84; and Dehqan, "Zîn-ə Hördemîr: A Lekî Satirical Verse from Lekistan," 295, n.5 and the literature there. Linguistically, *Dārjanga* is written in Lekî dialect which is a southern Kurdish dialect. The basic grammar and verb system of Lekî are clearly Northwest Iranian. This relationship is further affirmed by remnants in Lekî of the Kurdish grammatical hallmark, the ergative construction. Despite this, some scholars concluded that Lekî is somewhat different from Kurdish. See Shahsavari, "Lakī and Kurdish," 79–82. However, it is certain that Lekî is more closely related to Kurdish than to the Lori languages. See, for example, Lazard, "Le dialecte Laki d'Aleštar (kurde méridionale)," 215–245 and Anonby, "Kurdish or Luri? Laki's Disputed Identity in the Luristan Province of Iran," 7–22; also see Dehqan, "Zîn-ə Hördemîr: A Lekî Satirical Verse from Lekistan," 295–309.

3 Some have placed his origins at Butkī village of Kuīwand county. For more on this opinion see Abu al-Maʾālī al-Ḥusaynī, "Nigāhī Naw bi Dārjanga," 52. Others have given his origins as Alishtar. For the Alishtar assumption see Ḥaydarī, *Jughrāfiyā-yi Tārīkhī-yi Alishtar*, 148.

4 Ḥaydarī, *Jughrāfiyā-yi Tārīkhī-yi Alishtar*, 148.

5 While accepting the fact that he was a contemporary of the Afshārid dynasty, it seems unlikely that Miḷā Nawshād was born in Lekistan in 1686. Some authors regarded him as a native of Biḷefa (< Abu al-Wafā), a tribe of Tarhān, in the Kūhdasht region, whereas a few consider

descended from a religious family.[6] For Leks today, Miḷā Nawshād's words are the crystallization of an acute sense of cultural pride. Despite their shortcomings, local biographies provide some clues as to his popularity as an influential Lek poet. From among the poems attributed to Miḷā Nawshād, three, *Bahman wa Farāmarz*,[7] *hîç o püç*,[8] a *tarji'band*,[9] and *Dārjanga* stand out: the latter is discussed in detail.

Darceñge: The Talking Tree

This is Lekî literature's first instance of a talking tree. Lek communities enjoyed such fables in the poetry of Silimo Surkha Mihrī, whose biographical information is not known; however, it is certain he lived during the Qajar period. Lekî poems confirm the popularity of this genre, emphasizing Nature's authority,[10] which for the Lek mirrors that of God.

This talking tree is emblematic of the ancient genre of *mufākhira*/*munāżira* in an Iranian sense. *Dirakht-i Āsūrīk*, depicts a debate between a tree and a goat in vying for the superiority of their existential value.[11] It is also true of *Mīsh wa Raz*, a later Persian and a Judeo-Persian version of *Dirakht-i Āsūrīk*,[12] and the

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him a poet of southern Māhīdasht, or even of Zangana. No wonder that some *Ahl-i Haqq* in Lekistan view Nawshād as a close attendant of Sultan Saḥāk, an esteemed historical figure to the *Ahl-i Ḥaqq* Leks. For more on this, see Kūchakī, *Az Higmatāna tā Shūsh*, 186.

6 This is mentioned in the unpublished Kurdish *Jung*, MS no. 236, Maybudī Personal Library (Mashhad). See Ḥusaynī Ishkiwarī, *Fihrist-i Nuskha-hā-yi Khaṭṭī-yi Kitābkhāna-yi Shakhsī-yi Maybudī*, 186; also see Dirāyatī, *Fihristwāra-yi Dastniwisht-hā-yi Īrān*, 1021.

7 Considered to be the Kurdish *Shāhnāma*, *Bahman wa Farāmarz* is a Persian *mathnawī* based on Iranian epics, though its approach and treatment is in fact a mixture of Iranian epic and Kurdish paraphrasing.

8 A didactic *tarjī'band*, *Hîç o Püç* has a mystico-heuristic nuance. Nawshād II, a later Lek poet (b. 1795–96), is sometimes credited as the author of *hîç o püç*, however it is an undocumented claim. For more on *hîç o püç*, see Ghaḍanfarī Umarā'ī, *Gulzār-i Adab-i Luristān*, 146–47; For a brief biographical note on Nawshād II, see again Ghaḍanfarī Umarā'ī, *Gulzār-i Adab-i Luristān*, 137; and Raḥīmī 'Uthmānwandī, *Būmiyān-i Darra-yi Mihrgān*, 181–82.

9 As a poetic form, *tarjī'band* (literally, 'bound to return') is similar in form to that of the *ghazal*, in that the first two hemistichs of the first distich of the poem rhyme and the rest are free of this constraint.

10 To my knowledge, there is no edition of the *dīwān* of Silimo. For a short extract from the poem, known as "talking tree," see Luṭfī, "Lak-hā wa Adabiyāt-i 'Āmiyāna," 71.

11 See Jamasp-Asana and Anklesaria, *Pahlavi Texts*, 109–14.

12 See Qayṣarī, "Manẓūma'ī bi Shi'r-i Darī Naẓīr-i Dirakht-i Āsūrīk," 362–78; also see Asmussen, *Studies in Judeo-Persian Literature*, 32ff.

Perso-Arabic *munāẓira* of *Sarw wa Āb* by Muḥammad b. Isḥāq Qāḍī Niẓām al-Dīn Iṣfahānī.[13] A poem, however, that has a pivotal relationship to *Dārjanga* is Balsīya 'Black goat', a Persian folkloric poem by Darwīsh Akhgar of Zyad Ābād.[14] When the poet, Darwīsh Akhgar, asks the goat about his health and thinness, almost similar answers are given as in the *Dārjanga*.[15] Linguistically, the poetical symbols and objects in these move away from *Shāhnāma* heroes and go towards biblical prophets. These and other parallels between *Dārjanga* and *Balsiyā* point to a common prototype.

Darceñge: The Images of Shāhnāma

Sharaf Khān's initiative in linking the Lek tribe to the "Kurds of Iran" (and not the Ottomans) is of significance.[16] As far as the identity of Lek community is concerned, this part of the earliest Kurdish chronicle, the *Sharafnāma*, chronicles the rise to dominance of both Kurdish identity of the Leks and their interest in Iranian culture and literature. Perhaps this is one of the nostalgic reasons why later Leks composed many poems with the aim of explaining basic principles of Iranian literature and guiding local seekers to the Lekî versions of the said literature.

The Iranian epics, and especially the *Shāhnāma*, also a *mathnawī*, have played an important role in the worldview of southern Kurdish-speaking Kurds. A number of texts in which the *Shāhnāma* is retold or explained are preserved. The *Shāhnāma* versions in Lekistan are found not only in several Gūrānī and southern Kurdish dialects, but also in Lekî.[17]

The impact of the Iranian national epic is highlighted in several distichs (lines 25–54). Some simpler oral versions of different episodes of *Shāhnāma* are very popular in Lekistan. Some of the older generation Leks have have made the point of memorizing the *Dārjanga*.[18]

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13 See Ibn al-Rasūl, "Munāẓira-yi Sarw wa Āb," 285–323.

14 See Bāstānī Pārīzī, *Kūcha-yi Haft-pīch*, 447–65.

15 Especially compare Bāstānī Pārīzī, *Kūcha-yi Haft-pīch*, 463:
  yikī rūz kardam az ān boz so'āl ▪ kih ay boz chirā lāgharī, chīst ḥāl?
  bigoftā cho porsīdī az īn maqāl ▪ bigūyam konūn mar to rā sharḥ-i ḥāl
  chihil sāl Havvā marā dūkhta ▪ pas az ān bi Hābīl bifrūkhta . . . etc.

16 See Scheref, *Scheref-Nameh*, 323.

17 See, for example, Īzadpanāh and Rūhbakhshān, "Une version laki d'un épisode du Shahnama," 65–74; also see Īzadpanāh, *Shāhnāma-yi Lakī*, 100, 258–59 and Niyāzī Dawlatshāhī, *Ḥamāsa-hā-yi Luristān*.

18 'Elî Bexş Kûranî, Personal interview.

It seems, however, unlikely that the *Shāhnāma* was transmitted to the Leks solely by its legendary heroes (Rustam, Suhrāb, etc.). It may thus be assumed that references to the trees mentioned in *Shāhnāma* were in circulation in Lekistan. References to *sarw-i sahī*, *bust*, *Kashmar*, and *Farīwmad* may well speak to this impact.[19] *Dārjanga* as a tree seems to have a symbolic similarity to Zoroastrian prototypes. In the Lekî region of Uthmānwand, in southern Kirmānshāh, there is a very aged tree, named Dārbonyād, whose origins, according to local informants, can be traced to the earliest introduction of Zoroastrianism in Lekistan.[20] Such accounts, however, are likely exaggerated.

Darceñge the Adviser

Dārjanga ushers in admonitions: examples to ponder on all the experiences that the tree had in its long life. In this final analysis, *Dārjanga* is a work that grew out of the vast body of Lekî didactic literature.

The Lekî advice literature conveys negative ideas about life, especially the transience of this world and the importance of being virtuous in order to leave behind a good name. From this perspective, the most important fragments of poetry that are similar to *Dārjanga* are *Deṛeşer* by Miḷā Manūchihr Kulīwand, and *Qeḷe Çihr* by Turkamīr Āzādbakht.[21] These poems, touching on the importance of nature, especially the mountains,[22] warn the reader against the meaninglessness of the world, revealing an outlook similar to that in the *Dārjanga*. *Dārjanga* is similar to *Deṛeşer* and *Qeḷe Çihr* due to its reliance on natural advisers who give readers moral guidance. It can thus be assumed that giving mountains and the "Fortress of Chihr" ability to speak is an out and about mode of conveying their importance in Kurdish folklore.

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19 Compare Firdawsī, *The Shahnameh*, 82; Thaʿālibī Nayshābūrī, *Thimār al-Qulūb*, 473; Biyḥaqī, *Tārīkh Biyḥaqī*, 272, 281–83; Mustawfī, *Nuzhat al-Qulūb*, 175; and Kalhurniyā, "Barrasī-yi Taṭbīqī-yi Afsāna-yi Sarw-i Kāshmar, Sarw-i Farīwmad wa Manẓūma-yi Dārjanga-yi Luristān," 12–25.

20 Rizalî. July 2013; There may be possible connections between Lekî folklore and Zoroastrian lore in traditions regarding demons. See Yusefvand, "Some Laki Demons," 275–79.

21 For *Qalʿa Chihr*, see Ghaḍanfarī Umarāʾī, *Gulzār-i Adab*, 19–22.

22 For the mountains of the area, see Ḥasanwand and Ṭahmāsbī, *Shinās-nāma-yi Ijtimāʿī-Farhangī-yi Ustān-i Luristān*, 23–27.

Text

Among the many versions of *Darceñge*, the one from the *Tadhkira-yi Umarā'ī*[23] – believed to date from the Afshārid period – is traditionally considered most reliable. This is, however, a classical version in which Gūrānī *koinē* is the dialect.[24] The analysis given below is, however, based on the oral versions disseminated in Kangāwar and Harsīn, in eastern Kirmānshāh. The main text is recited by Meşiy Hesen Nezerî (an illiterate man in his eighties). For establishing the readings, the oral versions recited by Alî Mirö Turkaşwen (in his sixties and also illiterate) and Kamyar Xeletî (in his forties and educated) are juxtaposed here.[25] The text is presented in the Hawar system of transcription, though with some modifications in favor of conservation. The main features of the system employed here comprise of a distinction between *ö* and *o*, *ü* and *u*, and *ñ* in Lekî dialect. Hawar remained the standard system for others.

Darceñge

      hamdiḷan[26] wextî, hamdiḷan wextî ▪ je rûjan rûjî, je wextan wextî
      çü Qiys pûşyawîm je keḷpûs rextî ▪ ṛagem[27] keft ve pay 'alî dirextî
      ser ne kehkişö feḷek birde vî ▪ pa[28] mokem ne qe'r-i zemîn kirde vî
      şanavi şaxe şax o berg ev dîr[29] ▪ piy nişîmengay mîr[30] o borna o pîr
  5 ṛage ṛaguzer xelq ne payeş bî[31] ▪ hunuktir je say Tûba sayeş bî

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23 See Ghaḍanfarī Umarā'ī, *Gulzār-i Adab* 137–41. Compare also Şāliḥī, *Surūd-i Bādiyya*, 110–16 and Kūchakī, *Az Higmatāna tā Shūsh*, 186–87.
24 For Gūrānī as a *koinē*, a common idiom intelligible to several Kurdish speakers of different dialects of the area, see Rieu, "Gorani Koinē," 728–34.
25 Research about the oral versions of *Darceñge* was conducted during January-April 2011. The people interviewed were not professional story-tellers but had been identified as being versed in traditions, especially in Lekî literature. The oral versions were replies to the quests about the tale in Kangāwar and Harsīn, respectively; As there are many versions of the text, in some instances, certain variants are provided in the notes. These variants are abbreviated as AMT and KX. An interesting feature of oral versions stems from the Lekî rephrasing of Gūrānī idioms. In order to address the many faithful versions of *Darceñge*, some important variants given in the editions of Umarā'ī and Şāliḥī are also annotated by TU and SB, respectively.
26 AMT *hamseran*.
27 AMT *ṛam*.
28 AMT *paş*.
29 According to my informants, because of metrical compositions, *dür* should be read as *dîr*.
30 KX *siy*.
31 SB cade ṛa we ya xelq ne payeş bî.

ne ṛûy sîneṣ dîm zam-i tîrgazî ▪ yadigar ṣest-i xidiñg enazî
jev[32] lave sûmay x^wer[33] lîṣ dîyar bî ▪ çü cay qiliñgaz Ferhad izhar bî
amam tikye dam min vev[34] dareve ▪ vev dar-i zedey tîr-i xareve
muḷaze zam-i tîrgaziṣ kirdim ▪ serkîṣa çü dü Demaven derdim
10 bilîzim[35] berz bî, endûm bî payan ▪ 'esrîn je dîdem siyl bes ve daman
vatim[36] iy dirext-i berz-i borûmen ▪ kes mezan[37] tarîx hisow saḷit çen
je 'umrit çen saḷ, çen piṣt vîyerden? ▪ kî tö des nîṣön î dîyar kirden?
kî je verînan verînit dîen? ▪ kî je serdaran viy[38] ṛage çîen?
î zame çîṣen ve derüniten? ▪ kam serheñg daxiḷ dîye x^wîniten?[39]
15 dîm deñgî ama je lay dareve ▪ jev dar-i fertût, mihnet bareve
ve zarzareve vat iy dîvane ▪ çü min sergerdan,[40] bîyowon yane
î ehwaḷate mepirsîn je min ▪ memînî adab restaxîz vitin
mekoḷinîn zam o nasûr-i keftem ▪ meṣkafin camey yexey xem beftem
ger beyan bikem ṣemey je derdim ▪ izhar kem elqab henasey serdim
20 yi saḷ o nîmî nimeçû je ver[41] ▪ tö nazik teb'î, merencût xater
beḷî çüna tö meylit ve haḷen ▪ meqsûdit hisow ve çende saḷen[42]
her ta nîṣtîne gûṣ der ve deñgim ▪ ta vaçûm[43] ehwaḷ sitare leñgim
çen saḷe mi Darceñge namime ▪ ta îsge ye haḷ serencamime
bizan iy derün[44] kefte viy er viy ▪ nemom[45] bîm ne dör Keyûmers-i Kiy
25 ceñg-i Sîyamek o dîvanim dîen ▪ Hûṣeñg vev sipa, vev sanim dîen
Temûris koṛ-i Hûṣeñgim dîen ▪ ev sefaṛayî[46] ṛûj ceñgim dîen
bezm-i Ṣa Cemṣîd cem benim dîen ▪ ev ṛamiṣgeran ṛaz fenim[47] dîen
kokebe Zehak-i Merdasim dîen ▪ sem o seḷabet Gerṣasim dîen[48]
ciftî mar ne dûṣ Zehakim dîen ▪ ca bûse Ṣeytan-i napakim dîen
30 Ferîdûn ev bîx o bonyadim dîen ▪ 'eḷem-i Kawe hedadim dîen
Selm o Tûr, Îrec, Peṣeñgim dîen ▪ qer-i Menûçir ṛûj ceñgim dîen
nazikî Nozer naṣadim dîen ▪ Qubad o Qarin o Keṣwadim dîen

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32 AMT, KX, SB, TU *jev* [= je + ev].

33 KX *hwer*; TU jev lave sûay hûr lîṣ dîyar bî.

34 AMT, SB, TU *vev* [= ve + ev]; hatim tikye dam.

35 TU *bilîzem*.

36 AMT *vitim*; SB *pirsam*.

37 KX *nezan*.

38 AMT *jiy* [= je + î]; SB kî ama o lûa ve ire çîen?.

39 AMT *xüniten*.

40 KX *dirmeney*.

41 SB ve saḷ nimeyû nemeçû je ver.

42 SB arizût hisow vîrdeyi saḷen.

43 AMT, KX *bûṣim*. This is a proper Lekî variant, but the Gūrānī form occupies a more prominent place in our main version and the Lekî written literature.

44 AMT, *derd*; KX *dün*.

45 AMT *nemam*; TU nemanîm ne dör.

46 KX *sefaṛaytîp*.

47 AMT, KX *xenim*; SB *xwenim*.

48 A different version of the second hemistich of 28 is in AMT: des o baḷ o tîq Gerṣasim dîen.

padişahî Zew Gerşasim dîen ▪ Tûs o Gustehm o Tehmasim dîen[49]
Zaḷ-i pûr-i Sam goherim dîen ▪ je Zaḷ baḷatir[50] çen tenim dîen

35 Nerîman o Sam-i sûarim dîen ▪ Fîrûz o Qarin-i xʷînxarim dîen
hem Gûderz vev gurz-i ṟû'înim dîen ▪ Ferhad o Mîlad o Burzînim dîen
töndî tebî'et Ka'ûsim dîen ▪ zerîfî Zeresb bin Tûsim dîen
heftad o heft koṟ Gûderzim dîen ▪ her kam hokûmet yi merzim dîen
Gîv o Feḷamerz, Zevarem dîen ▪ beḷke[51] jev vîne hezarim dîen

40 Behram o Zeñge o Söravim dîen ▪ Surxe o Pîlsem o Tejawim dîen
şahî Keyxosro dîndarim dîen ▪ vev ciqe, ev tac zertarim dîen
keynişîn kinişt Luhrasbim dîen ▪ daniş o hikmet-i Camasbim dîen
Isfendîarim vev cöşen ▪ ev ṟûj hamneberd Tehemten dîen
bîdad-i Behmen-i bîdînim dîen ▪ davadav-i rezm-i Burzînim dîen

45 Feḷamerz vev gorz o kûpaḷim dîen ▪ vev ṟan o ṟikav, vev haḷim dîen
davadav-i rezm-i Dara o Sikener ▪ temaşam kirden jev ver hem jey ver[52]
pansed o sî saḷ[53] molûk tewa'îf ▪ ve çemim[54] dîme zûrmen o ze'îf[55]
rezm-i Erdeşîr, nevadey Sasan ▪ şayî Erdewan jev bî herasan
'edl-i Nûşerwan, 'eql-i Zörcemîr ▪ çenî bedbextî Bextek-i vezîr

50 Qubad Qubadan, Erdeşîran gişt ▪ Behram Behraman, gûr efgen ve mişt[56]
Şapûr Şapûran, şîr-i şîr öjen ▪ Hormoz Hormozan, giy je doşmen sen
siyr-i ser-i tac Pervîzim kirden ▪ temaşay şîrîn o şödîzim kirden
mesaf-i Behram-i Çûbînim dîen ▪ ev gorz o kûpaḷ ṟû'înim dîen
ta naga Şîru, şûm-i sitemger ▪ Xosro da ne kuşt, nîşt ve ca pider

55 paşiş avaze piy qetliş xîza ▪ yek yek serdaran je laş gorîza
şahîş nekîşa ve nîme mahî ▪ her kedxoda'î bî ve yi şahî
her dihnişînî keynişînî bî ▪ her ṟûj restaxîz-i serzemînî bî
je her canibî xîza serheñgî ▪ je her viḷatî piyda bî ceñgî
ciho piṟ aşû, dönya derhem bî ▪ xatir pejaran, asayiş kem bî

60 tömez[57] dö serheñg davişan besten ▪ hone mecaḷi je Xʷida gisten
îlçî nameşan averden birden ▪ vadey ceñgişan ne[58] pay min kirden
her ewsa zanam tül-i ceñg xîza ▪ ṟe'dasa her ca deñgî verîza
piyda bî livay rezim azmayan ▪ her sef nigam kird hüç nedaş saman
ṟiy ve ṟiy aman ev sipay 'ezîm ▪ min menme mabiyn, mihnet zedey şüm[59]

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49 SB padişahî Zew Gerşesb şam dîen▪ Gustehm o Tûs-i kîne xwam dîen.
50 The Lekî expected equivalent is *biḷiñgtir*.
51 SB *beḷkû*.
52 KX *der*.
53 KX döhis o sî saḷ; SB döist o sî saḷ.
54 An alternative possible archaic reading is *çavim*.
55 AMT Îronîm dîye meqşûş o xa'if.
56 AMT, TU *xişt*.
57 KX *tömerz*.
58 KX *le*.
59 Reading is doubtful.

65 şîr-i sehimnak, pa neşnas je ser ▪ Tehemten-i zaļ,[60] des ve şemşîr ber
vîne ṛe'd o berq, tem o tüz-i sext ▪ merîzu teverg bî saman je bext
je qezaxane des-i davkaran ▪ her mevarîya tîr vîney varan
howa piṛ qubar, zemîn möc-i xʷîn ▪ merd o esb er ban-i hem dîm sernigʷîn
dîm peļewanî vîney Tehemten ▪ keļe dîv meqfer, pûs-i bevr cöşen

70 muresse tacî pîkavî[61] ne ser ▪ zerbaf qeba'î kirdevî ne ver
je pişt-i esbiş señgîntir je Sam ▪ je nevey şahan, Erdeşîr ve nam
tîr-i diļdûzî ne çiļey keman ▪ ca davî piy qetl xesm-i bî eman
faqey xidiñgiş ne çiley keman ▪ piywes kirdevî çü peļewanan
ama ṛiy ve ṛiy serdaran jiy ser ▪ serdar-i señgîn lîş kirdî guzer

75 çü Şeqad je bîm serpencey Rûsem ▪ ve pîwar-i min señger girt mokem[62]
dîm xîza şaqey kemanî jiy ver ▪ je qîje tîriş hûşim çî ve ser
sînem amac kird ser muday xedeñ ▪ düzam ve sîne serdar-i serheñg
le min guzer kird çî ta ev şûne ▪ ta piṛ nîşt ve xak nemnak-i quļe
serdar keft ne xak, min menme pave ▪ viy xeternak zam henî ve pame

80 viy zexm-i tîrgaz-i bî emanewe ▪ henî ham ve pa viy samanewe
ceñg-i serdaran, merdan çî ve ser ▪ şîran-i xʷînxar, merdan-i ceñger
des birdin ve siyf o daxiļ bîn ve hem ▪ davişan hem da vîne tüz o tem
bes kase keļe ne miydan cem bî ▪ laşe, gûşt o pûs, xʷîn ow-i cû bî
şow ama dö sef coda bîn je hem ▪ mi menim viy derd piy endûh o xem

85 seher daļgîran, şehîdan-i ceñg ▪ birdevîn ne ṛûy qurs-i xurşîd ṛeñg
vehş o tiyr je kü vîşe ser kirden ▪ laş o cerg o berg şehîdan xorden
her çen ve nöbet tiyrî je tiyran ▪ menîşt ve şaxim piy 'ezm-i siyran
ga siyr-i laşe ga niga ve çûļ ▪ gaga ve tîmar baļ o per meşqûl
jev dema çen şa hem je ļam çîen[63] ▪ çen kûç-i xiylan guzergam dîen

90 çen padişahan şa Sefî neso ▪ je ļam veyardan[64] çü yüz ve edo[65]
ta îse ye dör Nadir sultanen ▪ merdim je cöriş bîzar je gönen
ciho piṛ aşû, dönya derheme ▪ xatir hezîne, asayiş keme
îsge min ye haļ, ye ehwaļime ▪ ye renc-i birde çendîn saļime
çen saļe mi Darceñge namime ▪ viy cöre axir serencamime

95 Nöşa[66] emanet: vit meder ve xem ▪ piy cîfey dönya xa zîya[67] xa kem
dönya bî veren, esliş ber bade ▪ evle eve se viy dönya şade[68]
er geñcit piṛ bû vîne Selm o Tûr ▪ kes maļ-i dönya nördese ve gûr
enderzim ye se piy dönya dûsan: ▪ dönya demî ke çü şar o bûsan
fire metirsim jiy ṛûjigare ▪ jiy fitney le'îm, şüm-i bedkare

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60 TU Tehemten hiyvet.

61 AMT *pîkyavî*.

62 SB xoy daye pîwar min kird ve ṛûy çem.

63 SB jev dema çen şa çen gidam dîen.

64 KX *veyaran*.

65 TU, SB nür ve edo.

66 TU, SB Nöşad.

67 AMT *fire*.

68 TU viy bade şade.

100 tersim zaḷimî lîm bidey agir[69] ▪ soxtem[70] bad berû, bayir er bayir
    kûta bû je ṛûy zemîn xak-i pam ▪ kes nay ta töylî binîşû[71]er cam

Translation

This is a literal translation with fealty to the original text. Although the aim was to remain as close as possible to the Lekî text, sometimes it was necessary to add some clarifications in square brackets for the sake of highlighting nuances that would have been linguistically lost.

O friends! Upon a time; oh friends! Upon a time ▪ a day of the days, a time of the times
I was dressed in a goat skin as Qays[72] ▪ my path fell to the presence of a corpulent tree
Its head reached to the Milky Way of firmament ▪ firmly it inserted its foot in the bottom of the Earth
Its branches and leaves had extended over a far distance ▪ for the respite of emirs, young, and old people
5 People's way and route was at its direction ▪ its shadow was cooler than the shadow of Ṭūbā[73]
I saw an arrow wound on its breast ▪ a souvenir of an archer's string
From that wound sun's light was clear ▪ it was like the impression of the adze of Farhād[74]
I came and leaned on that tree ▪ on that tree harmed by the thorny arrow
As I pondered on arrow wound ▪ my pain rose like the smoke rising from Damāwand[75]

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69 SB *ayir*.

70 AMT *bîlem*.

71 AMT, KX *bikarû*.

72 This is Qays of the tribe of Banu 'Āmir of Arabia, who became known as Majnūn "madman" because his infatuation with Laylā made him insane.

73 Ṭūbā (lit. "blessedness") is a tree that Muslims believe grows in heaven. The tree is mentioned only once in the Qur'ān, but its attributes can be ascertained from various *ḥadīth*s and other writings. According to Islamic tradition, Ṭūbā spreads over a distance that can be covered in a hundred years [it is so vast its shadow would take a hundred years to trace]. For the importance of both tree and Ṭūbā in Islamic tradition, see Qur'ān, 16:10, 22:18, 23:20, 48:18, 55:6; and Suhrawardī, *'Aql-i Surkh*, 230–32.

74 He is a romantic figure in Persian literature who competed with the Sasanian King Khusraw II Parwīz for the love of the charming Armenian princess Shīrīn. Sharaf Khān describes Farhād as a Kalhur Kurd. See Scheref, *Scheref-Nameh*, 16, and compare to Kâtib Çelebi, *Cihannümâ*, 413, where his Kalhurī Kurdishness is mentioned again.

75 What is referred to here is Mount Damāwand, the highest point in the mountains of northern Persia, northeast of Tehran. It is reported that the Kurds found refuge in Damāwand when they were fleeing Ḍaḥḥāk. See Firdawsī, *The Shahnameh*, 84.

10   My moan rose to up to my sorrow and [became] endless ▪ as my tears flowed down to the
skirt

O, high and strong tree! I said ▪ no one knows your age

How many years, how many generations of your life are gone? ▪ Who planted you in this
territory?

Whom have you seen of the forefathers? ▪ of the commanders, who have passed over
this way?

What is this wound on your trunk? ▪ Which colonel is responsible for your blood?

15   I saw that a voice came from the interior of the tree ▪ from that aged and painful tree

O crazy! Tearfully it said ▪ [you are] wandering like me [and] desert is your home

Do not ask me about these circumstances ▪ [to answer] is like to describe the
Resurrection

You boil my calm and putrefied wounds ▪ you split my garments with a collar

If I describe a small part of my suffering ▪ if I declare characteristics of my cold sigh

20   It is not more than a year and a half ▪ you are tender-hearted, it harms your mind

But if you like to know my age ▪ and your aim is to count the years

Do listen to my voice as you are sitting ▪ so that I would describe the circumstances of
my lame star

[Over] a number of years my name has been Dārjanga ▪ by now my fate is as follows:

O heart! Know that it was a state of utter confusion ▪ I was a sapling under Kayānid
Kayūmars[76]

25   I have seen the battle between Siyāmak and the demons ▪ I have seen Hūshang with that
[great] army of that [great] shape

I have seen Ṭahmūrath, son of Hūshang ▪ I have seen the marshalling of the battle day

I have seen the feast of King Jamshīd, the gatherer ▪ I have seen the mysterious
minstrels

I have seen the pomp of Ḍaḥḥāk, son of Mardās ▪ I have seen the dignity and firmness of
Garshāsp

I have seen two snakes on the shoulders of Ḍaḥḥāk ▪ I have seen the impression of the
kiss of impure Satan

30   I have seen Farīdūn, the root and foundation ▪ I have seen the flag of Kāwa,[77] the
blacksmith

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76 The importance of Kayānids is mentioned in many southern Kurdish epics. It is interesting
that Kayānids also have a significant role in the Gūrānī *manẓūma* "Shaykh San'ān and the
Christian Girl." See Adwāy, "Nuskha-yi Manẓūma-yi Shaykh San'ān wa Dukhtar-i Tarsā (Bi
Zabān-i Hawrāmī)," 25.

77 The blacksmith Kāwa played a significant role in the Iranian epic and its Kurdish version.
After Ḍaḥḥāk put his son to death, Kāwa rebelled against him. In the Kurdish version,
every day he saved one youth and helped them flee. These youths gradually increased in num-
ber and formed the first ancestors of the Kurdish people. See Firdawsī, *The Shahnameh*, 55–71;
and compare to the Kurdish version Perwer, *Çîroka Newrozê*.

I have seen Salm, Tūr, Īraj, and Pashang[78] ▪ I have seen the wrath of Manūchihr[79] on the day of battle

I have seen the delicateness of unhappy Nawdhar ▪ I have seen Qubād,[80] Qāran,[81] and Kashwād

I have seen the kingships of Zaw and Garshāsp ▪ I have seen Ṭūs, Gustahm,[82] and Ṭahmāsp

I have seen Zāl, son of Sām; [I have seen] the pearl ▪ I have seen some persons behind Zāl

35 I have seen Narīmān and Sām the Rider ▪ I have seen Fīrūz[83] and Qāran the Blood-thirsty

I have also seen Gūdarz[84] with the metallic mace ▪ I have seen Farhād, Mīlād,[85] and Burzīn[86]

I have seen natural pungency of Kā'ūs[87] ▪ I have seen the elegance of Zarasb, son of Ṭūs[88]

I have seen seventy and seven sons of Gūdarz ▪ I have seen each of them as ruler of a frontier

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78 This is the name of several Iranian ancient kings and heroes. It is hard to say which one is referred to here. For more see Rastgār Fasā'ī, *Farhang-i Nām-hā-yi Shāhnāma*, 250–53 Also see Yāḥaqqī, *Farhang-i Asāṭīr*, 142.

79 Possibly, this reference is to the son of Pashang. A son of Ārash, the Iranian hero, is also named Manūchihr, but it is hard to accept that Miḷā Nawshād refers to this less-known individual. See Rastgār Fasā'ī, *Farhang-i Nām-hā-yi Shāhnāma*, 1005–1012.

80 The name of two Iranian kings. The reference here is very possibly to Kay Qubād, the offspring of Farīdūn. It is hard to accept this as a reference to Qubād, son of Pīrūz, the Sasanian king. See Rastgār Fasā'ī, *Farhang-i Nām-hā-yi Shāhnāma*, 830–34.

81 Apparently Miḷā Nawshād refers to Qāran, son of Kāwa the Blacksmith. For other mythical heroes and historical kings named Qāran see Rastgār Fasā'ī, *Farhang-i Nām-hā-yi Shāhnāma*, 735–40, Yāḥaqqī, *Farhang-i Asāṭīr*, 335.

82 The name of four Iranian mythical and historical heroes mentioned in the *Shāhnāma*. The reference here is probably to the most important one, Gustahm, son of Nawdhar. Compare Rastgār Fasā'ī, *Farhang-i Nām-hā-yi Shāhnāma*, 881–91.

83 For Pīrūz, our poet has retained the Arabic form Fīrūz. The context does not help us identify him, since there are various mythical and historical figures named Fīrūz. See Rastgār Fasā'ī, *Farhang-i Nām-hā-yi Shāhnāma*, 271–77.

84 The name of various Iranian figures. The reference here is very possibly to the Iranian epic hero in wars against the Tūrānians.

85 The Iranian tradition knows Mīlād primarily as the father of Gurgīn. He is sometimes confused with a close attendant of Yazdgird. See Yāḥaqqī, *Farhang-i Asāṭīr*, 414; also see Rastgār Fasā'ī, *Farhang-i Nām-hā-yi Shāhnāma*, 1045.

86 Some of my informants mention the name as Barzīn, but it is better known as Burzīn. It is impossible to identify him as there are various Burzīns in the Iranian epic tradition. See ibid., 168–71.

87 The reference is to Kay Kā'ūs, the second mythical king of Kayānids.

88 The name of various Iranian heroes in the *Shāhnāma*. Here the name refers to Zarasb, the son of Ṭūs. Cross-refer with Rastgār Fasā'ī, *Farhang-i Nām-hā-yi Shāhnāma*, 502–3.

I have seen Gīv,[89] Farāmarz, and Zawwāra ▪ I have even seen one thousand of those like them

40 I have seen Bahrām,[90] Zanga, and Suhrāb[91] ▪ I have seen Surkha, Pīlsam, and Tazhāw

I have seen the kingship of the pious Kay Khusraw ▪ I have seen him with that aigrette [and] that golden crown

I have seen Luhrāsp, the master of the Knesset ▪ I have seen the knowledge and wisdom of Jāmāsp

I have seen Isfandiyār with that cuirass ▪ that day I have seen the fellow battle of Tahamtan[92]

I have seen the cruelty of impious Bahman[93] ▪ I have seen the hubbub of the battle of Burzīn

45 I have seen Farāmarz with the mace and club ▪ I have seen him with that leg, stirrup, and that state of being.

The hubbub of the battle between Dārā[94] and Alexander ▪ I have seen from that side and also from this side

Five hundred and thirty years of feudalism[95] ▪ by my eyes I have seen strong and weak [ones]

The battle of Ardashīr, the offspring of Sāsān[96] ▪ of which the kingship of Ardawān was afraid

The justice of Nūshīrwān,[97] the intellect of Būdharjumihr[98] ▪ also the misery of the Bakhtak the Vizier

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89 According to Iranian tradition, he is the son of Gūdarz and the father of Bīzhan. Interestingly, Sharaf Khān suggests that he was one of the first ancestors of Kalhurs. See Scheref, *Scheref-Nameh*, 317.

90 Various heroes and historical kings named Bahrām are mentioned in the *Shāhnāma*, but it is unclear whether this Bahrām is one of them.

91 Suhrāb has maintained a very popular place in Lekî literature. See Rizā'ī Nūr Ābādī, "Rustam wa Suhrāb bi Riwāyat-i Qawm-i Lak," 34–37.

92 The reference alludes to the well-known epithet in reference to Rustam (*taham-tan* "having a strong body").

93 Possibly the reference is to the son of Isfandiyār, the Kayānid king of Iran in the national epic.

94 This is Dara(b) II, the son of Dara(b) I and the last king of Kayānids. He is normally identified as Darius III Codomannus, the last Achaemenid king.

95 It is necessary to indicate that, in the traditional historiography of Iran, the period of the Arsacids is called the period of Mulūk al Ṭawā'if ("the Kings of the Tribes"). This is interpreted to have been the time when Iran was decentralized and ruled by many kings.

96 The reference is probably to Ardashīr Bābakān, the founder of the Sasanian empire.

97 This is the Sasanian king Chosroës I.

98 This is Buzurgmihr-i Bukhtagān, the legendary vizier of Khusraw Anūshīrwān. He is best known for his wisdom and sage counsels.

50 Qubād of the Qubāds, all Ardashīrs ▪ Bahrām of the Bahrāms who throws zebra [to the ground] with the fist

Shāpūr[99] of the Shāpūrs, Lion the Lion-Killer ▪ Hurmuz[100] of the Hurmuzs who takes the opportunity from the enemies

I have seen the head of Parwīz's[101] crown ▪ I have seen Shīrīn and Shabdīz

I have seen the battle of Bahrām-i Chūbīn ▪ I have seen the mace and metallic club

Suddenly Shīrūya,[102] the ominous and cruel ▪ killed Khusraw and sat on the throne of father

55 Then the fame of his killing spread ▪ all of the commanders escaped from him

The permanency of his kingship was only fifteen days▪ every headman became a king

Every rural person became a master ▪ every day became the Resurrection of a territory

From every side a colonel rose ▪ from every country a battle became clear

The universe became full of disturbance, the world became confused ▪ the mind became disturbed, the comfort diminished

60 It seemed that two colonels came to blows with each other ▪ they requested such an opportunity from God

The courier brought and took their letter ▪ they made their battlefield in my presence

At that time, I knew that the tumult of battle rose ▪ from every place, thunderously, a voice rose

The flag of the warriors became clear ▪ whatever rank I saw, there was not any order

Those huge armies came one after another ▪ as a painful and ominous [tree], I remained in between [them]

65 The formidable lion who does not know a leg from a head ▪ Tahamtan, son of Zāl, who takes the sword

Like thunder and lightning, plenty of darkness and dustiness ▪ it is strongly hailing from fortune

From the fate of warriors' hands ▪ there was an unceasing arrow as rain

The weather was full of haze, the ground was [covered with] waves of blood ▪ I saw men and horses toppled on each other

I saw a hero like Tahamtan ▪ whose helmet was demon's head, whose cuirass was tiger's skin

70 A bejeweled crown he wore for the head ▪ a golden long shirt he wore for the body

When he was on his horse, he was heavier than Sām ▪ [he was] offspring of the kings, [he was] named Ardashīr

A heart-sewed arrow on the bowstring of the bow ▪ he had placed for the killing of the prompt enemy

The end of his arrow on the bowstring of the bow ▪ he had attached as the heroes

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99 Shāpūr I (the Great), the second Sasanian king, is possibly referred to as Shāpūr Shāpūrān.

100 The reference probably is to Sasanian sovereign Hurmuzd IV (r. 579−90).

101 The Sasanian king Khusraw II Parwīz (r. 591−628). In Lekî literature, especially in oral tradition, the views regarding Khusraw II Parwīz appear to have been somewhat different from those occurring in the *adab* tradition. Here, he is a rival and at times a very negative individual, who owns Shīrīn, the beloved of the oppressed Farhād.

102 The reference is probably to the rebel son of Khusraw II Parwīz, who killed his father.

The commanders came from this way one after another ▪ the heavy commander passed them

75 Like Shaqād,[103] for the fear of the claw of Rustam ▪ he firmly fortified himself [against the enemy] with my wall

I saw that a branch of a bow rose from this side ▪ I became unconscious of the scream of its arrow

The arrowhead made my chest its target ▪ it sewed me to the chest of colonel commander

It passed me [and] went to the next side ▪ until it fully came down on the damp soil of enclosure

The commander fell to the ground, I remained standing ▪ despite this dangerous wound, I am still on my feet

80 Despite this sudden arrow wound ▪ still I am on my feet in this manner

I experienced the battle of commanders, the men ▪ the bloodthirsty lions, the warriors

They took swords and they blended together ▪ their battle was confused, as dust and darkness

Many skulls were gathered in the battlefield ▪ [there were many] bodies, flesh and skin, blood was like stream's water

It became night; the troops were separated from each other ▪ I stayed alone with pain, [I stayed alone] with grief and sorrow

85 The dawn, [the time of] the gathering of eagles; the martyrs of battle ▪ had colored the round face of the sun

The wild animals and birds living in the mountain and thicket ▪ ate bodies, liver, and the weapons of the martyrs

Occasionally, a bird of the birds ▪ took a seat on my branch for the sake of sightseeing

Sometimes they saw the bodies, sometimes they saw the desert ▪ sometimes they were busy grooming their plumage

Some kings again crossed my side at later times ▪ some groups of armies have seen my passage

90 Some kings descended from King Ṣafī[104] ▪ politely crossed my side as a panther

Now it is the circle of Nādir's[105] kingship ▪ the people are weary of his cruelty

The universe is full of disturbance, the world is confused ▪ the mind is sad, the comfort is diminished

Now this is my health, this is my condition ▪ this is my many-years long suffering

It is many years [that] my name is Dārjanga ▪ and this cruelty is my fate

95 [O], Nawshād! [My] deposit with you: do not make yourself sad ▪ for the world's mammon, whether small or great[106]

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103 This is Rustam's evil half-brother.

104 Whether this was Shaykh Ṣafī al-Dīn (b. 1252–53), the eponymous founder of the Safavid order, or Shāh Ṣafī, the grandson and successor of ʿAbbās I (1629–42), is unclear.

105 This is Nādir Shāh Afshār, the ruler of Persia from 1736 to 1747.

106 According to the educated oral informants, this is a reference to the *ḥadīth*: *al-dunyā jīfatun wa ṭālibuhā al-kilābun* ("the world is a carcass and those who crave it are nothing but dogs").

The world is inconstant; it is wind in origin ▪ the idiot is he who is happy with this world

[Even] if your treasure would be complete as [the treasures of] Salm and Tūr ▪ no one has taken world's mammon to the grave

My advice for the mundane ones is this: ▪ the world is [short as] a moment, as [were previous] towns and gardens

I am greatly afraid of this time ▪ of this base sedition, the bad omen, the wicked

100 I am afraid of a cruel that would burn me ▪ the wind that would take my ash, [my place would be] like an uncultivated land

My track would be removed from the earth▪ no one would come to sow a sapling in my place

Conclusion

The Lekî language is the youngest within the Kurdish Stock. It is well related to southern Kurdish dialects in structure and grammar. In course of time, Lekî had influenced and itself was influenced by other Iranian languages prevalent in Luristān and eastern Kurdistan (in the Kirmānshāh province).

Lekî literature is consisted mainly of written literature and oral poems which were preserved for hundreds of years. As a very favorable Lekī fragment, the *Dārjanga* is recognized not only by the written tradition of Lekî literature but also by the oral tradition. There are different versions of *Dārjanga* both in unpublished manuscript format and defective oral versions.

Lekî literature was enriched with the contributions of Iranian authors and poets. The Iranian influence was essential for the *Dārjanga*: *Shāhnāma* and the reappearance of its heroes speak to this plenty.

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