

MOBILIZING THE KURDS IN TURKEY: NEWROZ AS A MYTH

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DELAL AYDIN

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

Prof. Dr. Sencer Ayata
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

Prof. Dr. Feride ACAR
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

Assist. Prof. Necmi Erdoğan
Co-Supervisor

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mesut Yeğen
Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Assoc. Prof. Mesut Yeğen

(METU, SOC)

Assist. Prof. Necmi Erdoğan

(METU, ADM)

Assist. Prof. Fahriye Üstüner

(METU, ADM)

Assist. Prof. Ferdan Ergut

(METU, HIS)

Dr. Mustafa ŞEN

(METU, SOC)

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last name: Delal AYDIN

Signature :

ABSTRACT

MOBILIZING THE KURDS IN TURKEY: NEWROZ AS A MYTH

Aydın, Delal

M.S., Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Supervisor : Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mesut Yeğen

Co-Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Necmi Erdoğan

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This thesis analyses the role of Newroz in the process of mobilization of the Kurds with the claim of separate identity in Turkey. It is claimed that Newroz is utilized as an ideological tool in order to construct/create Kurdish cultural or national unity. This function of Newroz is examined through two theoretical perspectives which are related to each other. On the one hand, Newroz is taken as a myth which has been used in the construction of Kurdish national identity. On the other hand, Newroz is considered as a tool for counter-hegemony against the hegemonic culture to create cultural unity among the Kurds. Through this analysis, a hegemonic process over/through a myth is revealed. It is claimed that the utilization of Newroz in mobilizing the Kurds resulted in a remarkable success, which gave rise to its turning out to be an ideological battlefield between Kurdish and Turkish nationalisms.

Keywords: Newroz, Kurdish nationalism, ideological struggle, myth

ÖZ

TÜRKİYE'DE KÜRTLERİ MOBİLİZE ETMEK: BİR MİT OLARAK NEWROZ

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Tez Yöneticisi : Doç.Dr. Mesut Yeğen

Ortak Tez Yöneticisi: Yrd.Doç. Necmi Erdoğan

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Bu tez Türkiye'de Kürtler'in ayrı bir kimlik talebiyle mobilize edilmesi sürecinde Newroz'un rolünü incelemektedir. Newroz'un Kürt kültürel ya da ulusal birliğini kurmak/yaratmak amacıyla ideolojik bir araç olarak kullanıldığı öne sürülmektedir. Newroz'un bu işlevi birbiriyle ilişkili iki teorik perspektifin vasıtasıyla incelenmektedir. Newroz, bir yandan Kürt ulusal kimliğini kurmak için kullanılan bir mit olarak ele alınmaktadır. Diğer yandan, Newroz hegemonik kültüre karşı Kürtler arasında kültürel birlik yaratmak için bir karşı hegemonya aracı olarak dikkate alınmaktadır. Bu inceleme ile hegemonik bir süreç bir mit üzerinden/yoluyla gösterilmektedir. Newroz'un Kürtler'i mobilize etmekte kullanımının dikkate değer bir başarıyla sonuçlandığı; bunun da onun Kürt ve Türk milliyetçilikleri arasında ideolojik bir savaş alanına dönüşmesine yol açtığı iddia edilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Newroz, Kürt milliyetçiliği, ideolojik mücadele, mit

To Emek Ajda and Uğur Uğraş

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM.....	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ÖZ	v
DEDICATION.....	vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
I. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS	5
I.1 The Construction of National Identity	5
I.2 The Possibility of Counter-Hegemony	9
II. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE KURDISH MOVEMENT IN TURKEY	16
II.1 The Early Period of the Kurdish Nationalism	16
II.1.a. The Social Structure of the Kurds in the Ottoman Empire Period.....	17
II.1.b. Modernization and Centralization Attempts and Their Effects on Kurds	18
II.1.c. Kurdish Rebellions	22
II.2. 1938-1960: Years of Silence	33
II.3. The Military Coup and New Constitution	38
II. 4. Kurdish Movement Encounters Socialism	42
III.INTRODUCING NEWROZ.....	45
III.1. Newroz as an Antique Festival	45
III.2. Newroz in Texts	49
III.2.a. Şehname.....	49
III.2.b. Şerefname	54
IV. THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEWROZ AS A MYTH	57
IV.1. First Attempts of Construction: The Kawa Legend.....	59
IV.1.a. Jin: The Beginning of the Invention.....	59
IV.1.b. İhsan Nuri’s Failed Attempt	64
IV.2. Newroz as a Tool for Counter Hegemony.....	68
IV.2.a. Kawa the Proletarian	68
IV.2.b. “Contemporary Kawa”	78

V. NEWROZ AS AN IDEOLOGICAL BATTLEFIELD	84
V.1. Newroz Appears as a “National Security” Problem	85
V.2. <i>Nevruz</i> as a ‘Turkish Ergenekon Festival’	90
V.3. Discontinuities in PKK’s Discourse	101
V. 4. ‘W’ Crisis	108
V.5. Covering Newroz: Newroz in Newspapers	110
V.5.a. Critical Liberal Columnists	110
V.5.b. Mainstream Nationalist Columnists	112
V.5.c. The Extreme Nationalist Columnists	112
V.5.d. Islamist Columnists	114
 CONCLUSION	 118
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 122
 APPENDICES	 128
APPENDIX: A. The List of Journals and Newspapers	128
APPENDIX: B. The List of Interviews	129
APPENDIX: C. Minister Ayvaz Gökdemir’s Initial Speech in “Nevruz in Turkish World Second International Knowledge Festival” ..	130

- no mode of production and therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhaust all human practice, human energy, and human intention.

Raymond Williams

INTRODUCTION

Turkey has witnessed the phenomenon of Kurdish nationalist movement to become a mass movement from 1990 onwards. Demonstrations made on the days of Newroz, which the Kurds accept as their traditional New Year festival, indicated this new phenomenon in a very apparent way. Moreover, these demonstrations have become an area in which the demand of Kurdish identity was expressed. The intensity of clashes between Kurds and security forces during these demonstrations gave rise to the acceleration of the debates about the Kurdish question. On the other hand, this festival has become celebrated by the state officially with the name of *Nevruz*, afterwards. During these celebrations, the theme that Newroz was actually Turkish festival was worked on. Thus, the clash on the ideological significance of Newroz between Kurdish nationalism and state ideology became manifested in a clash about the spelling of the word (*Newroz* vs. *Nevruz*). Newroz, as a sign, became an ideological battlefield (Voloshinov, 1973: 23). The reason why Newroz turned out to be an ideological battlefield is that it signifies the existence of a separate Kurdish identity in Turkey. In fact, Newroz, as a myth, has crucial role in construction of this identity. The aim of this study is to analyse the role of Newroz in the process of mobilization of the Kurds with the claim of separate identity in Turkey.¹

This study is conducted through two lines related on the issue of the construction of Kurdish identity. On the one hand, Newroz is taken as a myth utilized in the process of construction of national identity. The Kawa legend, which constitutes the central ingredient of Newroz, has the function of being a myth of origin or revival which enables the imagination (Anderson, 1991) of a Kurdish national unity. On the other hand, Newroz is also approached as an ideological apparatus utilized for constructing

¹ Even though this study is limited with Kurdish movement in Turkey, it should be added that this invention (Hobsbawm and Ranger ed., 1983) has been experienced together with the Kurdish movements outside Turkey. Although the qualities and political aims of these movements differ a lot according to the specific conditions of their respective countries, it seems that these movements are highly interrelated in terms of the production of values concerning the Kurdish culture.

counter-hegemony against the hegemonic culture. It is an element of the common-sense neglected or excluded by the hegemonic culture (Williams, 1977). This aspect of Newroz enabled it to be a tool for the building of a counter-hegemonic discourse, by the help of Kawa legend which allows emphasis on “resistance”. These two lines coincide at the point where Kurdish nationalists assume the task of constructing a cultural unity in order to create a nationalist movement. The process of constructing a cultural unity includes two steps; at first, to reveal cultural differences against the hegemonic culture, which has been initiated by the Turkish nation state; secondly, creating cultural homogenization among the members of Kurdish population. In that respect, it seems that Newroz has a crucial role of unification of Kurdish culture. On the one hand, Newroz is an element which does not exist within the hegemonic culture; it is an “alternative story” (Williams, 1977). On the other hand, it has a role to unite the highly fragmented Kurdish population on a mythological basis. Newroz serves as a common field beyond all the religious, linguistic and class-based differences among the Kurds. Through its role in creating homogeneous identity, Newroz becomes an instrument of “identity transfer” (Armstrong, 1982: 130); it enables a new identity to be superimposed an older one.

There are numerous books and articles written specifically on Newroz. However, most part of this literature is regarded as research data instead of academic resources of this study. Among the sources of information, articles about the origins of Newroz mostly written by Iranian academicians and Gürdal Aksoy’s books: *Kürt Dili ve Söylenceleri Üzerine İncelemeler* (Studies on Kurdish Language and Myths) (1991) and *Bir Söylence, Bir Tarih: Newroz* (A Myth, a History: Newroz) (1998) were used extensively. Aksoy considers Newroz as an ideological myth and argues that Newroz has been used as a tool in political arena for identity construction of the Kurds. He defines Newroz as a modern myth that is useful for creating a field for struggle. In this sense, Aksoy’s book has a parallel perspective to this study. However, he does not fully elaborate ideological aspect of the subject since he has concentrated on its anthropological origins to find out the modern character of the Newroz myth.

Even though they are not specifically on Newroz, books and articles on Kurds and Kurdish historiography were used in order to understand the construction process of Newroz as a myth. The works of Hamit Bozarslan, Martin van Bruinessen, Robert Olson, Davit McDowall, and Konrad Hirschler have a crucial place in this study.

The major materials of this study are a set of primary sources. The periodicals published by the Kurdish nationalists were used in order to grasp their political perceptions as well as their discourse of Newroz and Kawa legend. In order to find out the official attitude the publications and web-sites of The Presidency of Atatürk Cultural Center and The Ministry of Culture were scanned. Some Newspapers were examined the days around 21th of March (Newroz day) especially between the years 1989 and 2004 in order to follow the developments of the period, to grasp the way in which the news about Newroz was given and to understand how the ideological struggle over Newroz perceived by the authors.² Interviews with some of the leaders and members of illegal Kurdish organizations of 1970s or leading actors of that period and some activists of today's Newroz celebrations constitute other sources of this study.³ Although not all were used directly in the main text, these interviews were helpful in understanding the "story".

In the first chapter, a theoretical discussion is held on the basis of ideology, specifically on the line of Gramsci's concepts of hegemony, counter-hegemony and common-sense. The role of myths in the constructing of national identity is also discussed. This discussion can help to clarify the roles of myths as ideological tools. In the second chapter, the development of the Kurdish movement in Turkey is analyzed. It is claimed that the process of this development has an effect on the meaning of Newroz today. This examination is also helpful to understand how and why different dimensions of the Newroz myth are emphasized in different periods. The third chapter seeks the roots of Newroz festival and Kawa Legend in antiquity as well as some modern texts such as *Şehname* and *Şerefname*. By this way, some elements important in view of today's debates on Newroz festival and Kawa legend

² For the list of newspapers see Appendix A.

³ For the list of interviews see Appendix B.

can be clarified. The fourth chapter tells the story of the construction of Newroz as a myth. It is known that until 1970s, Newroz and Kawa legend had not been commonly known and told among the Kurds in Turkey besides the fact that the component of Kawa Legend is novel for Newroz myth.⁴ It is discussed how and why the myth has been constructed in a way of “revolt against tyranny”. The last chapter focuses on the ideological struggle over/through Newroz between PKK (Kurdistan Worker’s Party) and the state. The responsive attitude of state discourse upon the success of the PKK in utilization of Newroz myth as an ideological tool – in other words, the effort of making *uniaccentual* (Voloshinov, 1973) – is explained through the idea that hegemony is always a process (Williams, 1977).

⁴ Yılmaz Varol says that “myths and legends, as far as I know, are told by the old generations to the new. However it was us, the younger generation, to tell the legend of Newroz and the figure of Kawa to the older one” (quoted from Aksoy, 1998: 180).

CHAPTER I

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this study, it is claimed that Newroz is utilized as an ideological tool in order to construct/create Kurdish cultural or national unity. Its function of being an ideological tool is examined through two theoretical perspectives which are related to each other. On the one hand, Newroz is taken as a myth which has been used in the construction of Kurdish national identity. On the other hand, Newroz is considered as a tool for counter-hegemony against the hegemonic culture to create cultural unity among the Kurds. Therefore, by the help of these two perspectives, it is argued that Newroz provides a base for an ideological struggle for the Kurdish nationalist movement. In this chapter, firstly, it is focused on the role of myths in the process of construction of national identity. Then, the possibility of building counter-hegemony through common-sense elements is discussed.

I.1. The Construction of National Identity

The term “invented tradition” (Hobsbawm and Ranger ed., 1983) seems very suitable in the case of Newroz. Hobsbawm uses the term in the meaning of actually “invented, constructed and formally instituted traditions” which are “establishing themselves with great rapidity” (ibid, p.1). Hobsbawm defines “invented tradition” as “a set of practices normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (ibid). He emphasizes that this historic past which is attempted to establish in continuity is a suitable one (ibid). It is for all invented traditions that political institutions, ideological movements and groups “use history as a legitimator of action and cement of group cohesion” (ibid, p.12). History becomes part of the fund of knowledge for the ideology of the nation, state or movement but this history is not what has actually been preserved in popular memory, but what has been “selected, written, pictured,

popularized and institutionalized by those whose function it is to do so” (ibid, pp.12-3) Therefore, according to Hobsbawm, ancient materials are used to construct invented traditions of a novel type for novel purposes. In this sense myths are tailored for nationalism, which is actually a modern phenomenon, to prove persistence of the nations:

However all human beings, collectivities and institutions need a past uncovered by historical research. The standard example of identity culture which anchors itself to the past by means of myths dressed up as history is nationalism... For nations are historically novel entities pretending to have existed for a very long time. Inevitably the nationalist version of history consists of anachronism, omission, decontextualization and, in extreme cases, lies to a lesser extent this is true of all forms of identity history, old or new (1997: 270).

Anderson (1991) who calls nations as “imagined communities” also considers the concept of the nation as an ideological construct. He states that “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (ibid, p.6). For Anderson, it is through this sense of fraternity that millions of people are willing to die for their their nation (ibid, pp. 6-7). Considering nationalism as a product of modernization, Anderson argues that the idea of nation, which refers immemorial past and limitless future, provides a sense of continuity and meaning to the modern life (ibid, pp. 11-12).

Brass (1991), who considers ethnicity and nationalism as not “givens”, but social and political constructions and who focuses on the mechanism of this construction is also applicable in terms of the aim of this study. Brass assumes that the rise of ethnic identities and their transformation into nationalism is not an inevitable process. To the contrary, the politicization of cultural identities is only possible under specific conditions. Therefore, according to Brass, ethnic conflicts do not arise from cultural differences but from the broader political and economic environment. This political and economic environment shapes the nature of competition between elite groups. To gain political power and economic advantage, elites create a political identity on the basis of ethnicity and nationalism. Therefore, ethnic identities are product of process of ethnic identity formation and this process necessitates the very definition of ethnic group and its persistence. At this point the cultural forms, values, and

practices of ethnic groups become political resources for elites in their struggle for power and prestige (ibid, p.15). They become “symbols and referents for the identification of members of the group, which are called up in order to create a political identity easily” (ibid). Brass adds that the symbols used to create a political identity also can be shifted to adjust to political circumstances and the limitations imposed by state authorities (ibid). Thus their meanings and contents are dependent on political circumstances (ibid, pp.13-16). Therefore, elites, who wish to represent the groups to protect their well-being or existence or to gain political or economic advantage, “draw upon, distort, and sometimes fabricate materials from the cultures of the groups” in order to create ethnicity and nationalism (ibid, p. 8).

Brass argues that nationalism is most likely to develop when new elites arise to challenge the system in the areas where distribution of economic resources and political power are ethnically distinctive (ibid, p. 44). Educational, technological, and administrative requirements of an industrializing, centralizing state make it difficult to sustain the system of ethnic stratification or a particular regional or urban-rural distribution of economic resources and political power. The reason is that industrial development and political centralization let concentrations of job opportunities in key urban centers which brings the need for trained personnel to fill the new positions. Therefore, the issue of language becomes critical because the choice of the official language and the medium of education determine which groups have favored to access the best jobs (ibid). It is at this point that new elites arise from culturally distinct, disadvantaged groups to compete for economic and political opportunities controlled by the dominant group (ibid, p. 46).

On the other hand, Brass argues that inequality between ethnically distinctive regions in societies undergoing social mobilization, industrialization, and bureaucratization does not necessarily give rise to ethnic conflicts. He suggests that “A potential nationalist movement may peter out if the immediate demands of its elites are satisfied in the political and economic systems. It may also peter out or remain of marginal importance if the mass of the people, whether they are rural peasants or urban proletariat, find their economic needs satisfied through the existing system”

(ibid, p. 47). For him, when there is a system of ethnic stratification in which one ethnic group is dominant over another, ethnic nationalism exists only potentially. This potential is realized when some members from one ethnic group attempt to move into the economic niches occupied by the rival ethnic groups (ibid).

As discussed above, Brass argues that “the objective existence or subjective perception of inequality is indispensable to justify nationalism, but it is not in itself an explanation for it” (ibid, p. 43). Micheal Hechter (1975), Marxist scholar, calls this ethnic stratification under the industrialization circumstances as “internal colonialism”. According to Hechter, the uneven wave of modernization over state territories creates two kinds of groups: “advanced” and “less advanced” groups, and resources and power are distributed unequally between the two groups. This is a point that objective cultural differences are superimposed upon economic inequalities. The more powerful group, or the core, tries to “stabilize and monopolize its advantages though policies aiming at the institutionalization of the existing stratification system” (quoted from Özkırımlı, 2000: 98). Hechter calls this stratification system the “cultural division of labour”, which leads individuals to identify themselves with their groups and contributes to the development of distinctive ethnic identification. Hechter states that “Social actors come to define themselves and others according to the range of roles each may be expected to play. They are aided in this categorization by the presence of visible signs” (ibid, p. 99). Such signs increase group solidarity and unite them around a certain commonality definition. Therefore, when an adequate degree of intra-group communication exists among disadvantaged group members, they claim the separateness of their nations and seek independence (ibid, p. 100).

To focus on the role of myths in nationalism, it is worth to follow Bourdieu (1993) who considers myth as one of a number of important instruments in cultural reproduction. Related to this, it can be said that constructing a national identity itself is a cultural reproduction. In this sense, nation-building process can also be seen as the process of identifying itself in cultural manners. This identification requires revealing cultural differences and creating homogenization in collectivity. Myths, at

this point, function as an important instrument since myth attributes special qualities to the group, extend its distinctiveness and create a boundary (Hosking and Schöpflin, 1997: 22). Therefore, what is crucial here is that myth, as Armstrong points out, can be an instrument for identity transfer. It enables a new identity to be superimposed on an older one (ibid, p. 22).

Anthony Smith, who emphasizes the significance of earlier myths, symbols, values and memories for ethnicity and nationalism, in his article “The ‘Golden Age’ and National Renewal” (1997) focuses on the themes of virtue, holiness, heroism, power, wealth and creativity in national identity. He argues that these themes have played an important role in cementing ethnic communities in the past and continue to do so in current debates about national identity. They provide touchstones and inspiration in moments of crisis and rapid change (ibid, p. 48). According to Smith, these concepts function so as to satisfy the quest for authenticity which is a myth of origins and descent, and also they underline the difference of “us” from “outsider” (ibid, p. 49). Additionally, they establish a sense of continuity between generations. Smith states “by establishing genealogical descent as well as cultural affinity with the heroic age(s), later generations realize their own genuine heroic individuality” (ibid, p. 50). These concepts also serve the quest for collective dignity, which is a key element in national struggles everywhere (ibid). Finally, Smith emphasizes that these themes offer the idea that the oppressed position of the present can turn reversal in a short time and former glory shall be restored (ibid).

I.2. The Possibility of Counter-Hegemony

Eagleton (1991) compares myths and ideologies and he states that despite they have important differences; myths and ideologies are worlds of symbolic meaning with social functions and effects. He argues that oppressive people do not leave the theory alone; they create collective symbols for themselves that is a kind of mythological consciousness. In this sense myths serve as a basis for social struggle (ibid. p. 188). Following this argument, construction of a myth for national unity can be considered as an ideological struggle, which may coincide with social antagonisms. In this

sense, Gramsci provides a very rich source to discuss ideological struggle with his concepts hegemony and counter-hegemony.

Initially, Gramsci (1971) puts emphasize on the material nature of ideology. In Gramsci's view, according to Mouffe, far from consisting in an ensemble of spiritual realities, ideology is always materialized in practices (Mouffe, 1979: 186). Gramsci mentions "organic ideologies" which are "conception[s] of the world that [are] implicitly manifested in art, in law, in economic activity and in all manifestations of individual and collective life" (Gramsci, 1971: 326) Organic ideologies are powerful mechanisms of social change that provide "a unity of faith between a conception of the world and a corresponding norm of conduct" (ibid). Therefore, as Hall states, in Gramsci, ideology is not a "trick" imposed by ruling class, but ideologies have their ground in material realities and are themselves material forces (Hall, 1977: 53).

In addition, Gramsci defines ideology as the terrain "on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle" (1971: 377). For Gramsci, ideology "must be seen as a battlefield, as a continuous struggle, since men's acquisition of consciousness through ideology will not come individually but always through the intermediary of the ideological terrain" (Mouffe, 1979: 185-6). As Mouffe states, this conceptualization of ideology implies that subjectivity is always the product of social practice, therefore, subjects are not originally given but are always produced in ideological field (ibid, p.186). According to Gramsci, ideology functions so as to cement and unify the social bloc (1971: 328). From this point of view, ideology is bounded to be the political; it is through politics that the "relation between common sense and the upper level of philosophy is assured" (Gramsci, 1971: 331, Hall, 1977: 52).

Gramsci who attributes ideology a material existence and considers ideology as a terrain of struggle provides a more sophisticated concept; hegemony. He defines hegemony as the ability of a governing power to assure the consent of its rule from those dominated population. Eagleton states that the concept of hegemony not only extends and enriches the notion of ideology, but it also lends this otherwise somewhat abstract term a material body and political cutting edge (1991: 197). "It is with Gramsci that the crucial transition is effected from ideology as 'systems of

ideas' to ideology as lived, habitual practice –which must then presumably encompass the unconscious, inarticulate dimensions of social experience as well as the workings of formal institutions” (ibid). Therefore, the area of hegemony is not only philosophy, but also practical means that they range from state institutions to the family, from religion to folklore, and all aspects of everyday life and common sense.

On the other hand, what gives hegemony such an enormous power also makes it weak since on the same field counter-hegemony can be built. To understand the very possibility of counter-hegemony it is necessary to look another concept of Gramsci that is common sense which serves an area both rulers for hegemony and ruled for counter-hegemony to be built on it. Gramsci considers that world-view is expressed in much simpler forms that is common-sense which presents itself as the spontaneous philosophy of the man in the street, but which is the popular expression of “higher” philosophies (Mouffe, 1979: 186). Common sense is chaotic union of various perceptions. It is generally an experience area, which is politically undeveloped, ambiguous and contradictory. Gramsci defines common sense as below:

[Common sense] ... is strangely composite; it contains elements from the Stone Age and principles of a more advanced science prejudices from all past phases of history at the local level and intuitions of a future philosophy which will be that of the human race united the world over (1971: 324).

This “inherently eclectic and disjointed” (Hall, 1977: 49) feature of common sense serves a certain openness that this openness constitutes the spaces which counter hegemony can be built (ibid, p. 53). Williams (1977), as follower of Gramsci, elaborates the very possibility of counter-hegemony. He emphasizes the openness of any hegemonic process as below:

The reality of any hegemony, in the extended political and cultural sense, is that while by definition it is always dominant, it is never either total or exclusive. At any time, forms of alternative or directly oppositional politics and culture exist as significant elements in the society (Williams, 1977:113).

Williams states that from a whole possible area of past and present; in a particular culture, certain meanings and practices are selected for emphasis and certain other

meanings and practices are neglected or excluded (ibid, p. 115). What is crucial in terms of this study is Williams's emphasize on "tradition" as a tool of building counter-hegemony as well as hegemony. He states that much of the most accessible and influential work of the counter-hegemony is historical: "the recovery of the discarded areas, or the redress of selective and reductive interpretations" (ibid, p. 116). Williams points out that "tradition is more than an inert historicized segment; indeed it is the most powerful practical means of incorporation" (ibid, p. 115) since the tradition in question is "not just 'a tradition' but a selective tradition: an intentionally selective version of a shaping past and a pre-shaped present, which is than powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification" (ibid). Therefore, in the sense of hegemony, tradition can be seen as an actively shaping force since it is a "deliberately selective and connecting process which offers a historical and cultural ratification of a contemporary order" (ibid, p. 116). The selective tradition in the sense of hegemony both makes it as a powerful and vulnerable process:

It is a very powerful process, since it is tied to many practical continuities- families, places, institutions, a language- which are indeed directly experienced. It is also, at any time, a vulnerable process, since it has in practice to discard whole areas of significance, or reinterpret or dilute them, or convert them into forms which support or at least do not contradict the really important elements of current hegemony (ibid).

In accordance with this point of view, it has been asserted that these "alternative or opposing practical continuities" in a selective tradition may have a counter-hegemonic function (ibid). Additionally, Williams emphasizes that against dominant culture, "residual" and "emergent" cultures serve alternative stories to the subjects. Williams defines the category of residual as one which has been "effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process not only as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present" (ibid, p. 122). What is crucial here is that residual may have an alternative or even oppositional relation to the dominant culture since "certain experiences, meanings, and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practiced on the basis of the residue- cultural as well as social- of some previous social and cultural institution or formation" (ibid). The large part of the social

location of residual relates to earlier social formations in which certain meanings and values were generated that they present areas for subjects which a particular dominant culture neglects, undervalues, opposes, repress, or even cannot recognize (ibid, pp. 123-4). Williams defines the category of emergent as “new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship are continually being created” (ibid, p. 123). In the structure of any actual society, there is always a social basis for elements of the cultural process that are alternative or oppositional to the dominant elements (ibid, p. 124). Thus, in terms of residual and emergent, what Williams emphasizes is that the modes of domination “select from and consequently exclude the full range of human practice” (ibid, p. 125) which makes them arena of counter-hegemony.

As a result, building counter-hegemony is very possible on the splits of the fields of hegemony. Gramsci considers the constitution of a new hegemony through intellectual and moral reform since, according to Gramsci, hegemony itself is an indissoluble union of political leadership and intellectual and moral leadership (Mouffe, 1979: 179, 190-1).

An historical act can only be performed by ‘collective man’, and this presupposes the attainment of a ‘cultural-social’ unity through which a multiplicity of dispersed wills, with heterogeneous aims, are welded together with a single aim, on the basis of an equal and common perception of the world (Gramsci, 1971: 349).

On the other hand, what should be emphasized here is that, as Mouffe states, Gramsci does not suggest to reject the previous elements of ideological terrain, but transforming them (Mouffe, 1979: 192). “The objective of ideological struggle is not to reject the system and all its elements but to rearticulate it, to break it down to its basic elements and then to shift through past conceptions to see which ones, with some changes of contents, can serve to express the new situation” (ibid). Hall emphasizes that in this process, common sense and practical experience can and must be worked on (1977: 53). Eagleton states very nicely with reference to Gramsci that “What is needed is not just some paternalist endorsement of existing popular consciousness, but the construction of ‘a new common sense and with it a new culture and a new philosophy which will be rooted in the popular consciousness with

the same solidity and imperative quality as traditional beliefs” (1991: 200). Gramsci express this process as below:

What matters is the criticism to which such an ideological complex is subjected by the first representatives of the new historical phase. This criticism makes possible a process of differentiation and change in the relative weight that the elements of the old ideologies used to possess. What was previously secondary and subordinate, or even incidental, is now taken to be primary- becomes the nucleus of a new ideological and theoretical complex. The old collective will dissolves into its contradictory elements since the subordinate ones develop socially (Gramsci, 1971:195).

After a brief discussion on Gramsci’s concepts of hegemony and counter-hegemony, it must be expressed that in this study, Newroz is regarded as a myth, which has a place in the “common-sense” of the peoples in the Middle East. In this sense, Newroz provided an “alternative story” for the construction of the Kurdish identity. Against the hegemonic culture, Kurdish nationalist movement has used Newroz as a part of its struggle to construct counter-hegemony for a new collective will. Therefore, Newroz served as “cement” for Kurdish national and cultural identity. On the other hand, the reaction of Turkish state was two dimensional; attempting to oppress and absorb. In this sense, it can be argued that hegemony in “ruler”’s side was not static but responsive to this alternative story. This ideological struggle serves an example the suggestion of Williams who states that “a lived hegemony is always a process ... [i]n practice, that is, hegemony can never be singular” (1977: 112).

Parallel to this view, Voloshinov (1996) also considers ideology as a continuous struggle. He assumes that ideological signs have a multi-accentual character that they serve arenas for the clash of social accents:

The very same thing that makes the ideological sign vital and mutable is also, however, that which makes it a refracting and distorting medium. The ruling class strives to impart a supra-class, eternal character to the ideological sign to extinguish or drive inward the struggle between social value judgments which occurs in it, to make the sign uniaccentual (1973: 23).

Voloshinov states that each living ideological sign has two faces, like Janus. “Any current curse word can become a word of praise, and current truth must inevitably sound to many other people as the greatest lie. This *inner dialectic quality* of the sign

comes out fully in the open only in times of social crisis or revolutionary changes” (ibid). Voloshinov’s approach about the nature of ideological sign is very explanatory for this study in that Newroz displayed itself as a typical example of ideological battlefield.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE KURDISH MOVEMENT IN TURKEY

In this chapter, the development of the Kurdish movement in Turkey will be analyzed. The process of this development has an effect on the construction of Newroz myth on the basis of “revolt against the tyranny”. By looking at this process it will also be clear how and why different dimensions of the Newroz myth have been put forward in the different phases of Kurdish movement.

II.1. The Early Period of the Kurdish Nationalism

The early period of the Kurdish nationalism starts with the reforms of Mahmut II for modernization and centralization of the Ottoman state and ends with the suppression of the Dersim rebellion in 1938. Kurdish nationalism as a type of opposition can be analyzed on two main axes.⁵ The first line of opposition was against the reforms threatening the traditional lives of Kurds who would enjoy a de facto autonomy in the Ottoman Empire. The first part of this threat was the reforms during the last period of the Ottoman Empire carried out the aim of modernization and centralization. Later, the foundation of Republic of Turkey as a nation-state increased this threat. The first line of opposition organized itself around sheikhs who gained significant political power with the help of the reaction against the dissolution of the emirates and the regulations made in favor of the Christian minority. The other line of opposition is Kurdish nationalism as an intellectual movement. In the last period of the Ottoman state, nationalist ideas influenced not only the Turkish elites, but also the Kurdish elites who mainly lived in Istanbul. In this period where a state structure dominated by the notion of *millet*⁶ instead of nation evolved into a state structure

⁵ For an analysis of this distinction see Hamit Bozarslan (2002).

⁶ At the Ottoman Empire period, the term *millet* was implying religious communities, but not ethnic communities. Therefore, the Kurds and the Turks belonged to the same Muslim *Millet*.

where the Turkish nation became the main determinant, these elites attempted to intervene in this transformation process in favor of their own ethnic roots. On the other hand, it would be incorrect to assume that these two types of opposition with different points of departure acted separately from each other; on the contrary, they engaged in a deep cooperation. This is an important point for a sound understanding of the twofold character of the Kurdish rebellions during the Republican period.

II.1.a. The Social Structure of the Kurds in the Ottoman Empire Period

In order to comprehend the nature of the first Kurdish opposition organized basically around sheikhs, it would be helpful to point out to the living conditions of Kurds during the Ottoman period. In the process starting with the Ottoman state's attempts for modernization and centralization and ending with the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, there have been significant changes that affected Kurds. Basically, the Kurdish living style, which was anchored in a social structure based on tribal organization and which was autonomous from the central authority, was threatened. Bruinessen observes the Kurdish autonomy during the Ottoman period as follows:

The administrative structure of the Kurdish provinces after their inclusion in the Ottoman Empire was different from that of the other regions of the empire. Most provinces were administered indeed almost independently by dominant Kurdish families, which were granted Ottoman titles, instead of governors appointed from the center (2002:127).

Bruinessen states that the Ottoman administration did not interfere with the internal affairs and living styles of Kurds whose living places were on the border with the East, and thus were functioning as a buffer zone (2002: 177). *Alevi* Kurds in Dersim region were living in the mountains as completely remote from the central political authority. Dersim Kurds, who were living in tribes instead of being subordinate to big principalities, neither paid taxes, nor did they enroll in the army.

Religion was a very important institution for Kurds, who were mostly members of the *Şafi* sect, and sheikhs had a significant weight even in social relations. Bruinessen (2003) states that sheikhs owe their significance to their role of being mediator in disputes between the tribes. Their authority was also maintained by miraculous stories widely told about them. Sheikhs' role in social life formed a significant basis for the political role they would attain later.

II.1.b. Modernization and Centralization Attempts and Their Effects on Kurds

In the early 18th Century, the Ottoman Empire was faced with immense difficulties at the level of central government. Local Kurdish emirates gradually achieved influence and a considerable level of autonomy (Olson, 1993:12). During the administration of Mahmut II, the Kurdish regions were placed under the control of the center, and the previously autonomous chieftains were removed from their regions. However, the officers appointed in place of *emirs* were alien to the region, and their authority was not recognized. Hence, conflicts between tribes increased after the dissolution of the emirates. Such an environment laid the ground for an increase in the political influence of sheikhs (see Bruinessen 2002, 2003, also Olson 1993). According to Olson, “sheikhs’ achievement of reputation and power indicates the desire of Kurds to fill the power vacuum that arose with the vanishing of the emirates” (1992: 22-3). On the other hand, people did not embrace reforms as attempts for modernization. Bruinessen explains its reasons as follows:

First of all, the people were aware that the reforms were resulting from the weakness of the empire and that they were imposed by the European powers. The increased centralization, which abolished the centuries-long autonomy of the Kurdish regions, together with the measures aimed at protecting the Christian minorities were also considered as attempts of Christians to demolish the traditional Islamic political and social order (2002: 126-7).

With the efforts of the missionaries, the Christian minority started to contest the political sovereignty of Kurds, which resulted in conflicts. The efforts of the missionaries were perceived as an endeavor of the Europeans to repress Muslims. Such developments were effective in the gathering of Kurds under the leadership of the prominent religious personalities. As Bruinessen states, “except for a few cases, we find politically effective sheikhs in regions where crowded Christian minorities lived and missionaries worked intensively” (ibid, p. 129). Olson, with reference to Jwaideh, remarks that one of the most potent reasons behind the efforts of sheikhs to unite Kurds was the concern about the rise of the Armenians in Kurdistan (1993: 23). Therefore, it may be argued that as a result of the reforms with the purpose of centralizing and modernizing the Ottoman state, the significance of sheikhs increased among Kurds, and they replaced *emirs* politically. At the subsequent stages of this process, sheikhs led the rebellions and the Kurdish nationalism too.

The Sheikh Ubeydullah Rebellion illustrates the way in which the sheikhs fill the power vacuum in the Kurdish society. The Rebellion took place at the time of the Armenian insurgency, which created a great tension among Kurds. Indeed, according to Olson, the reason of the Sheikh Ubeydullah Rebellion was the Berlin Treaty signed at the end of the Turkish-Russian War on 13 July 1878. Article 61 of the Treaty provides that the *Bab-ı Ali* government “shall undertake to make improvements and reforms required by local demands in the residential provinces of Armenians and to provide the security of Armenians against Circassians and Kurds” (1993: 23). In the same period, there were rumors arguing that the territory of a prospective Armenian state was in the same or overlapping regions where a Kurdish state was to be established (ibid). Therefore, Sheikh Ubeydullah formed the first Kurdish alliance in order to prevent the reforms, which would provide Armenians and Nestorians with more power, and probably sovereignty, that were aimed at protecting the Christian minority. The Ottoman government supported this alliance due to its opposition against these reforms. Another reason of such support was that Sheikh Ubeydullah and his men had provided significant assistance to the Ottoman side during the Ottoman-Russian War (ibid, 23-4).

Sheikh Ubeydullah clearly declared his aspiration to establish an independent Kurdistan. According to Olson, this should be taken as the first stage of Kurdish nationalism because of the fact that the already developed community sentiments were, for the first time, expressed in the form of a demand for independence (1993:17-8). In July 1880, Sheikh Ubeydullah said the following in a letter to Clayton, the British Vice-Consul in Başkale:

The Kurdish nation... is a people apart. Their religion is different [from that of others], and their laws and customs are distinct. It is known as the most worthless, the most spoiled of all nations. The Chiefs and Rulers of Kurdistan, whether Turkish or Persian subjects, and the inhabitants of Kurdistan, one and all are united and agreed that matters cannot be carried on this way with the two Governments [Ottoman and Qajar], and that necessarily something must be done, so that European Governments having understood the matter, shall inquire into our state. We also are a nation apart. We want our affairs to be in our own hands (quoted from McDowall, 1996: 53, also Olson, 1993:19).

Ubeydullah entered in the Persian territory in 1880. Olson points out that Ubeydullah might have planned to direct his power towards the Ottoman Empire in order to

establish independent Kurdistan after having achieved sovereignty in Iran. Yet, his army was defeated in Iran, and his dreams for independent Kurdistan fell to the ground. When the sheikh returned back, the Ottomans had started counter activities because of the pressures of the European countries and the dangers that the Ottomans could be exposed to on account of supporting a Kurdish movement. As a result, Ubeydullah was arrested by the Ottoman forces (Olson, 1993: 24).

Another significant event in this period was that Abdulhamid II adopted the method of cooperation with Kurdish tribal chieftains and established the Hamidian Troops. One purpose of Abdulhamid II in his cooperation with tribal chieftains was to finalize his attempts of centralization. The officers sent from the center had not been adopted by Kurds because of the fact that they were aliens and reformists. Olson emphasizes that another purpose of Abdulhamid was to diminish the increased power of sheikhs among Kurds. Tribal chieftains could be more easily put under control, and their jurisdiction was effective in narrower regions (1993: 35). Tribes that were allowed to form a troop or a unit drove many benefits. Once a tribe joined the Hamidian Troops and acquired authority together with weapons, it secured the opportunity to subordinate smaller tribes. It was also possible to drive a Hamidian troop against a tenacious tribe.

The formation of the Hamidian Troops radically affected the balance of power between Kurds and Armenians as well as among Kurds. Some Armenians became victims of slaughter. Such events resulted in an increase in the tension between Armenians and Kurds (Bruinessen, 2002: 134, Olson, 1993: 31). Furthermore, these tribes had been selected from Sunnites in accordance with the Pan-Islamic policies of Abdulhamid. This brought about the deepening of the division between *Alevi* Kurds and *Sunni* Kurds, and a rise in conflicts (Bruinessen, 2002: 135). On the other hand, the Hamidian Troops had a significant role in the rise of Kurdish nationalism. Between 1895 and 1914, Kurds had more than 50 thousand men with weapons, and they gained experience in warship. Some of the troops participated in the Balkan Wars. Thus, besides Turkish nationalism, they also got acquainted with Balkan nationalism (Olson, 1993: 33). “For Kurds, the Hamidian Troops was an opportunity to experience the world in all its broadness and to attempt at comprehending it more

in depth” (ibid).

Alongside the transformations in the social life of Kurds, the last period of the Ottoman Empire also witnessed the rise of Kurdish nationalism as an intellectual movement. The ideas of enlightenment and nationalism, which became very widespread after the French Revolution, also influenced the Kurdish elites of the era. In this respect, it may be argued that Kurdish nationalism started to be adopted among Ottoman intellectuals at the same time with Turkish nationalism.⁷ However, it cannot be argued that these nationalist intellectuals, generally members of elite families, were detached from their Ottoman and Islamic identities.⁸ Yıldız (2001) states that a foot of the Ottoman Kurdish elites was stepping on nationalism, while the other was stepping on their Ottoman and Islamic identities as well as an ambition to be a minister. For an independent Kurdish state, these intellectuals sought for the support of the European states rather than that of the people. Bruinessen states that for these elites, politics was a play of gentlemen, which was of no concern for the masses. Kurdish migrant laborers, such as those working as porters, have never participated in the activities of the Kurdish societies in İstanbul (2002:150).

Kürdistan Teaviün ve Terakki Cemiyeti (Kurdish Society of Solidarity and Progress), the first Kurdish organization, was founded in İstanbul after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. The leadership cadre of this society was mainly composed of the children of the old Kurdish *emirs* (Olson, 1993: 37). The society started to publish a journal as a continuation of the first Kurdish newspaper, *Kürdistan*, under the same name. *Kürdistan Teaviün ve Terakki Cemiyeti* was closed down by Young Turks in 1909 (Olson, 1993: 37). In 1912, *Hevi-i Kürt Cemiyeti* (Kurdish Hope Society) was founded by Kurdish students. Some of the members of the society were students from Hamidian schools established by Abdulhamid (Olson, 1993: 37-8). Bruinessen remarks that the members of *Hevi* were the children of the respected urban families

⁷ On the other hand, it may be argued that some Turkish nationalist policies provoked Kurdish nationalism. Celalettin Bedirhan, in his ‘*Open Letter to Mustafa Kemal*’, says that the policies of *İttihat ve Terakki* (Union and Progress) by using *Türk Ocakları* distances Turks and Kurds from each other, and adds, “In a word, *Türk Ocakları* raised Kurds for us as far as it raised Turkists for you” (quoted from Bayrak 1999: 313).

⁸ Some of them later became main figures of Turkish nationalism like Süleyman Nazif and Ziya Gökalp.

and they turned towards Kurdish nationalism as a response to Turkish nationalism (2002: 142).

As Bozarslan states, Kurdish nationalism as a program aiming at the foundation of a Kurdish state first appeared in 1918-19 (2005: 36). In this period following the First World War, activities of Kurdish nationalists increased. *Kürdistan Teaviün ve Terakki Cemiyeti*, which was established earlier, resumed its activities in 1918 under the name of *Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti* (Association for the Elevation of Kurdistan). According to Bozarslan, *Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti* departed from the first Kurdish intellectual activities in the last period of the Ottoman Empire with its claim for national independence and an independent state (ibid). This new society also included some members of tribes (Olson, 1993: 45). The society had a journal, *Jin*⁹, in which nationalism in the modern sense was supported. Some other societies were established besides *Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti*. Unlike the first Kurdish societies, these had close relationships with Kurds in the East. Olson explains the change in the nature of the societies founded after the First World War as follows: “surviving the common disasters of the First World War resulted in the fusion of these urbanized ‘Western’ intellectuals with the religious and traditional Kurds of the East” (1993: 38).

II.I.c. Kurdish Rebellions:

Although Kurdish nationalism became widespread and deepened during the First World War, it cannot be argued that nationalist ideas were influential among the people. Kurds were generally in support of the sultan and the caliphate. As Bruinessen states, “[before and in 1920] ... separatism meant little for the Kurdish peasantry. Although, from time to time, they had contested the local representatives of the bureaucracy, most of the people were in loyal to the Ottoman Empire” (2002: 124). The legitimacy of the sultan was always recognized.¹⁰ Loyalty to tribe and religion went much ahead the nationalist consciousness in its modern sense. In

⁹ This journal is elaborated in the forth chapter.

¹⁰ Even today, Abdulhamid II is commonly named as the father of “Bave Kurdan” (the father of the Kurds).

accordance with the comprehensiveness of the concept of *millet* of the era, Kurds did not separate themselves from other Muslims.¹¹

Mustafa Kemal and the Ankara government were able to attract Kurdish tribal chieftains to the movement of resistance on the basis of loyalty to the sultan, caliph, and the homeland. Yıldız analyzes this as follows, “During the period of national struggle, Mustafa Kemal Pasha addressed ethnic pluralism. The common denominator of this ethnic pluralism was the rescue the caliph from the slavery of non-Muslims, in addition to the ‘common Armenian threat’” (2001: 40). Symbols and values that were used to mobilize the people included many religious characteristics.¹² In addition, the power of Mustafa Kemal and the Ankara government played an important role in their success in achieving the support of tribal chieftains. On the other hand, as Bruinessen emphasizes, Kurdish nationalists had not such a power to represent these tribal chieftains which was important to the tribal chieftains (2003: 410). Thus, 23 rebellions occurred from 1919 until late 1921 against the Ankara government’s efforts to centralize its authority in all regions in the country, except for those under invasion, and Kurdish tribes joined only three of these rebellions. (Kirişçi and Winrow 2002: 84).¹³

¹¹ For example, Zinar Silopi, a nationalist Kurdish army officer, complains in his memories that Kurds abided by the call for jihad made by the sultan during the First World War and that they did not take into account the words on the independence of Kurds (quoted in Bruinessen 2002: 138). On the other hand, Olson emphasizes that from 1908 on, nationalist ideas leaked in *derviş* lodges and started to be adopted by sheikhs (1993: 38-40).

¹² In his telegrams sent to the participants before Erzurum and Sivas congresses, Mustafa Kemal mentioned about the common religious bound between *Lazs*, Circassians, Turks and Kurds; and these congresses were inaugurated with prayers. Again, in 1920, the National Grand Assembly was opened after the Friday prayer. In the declaration of the *Anadolu ve Rumeli Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti*, all Muslims were considered as the natural members of the society (quoted from Kirişçi and Winrow, 2002: 95). Lewis underlines that the document of *Misak-ı Milli* was mentioning Ottomans, not Turks, and the document had no single word of ‘Turk’ (quoted from Kirişçi and Winrow 2002: 95).

¹³ On the other hand, one of these rebellions, the Koçgiri Rebellion (March-June 1921) was very important with respect to its nature and the consequences it yielded for Kurdish nationalism. Koçgiri was a rebellion with clear nationalist demands. The rebellions claimed for the transformation of the Kurdish region of Western Dersim into a separate principality with its own Kurdish governor and Kurdish administrative clerks. Without any negotiation, such demand was responded with an operation. It is argued that Nurettin Pasha, the commander of the operation, said “We silenced those who say ‘Zo’ (Armenians), now it is time for those who say ‘Lo’ (Kurds)” (quoted from Bruinessen 2002: 153). However, the rebellion was not supported by some Kurds who considered Kurds were represented in National Assembly (Bruinessen, 2002: 153). Furthermore, Mustafa Kemal took the advantage of Koçgiri Rebellion in order to reinforced the inner harmony of the resistance movement

It can be argued that this period in which the concept of *millet* was used in order to fuse the masses and the masses were mobilized in order to rescue the sultan, caliph and the homeland started to end with the constitution adopted in January 1921. The first article of this constitution was as follows, “sovereignty belongs unconditionally to the *millet*”. However, the third article defined the Grand National Assembly as the administrative organ of the “State of Turkey”. By this way, for the first time, “Turkey” was used as the state’s name. In the following period, the sultanate was abolished in 1922. Mustafa Kemal, in his long speech at the assembly, talked about the 1500-year-old Turkish history instead of 700-year-old Ottoman history (Kirişçi and Winrow, 2002: 97). According to Mustafa Kemal and his fellows, the new state to be founded had to be a modern state, and its unifying power, its “cement”, would be nation not *ümmet*.¹⁴ As Kirişçi and Winrow states, “Turkism was the basis of a new national identity that was necessary for the transformation of a traditional society, assumed by Mustafa Kemal and his fellows from the Ottoman Empire, into a modern society” (2002: 98).

One of the most important steps in transition to nation-state was the abolition of caliphate. As Binnaz Toprak states, existence of such an institution, whose theoretical basis lies in a supra-national concept of solidarity, was against the interests of the nationalist movement (quoted from Kirişçi and Winrow, 2002: 99). For Kurds, who were non-Turkish Muslims, abolition of caliphate meant being devoid of an element that defined their identities since the time it was abolished; caliphate was still an important factor in perpetuation of the unity of Muslim elements on the imperial territory (Yıldız, 2001: 241). Yeğen (1999) underlines that caliphate was an institution that secured a loose link between the Ottoman political center and the Muslim elements of the “periphery” in order for the toleration of the ethnical plurality of the “periphery” by the Ottoman political center. This was important to Kurds, who had had a centuries-long autonomous administration. He states that abolition of caliphate in 1924 resulted in the replacement of the loose link between the center and the periphery with a regime of repression imposed by the

He showed the rebellions as traitors, who were in effort to weaken the attempts to rescue the country and the caliph (Kirişçi and Winrow, 2002: 85).

¹⁴ Muslim community.

center on the ethnic, cultural, economic, administrative and political elements of the periphery. Thus, as Bruinessen remarks, the state lost its legitimacy in the eyes of many Kurds (and Turks) in consequence of the abolition of caliphate (2002: 151-2).

The day caliphate was abolished, the law on the unification of education was also reified, and in consequence, all schools were put under the control of the government and *medreses* and religious schools were closed down. Winter defines the meaning of the new education law as follow:

[a] fundamental step in the establishment of a unified, modern, secular, egalitarian, and national education system. (...) In a country where the identity was mostly Islamic rather than national, and which is divided into numberless units on the basis of tribe, race and language, the role of this system was particularly vital in the process of the construction of the nation-state” (quoted from Kirişçi and Winrow 2002: 99-100).

Construction of nation-state necessitated standardization in language and culture.

Following the abolition of the caliphate and, the laws introduced, it was understood that the Kemalist regime was aiming at a secular nation-state. Following these developments, a big Kurdish rebellion, Sheikh Said Rebellion, took place. In order to understand the character of this rebellion, which is described as a “reactionary” and “religious” rebellion in the official discourse, it is necessary to mention the organization *Azadi* (Freedom). In this way, it will be clear that the two streams in the early period Kurdish nationalism that were already mentioned above came together in the Sheikh Said Rebellion. Additionally, we can deduce some points of continuity in *Beytüşşebap*, Sheikh Said and Ağrı Rebellions.

Azadi, another name of which was *Ciwata Xweseria Kurd* (Kurdish Independence Society), was established in 1921 (probably formally established in 1923) in Erzurum (Olson, 1993: 53, McDowall, 1996: 192). *Azadi* was a nationalist organization founded by Kurdish army officers, chieftains of tribes, and sheikhs. Unlike the previous Kurdish organizations, it was in closer relations with the people. In this respect, it is meaningful that it was established not in İstanbul, but in Erzurum. McDowall underlines the significance of this point as follows: “Azadi marked the real arrival of Kurdish nationalism in Turkish Kurdistan. Until then, nationalist sentiment had been confined to the educated notable class in Istanbul, to the larger towns of Kurdistan and a handful of aghas” (1996: 192).

Most of the leaders of *Azadi* were officers in the Turkish army (Olson, 1993: 73). Bruinessen describes these people as “persons, most of who had supported the Kemalist movement and were disappointed”. The purpose of the organization was to establish a Kurdish state (2002: 153). Olson defines the purposes of *Azadi* as follows:

Azadi, at least in late November of 1924, had three main purposes. Kurdish officers expressed these as follows: To rescue Kurds from the Turkish repression; to provide Kurds with liberation; to give Kurds an opportunity to enable them develop their country and to provide British support, as it was impossible for Kurdistan to survive on its own (1993: 76).¹⁵

Sheikh Said Rebellion was planned and organized by *Azadi* (Bruinessen, 2002: 160-3). However, the organization kept sheikhs at the front in order to establish a popular and charismatic leadership. As Bruinessen suggests, “as the idea of a Kurdish state had little meaning for broad sections of the society, the leaders had to emphasize religious sentiments” (ibid, p.167). Yet, it would be wrong to argue that Sheikh Said, a *Nakşibendi* sheikh, was only a showpiece leader. That is because, he attended the 1924 congress of *Azadi*, and he stated that the Kurdish policies of the Ankara government was increasingly becoming a threatening one, and he called the participants of the congress to fight for the independence of Kurdistan (Bruinessen, 2003: 412).¹⁶ At last, Sheikh Said undertook the commandership of the rebellion. In many places, sheikhs mobilized the tribal chieftains, who were their apostles. These were generally small *Sunni* tribes that spoke *Zaza* language. The rebellions were effective in Diyarbakır and its north.

However, non-tribal Kurds, which included some Christian and Jewish minorities in Diyarbakır plain, did not participate in the rebellion. These Kurds, who were extremely poor, were working as sharecroppers or workers on the lands of their aghas. Bruinessen explains this situation as follows:

Even though these villagers had national sentiments, their feelings against landowners were more powerful. (...) [These] villagers had no material power, nor did they have motivations, to participate in the rebellion. The rebellion was not against those

¹⁵ For the role of *Azadi* in *Beytüşşebab* revolt see Gündoğan, 1994.

¹⁶ There are some other clues indicating that Sheikh Said had a nationalist character. For example, in a debate on whether to receive help from Russians or not, Sheikh Said is argued to have supported the idea of receiving aid on the grounds that he would prefer to receive from non-Muslims instead of sharing the same fate with the Armenians (Bruinessen, 2003: 413).

persons exploiting them, but against a government which promised to restrict the powers of those exploiters (2003: 436).

Although they felt attracted to the rebellion, the unorganized and unarmed urban lower class Kurds did not participate into the rebellion either (ibid, p. 437).¹⁷ This fact seems to support the official argument that the reason of the rebellion was “feudal elements” or “backwardness”. However, Bruinessen emphasizes that none of the sheikhs and tribal chieftains that led the rebellion was a big landowner. Furthermore, he also adds that the government generally cooperated with the “most feudal” elements in order to maintain the security of the region (2002: 166-7). In addition, it should also be taken into consideration that, despite all its religious motivations, Sheikh Said Rebellion achieved no support by anti-modernist Turks. Therefore, according to Bruinessen, the rebellion can neither be described as religious, nor nationalist. For the participants of Sheikh Said Rebellion, religious and national loyalties were inseparable, even they were identical:

The revolt was neither a purely religious nor a purely nationalist one. The nationalist motivation of those who planned it is beyond doubt, but even among them many were also emotionally affected by the abolition of caliphate... The primary aim of both Sheikh Said and the Azadi leaders was the establishment of an independent Kurdistan. The motivation of the rank-and-file was equally mixed, but for them the religious factor may have predominated.” (2003: 441)

Olson argues that the nationalist motivations were more important than the religious factors (1993: 152-3). The speech made by the President Judge of the Independence Court after Sheikh Said was sentenced to death reflects how the rebellion was perceived by the state or how it was reconstructed by the discourse of the state:

Some in order to protect their individual interests and some under the effects of foreign propagation and their personal ambitions, certain persons came together. All of them had the same purpose: Establishment of independent Kurdistan. When they realized the rebellion, which they had been planning for years, they put the region

¹⁷ During the rebellion, an interesting event took place in Elazığ, where the population was overwhelmingly composed of Turks. A group of approximately three hundred Kurds entered the city. The governor fled from the city. The rebellions seized the house of government and the court, and they evacuated the prison. The prisoners showed the houses of the official clerks and wealthy in the city. The wealthy were imprisoned and those who had evacuated the prisons plundered their properties. The carriers and woodcutters of the city, who were mainly composed of Kurds, joined the rebellions. Although the sheikh leading the rebellion tried to stop these events, the security could not be established for a time. Later, during his interrogation, the former governor of Elazığ claimed that Kurds had put Koran pages on their bayonets, and thus the gendarme did not intervene (Bruinessen, 2003: 437). This is an important event for it shows that there is a common religious belief shared by the Kurds who joined the rebellion due to the inaction of the gendarmerie, and the gendarmerie, whose duty was to suppress the rebellion.

under fire. (...) Now, the poor people of the region, which had suffered the tyranny of sheikhs, aghas and chieftains, and whose lives and properties had been subject to the arbitrariness of these persons, are rescued from these evil powers, and from now on, while our Republic will progress in peace and happiness on the path of wealth and civilization, these powers will pay for the blood they shed and the homes they destroyed with the justice of gallows (quoted from Bruinessen, 2002: 165).

Sheikh Said Rebellion became a very significant factor in the attainment of Turkish nationalism an ethnocentric character and of the Kemalist reforms a much more strict form. After the defeat of Sheikh Said, İsmet İnönü, the Turkish prime minister, made the following statement:

We are frankly nationalist ... and nationalism is our only factor of cohesion. Before the Turkish majority other elements have no kind of influence. At any price, we must Turkify the inhabitants of our land, and we will annihilate those oppose Turks or 'le turkisme'. What we seek in those who would serve the country is that, above all, they be Turks and 'turquisites'. They say we lack solicitude for religious currents; we will crush all who rise before us to use religion as an instrument (quoted from Olson, 2000: 93).

Bruinessen adds that this rebellion provided Mustafa Kemal and İsmet Pasha an opportunity to assume dictatorship-like authorities, and that from that time on, the Kemalist reform program was put into progress in a much swifter manner without taking into consideration the opposition (2002: 123). Yet, the Sheikh Said Rebellion was not the last rebellion of Kurds against the newly established nation-state and its policies. Another big rebellion, Ağrı Rebellion, bursts out in 1930.

After the suppression of the Sheikh Said Rebellion, some of the Kurdish intellectuals and tribal leaders, together with many warriors, took shelter in Iran, Iraq and Syria. At the same time, small guerilla groups were continuing to fight in dispersed form. In order to unite the dispersed struggle, the organization *Xoybun* (Independence) was established in Lebanon in 1927. Among the founders of the organization, there were members of organizations such as *Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti*, *Kürt Teşkilat-ı İctimaiye Cemiyeti* (Kurdish Society of Social Organization), and *Kürt Millet Fırkası* (Kurdish Nation Party), as well as tribal chieftains (Kutlay, 1997:199). In the second article of its statute, the purpose of the society was described as, "establishment of an independent Kurdistan state within the national borders of Kurdistan and Kurds, which are under the oppression of Turkey" (Karaca, 1991: 15). *Xoybun* prepared a national flag and formed an armed force (Bozarслан, 2005: 51).

Ağrı Rebellion started with the tribe of *Celalis*' rejection of any other authority except itself. *Xoybun* decided to participate in the rebellion. İhsan Nuri Paşa, together with his men, joined the tribes that were already in riot in Ağrı Mountain, assumed the operational commandship of the rebellion. *Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti*, which had previously joined *Xoybun*, and some nationalist intellectuals, such as Memduh Selim, also joined the rebellion (Kutlay, 1997: 200). During the rebellion, members of *Xoybun* published a journal named *Agiri*. In the journal, in addition to news and comments on the rebellion, poems were also published (ibid). The organization, almost in all of its communiqués, used the Kurdish proverb, “Bexte Rome Tuneye!” (Roms –Turks are meant – have no mercy). What we can deduce from their publications is that they always emphasized that their struggle was a nationalist one, and that they carefully avoided any religious discourse.

On the other hand, during and after the rebellion, the ethnocentric emphasis within the discourse of some journals increased so much that sometimes even racist expressions were observed. For example, in an article in *Cumhuriyet* Newspaper, the rebels were described as follows:

The manifestations of their sentiments and brains, which function with natural instincts such as ordinary animals, show how vulgar and even jerky they think. (...) These men who mix raw meat with a little wheat and eat just in that way have no difference from African savages and cannibals (quoted from Yıldız, 2001: 243).

Additionally, there is also ethnocentric emphasis in the discourse of state officials. The Prime Minister İsmet İnönü stated, “Only the Turkish nation has the privilege of demanding ethnic and racial rights in this country. There is no possibility that others demands for such rights.”¹⁸ After the state crushed the rebellion, the statement made by the Turkish Minister of Interior, Mahmut Esat Bozkurt, was the most striking and well-known example of ethnocentric discourse: “Turks are the sole owners and the sole nobles of this country. Those who are not of Turkish origin have only one right: to serve and be the slaves, without question, of the noble Turkish nation” (quoted from Beşikçi, 1998: 3).¹⁹ In a caricature published in *Milliyet* Newspaper on 19 September 1930, there was an illustration of a grave on the peak of the Ağrı Mountain. “Muhayyel Kürdistan burada medfundur” (The fictitious Kurdistan is

¹⁸ *Milliyet*, 31 August 1930 (quoted from İsmail Beşikçi, 1998: 2).

lying dead here) was written on the epitaph (ibid, p. 2).

In his last article, İhsan Nuri Paşa states that the words of Mahmut Esat Bozkurt were racist, and they revolted because they understood that Turkey had such a policy. İhsan Nuri also refers to the caricature in *Milliyet* Newspaper:

Mahmut Esat, as a minister of the State of Turkey, where millions of Kurds, *Lazs*, and Circassians were living, showed his racism. Kurdish nation understood this policy of Turkey. It was impossible for it to bow to such captivity and slavery. A conscious group among Kurds revolted in order to reject and to make other races rebel together with Kurds. Thousands of victims were given for this purpose. Today, before the nations that admire freedom, the revolt provides evidence that is written with the blood of women and children, the elderly and youth, the evidence of protection of their rights by their genuine representatives. *Milliyet* Newspaper illustrated the success of the State of Turkey, which was achieved with the aids of Iran and the Soviet Union only after having suffered a defeat for five years, with a depiction of a grave on the Big and Small Ağrı Mountains, the stone of which bear the words, 'The fictitious Kurdistan is lying dead here' (Karaca, 1991:131-2).

As a result, it may be argued that the Ağrı Rebellion, which was described by Bruinessen as a continuation of Sheikh Said Rebellion, was a nationalist rebellion as understood from the words of İhsan Nuri and the communiqués of *Xoybun*. In this sense, it was a secular political movement. It clearly aimed at independence of Kurds against the nation-state that was established on the basis of Turkism. On the other hand, it is fairly difficult to define Dersim Rebellion, which occurred in 1937, as a political movement planned by a center. This rebellion may be interpreted as a rebellion against the efforts to rehabilitate the region that was perceived as a "boil".

In June 1934 a new law was enacted. This law divided Turkey into three zones: 1) localities to be reserved for the habitation in compact form of persons possessing Turkish culture; 2) regions to which populations of non-Turkish culture for assimilation into Turkish language and culture were to be moved; 3) regions to be completely evacuated (McDowall, 1996: 207).

The main focus was the region of Dersim, which was seen as "the head of the snake" by the state officials. The purpose was to rehabilitate the region and to maintain security. At the end of 1935, the government proposed a plan, which combined administrative reorganization with military repression. The name of Dersim was

¹⁹ Bozkurt's statement appeared originally in the *Milliyet* newspaper on 19 September 1930

changed into Tunceli. During his Grand National Assembly's opening speech in 1936, Mustafa Kemal defined Dersim as a problem to be urgently solved:

If there is a most important stage in our interior affairs, that is the issue of Dersim. This work of cleaning, tearing off and radically cutting off his scar, this awful boil at home should be done at any expense, and in order to take the most urgent decisions on this issue, the government should be given full and widest authorities (quoted from Dersimi, 1992: 259).

General Abdullah Alpdoğan was sent to the region as commander with wide authorities, and battalions were deployed in the region and military roads were constructed.

In the meantime, tribal chieftains in Dersim started to hold meetings. However, old hostilities between tribes prevented tribes from forming alliances in order to move along with a common plan. Some of the tribes decided to revolt under the leadership of Seyit Rıza (ibid, pp. 267-8). Alişer, who had led the Koçgiri Rebellion and sent a letter to Kurdistan Ascent Society informing that the Kurds in Dersim were loyal to the society, prepared their plans of war (ibid, pp. 275-80). Fights started in 1937 and then rapidly expanded. Alişer and his wife were murdered, and Seyit Rıza was executed in Elazığ on 18 November 1937 (ibid, pp. 275-87).

In his letter written in French and sent on 20 November 1937 to the General Secretary of the United Nations, Nuri Dersimi, one of the leaders of the rebellion, told that what was going on in Dersim was an effort to the destroy the Kurdish nation, which had a race, language, history and culture completely different from those of Turks:

While the government of Turkey, with a purpose of putting an end to the national existence of Kurds, who are separate from Turks on the basis of the most fundamental differences such as race, language, history, culture and civilization, on their genuine and historical homeland, where they have been living for centuries and even centuries before Turks, is committing an atrocity unprecedented in history; it is also perpetrating the most cruel lies before the history and the world by naming this operation as 'civilization'. (...) In order to end the existence of the Kurdish nation, this government is not hesitating to use any death machine, starting from evacuation of families, groups, and villages to bombardments by guns, machine guns, and planes, and to suffocating gas attacks" (ibid, p. 296).

In his letter, Dersimi also mentioned the practices of the state policy against Kurds,

which were aimed at, on the one hand, exclusion, and, on the other hand, assimilation:

Closing down all Kurdish schools, prohibiting any publication, reading and writing and even speaking in Kurdish with the most violent threats, taking strict measures to prevent Kurdish children from having secondary and higher education even in Turkish language and in Turkish schools, legislating secret laws in order to prevent Kurdish officers from enrolling in the Turkish Army, letting no Kurds in the Kurdistan region be employed as a clerk –even as civil clerk- (the relevant law has been published), omitting Kurd-related words and terms such as Kurd and Kurdistan from scientific, such as history and geography, works and from the press, forcing some Kurds, including their women and young daughters, to serve in military construction areas under whips with a cruelty well beyond that of the most cruel periods in Anatolia, settling by force some other Kurds, depriving them of all their properties and goods, in groups of five-ten persons, in Turkish regions where the number Kurds would not exceed five percent of the Turkish population (ibid, pp. 296-7, also in Bayrak, 1999: 317-8).

The operation continued also in 1938. The state mobilized some 50000 troops and used air power against Kurds (Olson, 2000: 89-90).²⁰ The rebellion was suppressed with a brutal violence. Beşikçi (1990) defines Turkish government's actions in Dersim as genocide. According to Bruinessen, the state's actions constituted ethnocide, rather than genocide because it aimed at destruction of the Kurdish identity (1994:148). Dersimi (1992) claims that the facts experienced in Dersim were slaughter, because, the people of Dersim, including persons who had not joined the rebellion, were attempted to be destructed.²¹

As a result, a total of 18 rebellions took place in Turkey between 1924 and 1938, and 17 of them were in the regions where Kurds lived (Kirişçi and Winrow, 2002: 105). According to Bozarşlan, the rebellions were a direct response to the Turkifying projects of Kemalism, its reforms in the cultural and religious spheres, and its attempts to subvert Kurdish social structures such as tribes and Muslim brotherhood

²⁰ Sabiha Gökçen, Kemal Atatürk's adopted daughter and Turkey's first female pilot, flew with the Turkish Air Force on their bombing runs against the Dersim Kurds. Olson emphasizes that she was a model of the progressive, liberated, and modern Turkish woman. "Sabiha Gökçen provides a good example of the role of women from the majority ethnic group and the dominant class of Turkish society who served as models and symbols of progress for that group and class simultaneously serving as the instrument of that group's and class' suppression of minorities" (2000: 90).

²¹ Additionally, Dersimi states that, as poisonous gas was used, bodies were flowing in the River Munzur, and that soldiers raided the villages and killed villagers (1992: in particular, pp. 318-321) Dead bodies flowing in the river were also mentioned in an elegiac: Hasan Efendi diyor "Ana hele bir çık dışarı da bak/Bu ne tozdu ne duman/Ah bu ne tozdu ne duman?"/Anası diyor: "Hasan Efendi'm/Hele bir var yanasıca Hamam'ın yakınına/Munzur getiriyor yukarıdan ölüleri/Oğul içimde bir korku/Bu kez bizimki kökten kırimdır/Ah bu kez bizimli kökten kırimdır" (Özcan, 2002: 52-4).

(2005: 48). The necessities of the Kemalist process of nation-state building threatened the social life of Kurds, who, although partially, had a consciousness of autonomy, and who were living in tribes. For that reason, there developed a type of opposition, which stemmed generally from peasantry and which was composed of members of tribes and religious sects. As stated by Bozarslan, this type of opposition rejected the state not because it was Turkish, but because it represented the opposite of the Ottoman tradition (2002: 848). The westernist, civilizationist urban Kurdish intellectuals constituted another type of opposition. This opposition rejected the state not because it was a state, but because it was a Turkish state (ibid). These urban intellectuals played a significant role in the rebellions. According to Bozarslan, these elites “bear both the political and military leadership and the political and ideological discourse productivity of nationalist struggles” (2005: 49). *Azadi* organization in Sheikh Said Rebellion, İhsan Nuri Pasha, the commander of Ağrı Rebellion, and Nuri Dersimi, one of the leaders of Dersim Rebellion, reveal the multi dimensional leadership functions of these Kurdish urban elites.

The rebellions were suppressed with violence, but those experienced in these rebellions were told to the next generations. As analyzed below, the leaders of the Kurdish movement, revitalized after the period of silence from 1938 to 1960s, were grown up with the memories of these rebellions. Such memories were also reinforced by publications. Suppression of the rebellions with violence played a significant role in the formation of the perception of the Kurdish movement that Kurds were an oppressed nation. On the other hand, the rebellions also played a role in attainment of Turkish nationalism an ethnocentric form.

II.2. 1938-1960: Years of Silence

After the Kurdish rebellions were suppressed, the Kurdish nationalist movement entered a relatively silent period. Prominent Kurdish activists were either executed or sent to exile (Bozarslan, 2005: 54). At the end of the 1930s, every Kurdish village with a certain population was put under control through a gendarmerie office, and the Kurdish language, Kurdish clothing, Kurdish folklore were completely banned (Bruinessen, 2002: 340).

On the other hand, especially after the Second World War, Turkey's modernization process gained pace. In consequence of the Kurdish regions' wider economic integration to Turkey and the subsequent tendency of urbanization, the class structure in Kurdish regions started to change. Furthermore, Kurdish regions started to integrate to Turkey also with respect to culture. According to Bozarlan, this was because of Kemalism's Turkification attempt, which resulted in the formation of a "new intelligentsia", which sought its references in the Republican Turkey if not in Kemalism (2002: 850). Kutlay (1997) states that in this period, the idea that Kurds could achieve many rights with the support of the Soviet Union and socialist organizations started to gain popularity especially among educated young people.

Social sections that had been repressed by strict Kemalist policies supported Democratic Party, which came to government with transition to the multi-party regime. The DP government had to respond to the demands of these sections, and furthermore, members of these sections had joined in the DP. Among these, there were local elites, aghas and sheikhs, from Kurdish regions. The assimilation policies were loosened in the DP period, and most of the village gendarme offices were renewed. One of the most striking practices of DP was that General Muğlalı, who was found responsible for the murder of 33 Kurdish villagers, was judged and sentenced to prison.

On the other hand, the DP government also tried to control the region by attracting tribal chieftains and aghas that had power in the region. Such prominent tribal chieftains and aghas reinforced their traditional position of leadership through the party system. They were in control of the local votes, in response; they supplied interests for their supporters (Bruinessen, 2002: 340).²² DP also used its power to provide freedom to the sheikhs, who had been suppressed by policies against Islamic sectors during the single-party period and who still had a significant influence in Kurdish regions. Furthermore, in order to control the region, DP also used these

²² For example, Özbudun explains the high voting rates in the region in 1950s with reference to the tribal chieftains, who made the people vote (quoted from Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997: 112). On the other hand, collaboration with local elites was also a policy of RPP. For example, in 1950 elections, RPP received 100 percent of the votes in Hakkari (ibid).

sheikhs that were in close relation with aghas (McDowall, 1996: 396-8).²³ Such cooperation between the government and the local elites became the grounds for the definition of “local collaborators as servants of colonizers”, which had an important place in the post-1965 Kurdish socialist-nationalist discourse.

By the help of its collaboration with local elites, DP was in control of the Kurdish regions to a large extent. On the other hand, Kurds migrated to big cities and went to big cities for education, started to highlight their Kurdish identities. Especially in Ankara and Istanbul, a small but an effective group, which put an emphasis on the Kurdish identity, was formed (ibid, pp. 402-3). For example, Musa Anter summarizes this in his memories as follows: “When we came to İstanbul and *found ourselves* ... we formed a sentimental organization that was stemming from hate” [emphasize added] (1991a: 62).²⁴

Moreover, in this period, significant developments took place for Kurds outside Turkey. In 1946, the first Kurdish Republic, the Republic of Mahabad, was established in Iran. This republic only had a 13-month-old life, but it deeply affected the Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey. As will be pointed out again later, the Kurdish flag with colors of yellow-red-green, and the march, “Ey Reqib”, which was adopted as the Kurdish national anthem, were taken from the Republic of Mahabad.²⁵ As Kurds in Turkey were under strict control, they could not mobilize immediately after the Republic of Mahabad was founded (Kutlay, 1997: 2005). However, when in 1958 the Iraq state acknowledged the Kurdish flag, Kurdish language and culture; conditions became much more convenient for Kurds in Turkey. From this year on, the “period of silence” started to come to an end. Anter tells how the developments in Iraq influenced Kurds in Turkey:

Revolution had taken place in Iraq, and *Berzani* had returned back to Iraq. There, pleasant days were expected for Kurds. The Iraqi state had acknowledged the Kurdish

²³ McDowall points out that Kamran İnan, son of Sheikh Selahaddin who was sent to exile after the Sheikh Said rebellion, and Kinyas Kartal, follower of Said Nursi, as the DP deputies, are the examples of this policy.

²⁴ The name of this organization, seemingly founded in 1940s, was “Kürtleri Kurtarma Cemiyeti” (Society for the Salvation of Kurds). Anter says that they heard about many Kurdish societies established in İstanbul between 1908 and 1920 but did not have much information about them (ibid).

²⁵ Today all Kurdish movements in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey accept the march Ey Reqib as their national anthem (Bozarslan, 2002: 843).

flag, and stated in its constitution that the Iraqi population was composed of Arabs and Kurds. All Kurdish cultural activities were free. Kurdish journals were published and, in schools, education was also given in Kurdish. Of course, this situation also influenced Turkey. Just in that period, I decided to go to Diyarbakir and publish a newspaper (1991a: 140).

Anter bought a newspaper, named *İleri Yurt* in Diyarbakır, and he published, using the Kurdish language also, imaginary interviews that reflected the miserable lives of Kurds. This publication was the first Kurdish self-expression in Turkey since 1938 (McDowall, 1996: 403).²⁶ According to McDowall, it was the beginning of *Doğuculuk* (Eastism) (1996: 403).²⁷ Meetings and panels were held in İstanbul and Ankara in order to support Musa Anter and his friends, and the participants of these activities were mostly Kurdish or leftist young people (Anter, 1991a: 144). On the other hand, the developments in Iraq and the revitalization of the Kurdish movement in Turkey significantly disturbed the state officials. In a manner that, Asım Eren, the deputy of Niğde, in his proposal claimed that Turks have been killed by Kurds in Kerkuk, and questioned whether the government considers retaliation or not. “Does not the government consider a retaliation?” in his proposal claiming that Turks were being killed by Kurds in Kerkük. Kurdish students protested these words of Eren (Anter, 1991a: 144-5; McDowall, 1996: 403).

These events ended up with the arrestment of fifty intellectuals and students, which

²⁶ Many of Anter’s articles published in this newspaper were subjected to legal prosecution. Yet, his article named ‘*Kımlı*’, dated 31 August 1959, turned into a sensation. In this article, Anter had written a Kurdish poem, the theme of which was female wheat suffering the harm of a *kımlı* pestilent. The article was ending with the words, “do not be sorry sister, new brothers and sisters are growing in order to protect you against the misery of *süne* and *sünme*”. The Turkish press showed a big reaction to the language and the final sentence of the poem. *Yeni Sabah* Newspaper wrote, “a newspaper in Diyarbakır published a Kurdish poem”. The news continued as follows: “Last night we met Vice Governor of Diyarbakır. He said that he had no information about the poem and the article, and added, ‘although I did not know about what this newspaper wrote, but I am going to take care of it. However, the persons in charge of the same newspaper have been prosecuted for similar reasons’. It is not understood what the writer intended by mentioning ‘brothers and sisters that will protect the sister from *kımlı*’” (*Yeni Sabah*, 4 September). In the *Akşam* Newspaper, Müşerref Hekimoğlu, in her article named “The Issue of Language is Above Parties” said, “We have not taught them how to write a Turkish poem. We have not made them accustomed to express their feelings and thoughts” (*Akşam*, 5 September). The *Cumhuriyet* Newspaper criticizes the governorship that was unaware of the publication of the article (*Cumhuriyet*, 6 September) (quoted from Anter, 1991b). Besides its effects and the debates it caused in the period it was written, this article also influenced the Kurdish nationalist movement in the subsequent era. Even, a Kurdish song named ‘*qımlı*’ was written and this song became popular among Kurds.

²⁷ Eastism suggests that Kurdish provinces neglected by the government and advocates economic development for the east. Eastists avoid using the terms Kurd or Kurdistan, but prefer the terms ‘*doğulular*’ (people from the east) and ‘*doğu*’ (the east).

was recorded in history as “the case of 49s” due to the fact that one of them died under arrestment. It is argued that the President Celal Bayar, the Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, and the National Intelligence Service wanted these persons to be hanged.²⁸ They were not hanged but kept under arrestment under very hard conditions.²⁹ This event deeply influenced the development path of the Kurdish movement in Turkey: some personalities, such as Musa Anter, Naci Kutlay, Yaşar Kaya, Sait Elçi, and Sait Kırmızıtoprak, among the 49s, who were divided into left and right wings (Anter, 1991: 144), became cornerstones for the subsequent Kurdish nationalist movement. Furthermore, as McDowall states, “the ‘49 episode’ dramatically raised national awareness among literate Kurds, especially when Said Elçi, one of the 49s, defended the individual and collective rights of Kurds in court” (1996: 403). Gündoğan claims, “the imprisonment of 49s indicated a new commencement in the history of the Kurdish movement. A new Kurdish nationalist opposition began to take shape” (2002:13). Said Elçi would later found the Democratic Party of Turkish Kurdistan in 1965.

This period, generally named as “years of silence”, was indeed quite weak in respect to political activism. In Bozarslan’s words, “the Kemalist power had completely marginalized the Kurdish movement, and had created a discontinuity between the active generations of 1920s and 1930s and the new generations” (2002: 852). However, Bozarslan also argues that the physical and symbolic violence imposed during this period did not abolish the grounds of nationalism, on the contrary, potentially reinforced it (ibid). In this period, the roots of the perception of “Kurds exposed to cruelty and unfairness”, which would subsequently form deep bonds with socialist ideas, were developed. Furthermore, Kurdish students and intellectuals started to adopt leftist ideas, which meant that persons other than local elites or intellectuals became candidates for the leadership of the Kurdish movement. To sum up, it may be argued that “Kurdism” was reinvented and produced in a new form, and the basis of a new structure, which would determine the character of the subsequent Kurdish movement, developed. On the other hand, under the conditions

²⁸ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, 2112

of the era, the main motivation was to defend that Kurds and Kurdish cultural values *existed*. The struggle on the nature of these values was very weak yet. At this point, the developments taking place in Iran and Iraq were very important. The symbols with respect to Kurdism, to a large extent, had their origins in the Kurdish movement in Iran and Iraq, and, mainly Kurds coming from these countries to Turkey as students transferred these symbols.

II.3. The Military Coup and New Constitution

The military coup at 27 May 1960 brought a completely new political era for Turkey. The military officers who made the coup d'état claimed that one of the most important reasons of the coup was the unprecedented situation in the East.³⁰ In *Cumhuriyet* Newspaper, dated 31 May 1960, it was written that the National Unity Committee would expose some documents on the issue. The documents were arguably proofs of the preparations within the DP group for the establishment of a Kurdish State and that the propagandas of the son of Sheikh Sait in the East had been overlooked. After having stated that the documents about those facts were available at the hands of the National Unity Committee, it is told that, “The National Unity Committee and the Government stopped the activities of the deviants, and took repressive measures in order to remove all the separationist factors. Some people who have alternative aims will get accepted that Turkey is totally the homeland of Turks.”³¹

The 55 of the 485 Kurds who were initially arrested and then gathered in a camp in Sivas as a result of a law enacted in 19 October 1960, and who were heavily tortured, were subject to mandatory settlement. In *Öncü* newspaper, an article was published on the Mandatory Settlement Law, which is also known as the “55 Agha Event”.³² The article was mentioning the widespread repression of aghas and sheikhs on citizens, the aim of the establishment of a Kurdish Republic in the East recent years. It is also told that the organizations of Kurdism which also have extensions in Iran

²⁹ Anter tells that they were kept in death cells for 195 days. Beside one person who died during his arrestment, due to the destructive effects of the heavy conditions they suffered, 24 persons died in a few years after they were released (1991a:163).

³⁰ Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi, p. 2112.

³¹ *ibid.*

and Iraq aim at training leaders in Turkey, those aghas who were exiled during the government of CHP came back during the government of DP and that it is again needed to make them subject to the Mandatory Settlement Law.³³ Actually, only 6 of these 55 Kurds were real landowners.³⁴ In two years' time, this application was put aside and the aghas returned their homeland with higher capacity of influence.³⁵

With the coup of May 27th, the denial of the Kurds was reconsidered with a new spirit. The book *Eastern Cities and the History of Varto* written by M. Serif Firat was published again by the editions of the Ministry of National Education. M. Serif Firat, who is also Kurd, claims that Kurds are in fact Turks and that there is not a Kurdish language. Cemal Gürsel wrote a "preface" for the book. The campaign named "Citizen, Speak Turkish!" started. The village and district names which were in Kurdish and Armenian were changed with the law code number 1587. In this code, it is designated that "names which contradict the national culture, morality and traditions and insult the public cannot be legally registered on birth certificates." The construction of local boarding schools started with the aim of expanding Turkish language and culture more effectively to the rural areas. In 1970, there were about 70 boarding schools that were functioning, and 60 of them were in areas where Kurds live, and others were also in Middle and Western Anatolia, places where the Kurdish population was dense.³⁶

Meanwhile, The National Unity Committee, composing a commission, invited a group of university scholars to prepare a new constitution. According to Ahmad, the decision which was taken in order to contain the intellectuals, totally changed the nature of the 27 May Movement and transformed it from a government coup to an institutional revolution (1999: 153). The commission prepared the most libertarian constitution of the republican history. This constitution permitted freedom of thought, expression, association and publication, promised social and economic rights, and granted trade unions limited rights to strike. Therefore, the 1961 constitution allowed for the establishment of a socialist party, the Turkish Workers'

³² *ibid.*

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 2112-3.

Party. On the other hand, the constitution was prepared also with the motivation of Turkish nationalism. Some articles in the Constitution are as follows: Article 4: “Sovereignty unconditionally belongs to Turkish Nation”, Article 7: “The judicial power is exercised by independent courts on behalf of the Turkish Nation”, Article 54: “Everybody who is attached to the Turkish State with the bound of citizenship is a Turk”.³⁷

In order to make use of the libertarian environment brought about by the new Constitution, journals and newspapers such as *Silvan’ın Sesi* (1962), *Dicle-Fırat* 1962-1963), *Deng* (1963), *Roja Newe* (1963), and *Reya Rast* (1963) were published. However, almost all of the publishers of these journals and newspapers were arrested.³⁸ On the other hand, articles published in a liberal journal, *Barış Dünyası*, provided the ground for Kurds and those supporters of the official views to explain their visions, which made a deeper impact than the Kurdish journals and newspapers. Musa Anter, in his article, titled “*Development of the East Means the Development of Turkey*”, proposed the following ideas for “the absolute solution” of the East

³⁶ *ibid*, p. 2116, also in McDowall, 1996: 404.

³⁷ During the discussion on nationalism’ principle in the Constitution, President Cemal Gürsel told his ideas about the issue to committee members with words as follow: “Europe solved the issue of nationalism one and half century ago. But are we like that? If you go to a village in Anatolia, and ask the citizen ‘Who are you?’, he would answer you as ‘Thanks to Allah that I am a Muslim’, but not as ‘I am a Turk’. He has not this kind of consciousness yet. We shall not enter in a condition of loosing our Turkishness and nationalism just because of some’s hypohthesis. We shall put nationalism into the Constitution. We shall execute it. We shall remove it after the consciousness of being Turkish awakened. Additionally, some people claim that other components may think to separate themselves for their own aims. You know our present struggle with Kurdism. If we declared that we abolished the nationalism, would they turn back to us? We will resist this. If there is an uncorrupted administration in this country, there will not be a problem at all. First of all, we shall make our people as Turkish nation. I am never the supporter of abolishment of the notion [nationalism]. Turkey should be Turkish. The term should not be extracted from the Constitution. If we extract it, there will not be anyone who say ‘I am a Turk’ after 50 years (quoted from *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler. Ansiklopedisi*, p. 2117).

(Avrupa milliyetçilik davasını 1,5 asır evvel halletmiştir. Fakat biz öyle miyiz? Anadolu’nun bir köyüne gidin, vatandaşa sorun, ‘Nesin?’ deyin, ‘Elhamdülillah Müslümanım’ der. ‘Türkümler’ demez. Daha bu şuur uyanmamıştır. Biz şunun bunun nazariyesi yüzünden Türklüğümüzü ve milliyetçiliğimizi kaybedecek bir duruma girmeyelim. Milliyetçiliği Anayasaya koyalım. Bunu yürütelim. Memlekette Türklük şuru uyandıktan sonra bunu çıkaralım. Sonra başka unsurlar kendi maksatlarına göre ayrılmayı düşünürler diyorlar. Bugün Kürtçülükle yaptığımız mücadeleyi biliyorsunuz. Biz milliyetçiliği kaldırıyoruz desek bize mi dönecekler? Biz buna dayanacağız. Bu memlekette temiz bir idare yer aldığı takdirde, bir tehlike yoktur. Evvela milletimizi Türk milleti haline getirelim. Ben asla kelimenin kalkmasına taraftar değilim. Türkiye Türk olmalıdır. Anayasa’dan bu tabir kalkmamalıdır. Bugün biz bunu kaldırırsak, 50 sene sonra, Türkiye’de Türküm diyecek kimse kalmayacaktır.)

³⁸ *ibid*, p. 2120.

Question:

The East Question cannot be handled with the regime of violence and prohibitions. We can turn this portion of our homeland into a heaven of the country or, perhaps, the world by applying to the meaning of statism. What is the use of abolishment of aghas? They still have social functions under the current primitive conditions. Abolishment of aghas before creating organs that would fulfill these functions and developing material and spiritual areas in accordance with the beliefs and creation of the people would bring about harm instead of benefits (1991a: 181).³⁹

In this journal, Ahmet Hamdi Bařar, a figure of liberal tradition, also wrote on the question of “East”. Articles published in *Bariř D nyası* were debated in journals such as *Y n* and *Milli Yol*. Thus, in Bozarslan’s words, one of the most significant taboos of the Republican history was practically broken (2002: 853). On the other hand, Avni Doęan, in his articles published in *D nya* newspaper, underlined the connections between the events in Iraq and the debates in Turkey, and claimed that establishment of a Kurdish government on the territories of Iran, Iraq and Turkey was not a sole idea but a real threat.⁴⁰ *Bariř D nyası* was also closed down during the arrestments known as the case of 23s.

Meanwhile, The Barzani Rebellion, which started in 1961 in Iraq, attracted the attention of the Kurds in Iran and Syria as well as in Turkey. During this rebellion, Kurds were addressed in Kurdish via radio publications (Bozarslan, 2002: 854). Bozarslan states that this rebellion became a movement of resistance that the Kurds in Turkey easily identified themselves with (ibid). With the influence of this rebellion, Said Elçi and his friends, from the right wing of the movement of 49s, founded the first clandestine Kurdish Party in Turkey, namely, the Democratic Party of Turkish Kurdistan (T rkiye K rdistan Demokrat Partisi) in 1965. The DPTK, like Iraq-KDP, was a relatively conservative and traditional party. The founders were rightist/conservative middle or upper class members. The program was based on the mainstream nationalist premises and confined to the Kurdish middle and upper classes’ moderate claims (G ndoęan, 2002: 23).⁴¹ G ndoęan describes DPTK as the

³⁹ Anter claims that his preference to write in a ‘rightist’ journal was evaluated in the National Intelligence Organization reports of the era as a strategy to reach a wider population (ibid).

⁴⁰ Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal M cadeleler Ansiklopedisi, p. 2121

⁴¹ G ndoęan emphasizes especially two articles that show those moderate claims: One suggests that the party would struggle in a ‘peaceful, democratic, humanitarian and republican way’; the other suggests that the party would defend the ‘Misak-ı Milli’ (the ‘National Pact’) (ibid, p. 22)

politically Kurdish equivalent of the Turkish conservative right, especially at the beginning of its life (ibid). However, the tendency of the party changed in time. Especially some of the youth in DPTK, which was the sole right wing Kurdish organization at the time, started to adopt leftist ideas, and this process ended up with the division of the party.

II. 4. Kurdish Movement Encounters Socialism

The modernization process which accelerated during 1950s became to influence lives of much more people; Turkey was passing through a great transformation. The expansion of national education and urbanization made the rise of socialist worker and student movements possible as in the case of other countries' experiences. Moreover, the freedoms that the constitution of 1961 provided made this rise much easier.

The migration of the Kurds to the industrializing cities and the number of the students coming to the big cities were continuing in increasing amounts. These migrants have faced poverty and discrimination in these cities. Under such circumstances, it is quite sensible that those Kurds adopted socialist aspirations towards an equal and free world. As McDowall states, "it was only with the Left that Kurds felt they were treated more or less as equals" (1996: 407). Bozarslan comments that "the leftist discourse meant a new universality for the Kurdish movement. The movement conceived itself as the representatives of an oppressed nation and could join its fate to those of proletariat and peasantry through this discourse" (2002: 853-4). While the leftist movement in Turkey incorporated the Kurdish question into its agenda, the right did not construct a liberal discourse on Kurdish question, on the contrary considered it together with communism as a threat (ibid, p. 855). Therefore, the leftist organizations like Turkish Worker Party (Türkiye İşçi Partisi) and Dev-Genç became an attracting channel where Kurds could engage in politics.

On the other hand, the migration to the big cities contributed to the emergence of the idea on the side of Kurds that they have a distinctive identity. Their increasing relation to the other ethnic communities played a crucial role of formation of this

idea (Bruinessen, 2002:187). Additionally, the migrants and students could realize the gap in welfare between their homeland and these cities. Consequently, as getting organized under the leftist organizations, Kurds began to demand the oppression and discrimination applied to themselves to be ended and development of the Eastern Anatolia. These demands have come to the political agenda of the country in form of a mass movement in the East Meetings held in 1967.⁴² In 1969, DDKO (Turkish acronym of the *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları* - Cultural Hearths of Revolutionary East) which is the first legal Kurdish organization was established in Ankara. Furthermore, in 1970 Congress of TLP a concluding text was accepted which criticizes the national oppression that Kurds were exposed to (Bruinessen, 2002: 342). These developments were interrupted with the military intervention in 1971. TLP and DDKO were dissolved and most of their active members were arrested.⁴³ Besides, military raids called as “komando harekatları” (commando operations)⁴⁴ were realized.

With the return to the parliamentary system, Kurdish movement began to organize more radically. As Bruinessen underlies this was a wholly new movement; it was more fundamentalist in its nationalist demands and at the same time, it has a more comprehensive social basis (2002: 344). In the second half of 1970s, the Kurdish movement separated itself from the Turkish leftist movement and began to organize around Marxist Kurdish organizations. These organizations advocated the thesis that “Kurdistan is a colonized country”. They were influenced by the “national independence movements” of the 1960s in the world context. They considered a

⁴² The statements showed up in the pancartes in these meetings involved a tacit demand for recognition of the identity, along with the reaction against poverty and inequality: “Batı’ya fabrika, yol, Doğu’ya komando, karakol!” (Factory and roads for the West, police station for the East), “Batı’ya imar, Doğu’ya istismar Milli Gelir: Manisa 2350 Ağrı 500 Aydın 2500 Hakkari 250” (Public works for the West, abuse for the East National income: Manisa 2350, Ağrı 500; Aydın 2500, Hakkari 250), “Dipçik değil, uzanan el istiyoruz!” (We do not want butt of the rifles, but hands to shake), “Hapishane, karakol, baskı eşittir Doğu!” (Prison, police station add to pressure equal to the East), “Ağa, şeyh, komprador üçlüsüne paydos!” (Stop for Agha, Sheikh and Comprador trio), “Dilimize hürmet ediniz!” (Respect to our language). (Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi, pp. 2129-30).

⁴³ In the lawsuit for *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları*, the Kurdish students and intellectuals advocated during the hearings that Kurds are a distinctive nation (see *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları Dava Dosyası*).

⁴⁴ In the lawsuits for *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları*, the pressure applied to Kurds during the Commando Operations was the issue that was most brought to the fore (ibid).

revolution that would be realized in Kurdistan as a part of the international socialist movement and the front that was constituted by the movements of oppressed nations. As going outside the discourse of Turkish leftist movement, they were in an effort to articulate a new socialist policy for Kurds. Most of these organizations were first established in Ankara and İstanbul, and then they have disseminated to the Kurdish regions. Bozarslan puts an emphasis on the fact that Kurdish movement has turned into a comprehensive mass movement; in 1977 elections a Kurdish nationalist candidate won the elections in Diyarbakır (2005: 57-8). However, the development process of the Kurdish nationalist movement was interrupted once more with the military coup in 1980.

CHAPTER III

INTRODUCING NEWROZ

Besides analyzing the historical development of Kurdish movement, investigating the roots of Newroz and Kawa legend is helpful to understand the construction process of the myth. By this way, its modern character can be revealed and some elements important for today's debates can be clarified. This chapter aims to introduce the roots of Newroz festival and Kawa Legend in antiquity as well as some modern texts such as *Şehname* and *Şerefname*.

III.I. Newroz as an Antique Festival

Newroz⁴⁵ is the celebration of spring Equinox, March 21, which is considered as the beginning of the New Year. It is known that, this day, which is the symbol of arrival of spring, is a widely celebrated festival in agrarian societies of ancient Mesopotamia. Price (2005a) states that Newroz has been renowned in one form or another by all the major cultures of ancient Mesopotamia. Yarshater (1959) emphasizes that Newroz owes its origin to the fertility cult, which was so common among the ancient Near and Middle Eastern societies. Babylonians, which were one of the most important cultures in Mesopotamia, celebrated the New Year festival, Akitu, at the first New Moon after the Spring Equinox.⁴⁶ The inner logic of New Year celebrations comes from ancient myths and Akitu festival was related to Babylonia Creation Mito (Hooke, 2002: 51). S.A.Pallis says that Akitu Festival is the celebration of victory of spring sun (Marduk) over the winter sun (Nabu) or victory of spring over the waters (Tiamat) which threatens the world with flood disaster (quoted from Aksoy, 1991: 68). After the capture of Babylonia and

⁴⁵ There are various spelling of Newroz in texts in English coming from Persian such as, Nov Ruz, Nowruz, No Roz, Norooz, and also New Year's Day.

⁴⁶ <http://www.gatewaystobabylon.com/religion/akitu.htm>.

settlement of the Assyrian Empire, main god of Assyria, “Asur” (Hooke, 2002: 52) took the place of Marduk, the god of Babylonia, and many mythological beliefs have been adopted by Assyrians as well (ibid, p. 24). Hittites too, celebrate Purulliyas, which is both the New Year and a celebration related to killing of snake Illuyanka by the god of storm, on 21st of March (Aksoy, 1991: 94-5). Aksoy states that, god myths, dying and back returning to live, symbolizes the birth and death of the nature, and Newroz which is a spring festival has a relation with these kinds of myths. For New Year symbolizes a transformation, i.e a re-birth after death (ibid). It should be added that in Mesopotamia, the New Year’s Festival could be held in the autumn as well as in the spring. For agrarian people of this geography, there were two starting points within the solar year, the one at the end of winter and the other at the end of summer.⁴⁷

On the other hand, it is generally accepted that Newroz with its Iranian characteristics has been celebrated nearly for 3000 years. The oldest historical record about Newroz goes back to the Achaemenian (550-330 B.C.) times (Price, 2005a). Newroz, as well as Mihrgan⁴⁸ and many other antique Iranian festivals, is deeply rooted in the rituals and traditions of Zoroastrian belief system (ibid).⁴⁹ Newroz was a festival made for Ahura Mazda and Holly fire, as the day life cycle begins, in this sense, Newroz is celebration of life (ibid). Again there are beliefs about Mihrgan that it is the day that sun has been created and man and women have been created from the first human being (Eghbal and Mooney, 1996).

Those two festivals had one more characteristic in common besides being based on the same creation myth; both were being celebrated at turn of seasons one in spring the other fall. In Zoroastrians belief, year is divided into two, as summer and winter seasons. Newroz was celebrated as the festival for starting of spring and Mihrgan as the starting of winter and harvest (Price, 2005b). The calendar year was starting with Newroz however it is also argued that during the Achaemenian era, the Mihrgan

⁴⁷ <http://www.gatewaystobabylon.com/religion/akitu.htm>.

⁴⁸ Another important antique Iranian festival which is celebrated 16th of Mihr, the seventh month of Iranian calendar-the beginning of October in Gregorian calendar.

⁴⁹ As will be discussed in detail in the following chapters, this points takes an important place in the critiques of Islamic people against Newroz celebrations.

feast celebrated the beginning of a new year (Eghbal and Mooney, 1996). Mihrigan was especially important for the people of southern Iran who considered it still to be their Newroz (ibid).

Another item which exists in Zoroastrians belief and which is crucial for the subject of this study is the struggle between the dragon Azydahak and Thraetaona. It is thought that this story is the base for the myth, about the struggle between King Dahhak, having snakes on shoulders, and blacksmith Kawa, helping him, in *Şehname*.⁵⁰ In Zoroastrians belief, Thraetaona's victory over Azydahak (Dahhak in *Şehname*) happened on the day of Mihrigan, not on the day of Newroz (Eghbal and Mooney, 1996).⁵¹

In the age of Sasanis (226-652 A.D.), Zoroastrians belief or antique Iran gained importance back (Yarshater, 1959). In this age, many elements of antique Iranian culture have gained importance, great effort has been spent for collecting the folk stories,⁵² and festivals of antique Iran again became important. Price argues that what we have today as Newroz goes back to the Sasanian period (Price, 2005a). In the Newroz item of Islam Encyclopedia, it is stated that, at the time of Sasanis, in Iran, kings have arranged big festivals, in this festivals, gifts were presented to the kings and people were going out to streets, lighting fires and throw each other water, to entertain them (1988: 234).⁵³

⁵⁰ See Aksoy, 1991, 1998. Aksoy takes readers attention that there is a similar myth in the Greek Mythology to the myth in which the fight between Azhi Dahaka and Thraetaona is told. In Greek Mythology, in the fight between God Zeus and dragon Typhon, Zeus throws the Mountain Etna to dragon Typhon, and Typhon remained under the mountain. Inhabitants of the region, believes that that's why Etna is a volcano (Aksoy, 1991: 56-9). Hooke states that the myth of "killing of the dragon" also exists in "Perseus and Andromeda", "Heracles and Hidra, the dragon of Lerna" and "Siegfried and Fafnir" which is a Scandinavian (Germen) myth, and this element has its roots in Babylonia creation myth (Hooke, 2002: 21-22). Bert De Viries also mentions that this theme is very widespread in all Near East literature (quoted from Aksoy, 1991: 61). Gertrude Jobes, tells that "dragon killing hero" is a popular hero in folk culture and the killing of the dragon (darkness, drought, volcano etc.) by the hero (sun) means the saving of a young girl (dawn, fertile spring) (quoted from Aksoy, 1991: 67).

⁵¹ Therefore it is not surprising that for the ancient Iranians Mihr symbolized truthfulness, bravery and courage (ibid).

⁵² It is known that Firdevsi used the texts collected in this age, when writing *Şehname*.

⁵³ Newroz is accepted in Egypt and other places, and it is celebrated by Kipties as the New Year. However, the date is 10 or 11 September (ibid).

After the advent of Islam to Iran, Newroz continued to exist by fusing with Islamic beliefs, among people and in the palace.⁵⁴ It is quite evident in *Şii* beliefs how Newroz festival has fused with Islamic beliefs. Metin And (2002), lists the beliefs and legends of *Şiis* which also have roots in Newroz: Sun rises for the first time, wind starts to blow, plants and flowers grow up, and nature wakes up. This day, the ship of Noah has reached the Cudi Mountain, after The Flood. At the same day, on 27th of Recep, Allah granted Mohammed prophecy. The Prophet broke 360 idols in the old temple in Mecca, just as Prophet Abraham did in Nemrud Temple. The root of Kadir meets with Newroz, on that day Prophet Mohammed declares Ali to take his place. And claims that some events related with Muharrem also related with Newroz (2002: 38-42):

For example, when Muhtar, the vindictive of Imam Hüseyin, hears about the death of Imam, he gathered his men and prepares to take revenge from Yezid; when the preparations are over, he lights a big fire on the roof of his house. The others follow him. This lightening of numberless fires happens on the equinox of the spring. Another important connection between Newroz and Muharrem is that the former is the spring equinox, and the other is on the autumn equinox, which corresponds to the end of the forty-day mourning (when calculated on the basis of sun year).

The Ottoman Palace, which has been largely affected by Persian Culture, has continued the Newroz tradition until its latest times (İslam Ansiklopedisi, 1988: 234). Newroz is accepted as the birthday of Ali, in Bektaşî ve Kızılbaşlar sects (ibid).

From the work of Ehmedê Xani, named *Mem u Zin*, we understand that Newroz day was celebrated as a traditional new year also among the Kurds:

When the destiny from the blue fortune
Showed Newroz again,
According to this blessed tradition
All city-folk including even the soldiers
Left the city, the castles, and the houses
Like hunters and plunderers
Moved to the hills and the walleys in rank
...
The virgins and youths, a hundred years old men
and crones who joined to the New Year,
Celebrated the New Year in traditional way

Feleğin dönüşü mavi talihten
gösterince Newroz'u yeniden,
o kutlu geleneğe göre
tüm kentliler, varıncaya dek askerlere
terketti kenti, kaleleri, evleri
andırarak avcılarını ve talancılarını
Saf saf tepelere ve ovalara yürüdüler
...
Yılbaşına katılan bakireler, delikanlılar,
yüzüne varmış erkek ve kocakarılar
geleneksel yol ve yöntemle yılbaşını

⁵⁴ Muhtar Kazbekov, tells about the ideological struggle at that time: "...Colonialists who failed to remove the folk festival from the memory of the people, this time changed the way of struggle and tried to use Newroz to increase the values of Islam. For that reason, Newroz defined as the festival celebrated for Caliph Ali İmam. Thus, with introduction of some components of Islam into Newroz festival, this tradition became a folk festival" (1993: 6).

Sending up their voice to the sky.
(quoted from Bozarslan, 1985-7: 45).

kutladılar, göklere dek yükselterek
Seslerini.

Xani, in another passage that he mentions Newroz, tells that lovers find each other on this day:

The reason they go up to the field
The intention they go down to the walley
Was that those who wish or be wished
In other words, those who loved and beloved
See each other
And chose the proper one
Plump breast girls in the same age with youths
Teenage youths unfledged and beautiful
The owners of beautiful faces

The owners of the goods of beauty
Were showing each other their goods
They were lovers in the love market
(quoted from Aksoy, 1998: 100).

kıra çıkmaktan maksatları
Ovaya inmekten amaçları
Şuydu ki; gerek isteyen, gerekse
istenenler, yani sevenler ve sevilenler
Birbirlerini görsün
Ve seçsin herbiri kendi dengini.
Delikanlılara yaşıt tombul memeli kızlar
Ergenlik çağına yeni gelen, tüysüz güzel
delikanlılar
Yüz güzelliğinin kumaşına sahip olanlar
Güzellik metanın sahipleri
Birbirlerine metalarını gösterirlerdi
Bunlar aşk pazarındaki sevdalıları

Today, in Iranian calendar, the year starts with Newroz festival on March 21st and divided into months according to the sun calendar.⁵⁵ Newroz is also the beginning of the year for the peoples of former Iranian places like Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan and Central Asian Republics. Kurds are also celebrating Newroz in Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. Turkey too has decided to declare Nevruz as a Turkish festival.

III.2. Newroz in Texts

III.2.a. Şehname

One of the first texts that Newroz is mentioned is *Şehname*. *Şehname* was written by Firdevsi and composed of compilations of folk tales and stories about generations of noble families told by fathers to their sons. Firdevsi also used the folk stories which were compiled and put into written form during the Sasanian era. Firdevsi formed these stories as the stories of races and heroism of Persian kings, in a chronological manner. Consequently, folk tales and legends take place in stories about kings. In his lifetime, it is known that, Firdevsi was subject to pressure due to these un-Islamic

⁵⁵ <http://www.irankulturevi.com/> On the other hand, as the start of calendar, the year 622 (Gregorian calendar), the year that Prophet Mohammad migrated from Mecca to Medina, is accepted.

factors. It is argued the writing process of *Şehname*, which took a long time, finished in 1010 A.D (Lugal, 1967: II).

Newroz is mentioned in ‘Cemşid’ (Jamshid) section of the book. Newroz is told as the festival of the day, in which Cemşid’s crown is made glorious.⁵⁶ Cemşid, whose rule lasted seven centuries, makes many great jobs during that time and wants to grace his crown by having a throne, decorated with jewelry. The day that Cemşid sat on the throne and shone like sun is called Newroz:

These works achieved, Jamshid ambitioned
Rank loftier still, and by his royal Grace
Made him a throne, with what a wealth of gems
Inlaid! which when he willed the divs took up
And bare from earth to heaven. There the Shah,
Whose word was law, sat sunlike in mid air.
The world assembled round his throne in wonder
At his resplendent fortune, while on him
The people scattered jewels, and bestowed
Upon the day the name of *New Year’s Day*,
The first of Farwardin and of the year⁵⁷,
When limbs repose from labour, hearts from strife.
The noble chieftains held a festival,
Called for the goblet, wine, and minstrelsy,
And ever since that time that glorious day
Remaineth the memorial of that Shah (Warner, 1909: 133-4).

In the following section of the book, the story of seizing the throne of Cemşid, by Dahhak⁵⁸ is told. When Cemşid “starts to see himself comparable with god, everything he has collapses, everything goes wrong, he starts to see himself as the biggest”. God sends Dahhak as a trouble to him. In *Şehname*, Dahhak is mentioned as a young Arab who is in cooperation with devil. Dahhak, who became cruel and mean under the control of devil, killed his own father and sat his throne. Cemşid “who when his Grace was darkened turned to folly and perverseness” (ibid, p.139), came up chaos in Iran, there are wars everywhere, from every corner comes out a king. Iranian Cavalrymen, who look for a king for themselves, hear the fame of Dahhak and accept him as their new king (ibid).⁵⁹ The devil has placed the idea of

⁵⁶ Also there is an Iranian story that Newroz is the day of the spark was seen, coming from *Cemşid’s* sword

⁵⁷ 21st March.

⁵⁸ The name Dahhak is also spelled various way such as, Zahhak, Dehak and Dehaq.

⁵⁹ “Pretenders started up, on every march

“Kingdom of Earth” into the mind of Dahhak. Therefore, Dahhak marches to Cemşid and takes his throne.

Firdevsi, in the Cemşid section, tells the story of the snakes coming out of the shoulders of Dahhak. Devil, disguises as a young man, and applies to Dahhak to be the cook of the palace. After getting the position of cook in the palace, with the wonderful dishes he prepared he wins the heart of Dahhak. When Dahhak wants to reward him, he says that his only wish is to kiss the shoulders of Dahhak and Dahhak accepts this. “Iblis received permission, kissed and vanished. A marvel followed - from the monarch’s shoulders grew two black snakes (ibid, p.139). Dahhak cuts the snakes but again grows snakes, from the place he cut. Hereupon, devil disguises as a doctor and advises Dahhak to let snakes eat human brain (ibid).

In sections titled “Dahhak” and “Feridun”, in *Şehname*, the story about the roots of Kurds and Kawa⁶⁰ legend, takes part as the continuance of the story on the snakes on the shoulders of Dahhak. Dahhak lets youths killed in order to let the snakes on his shoulders eat their brains.⁶¹ Two kind people start to work in the palace as cooks. When they see two youths brought to be killed, they feel pity for them, they kill only one of them, because they have to, mix the killed one’s brain with sheep brain and give the other one his freedom. Those freed people go to mountains and plains to hide there and Kurdish tribe spring up from them:

The disaffected nobles levied troops
And strove. Some set forth for *Arabia*,
For they had heard? There is a monarch there -
An awe-inspiring king of *dragon-visage*.
Thus all the discontented cavaliers
Went to Zahhak and offered fealty,

Saluting him as monarch of Iran [Emphasizes are added] (ibid). Dahhak’s country being an Arab country may be important because it may be pointing at a tribal struggle. Mentioning about Dahhak as “dragon-visage”, as mentioned, may be a trace of its mythological roots as a human-dragon fight (see Aksoy, 1991).

⁶⁰ Today, the story about the roots of Kurds and Kawa myth have united with Newroz festival. In various parts of this study, the story of this unification will be told, and this unification is one of the bases of construction of Newroz myth.

⁶¹ The only teaching that he knew was bad -
To massacre, to pillage, and to burn.
Each night two youths of high or lowly birth
Were taken to the palace by the cook,
Who having slaughtered them took out their brains
To feed the snakes and ease the monarch’s anguish (ibid, p. 146).

To whom they said: "Make shift to hide thyself,
 Approach not any dwelling-place of man,
 Thine are the wastes and heights."
 A worthless head
 Thus fed the serpents, and in every month
 The cooks preserved from slaughter thirty youths.
 And when the number reached two hundred saved
 Provided them, the donors all unknown,
 With sheep and goats, and sent them desertward.
*Thus sprang the Kurds, who know no settled home,
 But dwell in woollen tents and fear not God.*
 Zahhak was wont, such was his evil nature,
 To choose him one among his warriors
 And slay him for consPirang with the divs.
 Moreover, all the lovely noble maidens
 Secluded in their bowers, not tanged of tongues,
 He took for handmaids. Not a jot had he
 Of faith, king's uses, or morality [Emphasizes are added] (ibid, pp. 146-7).

Forty years before his death, Dahhak sees his end in his dream, a person named Feridun and coming from a king's breed, will wound him with an ox-head shaped mace and take him captive. Dahhak, looking for solutions to get rid of Feridun, decides to make up a huge army, composed of human beings, giants and fairies and for this asks for help from notables from every province. These men will sign a document that Dahhak is an honest and fair man. As "notables" sign the document, because they are afraid of Dahhak, a blacksmith named Kawa (ibid, pp. 154-9)⁶² comes to the palace and asks Dahhak to spare his son's life, who will be killed to let the snakes eat his brain.⁶³

⁶² In the Turkish translation of Şehname (Lugal, 1967), Kawa the Smith is mentioned as "Gave". Rızgari and Kava magazines, in their first editions, used the Turkish version of the name "Kava". Later, with the use of Kurdish "w" letter, it was fixed as "Kawa".

⁶³ Those upright men both young and old subscribed
 Their names upon the Dragon's document,
 Against their wills, because they feared the Shah.
 Just then was heard outside the palace-gate
 The voice of one that clamoured for redress.
 ... Smote on his head before the Shah and cried:-
 "O Shah! my name is Kawa and I sue
 For justice. Do me right
 ... Why hath my son been taken? I had once
 In this world eighteen sons: but one is left!
 Have mercy! Look on me this once! My liver
 Is ever burning' ... A smith am I, an inoffensive man,
 Upon whose head the Shah is pouring fire,
 And thou art he, and, though of dragon-form,
 Must still do justice in this cause of mine.
 Since thou dost rule the seven provinces
 Why should the toil and hardship all be ours (ibid, pp. 154-5)?

Dahhak accepts Kawa's wish but orders Kawa sign the document that the notables had signed. However, after reading things written on the document, Kawa refuses to sign, shouts at the peoples who signed it and quits the palace. After leaving there, Kawa starts an uprising against Dahhak, by making his blacksmith coat a flag. People in the market support him. Kawa and his fellows go to Feridun.⁶⁴ When Kawa reaches the palace of Feridun, he was welcomed there with happiness cries. Feridun accepts Kawa's blacksmith apron as luck decorates it and names as "the flag of Kawa". The flag of Kawa "thus fell out that Kawa's standard grew to be a sun amid the gloom of night, and cheered all hearts".⁶⁵

In the rest of this section, Feridun's declaration of war to Dahhak was mentioned. When Feridun goes to war, next to him is Kawa and has Kawa's flag. After a long fight, he beats Dahhak and locks him up in Demavend Mountain (ibid, p. 169), and he himself becomes king. The day that Feridun took over the throne celebrated as "Mihrgan" festival:

When Faridun attained his wish, and reigned
Supreme on earth, he ordered crown and throne
....
And on the first of Mihr, a blessed day,
Set on his head the royal diadem.

⁶⁴ When Kawa left the presence of the Shah,
A crowd assembled in the market-place.
And still he shouted, crying out for aid
And urging all to stand upon their rights.
He took a leathern apron, such as smiths
Wear to protect their legs while at the forge,
Stuck it upon a spear's point and forthwith
Throughout the market dust began to rise.
....
So that poor leather, worthless as it was,
Discriminated friends and enemies.
He took the lead, and many valiant men
Resorted to him; he rebelled and went
To Faridun (ibid. pp.156-7).

⁶⁵ When he arrived shouts rose.
He entered the new prince's court, who marked
The apron on the spear and hailed the omen.
....and having draped it
With yellow, red, and violet, he named it
The Kawian flag.
... It thus fell out
That Kawa's standard grew to be a sun
Amid the gloom of night, and cheered all hearts (ibid, p. 157).

...
He bade men kindle bonfires and the people
Burned ambergris and saffron; thus he founded
Mihrgan. That time of rest and festival
Began with him, and his memorial
Is still the month of Mihr. He banished then
All grief and labour from the minds of men (ibid, p.175).

In *Şehname*, it is mentioned that Feridun turned to become the king for five centuries and the text continues with the adventures of Feridun and his sons. Kawa and his son are defined as loyal helpers of Feridun, in a few sections.

III.2.b. Şerefname

Another text mentioning the story of Dahhak is *Şerefname*. The ruler of Bitlis, Şeref Han, wrote the book in Persian in 1597.⁶⁶ The book is composed of an introduction and four phases. The story on the roots of the Kurds, which was mentioned in *Şehname* as well, exists in the introduction. In the phases of the book, important Kurdish administrators and kings and tribes have been mentioned. Şeref Han, in the introduction part of his book, under the title of “About Kurdish Communities and The Explanation of Their Situations”, mentions a few “rumors” on the roots of the Kurds. The legend in *Şehname* is mentioned as one of these rumors without mentioning Kawa the Smith and Newroz festival:

There are various stories about the origin of the Kurds and their large communities. One of these stories, as some claims, is that:
Kurds originated from the race of the people who had escaped from to be killed, strangled and lost their head in order not to be put their brains on Dahhak’s cancer-like abscess on his two shoulders and who had spread up to mountains and wide places (Şeref Han, 1990: 17).

Kürtlerin aslı ve çok olan toplulukları konusunda çeşitli sözler ve rivayetler vardır. Bu rivayetlerden biri, bazılarının öne sürdükleri gibi şudur:
Kürtler, beyinlerinin alınıp Dahhak (Bivrasb)’ın iki omuzu üzerinde meydana gelen kansere benzer bir çıbana sürülmesi için öldürülme, boğazlanmaktan, başları kesilmekten kaçarak dağlara ve engin yerlere dağılan insanların soyundan gelmişlerdir.

⁶⁶ Şerefname was published in Turkish for the first time in 1971 with the translation of M. Emin Bozarslan.

One of the stories Şeref Han tells about the roots of Kurds is that Kurds is a society of “evil spirits” and one another is that they were named after their “excess braveness” or “fearlessness”. Şeref Han, implying only Allah knows which rumor was true, starts to tell about the characteristics of Kurds (ibid, p. 19).⁶⁷

As it is seen, it is possible to argue that there is continuity from Akitu festival to today’s Kurdish Newroz myth. The component of victory of a kind of “good power” on “evil power” is a common component in Babylonian creation myth, Zoroastrian cosmology, Mihrikan festival in *Şehname* and today’s Kurdish Newroz myth. Furthermore, the date of the myth with “dragon-human fight”, every time corresponds to a seasonal change. While this date is spring equinox, according to Akitu festival and today’s Kurdish Newroz myth, in Zoroastrianist belief and *Şehname*, it is fall. At this point it should be mentioned that, some items of Newroz and Mihrikan mix with each other. The myth on Azydahaka and Thraetaona (or Dahhak, Feridun and Kawa the Smith), which belongs to the Mihrikan festival, is united with the Newroz festival. Some common characteristics of these two festivals might have caused some items of them to mix with each other. Both of the festivals are based on the creation myth and both have been celebrated as the start of New Year because of being equinox.⁶⁸ Additionally, it is interesting to note that, in his writings about Newroz, Ehmede Xani did not mention Kawa myth. Xani tells Newroz as a new year’s day, as a festival that lovers find each other. Considering that Xani has lived in 17th century, for Kurds, this may be taken as an indicator of unification of Kawa myth and Newroz festival is a more recent thing (see Aksoy, 1998: 47-8).

⁶⁷ Among the characteristics are, ‘staying away from high menegerial positions and scientific ranks’, ‘not being cooperative with each other’. Due to these characteristics, (and according to a rumbling due to curse of the Prophet) they cannot succeed to have a government. In general, since there is nobody leading them, they are considered as ‘blood shedding’ and ‘order deteriorating’. Şeref Han also mentions that majority of Kurds live in poverty (ibid, pp. 19-21).

⁶⁸ Aksoy states that the reason why Mihrikan festival and Newroz myth combined each other is not only “celebration of the two festivals in Antique Iran” and “reconstruction of mythical scenario of Newroz by Kurdish intellectuals, probably at the end of previous century”, but also “confusing of the dates of these two festivals as well (1998: 33).

At this point, it should be stated that there is another important date for the fight between Dahhak and Kawa the Smith: 31st August. This day is the date of Iyd-i Kurd festival, which Nikitin (2002: 48) and Minorsky (1992: 13) told about, making quotation from Morrier. Nikitin and Minorsky tell us about celebrations made by people living in Demavend region, at the day that represents the day that Kawa killed Dahhak (ibid). Since it was not possible to obtain enough information about Iyd-i Kurd festival, it is very difficult to reach a conclusion about the relation between this festival and Mihrgan. However, as it will be mentioned in following sections, this date has found an important place for itself in the Kurdish historiography, especially in *Jin* and İhsan Nuri.

In *Şehname* and *Şerefname*, the story about the roots of Kurds is common; the people who were saved from being sacrificed for Dahhak and escaping to desolate regions and starting a breed. While in *Şehname*, the fight between Dahhak, Feridun and Kawa was told, in *Şerefname* Kawa and Feridun figures do not appear at all. While in *Şehname*, Newroz and Kawa myth were told as two separate stories, in *Şerefname*, Newroz is not mentioned at all. Consequently, in either of two texts, there is no Kurdish Kawa figure, which saved Kurds (or their ancestors Meds) from brutal king Dahhak (or Assyrian rule) on the day 21st of March, i.e. the date of Newroz festival today.

On the other hand, the Kawa figure in *Şehname*, who converted “that worthless blacksmith’s cloth into a flag” is an attention-drawing figure and is very suitable to be seen/presented as a public leader. This peculiarity of Kawa has created grounds for Newroz to be a resistance myth as much as an origin myth. In fact Kawa has been the symbol of uprising against tyrants in Tajik poetry. Some fragments of *Şehname* have been used as Tajik agitation against Germans in World War II and Hitler was compared to “dragon tsar Dahhak” (Aksoy, 1998: 19).

CHAPTER IV

THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEWROZ AS A MYTH

Kawa legend represents the common founding myth as regards the entirety of Kurdish movements today (Bozarslan, 2002: 843). The legend occupies a position among the Kurds invariably fixed to that version of it in which Kawa defeats the (Assyrian King) Dahhak with a popular movement and liberates the Kurds (or their ancestor the Meds). This victory day is mentioned in the legend is celebrated not as Mihrgan or Iyd-i Kurd, but as the Newroz festival. Today, Newroz is accepted by all Kurdish movements (including those in Iran, Iraq and Syria) as a common national festival (ibid). The fixing of the legend among the Kurds to this version and on the Newroz day was realized within a period of time of approximately a hundred year. During this process, the Kawa legend, related at times through voluntary interventions and at times coincidentally to the Mihrgan or Iyd-i Kurd festival, was united with Newroz, the Feridun element was eliminated from the narrative and Kawa appeared as a Kurdish hero. Therefore, Newroz became an ethno-genesis and resistance myth for the Kurds. Regarding myths, we should bear in mind that, as Mary Fulbrook points out, myths are stories which are not necessarily true, not even believed to be true, but which have symbolic power. Therefore, myths are “essentially propagated for their effect rather than their truth value” (in Hosking and Schöpflin, 1997: 73).⁶⁹

This chapter explains the process of construction of Newroz as an ethno-genesis and resistance myth. This process also stands as the transformation of Newroz into an ideological tool and its provision of a “cement” function. It should be stated that, the process, which can by no means be said to enjoy continuity; embodies ruptures, inconsistencies and ambiguities within it. These ruptures, inconsistencies and ambiguities have been aggravated by the lack of a mono-centric attempt at

⁶⁹ George Schöpflin also emphasizes the similar features of myths that he suggests members of a community may be aware that the myth is not history, but this does not matter. “It is the content of the myth that is important, not its accuracy as a historical account” (ibid, pp. 19-20).

construction regarding the Kurds, alongside the fact that this type of construction always follows the same path. The dispersion of the activities of Kurdish movements into different state boundaries and the pressures they face in these countries have prevented a continuous and more consistent cultural production or historiography.

On the other hand, the very same conditions (of being divided within different state boundaries and the pressures encountered) have provided the basis for the Newroz myth's contemporary characteristic. It can be said that the function of a descent myth presented by Newroz and the function of a descent myth constructed by a centralized state differ in their characteristics. In both cases, descent myths possess a common function regarding their existence as tools that render possible the imagination of the nation. However, while the descent myth is an ideological tool for a centralized state consolidating the nation state structure, Newroz is an ideological tool utilized for "identity transfer", an "alternative story" against the hegemonic culture. Hirschler indicates the significance of the descent myth for the Kurds in Turkey as such: "The myth of ethno-genesis seeks to identify an ethnic link between the modern nation and an ancient people in order to show an independent 'own' development. This is of crucial importance for the Kurds in Turkey, whose separate existence has been denied by the national discourse for many decades" (2001: 152). Hirschler expresses the meaning of the resistance myths for Kurds as such:

The myth of resistance seeks to establish a narrative of eternal opposition to foreign rule. The struggle for national liberation and the future establishment of a nation state is thereby represented as the result of a teleological historical development. This means that the periods of foreign rule lose any lasting influence and the survival of the national characteristics can be shown (ibid, pp. 153-4).

In what follows, the attempt constructing the Kawa legend by the *Jin* Journal and Ihsan Nuri as a tool for nation building is elaborated. Furthermore, the way in which the socialist Kurdish movements of 1970s, which accepted Newroz and Kawa legend as "progressive values" prevailing in the Kurdish history and culture, utilized them as counter-hegemonic tools is analysed. Finally, the PKK discourse, of which situated Newroz at the heart of itself with the aim of creating a Kurdish national and cultural unity the after the military coup in 1980, is explained.

IV.1. First Attempts of Construction: The Kawa Legend

IV.1.a. *Jin*: The Beginning of the Invention

The story of the construction of the legend of Kawa the Smith as a descent myth or as a resistance myth begins with the *Jin* journal published in İstanbul by Kurdish intellectuals during 1918-1919.⁷⁰ This journal is the unofficial publishing organ of the *Kurdistan Teali Cemiyeti* (Association for the Elevation of Kurdistan) (Bozarslan, M., 1985-7, 'Preface'). The members of *Kurdistan Teali Cemiyeti*, defined by Hamit Bozarslan as the "passive receiver" and "active user" of Western ideas, were greatly influenced by positivism and social Darwinism (2005: 43). In this sense, the members of the Association basically shared in common the same political programme with Turkish Unionists and the class of Arab nationalist elites (ibid, pp. 43-4). The writers of the *Jin* aimed at the attainment by the Kurdish nation, which has been kept underdeveloped, of its deserved place among contemporary societies. The article titled "Our Purpose" which appeared in the first issue of the journal presented the reason for the publication of the journal as such:

'Jin' is not published for private interests. The aim of it is to publish on Kurdish historical life, national rights, literature, and sociology, which are neglected for centuries. In our opinion, achieving to prepare the deserved place for Kurdish nation in the commonwealth is only possible by adopting the manner of work which is appropriate to the modern view (Bozarslan, M., 1985-7).

'Jin' şahsi bir menfaat için çıkmıyor. O'nun hedefi, uzun asırlardan beri ihmal edilen Kürd hayat-ı tarihiyesine, hukuk-ı milliyesine, edebiyat ve ictimaiyatına dair neşriyatta bulunmaktır. Kanaatimize göre Kürd milletine cemiyatgah-ı milelde layık olduğu mevki ihzare zaferyab olabilmek, asrın telakkilerine muvafık bir tarz-ı mesai ittihazıyla kabildir.

Jin defended a modern sense of nationalism. In accordance with this, the writers of the *Jin* dealt with fulfilling all the requirements of constructing a nation. In this sense, they tried to extend distinctiveness of the Kurds from the other nations and tried to establish a boundary with them. Within the framework of such an aim, *Jin* tried to find and emphasize those characteristics of Kurds that "distinguish" them

from other nations. Alongside the articles on Kurdish art and literature, articles relating to Kurdish history and the social life of Kurds were published in the journal. It was also crucial to determine national days to construct a nation. Following Morrier, the writers of *Jin* declared 31 August, the day Kawa defeated Dahhak, as the “national day” of the Kurds. On the other hand, 21 March, already being celebrated traditionally in some Kurdish regions was accepted as the New Year’s Day (*sersal*) and “social day”. It is openly stated in a celebratory writing titled “*Sersal*”, published in one of the March issues of the journal that the special days of Kurds are given importance with the idea that they should find their characteristics “distinguishing them from other nations”:

Nations have several kinds of special days: National, religious, social, etc. The national days of the Kurds are the day of ‘Kawe’ overcame the cruelty of Dehak, the days of which Salahadin Eyyubi was born and became the sultan etc. Our religious days are known. Kurds also have ‘Sersal’ (New Year’s Day). This day is 9th of March in Julian calendar [21th of March in Gregorian calendar], of which whole Kurds know as a ‘festival’, adopt as as a new beginning for a new life; run to visit, celebrate and give presents to each others. Therefore, this day has a special place among other days. *Every nation separates these kinds of days from other days* and laughs, enjoy and cheers at them [emphasizes are added] (Bozarslan, M., 1985-7, *Jin*, Vol. 14, p. 3).

Milletlerin birkaç türlü eyyam-ı mahsusası vardır: Milli, dini, ictimai...ilh. Kürdlerin milli günü, ‘Kawe’nin zulm-ı Dehak’i kırdığı gün, Selahaddin-i Eyyubi’nin doğduğu ve ‘sultan’ olduğu günler vesaireler gibi. Dini günlerimiz ise malumdur. Kürdlerin bir de ‘Sersal’ı (yılbaşı) vardır. Bu, Rumi Martın 9’uncu günü⁷¹dür ki, bu ictimai yevm-i mahsusu bütün Kürdler bir ‘bayram’ bilirler, yeni bir hayata başlangıç addederler; birbirlerinin ziyaretlerine şitaban olurlar, tebrikleşirler, birbirlerine hediyeler gönderirler. Velhasıl, bugünün hayatın eyyam-ı adiyesi içinde bir imtiyaz-ı mahsusu vardır. *Her millet, böyle günlerini diğerlerinden ayırır* ve böyle günlerinde güler, eğlenir, tezahurat yapar.

The writers of *Jin* Journal were indulged in an effort to create a modern nation in the European sense out of the traditional Kurdish society. The article by Memduh Selim “*Eyyam-ı Mahsusamızı Tesbit Meselesi*” (The Question of the Determination of Our Special Days) (ibid, Vol, 16), portrayed the modern and positivist characteristics of this attempt at nation building quite strikingly. In his article, Selim quotes the remarks of his friend, a European intellectual as such:

⁷⁰ The journal *Jin* is considered as origin in this study due to the fact that it is the oldest text with the exception of Şehname and Şerefname cited as reference in the following texts.

⁷¹ 21th of March in Gregorian calendar.

A European, with whom we have friendship and who loves our nation, once told me that ‘you have only a few special days; two religious festivals, national days which are not more than one or two. Moreover, you do not keep them alive. The fact that you have few special days indicates that you are not diligent since diligent people need the days for vacations. This also indicates that you do not observe the nature, you do not enjoy the wonders of the nature. In addition to this, this proves that you have always been under submission, you have not intervened the developments, you have not improved the occasions in your national existence. They are all deficiencies; you should revise them’ (ibid, Vol. 16, p.7).

Samimi görüştüğümüz, muhibb-i millimiz münevver bir Avrupalı, bir gün bana, “sizin yevm-i mahsuslarınız pek az; iki dini bayramınız var, bir ikiyi de geçmeyen milli günleriniz. Bunları da adamakıllı yaşatmıyorsunuz. Eyyam-ı mahsusunuzun azlığı, sizlerin bir defa çalışkan olmadığınızı gösteriyor. Çünkü çok çalışanlar, kendileri için istirahat günleri ararlar. Saniyen, tabiatı iyi tetkik etmediğinize, bedayi-i tabiattan pek zevkyab olmadığımıza delildir. Bundan başka, her vakit teslimiyetle yaşadığınıza, her şeyi oluruna bıraktığınıza, milli hayatınızda mühim anlar geliştirmedeğinize de delildir. Bunlar birer kusurdur; tashih etmelisiniz” dedi.

Departing from here, Selim called on the Kurds to undertake the duty of “knowing themselves” and “making it known to others”, hitherto neglected by them. Selim put forward the “determination”, “examination” and “definition of special days” as an imperative for the Kurds to live (exist) as a nation:

Knowing our special days is our duty in that we are a historical nation. We have neglected the duty of knowing ourselves until now. Getting to know our special days and celebrating them in their time is one of the ways of knowing ourselves; it is also an enterece to origins of our history of civilization. What I mean that *we shall determine our special days* and keep them alive in our national life; the Kurds who know themselves very little and who do not make them known to others, shall learn how they were in the past and are in present. In brief, we should know ourselves and make us known to others since this *examination* and *definition* is a solution for recognition of our national task and gaining our rights. This solution is a necessity for us to live as a nation [emphasizes are added] (ibid, p.6).

Yevm-i mahsuslarımızı bilmek, tarihi bir kavim olmak haysiyetiyle vazifemizdir. Kendimizi bilmek vazifesini şimdiye kadar ihmal ettik. Hem yevm-i mahsuslarımızı öğrenmek, hem de onları zamanlarında yaşatmak, kendimizi bilmenin yollarından biridir; tarih-i medenimizin asıllarına doğru da bir girizgahdır. Demek istiyorum ki *yevm-i mahsuslarımızı tayin edelim*, onları hayat-ı milliyemizde yaşatalım; kendilerini pek az tanıyan ve başkalarına da az tanıtan Kürdler de, tarihte ve halde ne olduklarını öğrensinler. Bu uzun sözlerin hulasatulhulasası: kendimizi bilmeliyiz ve başkalarına bildirmeliyiz. Çünkü bu *taarruf* ve *tarif*, milli vazifemizi takdir etmek ve hakkımızı ağraya teslim ettirmek için bir çaredir. Bu çare de, millet olarak yaşamamız için kat’i bir lazimedir.

The questions asked by Selim to historians and the youth to be researched, provides another example for the perceptions of Kurdish nationalists during the period, which

do not relate the legend of Kawa the Smith and Newroz with each other. Furthermore, it is also understood from the article that the New Year's Day (*sersal*) in 21 March was not named as Newroz:

What kind of national and social special days do the Kurds have apart from religious special days? From which historical sources did they originate, through which channels did they flow and reach to present. For instance, it is understood that the New Year (*sersal*) is in common with Iranian *Nevruz*; why is it so, or is it so? Apart from the fact that Kawa is historically Kurd, are there any other reasons for adopting the day on which the flag of Kawa (*Direftş-i Kaweyani*) was unfurled as a special day, in addition, are there any other results for that (ibid, pp. 7-8)?

Kürdlerin, malum olan dini eyyam-ı mahsusasından maada milli ve ictimai ne gibi yevm-i mahsusları vardır? Bunlar hangi tarihi menbalardan çıkmış, hangi meceralardan akıp gelmiştir? Mesela '*Sersal*'ın İranilerin *Nevruzlarıyla müşterek olduğu anlaşılıyor*; bu nedendir veya öyle midir? '*Direftş-i Kaweyani*'nin açıldığı günün yevm-i mahsus ittihazi için 'Kawe'nin tarihen Kürd olmasından başka sebebler ve bu esbabdan doğmuş neticeler yok mudur?

Memduh Selim continued his studies on the legend of Kawa the Smith. In his article titled "*Kawe Yevm-i Mahsusu 31 Tabax (August)*" (ibid, Vol, 21), he placed importance on the Kawa legend not only as a "special national day", but also focused on its characteristic as a resistance myth. He expressed that Kawa has shown a national resistance to Dahhak the tyrant and that this was a carrying out of the nations right to resistance and revolution recognized by the *hukuk-u esasiye* (fundamental law) today. Selim indicated that this resistance conveyed by a group which was not even aware of this right is an event to be proud of throughout generations. Selim then goes on to say that:

The nations, which highlight with obstinacy the statement of 'our revolt is our consolidation' against even the most unfair authorities, can be independent in training the rights of their lives by themselves free from every law and power. We do not see that any authority keeps its cruelty against those who revolt not always, but only in necessary conditions (ibid, Vol. 25, p. 5)⁷².

'Kıyamımız kıyamımızdır' (başkaldırımız pekişmemizdir - The note of the translator, M.E.Bozarlan -) tirazımı en itisafkar hükümet idarelerine karşı bile en mütecellidane yükselten milletlerdir ki, hakk-ı hayatlarını her kanunun ve her kuvvetein kuvve-i te'dibyesinden azade olarak ve yalnız kendi idareleriyle te'bid etmiş olurlar. Daima ihtilal edenler değil, fakat lazım olduğu zaman ihtilal edebilenlere karşı hiç bir idarenin idame-i zulüm ettiğini göremiyoruz.

⁷² Memduh Selim also mentions the ceremony for "Kawa National Day" (ibid, p. 6).

The writers of the journal *Jin* had attributed special importance to the Kawa legend as a descent and resistance myth beginning from the first issue of the journal. For instance, Kurdiye Bitlisi⁷³ has placed a note that said “On the Occasion of Kurds published by Muhacirin Müdürlüğü (Office of Migrants)”⁷⁴ on top of his article titled “*The Dehak Legend*”. Bitlisi also mentions in his article that a writer known as Zekeriya Bey rejects the existence of Kurds in his article published in the journal named *İçtimaiyat* (Sociology). Bitlisi indicates that he has written the Dahhak legend, since it relates to the origin and history of Kurds and as a reply to those writings oriented towards the denial of Kurds (ibid, Vol.1, p.8). Kurdiye Bitlisi claimed that what is narrated on behalf of the event in the legend proved that Kurds are a nation of Iranian origin, who actually put an end to the sovereignty of Dahhak (ibid, p. 10).

For Kurds the liberation day, which is at 31th August, has considered to be important as it deserved and every year at 31th August it has been celebrated as a national liberation day in Demavend. The fact of naming this celebration as Kurdish Festival and being glorified and honoured only by Kurds definitely states that it was the Kurds who declared war in order to put an end to Dehak’s cruelty, and it was ancient Kurdish history which built control again in Isfahan. The reason behind this is that every nation only adopt and glorify the days and events which belong to it and in which it was agent and influential. Moreover, we do not have any information about the mentioned day celebrated by any other people except from the people of the city. This proves that the Demavend festival is special for the Kurds (ibid, p. 9).⁷⁵

Kürdlerce de senenin 31 Ağustosuna tesadüf eden yevm-i halas, layık olduğu ehemniyetle telakki olunmuş ve her sene Ağustos’un otuzbirinde ‘Demavend’de halas-ı milli namına bayram yapılmakta bulunmuştur. Bu merasime Kürd Bayramı namı verilmesi ve münhasıran Kürdler tarafından tebcil ve teşrif edilmesi, Dehak’ın ref’i mezalimi için ilan-ı mücadele eden milletin Kürdlerden ibaret olduğunu ve binaberin vakayı müteakib Isfahan’da tekrar tesis-i hakimiyet eden millet tarihinin Kürd tarih-i kadiminden ibaret olması lazım geldiğini katiyetle tesbit eder. Çünkü her millet, ancak kendisine aid ve kendisinin amil ve müessiri bulunduğu vakayii, eyyamı hakkıyla benimser ve takdis eder. Aynı zamanda yevm-i mezkûrün akvam-i hazıradan başka biri tarafından tes’id edildiğine dair de malumata malik bulunmuyoruz. Bu da Demavend bayramının Kürdlere ihtisasını isbat eder.

To conclude, it can be stated that, the writers of *Jin* Journal, in order to create/construct the Kurdish nation, tried to reveal the cultural differences that

⁷³ His real name is Halil Hayali (ibid, the preface of Bozarslan).

⁷⁴ The book rejected the existence of Kurds as a separate nation (ibid).

⁷⁵ Bitlisi also states the place of this legend in Şerefname.

distinguish Kurds from other nations. This was necessary to establish and determine Kurds' existence as a separate nation. To that end, the writers of the journal placed major importance on the construction of national days. They defined the "Kawa event" as one of the most significant among the national events of Kurds, the date of which they accepted as 31 August.⁷⁶ At the same time, this "national day" provided the function of a descent and resistance myth as well. On the one hand, Kawa legend, as a descent and resistance myth, signified the persistence of Kurdish nation, on the other hand, as an ancient myth; it provided a tool for establishing a sense of continuity between generations. The Kurds were called on to carry out the "right to resist to oppression" and the "right to revolution" recognized by the *hukuk-u esasiye* today, through this connection established with the heroic past (see Bozarslan, H., 2002 and 2005).

In this sense, the efforts of *Jin* writers regarding the Kawa legend can be seen as a fairly classical example of the construction of myths to be utilized as a tool during the process of nation building. In this example, as Hobsbawm (1983: 12-3) indicates, ancient materials are used to construct invented traditions of a novel type for novel purposes. In other words, Kawa legend was selected by *Jin* writers as a tool for constructing a myth for their modern purposes. On the other hand, the day 21 March remained as a "New Year's Day" (*sersal*) in the *Jin* journal, the connection of which with the "Nevruz of Iranians" could not be definitely determined.

IV.1.b. İhsan Nuri's Failed Attempt

İhsan Nuri's⁷⁷ efforts constitute another of the first attempts during the process of construction of the legend of Kawa the Smith as a myth. As a nationalist intellectual, İhsan Nuri strove to prove the existence of a separate Kurdish nation as well. In the preface to his book "*Kürtler'in Kökeni*" (The origin of the Kurds), a study worth

⁷⁶ Bozarslan H. claims that the invention of national symbols provides the function of compensating for the shortcomings in historical accounts and that this paved the way for the history-literature based discourse of the subsequent periods (2005: 48).

⁷⁷ İhsan Nuri, who has led the Beytüşşebab and Ağrı rebellions, has written this book during his presence in Iran. It has been firstly published in journal *Kuhistan* (Mountainous) in 1946 and then published as a book in Persian in 1955 (İhsan Nuri, 1976, Preliminary).

paying considerable attention, written in conformity with his purpose mentioned above, he stated that:

It is told that one should not take pride in gravestones, yet the formation and strengthening of the sentiments of freedom of nations depends on knowing the glorious past of their ancestors...My purpose is not to write a history of the Kurds and Kurdistan, it is more of a service done for a society of Iranian origin, the existence of which has been decided to be denied in the opinion of other races (1976:11)

The effort to find the origins of Kurds led İhsan Nuri towards the Kawa legend as well. He mentions in his book, the legend in the *Şehname* regarding the Kurds (ibid, p. 65). Besides, he also emphasizes that Morrier mentions the “Kurdish Festival” (most probably Iyd-i Kürd) celebrated in the vicinity of Demavend on 31 August (ibid, p. 73). On the basis of these, İhsan Nuri claimed that the origins of the Kurds were narrated in the Kawa legend. However, he designated for this legend not the Iyd-i Kürd, but the Tol Hıldan festival (ibid, pp. 73-74):

The name Kurdish Festival]... demonstrates that Kurds were the ancestors of the Iranian nation during the period of Cemsid and Dahhak. The Demavend folk also knew their ancestors as Kurds. That festival is also inherited from their ancestors. For that reason, they have named it as ‘Çeşne Kurd’ meaning Kurdish Festival. This festival however, is the Tol Hıldan festival...This festival is being celebrated in the Turkish Kurdistan. It is called ‘Çeşne Tolan’. ‘Toli Dan’ is the simplified form of Tol Hıldan. It means to take revenge in Kurdish. As it is understood, they held a festival when they avenged the violent seizure of the crown and throne of their nations, namely when they put an end to foreign domination and had their own leaders (we consider this as Feridun - İ.N) take power and called this in their own Kurdish language ‘Tol Hıldan’, namely ‘to take revenge’ (ibid).

It can be thought that İhsan Nuri was anxious to find a festival celebrated by the Kurdish people within the boundaries of Turkey and therefore took Tol Hıldan as basis.⁷⁸ It occurs from his expressions above that one other reason for İhsan Nuri’s preference in favor of this festival is the name “Tolan”, the meaning of which is designated by him as “taking revenge”. This name may have seemed more meaningful or useful for İhsan Nuri, since a great revolt under his leadership had resulted in defeat. On the other hand, İhsan Nuri related the time difference between this festival indicated by him as being celebrated 21-22 days before Newroz and the Kurdish Festival being celebrated in the vicinity of Demavend, to the changes that

⁷⁸ Jin writers did not encounter such a problem since in the years 1918-1919 during which Jin was published, the Ottoman Empire has not yet dissolved, to be replaced by the Turkish Republic.

have occurred in the dates of New Year's festivals during the course of time (ibid, pp. 80-81). In the light of this explanation, the reason for İhsan Nuri's preference for a date close to Newroz instead of simply opting for Newroz itself lies in his awareness that Newroz occupies a place in Iranian literature as a narrative concerning Cemşid. Relying on a Pahlavi hymn and *Şehname*, İhsan Nuri explains the Newroz⁷⁹ day in his book as the first day of the month of Ferferdin (21 March) on which King Cemşid shone on his throne, the people thought him as the sun in the sky and two suns appeared in the sky (ibid, p. 63).⁸⁰ On the other hand, Tol Hıldan (Tolan) was a local festival celebrated solely by Kurds.

İhsan Nuri designated the "Tol Hıldan" festival as the "Kurdish National Festival (ibid). He indicated that this day symbolized the Feridun taking Dahhak captive through the rebellion under the leadership of Kawa the Smith (ibid). Furthermore, he designated a historical day for the Kawa legend: "Historically, this festival is the celebration of the collapse of the Assyrian state by the hand of the Mad Sultan Huxstere in 612 BC" (ibid, p. 131). Finally, İhsan Nuri declared that "...the Kurd-Mad nation has accepted this date as the commencement date of their national histories!" (ibid).

İhsan Nuri points out that during the "Tol Hıldan" festival, everyone in North Kurdistan⁸¹ lights fires behind their houses or in high places. According to İhsan Nuri, these fires symbolize the passing around of fires for purposes of

⁷⁹ İhsan Nuri mentions the festival as "Newruz".

⁸⁰ In fact, İhsan Nuri seems to have made rather extensive research on the festivals in question. In his book, he expresses that Ömer Hayyam also narrates Newroz, being a festival relating to the Şemsi New Year, as a festival put forward by Cemşid, but that the New Year was previously celebrated as festival as well (ibid, p. 65.) Besides, he also mentions the Mihrgan festival. He says that Mihrgan festival existed before the Sasani period as well, yet that Newruz festival exceeded it in significance later on (ibid, pp. 65-6). İhsan Nuri emphasizes that the Iranian legends taking place in the *Şehname* resemble the Indian, Rum, Jewish or even Chinese legends; therefore, it is not imperative that the sultans should necessarily be Iranian sultans. In addition to this, he also indicates that there are variants of the Dahhak legends in Jewish and Christian works.

⁸¹ He means the area inside the boundaries of Turkey.

communication during the “revolution”⁸² against Dahhak and hence the initiation of the rebellion (ibid, p. 79).

By the time İhsan Nuri’s book was translated into Turkish in 1976, the myth of Newroz had been constructed in such a way that Newroz had become the celebration of Kawa the Smith’s victory over Dahhak the tyrant (see below). Therefore, İhsan Nuri’s idea of “Tol Hildan” festival for the Kawa legend remained as a failed attempt. The intervening footnotes by M. Tayfun, the translator of the book and his effort to explain what has been told by İhsan Nuri is quite meaningful in demonstrating this point:

It can also be stated about this festival [Tol Hildan] that: In the beginning, the people, liberated under the leadership of Kawe the Smith who killed Dahhak, have celebrated this virtually as a feast in a mood of enthusiasm; the same festivities have been repeated in the following years in commemoration of this event, gradually transforming into a festival form. As the author notes, this festival is being celebrated among Kurds even today. Nevertheless, during the course of time, the festivals celebrated by Kurds have acquired a complex structure as well. For instance, it is indicated that 31 August is celebrated as a festival. However, as it is known, Newruz is celebrated on 21 March. Besides, the celebration of Newruz embodies the lighting of fires. Although it may be thought that the practice of lighting fire has become a part of Newruz due to the fact that fires were lit on the hills after the rebellion movement of Kawe, in order to communicate and send signals; in our opinion, the role of ancient Kurdish religions, Zoroastrianism etc. which consider fire as sacred, should not be overlooked (ibid, p. 74).⁸³

The modern, nationalist motivation inherent in İhsan Nuri’s attempt to find a descent myth and a national festival for Kurds constitutes a common point with the writers of *Jin* Journal. On the other hand, there had occurred a significant change between the conditions of the period during which *Jin* was published and of the period during which İhsan Nuri wrote his book. The Turkish Republic was established following the dissolution of the Ottoman State, in the aftermath of this process, Kurdish rebellions had ended in grave defeat. It seems to be the case that İhsan Nuri tried to determine a festival, celebrated within the territorial boundaries of Turkey and one which is unique to Kurds. *Iyd-i Kurd* was unknown to the Kurds in Turkey. In the

⁸² The expression belongs to him.

⁸³ As seen, contrary to İhsan Nuri, M.Tayfun does not mention Feridun and relates the practice of lighting fire with Zoroastrianism, in compliance with the belief that Zoroastrianism constitutes the national religion of the Kurds. On the other hand, since the festival has not been invariably named as “Newroz” yet, M. Tayfun, following İhsan Nuri does not refrain from using the “Newruz” version.

case of Newroz, İhsan Nuri knew very well that this festival was one which occupied a prominent place in Iranian culture and literature and which was affiliated not with the Kawa legend, but with *Cemşid*. In this respect, for İhsan Nuri, “Tolan” festival celebrated by the Kurds present within the boundaries of Turkey may have seemed more suitable. Moreover, as a leader of violently suppressed rebellion, the meaning of which he designated as “taking revenge” (Tol Hıldan) must have been expressive to him. However, by the time his book reached the Kurdish nationalists in Turkey, the establishment of the Newroz myth had almost been completed. Therefore, İhsan Nuri’s undertaking for “Tol Hıldan” festival could not acquire itself any place.⁸⁴

IV.2. Newroz as a Tool for Counter Hegemony

IV.2.a. Kawa the Proletarian

Kurdish nationalist intellectuals in Turkey could not have access to the *Jin* Journal and İhsan Nuri’s book *Kürtlerin Kökeni* as well as other books on Kurds until 1970s. As was stated in Chapter II, after the suppression of the Kurdish rebellions, the Kurdish movement had entered a period of silence. During this time, a historical rupture had occurred with the Kurdish nationalist movement of the period of rebellions (Bozarslan, 2002: 852). The Kurdish intellectuals, who were fairly small in quantity, lacked organic ties with the old confrontations (Bozarslan, 2005: 54). These intellectuals were of urban origin, educated in Turkish language, belonging to the same social groups with the Turkish intellectuals (ibid). They were also devoid of those data to reproduce the symbols pertaining to Kurdishness, due to the fact that books relating to Kurds could not be published in Turkey. Under these conditions, they were in a position as receivers of the symbols produced by the Kurdish movements in other countries.

In his memories, Anter narrates the difficulty of “symbol” they have encountered during the establishment of the *Kürtleri Koruma Derneği* (Association for the

⁸⁴ Still, the year 612 designated by him as the date in which the Kawa legend had actually occurred, is endorsed by several other Kurdish historiographs (see for example Bender, 1991).

Protection of Kurds), an organization they have founded during 1940's. They are under an obligation to declare allegiance to the cause, but since they "cannot place hands on the Koran", they decide to take an oath over a Kurdish flag and a gun. As for the Kurdish flag, they choose the flag of the Mahabad Kurdish Republic comprising the colors yellow, red and green. As seen, Anter reveals that the Koran signifies nothing for them in terms of their Kurdish cause. It may be argued that this stems from basically two reasons, the first one concerns the left wing positions of Anter and his friends and their non religious standing.⁸⁵ In relation to this, the other reason is the refusal by Anter and his friends to prefer loyalty to the religion of Islam as an element which distinguishes the Kurds from the hegemonic culture. In the following years, the belief which advocates that Zoroastrianism is the original religion of Kurds, received widespread support from the Kurdish nationalist intellectuals (Anter, 1991a: 62).

The Newroz festival and the Kawa Legend were also symbols, which were learned from the other Kurdish movements to a great extent. Bruinessen states that Newroz was first adopted by Iraq's Kurds as their own national holiday in the 1950s (2000: 9). Parallel to this, Naci Kutlay, in the interview conducted with him, expressed that he heard about the Newroz festival and the legend of Kawa the Smith for the first time from the Kurdish students from Iraq. On the other hand, the Newroz festival was celebrated as a tradition in some regions of Turkey where Kurds live.⁸⁶ It is also known that the Kawa legend was told both among the people and by dengbejs⁸⁷. Yet, it cannot be claimed that the celebration of the Newroz festival in the traditional sense, is widespread, encompassing the whole Kurdish population or that the Kawa legend is of common knowledge as a Kurdish legend among the Kurds in Turkey.

⁸⁵ Indeed, Anter emphasizes in various parts of his book that he has never been a religious person himself (Anter, 1991a).

⁸⁶ Silvan was one of these places. Mehdi Zana and Nurettin Elhüseyni told that Newroz was celebrated as a festival in Silvan before the year 1970 in the form of having picnic at the countryside, painting eggs and such. Kurds living in the vicinities of Kars and Iğdır traditionally celebrated Newroz as well. However, since Newroz originating from Iranian culture, is also a traditional festival for *Şii* Azeris, densely inhabiting the vicinity, it is hard to mention Newroz as a "Kurdish festival" in Kars and Iğdır region.

⁸⁷ Interview with F. Kanat and Nurettin Elhüseyni. Mehdi Zana also mentioned that the Kawa legend was told among the people. They indicated that Feridun was also present in these narratives.

During the so called years of silence, Newroz, perceived as a value pertaining to Kurdishness, was tried to be kept alive. Until the 1970's, activities relating to Newroz consisted of minor celebrations and nights among the Kurds.⁸⁸ Beginning from the second half of 1970's, Kurdish students and intellectuals, organized around Marxist Kurdish organizations, were in an effort to seek those characteristics relating to Kurdishness, which "distinguish" the Kurds and which were "progressive" at the same time. During this period, which witnessed the accelerating pace in the number of books published about Kurds, Kurdish language and culture became the focus of attention. Alongside this, the social structure and economic conditions of Kurdish society were analyzed. "Kurdistan" was defined as a colonial country and a revolution to take place here was seen as a part of the front consisting of the world socialist movement and the movement of the oppressed nations. Therefore, these movements tried to construct a socialist Kurdish cultural unity against the hegemonic culture of the Turkish state which they defined as "colonialist".

Following to Turkish left, these Marxist Kurdish organizations tried to reconstruct a Kurdish history and culture on the basis of class antagonism. For instance, Nurettin Elhüseyni narrated that when they were preparing a declaration for May 1th, they involved into a serious effort to find out whether or not there is a worker demonstration in the Kurdish history. Since they could not find adequate example, they decided to write the declaration in Kurdish in order to indicate the nationalist character of it. Parallel to this, during this period, the Kawa legend was worked on with a new spirit. These movements, which situated the concepts such as the "oppressed nation", "laboring people", "proletariat" at the centre of their discourses, politicized Kawa the Smith who, "raising his smock as a flag", initiated a "popular revolt" against the "colonialist king Dahhak" and they elaborated him as a "progressive value" coming from the past. The Feridun element of the legend, present in *Şehname* and in its versions told among the people, was removed from the narrative. Kawa was not just a national leader, in the way it was stressed by the *Jin*

⁸⁸ For instance Anter and his friends have been organizing nights called "*Dicle Gecesi*" "to make it resemble Newroz", which all Kurds living in İstanbul were invited (Anter, 1991a: 62).

journal writers or İhsan Nuri; from now on, he was the proletarian vanguard who resisted by raising the smock of the “oppressed Kurdish people” as a flag.

It seems that by the time the Kurdish intellectuals in Turkey reached once more the Kawa legend as a descent (or revival) and resistance myth, this legend had been united with the Newroz festival in the discourse of the Kurdish movements outside Turkey. Daimi Cengiz claims that this was a deliberate activity on part of the Iran Kurdistan Democratic Party (quoted from Aksoy, 1998: 16). Cengiz indicates that the tradition of Newroz exists in the Kurdish regions in Iran as a New Year’s Day (*Sersale*) and a spring festival and that no data to prove its relationship with the Kawa legend was found in Kurdish area researches (ibid). Tracing the actual way this unification has occurred is a fairly hard task due to the scope of this study; however, it can be stated that the unification of the Newroz festival and the Kawa narrative, is the outcome of a slightly compelling, if not a spontaneous process. As indicated in Chapter III, Mihrgan, the festival with which Kawa legend is related in *Şehname*, is also a celebration of New Year and has common mythological features with Newroz.

An indicator that this unification was not realized by the Kurdish movements in Turkey can be found Zinar Silopi’s book *Doza Kurdistan* (1991), the first edition of which was made in Beirut in 1969, where he was in exile. Silopi tells the Kawa legend as one of the rumors relating to Newroz. He mentions the presence of the belief that Newroz is the celebration of the day on which the “Kurdish people” under the leadership of the “Kurdish Kawa the Smith” have captured and “thrown into fire they lit for tyrannical sultan Dehhak”, enthroning the Feridun of the Cemşid generation and thereby “achieving freedom” (1991: 211).⁸⁹ The other rumor mentioned by Silopi concerns the presence of Newroz as a festival regarding the arriving of spring. Silopi, emphasizing that these rumors unite in the sense that light defeats darkness and that justice defeats tyranny, expresses the meaning of Newroz for Kurds as such:

⁸⁹ Besides, Silopi provides examples from the poems of two Kurdish poets relating to Newroz (ibid, p. 259 - the note of the translator, M. Bayrak). However, Newroz appears in these poems solely as a spring celebration.

This national festival, which the Kurdish nation annually celebrates, painstakingly preserving its brilliance, is celebrated all around Kurdistan and rituals are held with fires being lit, reminiscent of the heap of fire in which the cruel ruler was burnt. In doing this, they intend to warn that tyrants will end up being thrown into fire or will suffer an even worse punishment (ibid).

Another indicator is the article published in the first issue of the journal *Özgürlük Yolu* (Road to Freedom) published in March 1976, which presented Newroz as a Kurdish tradition to the reader.⁹⁰ The article published in the Art and Literature section of the journal makes this presentation by including in it poems by Cigerxwin, a Kurdish poet living in Syria:

In this issue, we introduce two poems by the famous contemporary Kurdish poet Ciğerxwin (Cigerğın), who lives in Syria at the present. Both poems are related with the traditional festival of Kurds, the 'Nevruz'. Nevruz festival is being celebrated each year on 21 March. The word Nevruz means 'new day'. On that day, all Kurds get dressed in their prettiest clothes, go out to the countryside or the fountains, and celebrate this festival by singing folksongs, playing games. On the night of that day, they light great fires on hills, mountain tops. Apart from the Kurds, Nevruz is now being celebrated by other Iranian peoples as well.⁹¹

In the poem titled 'Kimim Ben' (Who am I), Newroz is told as the celebration of the day Kawa the Smith liberated the Kurds by defeating "Dehak the Tyrant". Cigerxwin, who is a socialist poet, has not included in his narration the Feridun element and has utilized the expressions relating to Zoroastrianism:

...	
Kawa the Smith is my ancestor	Benim atam Demirci Kave
He crushed the head of Dehak the tyrant	Ezdi zalim Dehak'ın başını
Out of the Kurd's neck,	Kürdün boynundan
He broke off the chain	Zinciri kopardı
Protected our head	Korudu başımızı
From the sheer cliff, the sword	Yardan, kılıçtan
the day he died, that cruel hearted,	Öldüğü gün kan emici
merciless exploiter	zalim yürekli
so they say, is that day, the Nevruz day	Derler ki o gündür işte Nevruz günü
Winter fades away and so do all days of agony	Kış gider, Tüm acılı günler
The Kurds are liberated	Zergeş devinden
from the Zergeş giant	Kurtulur Kürtler
This is what Zerdeşt of proper manners has to say	Yolbilir Zerdeşt işte böyle der
once the hürmüz is revealed, collapses	Hürmüz meydana çıkınca ehraman
the Ehraman	çöker
Who am I? ⁹²	Kimim ben ?

⁹⁰ *Özgürlük Yolu*, Vol.1 March 1976.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² The fact that discursive claims regarding the Kurdish name of the festival did not exist yet, may be observed through the non-refraining attitude of the writers in using the word Nevruz in a text published in Turkish. The Kurdish version of the poem had also been published. In this version, the words Kawa, Dehak and Newroz appear as 'Kaway', 'Zehak' and 'Nüroz' respectively.

The Kurdish movements in general constructed the Newroz following the same line with Cigerxwin. During this period, Kawa legend was constructed as a narrative relating not to the origin of the Kurds, but the revival of them and the function of the legend as a “resistance myth” were taken as basis. Kawa legend and Newroz were situated as the symbols expressing the “revolt against tyranny”. It may be argued that the main reason for such an attitude lies in the Marxist orientations of these movements. They aimed at creating a revolutionary Kurdish national unity, rather than advocating an essentialist Kurdish nationalism. Likewise, with the influence of the leftist tradition, they possessed a concern for being “scientific”. For instance, in an article published in the first issue of the *Rizgari* Journal, the information that as a festival, Newroz did not belong solely to the Kurds was provided alongside the statement that different beliefs regarding this festival existed:

21 March, the day our journal is first issued⁹³, also signifies the Newroz festival. Kurdish people as well as the Iranian, Afghan and Beluci people celebrate this festival in the Middle East. The Turkish meaning of Newroz, which has an historical past, is ‘new day’. There exist different rumors as regards Newroz. Yet, all spring from the same source. Despite the changes, the masses know in all its respects what is symbolized in this festival and what is tried to be articulated. Symbolized in Newroz, is a rebellion against malice, tyranny and exploitation. Instead, it is the desire to attain benevolence, brotherhood, illumination, in short a society without tyranny and exploitation.⁹⁴

Similarly, some expressions in the same article provided one of the plainest examples of the treatment of Newroz by the Kurdish movements of the period as an ideological tool in order to create counter hegemony:

Revolutionaries are the inheritors of those values with a democratic content possessed by their people. Any movement which is not grounded on its own historical past and which does not stand as the inheritor of the revolutionary values; formations present in its history have meagre chance for success. It is an absolute necessity to attend to the past despite its shortcomings and flaws and to carry it back to the people, having dissolved it within the scientific theoretical determinations of our age.

...

It is not coincidental that *Rizgari* was first issued on the Newroz day on which fires symbolizing freedom and rebellion against tyranny are lit. *It is an outcome and a part of the duty undertaken.*

...

For many reasons, Newroz has provided guidance for the rebellion against barbarism and tyranny. Newroz is a mythological symbol having deep traces in social life. Newroz does not constitute by itself a reason for the pressure and tyranny

⁹³ The first issue of the journal is dated 21 March 1976.

⁹⁴ *Rizgari*, Vol.1, March 1976.

exerted by the imperialists-colonialists. *It is a target to be attacked, a gap to be filled. This is because the Kurds remember in Newroz a cruel despotic ruler.* This ruler is Dahak. They know that every day, Dahak's executioners tear off the heads of two young people for the two snakes on Dahak's shoulders. And so they know, not a single tyrant is to succeed in putting the people in chains eternally. There appears a Kawe, Kawe the Smith, destroys the rule of Dahaks. *Raising his smock as a flag, he erects that unequalled power of the people on the castle towers*" [emphasizes are added] (ibid).

Devrimciler, kendi halklarının demokratik muhtevalı değerlerinin mirasçılarındırlar. Kendi tarihi geçmişi üzerine oturmayan ve tarihindeki devrimci değerlerin, oluşumların mirasçısı olmayan bir hareketin başarı şansı azdır. Eksikliğine, aksaklığına rağmen geçmişe sahip çıkmak ve bunu günümüzün bilimsel teorik belirlemeleri içinde eriterek tekrar halka götürmek zorunluluğu vardır.

....
Rızgari'nin özgürlüğe ve zulme başkaldırını simgeleyen ateşlerin yakıldığı Newroz gününde çıkışı bir tesadüf değildir. *Üstlenilen görevin bir ürünüdür ve bir parçasıdır.*

...
Birçok neden ile birlikte Newroz da barbarlığa ve zulme karşı isyanın yol göstericisi olmuştur. Sosyal hayatta derin izleri bulunan mitolojik bir simgedir Newroz. Newroz, emperyalist-sömürgecilerin baskı ve zulümleri için tek başına bir neden değildir. *Saldırılan bir hedef, kapatılması gereken bir gediktir. Çünkü Newroz'da Kürtler, gaddar, despot bir hükümdarı hatırlarlar.* Bu hükümdar, Dahak'tır. Dahak'ın omuzlarındaki iki yılana hergün Dahak'ın cellatlarının iki genç insanın kafasını kopardığını bilirler. Ve bilirler ki, hiç bir müstebit, halkları ebediyen zincire vuramaz. Bir Kawe çıkar, demirci Kawe, yıkar saltanatını Dahak'ların. *Önlüğünü bayrak yaparak halkların o harikulade gücünü kale burçlarına diker.*

As seen, Newroz is described in the article as “a gap to be filled in” on part of the dominant powers and “a value of the people with a democratic content” on part of the revolutionaries. The “carrying back to the people” of this mythological symbol (or historical narrative) “having dissolved it within the scientific theoretical determinations of our age” is undertaken as a revolutionary duty. Such an approach can be seen as a good example to the statements of Williams (1977) regarding the use of selective tradition in order to construct counter hegemony. What is recommended for Newroz in the article is the recovering or redressing of something neglected or excluded by the hegemonic culture through its elaboration by the revolutionaries.

One other powerful example of such an approach to Newroz was represented by the journal *Kava*,⁹⁵ named after Kawa the Smith. In this journal, a revolutionary war was

⁹⁵ In fact, “Kava” was the name of a publishing house established by Ahmet Zeki Okçuoğlu. The name was easily endorsed after its use by the members of the movement in Ankara as signature under a declaration they have published and the movement was called to mind with the name Kava (interview with Nurettin Elhüseyni). They use “Kava”, the Turkish version of the name, since the journal is published in Turkish.

proposed for “Kurdistan”, described as a part of the oppressed world⁹⁶. The purpose of the journal was declared in the section “Başlarken” in its first issue as such:⁹⁷

Keeping alive the spirit of struggle and resistance of the revolutionary KAWA the Smith it is named after, it will carry out a determined and merciless struggle against the DEHAKS of our age, the colonialists, imperialists, social imperialists and a handful of national traitors.⁹⁸

In the second issue of the journal, Kawa the Smith was described as the “Spartacus of Kurdistan” accompanied by a statement that it is the proletarian revolutionaries who should attend to Kawa:

Just as the revolutionary proletariat must attend to revolutionary Spartacus and just as those who attended to him led the German working class for some time...well, this is what we wish to tell in describing KAWA as the Spartacus of Kurdistan and in saying that only the proletarian revolutionaries of Kurdistan can attend to him in the way that befits his glory!⁹⁹

As seen, a relationship of resemblance is being established between Kawa, a mythological hero and Spartacus, a powerful myth for socialists. This can be interpreted as an indicator of modern character of the socialism oriented approach in elaborating the Kawa myth. Again, the point in this case is the reconstruction of the mythological past through novel values, in compliance with novel purposes.

Another example for the effort to relate the Newroz myth to current politics oriented towards socialism is the articulation of “21 March as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination”¹⁰⁰ within the discourse regarding Newroz. In an article published in the journal *Özgürlük Yolu*,¹⁰¹ the rebellion of the Kurds

⁹⁶ See in particular, the article titled “Sömürgecilik ve Milli Mesele”, Kava, Vol.1, 1 December 1978.

⁹⁷ Kava, Vol.1, 1 December 1978.

⁹⁸ Ibid. Again in the same section it wrote in bold that “the laws of class struggle have created KAWA. Our people will further develop and strengthen KAWA, with the condition that the requisites of class struggle are carried out.”

⁹⁹ Kava, Vol.2, January 1979, pp. 3–4.

¹⁰⁰ The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed annually on 21 March. On that day, in 1960, police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration at Sharpeville, South Africa, against the apartheid “pass laws”. Proclaiming the Day in 1966, the General Assembly called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination <<http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/racial>> accessed 07.05.2005.

¹⁰¹ *Özgürlük Yolu*, Vol. 23, April 1977. Newroz, a subject of fairly modest presentation in the previous year (see above), has come to be expressed in fairly political terms in the articles on this issue of the journal. The name of the festival is now being referred to as Newroz in all articles.

against tyranny as the “oppressed nation”, present in the Newroz discourse, has been combined with resisting racial discrimination on an international plane:

The coinciding of the day for the elimination of racial discrimination and Newroz on the day of 21 March conveys a deep meaning particularly in Turkey. According to a belief and tradition which has been established throughout centuries, thousands of years ago, on the day of 21 March, the Kurdish people, under the leadership of a smith named Kawa have revolted against the Dehak the tyrant, and put an end to his tyranny. Today, the Kurdish people once more suffer from a great national tyranny in Turkey, Iran and Iraq. The laboring people, revolutionaries and democrats of Kurdish and Turkish origin, in celebrating the day for the elimination of racial discrimination simultaneously with Newroz, have, in the same way they oppose racism in all around the world, opposed the racial bullying, attempts at fascism, the national tyranny and racial discrimination directed at the Kurdish people, which have gotten even more frenzied in recent years and provided a good example of internationalist solidarity.¹⁰²

The designation of a specific date for the Kawa legend was also resorted to in order to situate Newroz within the socialism oriented discourse. In a pamphlet prepared for a Newroz celebration to be held in Munich, the Kawa legend was declared as “an event compatible with the Marxist conception of history” and the year 612 B.C., which designated the occupation of Ninova by the Meds, was taken as basis:¹⁰³

Each year on the 21st of March, Kurds celebrate the Newroz ... 2589 years ago, the people, suffering under tyranny and pressure, oppressed by a cruel and despotic tyrant ... have revolted and overthrown the tyrant. Now, Newroz is celebrated each year as a symbol of this rebellion and liberation ... This event is compatible with the

¹⁰² Ibid. The article also states that in İstanbul and the countryside, meetings were held and posters were hung on the occasion of 21 March. It is mentioned that, on the occasion of this day, a night was organized at the İnci Düğün Salonu in İstanbul with the participation of over 1500 people, that a pantomime, which expressed the rebellion of the Kurdish people against Dehak the tyrant, was performed, that poems were read in Kurdish and Turkish, that the DHKD chorus presented revolutionary folk songs and marches, that two poets from Silvan, Kulil Bacı and İsmet Yeter stirred the crowd to excitement through Kurdish folksongs and marches and Mehmet Çapan through singing folksongs by Rahmi Saltuk and İhsani. It is emphasized that the night was spent in a mood of complete solidarity of the Kurdish and Turkish revolutionaries and laboring people.

¹⁰³ As stated above, this date is the same with that designated by İhsan Nuri. The date 612 B.C. was put forward by a certain wing in Kurdish historical writing and was adopted in a widespread way within the discourse regarding Newroz. For instance, in the report prepared by the People's Party of Labour (Halkın Emek Partisi) for the 1992 Newroz, Newroz was presented as such: “Newroz (Nuroz-Nuroz, new day), which signifies for the people of Middle East and the Kurdish people, unity, struggle, achievement of freedom and independence, the ending of dark and cold days and the arriving of days of light and spring, the abolition of tyranny, is being celebrated for centuries among the Kurdish people as a national festival... According to the legend, the Newroz event has occurred around the year 612 B.C. in the regions of Kuis and Meds, which were the ancestors of Kurds. For this reason, Newroz celebrations were first initiated among the Kurds; later on it has been practiced as a national festival by other neighboring peoples (Afghan, Beluci, Persian, Tajik Ossetian and such). Therefore, the actual day of Newroz celebration dates back to 2603 years before.”

Marxist conception of history. As history is the struggle between the working and dominant classes, Newroz is compatible with this view ...The struggle initiated by Kawa (the Smith), continues to be a part of the world revolutionary movement by acquiring new dimensions in our age ... Kurdish patriots, unite in the MARXIST-LENINIST ORGANIZATION. Our hearts are filled with the hope of celebrating ... our Newroz festivals to come. Munich Newroz Organization Committee (quoted from Başbuğ, 1985).

The discourse of Newroz as the “national festival of the oppressed Kurdish people” seems to have been endorsed by various groups within the Turkish socialist movement as well. For instance, the newspaper *Kurtuluş İçin İleri* (Forward for Liberation) in its March issue in 1977 wrote about Newroz that:

Newroz embodies content in the history of Kurdish people, which symbolizes the struggle for freedom, independence against tyranny, pressure and subservience. It reflects the thirst for freedom of an oppressed nation ... Nevroz is a symbol of the struggle against tyranny, pressure and subservience. Nevroz is a Kurdish festival ... Nevroz is a symbol of independence and liberation for the colonial nation (ibid).

The newspaper *Devrimci Demokrat Gençlik* (Revolutionary Democratic Youth) also endorsed Newroz as a “progressive value” and stated that it should be attended to as “part of the struggle that was being waged”:

Revolutionaries are under the obligation to oppose the policies of the colonialists and attend to those values of its people that embody a progressive essence. Especially if this value is a day such as Newroz, which is the symbol of liberation from tyranny, the achievement of freedom and a happy life and of the new day, the importance of attending to it and keeping it alive ... As part of the struggle of our people being waged currently, we must celebrate March 21st and the Newroz, and we must make its meaning and prominence known to the masses (ibid).

When this period during which Kurdish nationalism was transformed into a people’s movement around the axis of socialist ideas ended with the military coup in 12 September 1980, Newroz had been constructed and fixed as the day Kawa the Smith defeated “Dahhak the tyrant king”. Now, Newroz was also commonly known and endorsed by the socialist movements in Turkey alongside the Kurdish movements. However, it is not possible to mention that the celebration of Newroz was a common practice among the Kurdish people during this period. Activities regarding Newroz were limited to the nights organized and demonstrations waged by the Kurdish

movements. The article by Muhsin Kızılkaya titled “*Düze İnen Newroz*”¹⁰⁴ provides a quite pleasant account of the actual experience relating to Newroz:

...The night is the night that bridges the March 20th and March 21st. Year 1978...It is the Newroz Day tomorrow and for the first time in the history of our city [Hakkari], Newroz is to be celebrated tomorrow by attributing it a democratic content... All companions are fully conscious of their responsibilities; we have prepared ourselves for a ‘demonstration’ rather than a celebration... We are excited. Both for the reason that we are ‘mature revolutionaries’ enough to assume duty in an important demonstration, and that we have been included in the enthusiasm of a festival, the name of which was only recently known to us, included in such an important duty. We are to show it to the friend and the foe, to make it heard to everyone, informed or not, that tomorrow is the day of the Newroz festival. And so we start the celebrations by lighting fires in the peaks...The idea of attributing a political meaning to a legend known to us through books, transforming a period mentioned in the legend into a festival day and celebrating that festival with mass participation, extending this celebration even beyond our geography, ascribing it to the people must be, without doubt, a creative one; however, that night, just how far they were, all those to happen years later, from me, from our thoughts, from my imagination... So it wrote in the book and Newroz happened to be our festival. We were celebrating this festival with fire... The next day we built a great fire in the yard of the high school... We held the govend around it, sang folksongs... Our repertoire of Kurdish folksongs was limited, we sang all the folksongs we knew and we ran out of them. As if to ask for help, we glanced at the people, who had climbed on the wall or perched on the small mounds, watching us, we hoped for help, but nobody joined us... Such kind of Newroz meeting had made no sense to the people and they were content with watching us ... they did not yet possess our excitement...

IV.2.b. “Contemporary Kawa”

After the 1980 coup, PKK (Workers Party of Kurdistan) became the most dominant power of the Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey and succeeded in receiving considerable support from Kurds. Hirschler argues that “The rise of Kurdish nationalism since 1980’s is also a consequence of the extremely severe policy adopted after the coup d’etat towards the expression of minority identities” (2001: 146). Hirschler’s claim is justified by the success of the discourse of “resistance” grounded on Newroz by the PKK, on the basis of the events in Diyarbakır Prison. The policy of violence executed by Captain Esat Oktay Yıldırım has been interpreted as an example of the policy of intimidating the Kurds.¹⁰⁵ Selim Çürükkaya explains

¹⁰⁴ Artı Gündem, (supplement to Yeni Gündem in 2000), 17 March 2001.

¹⁰⁵ This idea was particularly put forward by the PKK. However, members of other movements defend similar views as well. For instance, in the interview conducted with F. Kanat, he interpreted the events in the prison as such: “Kurdish people were put to a test in the case of Diyarbakır Prison”. Mehdi

in his book “12 Eylül Karanlığında Diyarbakır Şafağı”, commonly read by the supporters of PKK, how this policy of intimidation was inverted. According to Çürükkaya, just when it seemed that the policy of daunting and intimidation executed in the prison by Captain Esat Oktay Yıldırım were yielding results, the PKK captives initiated resistance in the aftermath of the event in which four prisoners set themselves on fire, following Mazlum Doğan who hang himself on the night of 21 March in 1982¹⁰⁶, and defeated this policy of intimidation.¹⁰⁷ PKK, placing this resistance in the Diyarbakır Prison into the centre of its discourse¹⁰⁸, proclaimed Newroz as the “symbol of the ideology of resistance”.¹⁰⁹ Mehmet Can Yüce, in an

Zana, who was also present in the Diyarbakır Prison during that period, told in the interview conducted with him about the violence they were exposed to.

¹⁰⁶ In the subsequent narrations of Newroz, the hanging one of Mazlum Doğan was made to give the impression that he set himself on fire, in conformity with the cult of fire in the Newroz myth.

¹⁰⁷ In the interview conducted with him, Mehdi Zana interpreted Mazlum Doğan’s action as such: “Well of course, giving a message to the enemy, this is me, I exist, you are in no position to intimidate me, and this is the essential point. He puts together all activities, all ideas, the future there, integrating them with one action there. From then on, everything belongs in that action; Kurdish flag, Kurdish history, its language, its existence, its being, its past and future, all are in that action. This is a commitment; they are the symbols of this commitment. This is symbolized there, vitalized there. That is the purpose, everything else is a detail, it is not an issue... whether his pants were short or long, this is unimportant, whether it was the afternoon or the evening... The action matters, the purpose matters.”

¹⁰⁸ Celal Başlangıç’s narration of a Newroz celebration held at a cinema in Diyarbakır in 1991, demonstrates the new relationship established between Newroz and Diyarbakır Prison and how widespread its endorsement is: “...The bus departs. A colonel dressed officially is present among the passengers as well. As he looks out of the window, the colonel starts to talk: ‘What a beautiful country is this. Look at those buildings, those parks...’ He turns to the person next to him and asks: ‘Where are you from?’ The person next to him replies: ‘I am from Diyarbakır’ while he jumps to his feet and points his hand shaped like a gun to the colonel. His voice is determined: ‘Esat Oktay Yıldırım, I condemn you to death in the name of the Kurdish people...’ Three gun shots... The colonel tumbles... When the lights are turned on, all three floors of the Dilan Cinema are being battered with applause. Terrified, I was watching this scene at the backstage of the Dilan Cinema. The Cinema was jam-packed with people. One could not help asking ‘Where are we going?’, since that scene in the ‘Newroz’ of 1991 filled one’s soul with pessimism regarding the future of the country. The two floor balconies of the cinema were occupied by the youth, women and the elderly. Almost everyone had candles in their hands. The saloon sparkled even when the lights were turned off. As the actors exit the stage, the audience shouted ‘Biji Kurdistan’. It was estimated that six thousand people were able to enter the saloon. And almost an approximate number was left outside...” (Celal Başlangıç, *Radikal*, 23 March 2003).

¹⁰⁹ Karaca, M, *Özgür Halk*, March 1997. Karaca indicated this as such: “Naturally, it is not only our history that guides us. Marxist-Leninist ideology and scientific socialism illuminates us. Our ideology of resistance is formed on the basis of living independently and freely. *Newroz stands as the symbol of our ideology of resistance*. This is because we are the representatives, in the 20. Century and in the future, of our people who do not wish to live under captivity... As the resistant-revolutionary powers

article he wrote on Newroz, published in the journal *Özgür Halk*,¹¹⁰ explained the meaning of Mazlum Doğan's action for the PKK and Kurdish people as such:

On March 21st in Diyarbakır Prison, Mazlum Doğan became a milestone in the history of UKM [Ulusal Kurtuluş Mücadelesi - Struggle for National Liberation]. From then on, he was to be commemorated as the contemporary Kawa. In fact, 21 March 1982, signifies a very critical date in terms of our people and the history of our struggle. *It was just the time when the matter of life and death forced itself. Something had to be done without fail. Or else the Kurd was to be carved in concrete, never to be uncovered again...* Resistance was necessary and imperative. But how? This was the question being asked by those who had a fire burning in their hearts for the party, the people and the revolution. In such a critical period, on the day the day turned towards spring, on the Kurd's festival day 21 March, Newroz, Mazlum Doğan put an end to the search and discussions: He transformed the *historical NEWROZ* into a new day for progress in UKM. The sparkle was lit; the pitch-black darkness was brightened up. Hearts were filled with the hope for liberation. This sparkle would ignite the 'plain' of the Kurd, transforming it into the serhildan rising in waves. What mattered was the igniting of the hearts, the opening up of the horizon. Mazlum's action realized this. *He was a manifesto for the resistances in dungeons as well as for the guerrilla and the serhildan; he would determine the way* [emphasizes are added].¹¹¹

As seen, the class based emphasis present in the pre 1980 discourse on Newroz was replaced by an ethnicity based emphasis in the discourse of PKK. Newroz was being founded as the day the Kurdish people, who were attempted to be destroyed, initiated resistance. For this resistance, Mazlum Doğan's suicide action in the Diyarbakır Prison on 21 March 1982 was taken as basis.¹¹² Mazlum Doğan was named as the "contemporary Kawa". On the 21 March 1990, a woman named Zekiye Alkan who was a student at the Faculty of Medicine at the Dicle University poured gasoline over herself and set herself on fire.¹¹³ This event was combined with the suicide of Mazlum Doğan in Diyarbakır Prison and used as a cornerstone in the formation of the "Contemporary Kawa" myth. In relation to the ethnicity based emphasis in the

of today in acquiring for our people a free and happy tomorrow, we are also jointly writing down a history to be elaborated and analyzed" [emphasis is added].

¹¹⁰ The journal *Özgür Halk*, which first began to be published in 15 November 1990, had a fairly large reader mass. Besides, through its offices and its staff, the articles in the journal could be introduced to the illiterate sections of society. It may be argued that, as it happened in the *Özgür Gündem* and later on *Demokrasi*, *Yeni Gündem*, etc. newspapers, this journal reached a number of people that actually exceeded its circulation.

¹¹¹ *Özgür Halk*, March 1997.

¹¹² PKK almost rejected the inheritance on Newroz originating from the Kurdish movements of the pre-1980 period. "Since they failed to situate any of our national values in its proper place, the leaderships observed in the history of the Kurdish resistance movements have also failed to enhance the NEWROZ day through elements which are new to its essence" (ibid).

new Newroz discourse, PKK particularly emphasized that Newroz was a “unifying” element which “improved national ties”. Mehmet Can Yüce expressed this point as such:

Due to the fact that Newroz has always been a crucial element of our popular culture, it has continuously possessed a unifying, integrating function... Through the process of national liberation, Newroz has come to embody a richer content and to appear as a nationalizing, unifying high value.¹¹⁴

In addition to this, PKK demanded that Newroz be celebrated not as a “national festival”, but as a “rebellion day”:

Frankly, up to this time, our people have somewhat celebrated Newroz as a festival. We said that this is a natural outcome, but as a matter of fact NEWROZ day should be assigned its genuine meaning and value. For the Kurdish people today, NEWROZ does not signify a day of festival, but one for liberation from captivity and resistance to that end. The action of Mazlum Doğan who ended his life in the Diyarbakır Military Prison in order to protest torture, pressure and tyranny, which was timely, arranged for the NEWROZ night on 21 March; likewise ZEKİYE ALKAN’s setting her youthful body on fire on the city walls of Diyarbakır and seizing the occasion for 21 March NEWROZ, are much meaningful. And these are actions which assign the NEWROZ day its genuine meaning. Therefore it would not be right to celebrate NEWROZ in a festival mood, thereby rendering it contentless.¹¹⁵

On the other hand, the traditional Kawa narrative was continued to be used as part of the discourse of resistance. Particularly, the resemblance between the “cruel T.C.”¹¹⁶ and the Assyrian King Dahhak and the position of Kawa the Smith as the “national leader” were frequently emphasized:

There is an amount of truth in every mythological event and we believe that, Kurds, in fighting against the Assyrian dominance, stood as the leaders of fighting people. “KAWA battle with DEHAK the tyrant” in fact amounts to nothing more than the battle of Kurdish people “to exist, to acquire a homeland”. In 612 B.C., Meds utterly destroy Ninova, the capital city of the Assyrian Empire which had hitherto established a colonial sovereignty in the region. This is part of the reason for the celebration as a festival of the NEWROZ day which expresses the liberation of Kurds from captivity and which is also known as the “occasion of building fire on the mountains.”¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Hürriyet, 23 March 1990.

¹¹⁴ *Özgür Halk*, March 1997.

¹¹⁵ Karaca, M., *Özgür Halk*, Vol 5.

¹¹⁶ The initial words of *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti* (Turkish Republic).

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

The Newroz myth of PKK, on the one hand established continuity between the past and the present as in the construction of a classical national myth. On the other hand, in conformity with the Marxist origin of the party and similar to the Kurdish movements of the pre 1980 period, the striving for the “acquisition of a revolutionary core” by the past was considered as the duty of a revolutionary organization. The words of Mehmet Karaca quoted below demonstrate one of the plainest expressions of this:

As our country continues to stay in a colonial condition, every day of this situation would necessitate a different form of struggle... For centuries the Kurdish people have fought devoid of its revolutionary self power. However, in today’s conditions, we should render dominant a new understanding-resistance in Newroz celebrations. And we should carry this out through advances that comply with the new period. This situation does not come to mean that we shall not participate in the sentiments and delight for ‘Festival’ on the day of Newroz, felt- not that much though- by our people. Newroz is the liberation day of our people from an enslaving captivity thousands years ago. (Today it is once more placed under captivity). While commemorating the past historical values of their people, sharing their sentiments, the revolutionaries are, at the same time; under the obligation to have these values acquire a forward acceleration, an organized and rational essence.¹¹⁸

It can be stated that the Kurdish movements of the post 1970 period, constructed Newroz and the Kawa legend, perceiving it as a suitable tradition for creating counter-hegemony. These movements placed emphasis on the class character of Kawa rather than his Kurdish origins. They constructed him as the leader of the people who, raising his smock as a flag, initiated resistance against the cruels. However, this process of construction was interrupted by the military coup in 1980; this version of Newroz did not have enough time to enjoy popular endorsement. In the aftermath of the military coup, the policy of the strict denial of Kurdishness and the intensive violence exerted on the Kurdish nationalists accelerated the process of Kurdish identity construction. In such conditions, Newroz, inherited from the pre-1980 period, was situated by PKK into the heart of its discourse. On the other hand, again as a consequence of the changing conditions, the characteristics of this myth underwent change as well. Kawa the Smith was reconstructed as the Contemporary Kawa. The Contemporary Kawa was also poor; however, rather than a “proletarian vanguard”, he was more a self sacrificing hero in order “to revive the Kurdishness, which was attempted to be destroyed”. The Newroz myth constructed by the PKK

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

share a common denominator with the *Jin* Journal and İhsan Nuri in terms of its ethnicity based orientations. However, it should be indicated that, as a surviving representative of the Kurdish movements of the 1970's, PKK was the inheritor of these movements despite the transformations it experienced. In this sense, PKK's approach to Newroz can be evaluated within the same context as the perceptions of Newroz as a tool for creating counter hegemony by the pre 1980 Kurdish movements. Thus, Newroz is an ideological tool for the PKK, utilized in order to create a revolutionary Kurdish national unity.

As a consequence of such a standing, one of the most distinguishing aspects of PKK's discourse on Newroz, compared to the previous period is the vague language employed by it. Against the "cruel T.C", the expression "oppressed Kurds" is situated, which lack definition in terms of its origins, ethnic boundaries or even class basis. It is expected of these "oppressed Kurds" to "resist", to "rebel". The actual anticipations at the end of this rebellion are not designated and are subject to periodical changes. Therefore, the inclusiveness of this language is so wide that it is able to address Kurds belonging to all kinds of class and ethno-cultural background. The imagination by these people of the "new homeland" to be established can vary in accordance with the actual person imagining it. Therefore, this kind of imagination enables these people to isolate those features of "T.C." they suffer from and rebel against them only. To conclude, in such a discourse, the Newroz myth constitutes on the one hand, an "alternative story" against the hegemonic culture for Kurds. It also functions at the same time as a fairly successful tool for "identity transfer".

CHAPTER V

NEWROZ AS AN IDEOLOGICAL BATTLEFIELD

The PKK, which succeeded to attain a great mass support especially in the 1990s, declared Newroz as “the symbol of resistance” and located it in the center of its discourse. In accordance with this, it defined Newroz days as “the days of rebellion (*serhildan*) against cruel T.C.” Therefore, Newroz became PKK’s exhibition space of mass support it had. Because of the fact that the armed forces responded very harshly to PKK’s actions and mass demonstrations, there occurred great clashes on the days of Newroz. On the other hand, in response to the PKK’s success in utilizing the Newroz as an ideological means, the state adopted the discourse of “Nevruz as the Turkish Ergenekon Festival”. Thus, Newroz was located into state’s discourse that denied a separate Kurdish identity by declaring it as Turkish festival. This new discourse was attempted to legitimize/locate by various state institutions. Therefore, began a great struggle, which was knotted in the writing of the name of festival with whether “w”, or “v”; Newroz (*Nevruz*) transformed into an ideological battlefield. In this chapter, this contradictory, patchworked, and versatile process is discussed. In order to grasp why Newroz gained such an importance, firstly, the events developed between 1990 and 1992, the actions made, and how they were evaluated are explored. Then, it will be discussed why and how Newroz was constructed as “Turkish Ergenekon Festival”, and which practices were performed to legitimize and locate it. In relation to this, PKK’s ideological and armed struggle against the state, and the ruptures this struggle caused in its discourse in connection with the momentums of this struggle, are described. Finally, on the basis of articles in the newspapers, it is discussed how different political circles evaluated the struggle.

V.1. Newroz Appears as a “National Security” Problem

As Hirschler argues, after 1980 coup any implicit recognition of Kurdishness as socio-cultural reality was entirely excluded (2001: 146). In 1983 it introduced Law 2932 prohibiting the use of Kurdish with the article that “The mother tongue of the Turkish citizen is Turkish. It is forbidden: (a) to develop any form of activity in which a language other than Turkish is used and disseminated as the mother tongue; (b) at gatherings, or demonstration to carry posters, banners, signs, or other such objects written in another language... or broadcast records, tapes, or video-cassettes, or other objects of the media in another language, without the consent of the highest official in the region (Art.3). The aim of the Law was justified in its first article as such: in order to protect the indivisible unity of the state, with its land and nation; the national sovereignty, the national security, and public order” (McDowall, 1996: 424-5). By 1986, 2842 villages were renamed in Adıyaman, Gaziantep, Urfa, Mardin, Siirt and Diyarbakır (ibid, p. 425). On the other hand, in accordance to the Article 134 of the 1982 Constitution Atatürk Higher Institution of Language and History (*Atatürk Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu*) was founded. Thus, Turkish Language Institution (Türk Dil Kurumu) and Turkish History Institution (Türk Tarih Kurumu) were revived.

The policy of the post-1980 regime regarding the Kurds was not limited with these legal regulations. In the last years of the 1970s, security forces applied pressure in some of the cities inhabited by the Kurds to annihilate the strengthened Kurdish nationalism.¹¹⁹ As Olson argues, “the regime’s indiscriminate repression in the southeast and east helped the PKK gain many adherents, a large number of whom were in prison in Diyarbakır” (1996: 22). After PKK started the armed struggle in 1984, the combination of PKK operations and state violence in response progressively radicalized Kurdish population (Olson, 1996: 29, McDowall, 1996: 426). In 1990 besides having a quite organized military force, PKK gained a considerable mass support too.

¹¹⁹ For assertions of torture and killing against the peasants and political prisoners, see McDowall, 1996: especially p. 425.

The gravity of this mass support appeared during Newroz celebration in 1990.¹²⁰ In 20 March 1990, 10 thousand people participated in the demonstration march in Cizre, which was organized to protest the events happened in Nusaybin during the funeral of 13 guerillas who were killed in 13th March 1990 (The families of the killed guerillas dared to claim the bodies and then this turned into a mass demonstration against the state forces) (McDowall, 1996: 427). By the intervention of the security forces, four people were killed, 149 were arrested.¹²¹ Pulling-down-the-shutter action was started in İdil and Silopi to protest the events, and this interrupted the ongoing of everyday life of the districts.¹²² In Diyarbakır E-type and Gaziantep special type prisons, political prisoners instigated hunger strikes. Leftist university students in İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Adana and Erzurum performed actions for Newroz in 21st March 1990. They expressed their support in these actions for the people of Nusaybin, Cizre, İdil and Silopi.¹²³

As a result of these events, the seriousness of (recent) Kurdish problem came into view. However, no consistent policy could be generated. The government passed a decree and strengthened the authority of the army.¹²⁴ However, SHP (Social Democratic Populist Party) applied to the Constitutional Court on the ground that the decree was against the law and the decree was redrafted with another one (Decree

¹²⁰ PKK's actions regarding Newroz first reflected in the newspapers in 1986. According to Hürriyet in the armed raid in the occasion of Newroz by PKK in Erzurum 11 people were killed and the transformers were set into fire (Hürriyet, 24 March 1986). In the Newroz of 1989 PKK and TKPML/TİKKO made armed actions (Tercüman, 21 March 1989).

¹²¹ Hürriyet, Milli Gazete, 22 March 1990 (Milli Gazete informed that 125 people were arrested.) Because of these events Minister of Internal Affairs went to Cizre. The head officer of Cizre claimed that the events were preplanned, the bust of Atatürk was devastated, and the Turkish flags were brought down in two state offices and set into fire.

¹²² Hürriyet, 22 March 1990

¹²³ Türkiye, 22 March 1990. The Türkiye newspaper informed that the actions were performed by students who "are belonged to leftist organizations and want to celebrate so-called 'Newroz Festival' " and that these students support the events in the Southeast. In the demonstration in the İstanbul University some of the placards said these: "Newroz Cejna Kurda Piroz Be- Young Socialists"; "The Newroz Fire is Illuminating the Kurdistan Mountains Long Live the Kurdistan People's Struggle for Freedom and Socialism", "Long Live Newroz! Long Live the Common Struggle of Kurdish and Turkish Peoples! Long Live Dev-Genç the Organized Power of Kurdish and Turkish Youth", "Newroz Cejna Kurde Qehreman- Newroz Tım Lı Kurd u Kurdistan" (ibid).

¹²⁴ Decree 413 was giving the governor-general powers to recommend the closure of any publishing anywhere in Turkey that 'falsely reflects events in the region or engages in untruthful reporting or commentary' (McDowall, 1996: 427). This meant practically censorship against getting information about developments. This decree also was giving the governor-general wider powers forcibly to

No 424). In 15 July 1990 SHP further published a report explaining the situation in the Southeast. This report was explicitly using the statement of “Kurdish problem” and emphasizing the significance of the concept of citizenship. The concept of citizenship was defined as “a political identity concept making the co-existence of the citizens of the republic meaningful, providing content and richness to it.”¹²⁵ McDowall states that this report “marked the beginning of visible stress within the heart of Turkish party politics” (1996: 428). Thus, not only the PKK actions but also the existence of Kurdish problem became debatable.

The formation of an autonomous region in northern Iraq which came into being after in 1991 has had multi-directional effects on the Kurdish problem in Turkey. This removed the basis of the solution for the problem by suppressing, granting some democratic rights or only as an “internal problem” of Turkey. During the Gulf War, about half a million Iraqi Kurds took refuge in Turkey. On the other hand state authorities made official meetings with the leaders of the Democratic Party of Kurdistan and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. Such a kind of situation created an incoherency in the official discourse, which denied the existence of Kurdish identity domestically. On the other hand, the Gulf War in 1991 provided the PKK with significant political and military room to maneuver (Olson, 1996: 21). This situation made Kurdish problem as a security issue much torrid. Under the impact of these developments, the state authorities adopted a multi-directional attitude. On the one hand, the Law 2932 was annulled. On the other hand, a brand new anti-terror law was put into force, which broadened the description of terror. This law defined terrorism as “any kind of action ... with the aim of changing the characteristics of the Republic” (McDowall, 1996: 429). Moreover, the military begun regular cross-border raids onto the PKK bases in northern Iraq. Thus, the struggle against the PKK was escalated militarily. In the late 1991, Demirel announced that Turkish Republic recognizes the Kurdish reality, but in the very same period there occurred increase in the number of unidentified murder. The PKK responded to this by killing a number of state officials (White, 2000: 223).

resettle “those persons whom it is deemed necessary ... in places which the Ministry of the Interior shall determine”. This decree was followed by a number of village evacuations (ibid).

¹²⁵ Cumhuriyet, 17 July 1990; Milliyet, 24 November 2005.

In 1992, violence escalated. Thus, this was the year during which violent actions reached its peak. In Şırnak, Cizre and Nusaybin, Newroz celebrations turned into a rebellion in the real sense of the word. Since the state forces retaliated with a great deal of violence, according to the report of SHP, 26 people in Şırnak, 29 in Cizre, and 14 in Nusaybin. Among them one was a police officer and one was a soldier.¹²⁶ More than two hundred persons were wounded and hundreds of people were arrested. Houses, workshops, and party centers were destroyed.¹²⁷ In Cizre, as a result of the fire set against the journalists, İzzet Kezer, the correspondent of *Sabah* newspaper lost his life.¹²⁸ Mesut Yılmaz, the chairman of Motherland Party, described the events as a rebellion.¹²⁹ In an article on Newroz, *Milli Gazete* used these expressions: “A civil war is taking place especially in Şırnak and Cizre.”¹³⁰ The observations of journalist Taşkın Erol, who was in Cizre for Newroz celebrations, are helpful to understand what happened in Şırnak and Cizre.

Those who were attacking the tanks and barriers by stones have now been multiplied in number and moreover this time *kalaşnikovs* had replaced the stones. The iron fist of the state, which had been used to crush the PKK, had wearied the innocent people and it had been alienated from its state which they had identified with truncheon, butt and torture. They called soldier as ‘T.C. Army’, and police as ‘T.C. Police’. As for PKK, for them, it was an ‘independence-liberty army’ which has carried out armed actions against T.C which, they believed, was suppressing and exploiting them. The people and state were alienated from each other at such an extent that, you could see ‘mutual anger’ in all eyes. Turks and Kurds were offended to each other... Often we heard that both police and soldiers proposed such solutions as ‘these places are over, we are wasting our time’. ‘We should be prepared to sacrifice one or to places, it will be a lesson to the others.’ The fact that solutions proposed were that terrifying was a psychological reflection of the environment in which they were living in. Everybody thinks that arm was the solution... But there were also some details that we could not understand. The Turkish flag on the panzers. On the plates, T.C. inscription instead of numbers. We could not understand why they were announcing from the speakers *Mehter* Anthem, which was used by Ottomans to encourage the soldiers when they were going to conquest. What kind of a message it was and to whom they were trying to give this message. What kind of a place was this Cizre (*Güneydoğu Notları: Nevruz'da ne Oldu*, 1992: 8-10)?

¹²⁶ *1992 Newroz Olayları*, 1992. According to the article of İhsan Dörtkardeş the number of the deaths in 1992's Nevruz were 52 in the city center of Şırnak, 10 in Cizre, 14 in Nusaybin, 3 in Gercüş, 3 in Yüksekova (Hürriyet, 21 March 1998).

¹²⁷ *1992 Newroz Olayları*, 1992.

¹²⁸ In the ‘Susurluk Report’ prepared by Kutlu Savaş, The President of Prime Ministry Council of Inspection, it was reported that İzzet Kezer was killed by state officials (Hürriyet, 21 March 1998).

¹²⁹ Tercüman, 23 March 1992.

¹³⁰ *Milli Gazete*, 24 March 1992.

Newroz demonstrations took place also in the big cities where Kurdish immigrants are densely living. In the Kadifekale neighborhood of İzmir, Reşşan Demirel, aged 18, poured gasoline on herself and fired herself.¹³¹ In Adana, two demonstrators were killed, and eight were wounded as a result of the clashes with the police.¹³² In the meantime, a fire was opened to a police station in Bursa.¹³³ In various districts of İstanbul armed clashes happened between the police and the demonstrators; a tax office and a bank branch were attacked by a Molotov cocktail.¹³⁴

As a result of these events the solution of Kurdish problem entered into a deep deadlock. 14 HEP (People's Labour Party) deputies who became the member of the parliament from the lists of SHP (Social Democratic Populist Party) resigned from SHP. According to Robins, this was the end of "the newborn relationship between the moderate Kurdish nationalism and liberal Turkish thinking" (quoted from Kirişçi and Winrow, 2002: 143). On the other hand, Council of Ministers defined the problem in its notification just after the events "absolutely not as an event of politics, but as an issue of state". It was stated that the unity of country and nation was the reason d'être of the state.¹³⁵ In the notification, the events were evaluated as such: "a separatist terror organization, behind which there are some sort of external forces and which has heavy arms in all forms, attacked the state with the aim of breaking a precious part of homeland off from our country, which is one of the most powerful states of the world and faced the response in the most determined manner".¹³⁶ Also in the notification it was added that the patriotic people of the region should know that they are the essential owners of this homeland.¹³⁷ This notification can be seen as an

¹³¹ Hürriyet, 23 March 1992.

¹³² Statement made by the Governorship of Adana. (Milli Gazete, 25 March 1992).

¹³³ Milli Gazete, 25 March 1992.

¹³⁴ Milli Gazete, 25 March 1992. Also in İstanbul a transportation vehicle carrying soldiers was opened fire, 2 were killed and 7 wounded. Among the death was a commander. The action was undertaken by Dev-Sol. The organization was declaring that "we punished MİT [National Information Bureau] members at 8.30 in the morning. We will brake the hands reaching the Kurdish people. We will not let the enmity formed between Turkish and Kurdish peoples" (ibid).

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid. About Newroz demonstrations some state officials also had some interesting declarations: For example, the governor of *OHAL* zone, Ünal Erkan made a speech which can be a signifier of the patriarchic character of state discourse. He mentioned discomfort of "region habitants" because of the demonstrations while he was declaring prohibition of demonstrations for the Newroz of 1992. According to Erkan, in Newroz days, some illegal demonstrations had done by hiding behind our

expression of the official state discourse which sees the recognition of Kurdish identity as “endangering the union of citizens who are by definition Turkish” (Hirschler, 2001: 148).

V.2. *Nevruz* as a “Turkish Ergenekon Festival”

It is understood that the ways out of this Newroz issue that threatened the “national unity” has long been explored within the official discourse. Basing on Abdulhaluk Çay’s book titled “*Nevruz, the Turkish Ergenekon Festival*”¹³⁸, the Ministry of Culture approved the thesis that the *Nevruz* was a Turkish festival and took the decision of celebrating 21 March as *Nevruz* festival beginning from 1991 all around Turkey. The Minister Namık Kemal Zeybek sent an official letter to all the provincial directorates of the ministry and declared that the *Nevruz* was to be celebrated in all provinces.¹³⁹ The Department of Research for Folk Culture (Halk Kültürünü Araştırma Dairesi) which organized the project of celebration of *Nevruz* in the whole country told that they decided for the celebration of *Nevruz* since it is an Asiatic-Turkic festival like “*Hıdırellez*”.¹⁴⁰ During the celebrations of *Nevruz* in Istanbul in 1992 the communiqué stating that *Nevruz* was the festival of the Turks were thrown from the police helicopters. It was asserted that the separatist factors operating against Turkey were attempting to seduce *Nevruz* by deceiving the public.¹⁴¹ The communiqué too was prepared on the basis of Çay’s book and published by the The Department of Research for Folk Culture.¹⁴²

Abdulhaluk Çay wrote his book, which was first published in 1985, not against the Newroz actions started by the PKK, but against the activities of the Kurdish movements abroad. In the ‘Foreword’ (*Sözbaşı*) chapter, Çay states that “separatist

moms, sisters and children. In our traditions the place of our moms and sisters is their home (Tercüman, 19 March 1992). President Süleyman Demirel made a declaration, after his meeting with HEP deputies before Newroz of 1992, that they are searching for solutions to conclude Newroz peacefully. He answered the question of if they find a solution just like that: “It is not a dyer cube that I will find the solution” (Boyacı küpü değil ki, çareyi ben bulacağım) (*Güneydoğu Notları: Nevruz’da ne Oldu*, 1992: 77).

¹³⁸Türkiye, 21 March 1991.

¹³⁹ Tercüman, Türkiye, 21 March 1991.

¹⁴⁰ Türkiye, Milli Gazete, 21 March 1991.

¹⁴¹ Milli Gazete, 22 March 1992.

¹⁴² Ibid.

factors who are active especially abroad try to claim our national cultural values, to distort them, and to mislead world public by utilizing the false information as propaganda factor.” According to him “to degenerate, to destroy the national culture, and to cause suspicion over the factors of national culture”, “to look for other possessors over national culture values” are the method of the enemies of Turkishness and the strategy of imperialist policies which have the aim of conquering the fortress from within (1985: Preface). As an attempt in this direction, *Nevruz*, which is originally a Turkish festival, is re-manifested with the meanings such as rebellion, revolt and war for “so-called Kurdish communities”.¹⁴³ For Çay, *Nevruz* is the festival of “the day of Turks’ leaving of Ergenekon”.¹⁴⁴ “That day, 21

¹⁴³ Çay mentions below about such an approach to Newroz by quoting from a writing called “Struggle with Racism and Newroz” which was published in journal *Özgürlük Yolu*: “Marxists and Leninist circles tried to equate the murder of 69 blacks in South Africa Association on 21 March 1960 and acceptance of this event as ‘day for struggling day by United Nations with Nevruz events in Kurdish community’. According to their mind; *rebellion, insurrection, war, massacre* [stresses belonging to him] were integrated with Nevruz event. There is no directly and indirectly relation between this approach and concept of ‘festival’. Festivals are days when people hug themselves, make peace and forget about unfriendliness among them. Festivals are days when national integration and unity and also desire to live together are strengthened. Festivals are days when national and religious feelings, beliefs, customs are displayed, and a day when consciousness of being a nation in a society is shaped. With this definition, Nevruz custom is a national festival coming from history of Turkish community that was expansive from East Turkistan to Anatolia, from Anatolia to Balkans and still exists” (1985: 19).

¹⁴⁴ It was mentioned that *Nevruz* is a Turkish Ergenekon Festival by Abdülbaki Gölpinarlı in a newspaper article “Nevruz Yenigün” (Nevruz New Day) in 1957 (Vatan Newspaper, 22 March 1957), by Süheyl Ünver in a newspaper article “Bugün Nevruz” (Today is Nevruz) in 1967 (Haber Newspaper, 21 March 1967, Yearbook of Our Medicine History, I) and by Nizamettin Onk in an article in Turkish Culture Magazine (Turkish Culture Magazine, Vol.119, p. 48). However, these articles did not have repercussions till 1980. For instance, Ahmet Kabaklı in an article on 1 January 1974 complained about the fact that Nevruz Festival was not claimed. On the other hand, his reprehension was not about the claim of Kurds to *Nevruz* but rather about the celebration of a “*gavur*” (non-muslim) New Year day which was replaced with “our national festival”. He himself learned this national festival and how to celebrate it from Nizamettin Onk: “We lost ourselves in every area, we have to find ourselves by looking for; otherwise, we can have a difficulty in living and clinging in such a complicated and confused world. There is no need to derive enemy from external, we continue to derive our enemy from internal and finally we are stuck in calamity... What is the necessary to make a New Year day for the other prophet’s birth within an aim of causing to forget our prophet? No need to make a comparison but our Noel is said Hızır Aleyhisselam. He is the person who brings abundance, foliage to our ancestors. From the time being, our national New Year day is the beginning of Muharrem... In Turk, Iran and Islam... 22 March which is called ‘Ergenekon and Nevruz’ is our cheerful happy new year ceremony” (Tercüman; 1 January 1974). The first writing written after 1980 forming a source about a claim of *Nevruz* as a Ergenekon Festival is “*Şi’a’nın Bayramlarından Nevruz*” by a Bektaşî chief called Bedri Noyan with a appellation “Dedebaba” (Turkish Language and Literature Researches Magazine II, Prof. Dr. Harun Tolasa, Special Publication, İzmir 1983, p. 101-127, Ege University Literature Faculty Publishing). Noyan says that *Nevruz* is a big festival in *Bektaşî*. According to Noyan, Nevruz is a festival among *Bektaşî*’s because it is known as the birth of Hz. Ali; wedding day of Hz. Ali and Fâtımatü’z-Zehrâ; a day of Turks when the migration to uplands from downlands was started with the coming of new spring, movement of Sun from Pisces to Aries,

March when the *independence was won* (emphasis original) caused the emergence of a tradition among the Turks and this tradition has endured until today.” (1985:192) This festival has been celebrated traditionally among the Turks in Central Asia, Caucasias, Crimea, Kazan, Balkans and in Anatolia as Ergenekon/Nevruz Festival (ibid, pp. 47-118). Moreover, Çay claims that *Nevruz* celebrations were made during Republican Era. As evidence to this claim he offers a telegram dated 24 March 1337 (1918) sent from Neriman Nerimanof, the head of government of Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic, to Mustafa Kemal and Mustafa Kemal’s participation to the *Nevruz* celebrations in Ankara in 1925.¹⁴⁵

end of winter and start of spring (ibid). Noyan takes his root about Turkish Ergenekon Festival from Süheyl Ünver. An other important article that claims *Nevruz* is a Turkish Ergenekon Festival was published by Hayri Başbuğ, in 1985 (Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Dergisi, 1985). Başbuğ wrote his article against Newroz understanding which was established by the socialist Kurdish movements. Since he named Kurds as “*Kürttürkleri*” (Kurdishturks), every cultural item which is owned by Kurds was defined as part of Turkish culture. Thus, he did not attempt to deny that Newroz was also celebrated by the Kurds. *Kürttürks* also celebrate *Nevruz* just like their same race members of Turkish clans. They have the same view point of *Nevruz* with them. Although *Nevruz* as a word, originated from Persian language, it carries the same national meaning gets its source from Turkish culture among all Turkish clans including *Kürttürks*” (p. 86) Başbuğ objects to content of Newroz, which is interpreted around Marxist theory and presenting it as a “national independence day” by “the separators” (p. 74). According to Başbuğ, *Nevruz* which is celebrated among *Kürttürks* can be analyzed in two meanings; former one is “spring festival”, latter is “Festival of Leaving Ergenekon” (pp. 96-9). For one of the last version of the claim that *Nevruz* is a Turkish Ergenekon Festival, see Mehmet Kaya, 2002: “*Bilge Tonyukuk mu Demirci Gave mi?*”

¹⁴⁵ The importance of this book has increased after its acceptance by state officials for *Nevruz* discourse. Çay, made some “essential additions” to his book over time. For instance, 219 paged first edition of his book in 1985; reached to 555 pages at its 8th edition in 1999. Subtitle called “*Anadolu’da Nevruz/Ergenekon Bayramı*” (Nevruz/Ergenekon festival in Anatolia) a total of 12 pages in its first edition is turned into a main section titled as “Osmanlı Devleti’nden Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’ne Anadolu’da Ergenekon/Nevruz Bayramı” (Nevruz/Ergenekon Festival in Anatolia From Ottoman State to Turkish Republic) which has 135 pages in 1999. A chapter was also included to the subtitle named “*Demirci Kava ve Nevruz*” (Kava the Smith and Nevruz) which did not exist in the 1985 edition. In this chapter, Çay claims “Today it is still uncertain who Kava is, when he lived, his real role of in events, from which race or nationality he is, where the notion of dealing with smithery comes from. Claims by ideologists who want to make *Nevruz* as a *myth* [emphasized by him] of Kurdish movement have no scientific and historical bases (1999: 16). Furthermore Çay, added one more rumor which was not exist in 1985 edition, in section titled as “*Nevruz Hakkında İslami Rivayetler*” (Islamic Rumors about Nevruz) with the following words: “King Salomon’s punishment for 40 days by God and during this time country was ruled by devil has made related to *Nevruz*. Prays of repentant sinner Salomon was accepted by God and given the ring which symbolizes the sovereignty in a *Nevruz* Day. Salomon sent his concubines who got pregnant from devil to exile on *Nevruz* day. According to Arabic rumors, communities named as Kurds coming from these children. The legend which political Kurdistans are looking for an origin for themselves and the day which they are claiming as Kurdish Festival, is actually this exile day. Thus, it is not a Kurdish Festival. A community does not accept a disaster day as a festival for themselves. Even this point itself is a conspicuous example that shows there is no relation between political Kurdistan and *Nevruz*” (1999: 22).

This attempt toward adopting Newroz as a Turkish festival can be claimed to be an attempt to include a space which has been “neglected” or “excluded” by the hegemonic culture. Used as a means of “distinguishing” the Kurds by the Kurdish nationalists, Newroz has been attempted to be presented as an element of the category of Turkishness. Thus the Newroz celebrations which could not be hindered were absorbed by the official discourse, as a celebration of a festival within Turkish culture and by the citizens who were deemed to be Turks. At the same time it is understood that there is another aim in accepting Newroz as a traditional Turkish festival: after the collapse of Soviet Union, it was attempted to create links through Turkishness with the newly independent Turkic republics in order to build economic and politic cooperation. Since it is understood that the *Nevruz* Festival had been traditionally celebrated ¹⁴⁶ in these republics, this festival was attached importance as an indication of common culture with these republics. As well, the celebration of *Nevruz* in these republics became presentable evidence that the *Nevruz* was a Turkish festival.

Türk Kurultayı held in 21 March 1993 was a huge ostentation exhibiting the attempts of building common cultural ties with Turkic republics in order to attain economic and political gains from them. This congress was organized in Antalya with the great efforts of Alparslan Türkeş, the head of NAP (Nationalist Action Party). The president Turgut Özal, the Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel, the General Secretary of SHP Erdal Inonu, the General Secretary of NAP Alpaslan Türkeş, Azerbaijan Prime Minister Ali Messimov, Tataristan Prime Minister Sabinov, Chechnya Prime Minister Yeragi Mamadezov, Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş and Minister of Culture Fikri Sağlar participated in the congress. From the early hours of the day *Mehter* Band played anthems in the holiday village where the congress was held. Grey wolf pictures were nailed on the walls of the congress hall. Exit from the Ergenekon was presented via multivision demonstration. After this demonstration the leaders dramatized Ergenekon Legend by forging on an anvil. Stating that the Turkic

¹⁴⁶ Because of being a part of Ancient Great Iran, Newroz festival was also exists in these republics. After gaining their independency, these republics gave great importance to Newroz besides other traditions related with constructing their national and cultural unity. Newroz was declared as a national festival at many of these countries (see Saparalin, 1993: 29-30, Koraboyev, 1993: 45).

world which rose altogether went expedition every day, President Özal said that “pendulum of Turkish history was as low as possible. From now on the whole world was going to watch the ascent of the Turkic world in the pendulum of history.” Özal also declared that formation of a status quo and political structure outside of Turkey in the New World Order was impossible and that if being late in beginning tomorrow would be too late. The Prime Minister Demirel told that the congress was two centuries late and the Eurasia extending from Adriatic to Central Asia was the new Turkic world. Demirel added that “It is a new Ergenekon. The name of the continent known as Eurasia is Turkic World.” Demirel ended like this: “Great Turkish Nation! Good luck! May the sun never set in your skies.” İnönü cut short his speech by saying that “no more left to me to say.” Türkeş emphasized the necessity of building a Turkish unity and stated the importance of cultural and social cooperation between Turkic Republics.¹⁴⁷

This new approach in the form of absorbing Newroz into the Turkish nationalist discourse was not adopted without hesitation by everybody who was in the center of this discourse. For instance, Kemalist academician Talat Tekin opposed to the idea of the *Nevruz* as a “Turkish Ergenekon Festival”. In his article concerning the Turkish Congress in *Cumhuriyet* newspaper, Talat Tekin stated that the evidence of the fact that Newroz is an “Iranian” festival is the Persian name of the festival itself and to argue that it is a Turkish festival is ridiculous. Moreover, he claimed that the Ergenekon legend which was first introduced into Turkish literature by Ziya Gökalp was itself a Mongol legend and that the primary source of the narrative of this legend was Ebhulghazi Bahadır Khan’s ‘Ancestry of Turks’ (*Şecere-i Türk*) in which this legend took part as a Mongol legend of genesis. On the other hand, Tekin suggested that it is possible to give better examples from the long history of the Turks:

Take Iran’s or Iranians’ 2500 years of Nevruz Festival, then integrate it into Mongol legend of genesis and set out to celebrate it with forging on the anvil...I wonder if there is no sufficient festival to celebrate or sufficient events to remember in the

¹⁴⁷ Hürriyet, Tercüman, Milli Gazete, 22 March 1993. Especially, *Kurultay*’s analysis of Ali Budak from Tercüman is worth attention. “... Yesterday’s enemy camps are walking for the same purpose today. Especially I gave attention, both Erdal İnönü and Fikri Sağlar applauded Başbuğ Türkeş with the same vigor. That was the missed picture. Formerly we were Turk, latter we were rightist, or leftist. Just like Demirel said, we were writing a new Ergenekon Legend. Seven flag at one pole!” (Tercüman, 22 March 1993).

Turkish history of 1500 years that we are setting out to such ‘appropriating’ and falling into ridicule?¹⁴⁸

Çay accused Talat Tekin of being anti-Turk. He pointed that in some separatist-Kurdish circles, through some Turkish scientists, it is claimed that *Nevruz* is Ergenekonized. “It is seen that some of the overly well-known persons in disguise of scientist agree with these ‘anti-Turk’ claims. Those persons who felt discomfort with the national revival in Turkey formed a rejection front that assumed an attitude against the elements of the Turk and Turkishness” (Çay, 1999:39). The accusation of Talat Tekin in such a form in terms of supporting the “separatist-Kurdish” circles and of advocating “anti-Turk” efforts is an example of an attempt to fix the meaning of Newroz. On the other hand, the work of making Newroz “unaccentual” was undertaken institutionally by the Presidency of Atatürk Cultural Center.

The academic premises of state discourse concerning *Nevruz*, which have been fragmented up until that time began to be provided from one institution, the Presidency of Atatürk Cultural Center which was founded in September 1983 as a branch of Atatürk Higher Institution of Language and History. It would be beneficial to review some of the principles of this institution and its branches in order to grasp the founding premises and functions of it:

- To act in the direction to strengthen the gathering of Turkish citizens in total with national honor and pride, in national joy and grief, as a common and indivisible entity and around the national culture and ideals.
- In national solidarity and integrity, to regard the Atatürkist ideas, Atatürk Principles and Revolutions, Values of Culture, Language and History as a unifying force, to adopt foundation of *scientifically refuting foreign and dividing streams in all kind*.
- To act in the direction of preserving and guarding the requirements of national unity and national tradition;
- In examining the Turkish History, the History of Turkey and the related subjects to them, and the services that the Turks made for the civilization, to adopt the basis that our history and our national historical values are a unifying force and to make Turkish nation claim its history which is suitable for its glorious past.¹⁴⁹

The institution organized five International Knowledge festivals for *Nevruz*, published a book titled “*Nevruz ve Renkler*” (*Nevruz and Colors*) by Reşat Genç, the

¹⁴⁸ Cumhuriyet, 19 April 1993.

president of ACCD in 1996 and an encyclopedia named “Turkic World Nevruz Encyclopedia” in 2004. Also some articles on *Nevruz* were published in the journal of *Bilge* (Wise) by this institution. The basic theses of the institution regarding *Nevruz* have close affinities with Abdulhaluk Çay’s arguments. Added to them was that *Nevruz* had been a spring festival tradition of Turks since Mete Khan’s time in 3rd century B.C. It was asserted that “as a ring of the historical chain” from the Khuns to the Uygurs, from the Seljuks to the Akkoyuns, the Ottomans were also celebrating the *Nevruz*. The basic emphasis of the institution was that the *Nevruz* tradition has been preserved among Kazak Turks, Uzbek Turks, Kirghiz Turks, Azerbaijan Turks, in Tataristan, among Gagauzs, Turkey Turks, Turkomans, Iraqi, Iranian, Iraqi Turks and Balkanian Turks. In order to prove this, academicians from the former Soviet Republics were invited to the Knowledge Festivals.

By the first international knowledge festival by the theme of *Nevruz* in Turkish World organized by the ACCD, *Nevruz* was officially celebrated for the first time in 1995. ACCD President Sadık Tural stated in his opening speech that their aim was to “disabuse the concepts and the terms from the turbidity”:

Most of the concepts and the terms in the Turkish World are turbid... New ideas which will be produced by people who have enlightened thoughts and sound reasoning can save the concepts and the terms from the turbidity... In the style of approach of primarily Turkish World, and then of the Islam World, whose center is this country, to the concepts and the terms, if serious and grave responses are not produced this fouling and turbidity will increase and reached to the level of anomaly. One of the concepts that the internal and external sedition focuses attempt to use is, because of its turbidity, the Nevruz concept.... However, those who do not have sufficient knowledge, responsibility and the conscious of national unity try to evaluate, in a different manner, the *Yengi Kün*, *Ulustın-Uluğ Kün*i festival or conceit which the Turks have been celebrating for two thousand years. The use of Nevruz for a turbidity of concept and term, and a pollution of mentality obliged us to organize a scientific meeting concerning this issue [emphasizes are added].¹⁵⁰

In his speech, Minister of State, Ayvaz Gökdemir was expressing his gladness towards ACCD’s dealing with the *Nevruz* as such:

¹⁴⁹ <http://www.akmb.gov.tr/turkce/kurulus.htm>.

¹⁵⁰ See <http://www.akmb.gov.tr>.

In one period, some separatists disquieted our people in a manner of a rebellion day by locating it into the version of struggle between the tyrant sultan in Iran and the Gavê-Kava the Smith and by abusing it. However, after a 80 years of *an official negligence* and especially after seeing the condition of our brothers who regained their independence, our state reclaimed the event and this value of our national culture, which we share with other neighbor nations we lived together in Central Asia, Middle East, North Africa, in the same administration, enlivened again. Especially this year, it was dealt with much widely. Both in our capital and in outside provinces spring festival celebrations are made. Our Ministry of Culture, Foreign Ministry and Atatürk Higher Institute handled Nevruz, and the celebrations were set out with great enthusiasm and as a day of unity and togetherness” [emphasizes are added]¹⁵¹

Prime Minister Tansu Çiller participated in the celebration too. In her speech, Çiller stated that the *Nevruz* was the common festival of all Turkish World and that it was celebrated in each corner of the Turkish World.¹⁵² It was interesting for Çiller to tell this, because the year before, in 1994, she said she would ensure *Nevruz* to be celebrated as an official festival. However, the stress in her justification was not on the fact that the *Nevruz* was a common festival of the Turkish World, but on “sharing of a tradition which the east has been maintaining, by the whole country”. Çiller expressed it as such: “If we were able to become martyr altogether in the War of Independence, in the War of Dardanelles and all around Anatolia, we have to be together in the festival. Nevruz will be the festival of all Turkey.”¹⁵³

One of the most important contributions of ACCD to the official discourse was to declare yellow, red and green as Turkish colors. This claim was put forward first in 1996 by Reşat Genç, the president of Atatürk Higher Institution of Language and History, whose book was titled “Nevruz and Colors”. In 1996, during the second “Turkish World Nevruz Knowledge Festival” in Iğdır, Genç stated in his speech that inability to teach that along with *Nevruz*, yellow, red and green colors were the “shared values which made Turkish nation a nation” had the grave result like the use of these values as an element of separatism:

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² see <http://www.akmb.gov.tr> .

¹⁵³ Türkiye, 19 March 1994; Milliyet, 22 March 1994, Tercüman, 21 March 1994. Yavuz Bülent Bakiler from the Türkiye newspaper argued in his column that Çiller’s enterprise is a good move in terms of being together with Turk-Islam world it is a good move; however, he was finding her reasons very wrong. In his writing Bakiler states that “the Turk World which extends from Azerbaijan to

If we were able to teach our people who grew up by passing through our education wheels that Nevruz was a new year's festival which have been known by the Turks and celebrated enthusiastically for thousands of years; if we were able to teach that the yellow, red and green have been the colors of the flags and standards representing the military units and especially the sovereigns leading the state and that the standard personally owned by the Sultan (the standard of *Zat-i Hazret-i Padişahi*) had the colors of yellow, red and green, all of our people would know that these colors, like Nevruz itself, are our shared culture values which unite, combine us and make us a nation and someone who were deceived would not show them us as elements of separation. Or if they tried so, we would not be floundered in our mind with 'if so?' questions.¹⁵⁴

In his speech, Genç also stressed that Atatürk never mentioned "race" in physical sense when explaining the concept of nation, and from this respect what was important to be a true nation was the unity of culture. As seen, declaration of yellow, red and green colors as Turkish ones, the colors that the Kurds adopted as the colors of Kurdish flag and thus, used so much during the Newroz actions, is the continuation of Turkish policies against Newroz. This was another attempt to absorb another national symbol which differentiated the Kurds. Here, too, the Turkish nationalistic characteristic of official discourse which can be described as controversial. On the one hand, these colors were presented as the colors of a Turkish ethnics which has been enduring for one thousands of years; on the other, "shared cultural ties" concerning being the nation were mentioned. In that sense declaring yellow, red and green colors as Turkish colors can be seen as a practice of accepting all the citizens of Turkish Republic as Turks by definition and of defining national unity through Turkish ethnic identity, the form which is convenient to the classical official discourse.¹⁵⁵

Official *Nevruz* activities did not remain limited to the festivals organized and the books published by the ACCD. The theme that the *Nevruz* was a Turkish festival was processed by all the institutions that were producing the official discourse. These institutions organized a good variety of activities.

Chinese Wall and to Balkans, did not take Nevruz from "our people from Southern region". He states that, because of this, it is wrong to see Nevruz as a "Turkey's festival (Türkiye, 19 March 1994).

¹⁵⁴ <http://www.akmb.gov.tr>

¹⁵⁵ Too see Minister Ayvaz Gökdemir's speech Appendix: C.

Among them the most interesting one was the *Nevruz hutbes* (sermons) of the Presidency of Religious Affairs. Religious Affairs began to prepare sermons, make statements, and disperse communiqués concerning *Nevruz* in order to read in all the provinces and the districts of Turkey beginning from 1994. In the communiqué titled “Nevruz Festival” to be read in 1994 it says “this day which is deemed to be the day of abandonment of the Turks from the Ergenekon has been celebrated for thousands of years in the Turkish world, from Turkistan to Anatolia, from Anatolia to the Balkans. The disassociation of this significant festival from the Turkish culture is wanted...Our brothers who believe and love their country will not be deceived.”¹⁵⁶ In 1995, in occasion of *Nevruz*, Mehmet Nuri Yılmaz, the President of Religious Affairs stated that the local and national festivals, alongside the religious ones have been celebrated in each period of history and that there can not be any rejection for the celebration of *Nevruz* in a “manner that will provide individual and social benefits.” He warned the Turkish nation against those who want to “degenerate its culture” and “make the tool of their dark ends.” In the *hutbe* of the Presidency for the year 1997, besides the name Ergenekon, the name “Çağan”¹⁵⁷ which was mentioned in the publications by The Presidency of Atatürk Cultural Center was used for *Nevruz*. In the *hutbe*, it was stated that it was a religious and a national responsibility not to give an opportunity for those internal and external enemies who wanted to abuse this tradition which had no “religious identity”.¹⁵⁸ In 1998, in the *hutbe* entitled “National Unity and Togetherness” after re-reminding this “national and religious responsibility” it said that “...over 62 million people living in our country may have different ethnic structure, different understanding of sect and conceit. However, this diversity of structure and understanding must not be evaluated as a source of division, instead as elements embellishing and enriching our culture.”¹⁵⁹ In accordance to the relatively peace time in 2001, from now on the Presidency’s *hutbe* was saying that *Nevruz* was an existing tradition in Turkish World, as well as in “some of Eastern provinces”.¹⁶⁰ The fact that the Presidency of Religious Affairs was

¹⁵⁶ Milliyet, 22 March 1994.

¹⁵⁷ <http://www.akmb.gov.tr>

¹⁵⁸ Sabah, 20 March 1997.

¹⁵⁹ Hürriyet, 20 March 1998.

¹⁶⁰ Yeni Şafak, 22 March 2001.

publishing *hutbes* having subjects “national unity and togetherness” regarding a non-religious festival discloses the function of this institution in dispersing the official discourse. As seen, the statements in these *hutbes* reflect the official *Nevruz* discourse and the periodical alterations in it as they are. Considering the pandemic condition of the mosques over the country, it can be argued that these *hutbes* which were read by the religious officials of the state appear as influential ideological means.

On the other hand, The Ministry of Culture was organizing activities for the purpose of showing that the *Nevruz* was practically celebrated. Among the programs of the Ministry were 1st International *Nevruz* Race¹⁶¹, Traditional *Nevruz* March¹⁶², Drawing Exhibition on *Nevruz*, Puppet-Karagöz Show with *Nevruz* content¹⁶³, the concerts of *Mehter* Band¹⁶⁴, concerts of spring songs¹⁶⁵, public concerts¹⁶⁶, folk dances and javelin shows,¹⁶⁷ celebration stamps of the Post, Telephone, Telegram Institution¹⁶⁸, Special *Nevruz* Lottery of National Lottery¹⁶⁹⁻¹⁷⁰ Along these the Ministry of Culture published pamphlets¹⁷¹ and text books¹⁷² regarding the *Nevruz* and its celebrations in various countries.

¹⁶¹ Milliyet, Türkiye, 22 March 1996 ‘President Süleyman Demirel gave start for this race in front of The House of Presidency (ibid).

¹⁶² Sabah, 20 March 1997, Milliyet, Türkiye, 21 March 1997.

¹⁶³ Cumhuriyet, 21 March 2000.

¹⁶⁴ According to programme, concert of Mehter Band would be done at Ulus after firing *Nevruz* fire at Sıhhiye. Sabah, 20 March 1997, Milliyet, Türkiye, 21 March 1997.

¹⁶⁵ This concert had been done in Istanbul by the Ministry of Culture Istanbul State Music Chorus. Cumhuriyet, 22 March 2000.

¹⁶⁶ Milliyet, 17 March 2002.

¹⁶⁷ Sabah, 20 March 1997, Milliyet, Türkiye, 21 March 1997

¹⁶⁸ Milliyet, Türkiye, 21 March 1996

¹⁶⁹ Milliyet, 17 March 2002

¹⁷⁰ It was declared by the Ministry of Culture that groups of successful students (including 10 students) from East and Southeast will attend to celebrations in Ankara in 2002. Milliyet, 17 March 2002

¹⁷¹ see <http://www.kulturturizm.gov.tr/>

¹⁷² Star, 06 March 2002, Milliyet, 17 March 2002, Türkiye, 18 March 2002 The Ministry of Culture prepared books about *Nevruz* for children. In a story book, for the children at the level of primary education, named “*Kaya ile Sinan Nevruz Şenliklerinde*” (Kaya and Sinan at *Nevruz* celebrations), some different kinds of *Nevruz* celebrations was mentioned. In one of them a folk dance group pictured with the flags of Turkey and Greece on a spaceship. In another one, American Indians’ celebrations of *Nevruz* was told with a stress that American Indians had originated from the clans migrated from Ergenekon valley. However, Kurdish celebrations did not exist among mentioned celebrations. Another story book named “*Nevruz Birliktir*” (*Nevruz* is Unity) was telling a *Nevruz* celebration after winter for the sake of the spring in a village. The theme of the book was on the unity

Academicians from different universities made explanations regarding the fact that Nevruz was a Turkish Ergenekon Festival and some of them actively participated into the activities.¹⁷³ Security Forces too organized Nevruz celebrations.¹⁷⁴

As a result of these efforts, it can hardly be said that it was succeeded to provide *Nevruz* celebrations in public as a Turkish festival. One of the basic reasons of this may be the fact that there were no elements of Newroz in the “common-sense” of Turkish people. Additionally, it was strongly obvious that this discourse which needed to be constructed in a very brief time was developed as a state policy against the Kurdish nationalism. Indeed, as mentioned below, these efforts were taken with mockery by most of the columnists. In this sense, the state effort towards making Newroz uniaxential, in other words absorbing it into the hegemonic culture can be argued to be unsuccessful. On the other hand, PKK’s discourse transformed during the struggle in the military and ideological realms between itself and the state, depending on the moments of this struggle.

V.3. Discontinuities in PKK’s Discourse

The first discontinuity in PKK’s discourse, which constituted Newroz for Kurdish people as “*zalim T.C’ye karşı topyekün savaş*” (an all-out day of revolt against cruel T.C.), was experienced in 1993. However, it should be noted that this first discontinuity is not one that is related to the construction of the discourse on Newroz.

of the villagers. The Ministry of Culture also prepared a coloring book for the children under school age. *Milliyet*, 17 March 2002.

¹⁷³ In fact many official *Nevruz* celebrations in many cities were organized at universities. For example, in 2003, at *Nevruz* celebrations at Karadeniz Technical University, the president (Prof. Dr. Türkay Tüdeş) jump over the *Nevruz* fire with the forward march played by *Mehter* band and with student’s slogan “Allah Allah” (*Hürriyet*, 22 March 2003). In 2004, a *Nevruz* celebration was organized by the collaboration of the governorship of Kayseri and Erciyes University. At that celebration *Nevruz* fire was burned, forged and egg race was hold. In Tokat also the governor attended the celebration in the campus of Gaziosmanpaşa University. The *Nevruz* fire was burned in the school garden and the governor joined the egg race with the students (*Cumhuriyet*, 22 March 2004).

¹⁷⁴ For example, one of the headquarters in Eskişehir organized a *Nevruz* celebration and the governor of Eskişehir also attended. In Çorum, also a *Nevruz* celebration was done at headquarter. In this celebration a volleyball match was played between the students from military school and the students from an occupation high school (*Cumhuriyet*, 22 March 2004).

It was related merely to a temporary cease-fire that postponed the revolt which could have happened in 1993. The cease-fire was announced by Abdullah Öcalan at March 17th for the term between March 20th and April 15th.¹⁷⁵

Öcalan gave an interview to the press with Celal Talabani, leader of the PUK. In this interview, Öcalan asked Kurdish people to celebrate Newroz in a manner suitable to the process of cease-fire; nonetheless, by using the national colors.¹⁷⁶ By this way 1993 demonstrations for Newroz happened more tranquilly compared to the year before.¹⁷⁷ Öcalan's cease-fire announcement was generally taken as a sign that Öcalan had undergone a military defeat and now sought whatever he could gain politically (McDowall, 1996: 436-7), state officials did not respond the announcement positively. On May 24th, the one-sided cease-fire ended by the killing of 33 soldiers by PKK guerillas near Bingöl. The military struggle continued increasingly.

In 1994, Öcalan asked the people to celebrate Newroz inside their houses for reasons of security.¹⁷⁸ Because of this, Newroz passed without incidents in Turkey. However, it was celebrated with big demonstrations in many cities in Europe where Kurds were concentrated. In Germany, Bedriye Taş and Nilgün Yıldırım burned themselves to death “for protesting the massacres in Kurdistan and the support given to Turkey by

¹⁷⁵ A few hours to the announcement of the cease-fire, in Cizre the PKK militants attacked on the governmental buildings with guns (Türkiye, 21March 1993, Hürriyet 21 March 1993).

¹⁷⁶ Türkiye, 21 March 1993, Hürriyet 21 March 1993. After the interview with journalists, the headline of Hürriyet was like that: “I am like Jesus: The leader of PKK, Öcalan, has told about his private life with secret and unknown sides to Hürriyet. Apo answered all questions extend from woman to marriage; from family to the society” (Hürriyet, 21 March 1993).

¹⁷⁷ It does not mean that Newroz passed without incidents in 1993. At the demonstrations in Adana, a 16 years old boy died by the intervene of the police and six persons were wounded with guns. A police vehicle was attacked with guns. In Batman and Kurtalan, two persons were killed by guns. In Ağrı, 60 persons were captured by the police, who shouted some slogans. In İstanbul, gendarmerie opened fire on the demonstrators (Türkiye, Milli Gazete, 22 March 1993).

¹⁷⁸ Because of this announcement, some rural guards celebrated Newroz in Şırnak. Tayan and Kıçan tribes' members celebrated Newroz with Turkish flags and the songs from Hilmi Şah Ballı named as “Türk-Kürt Kardeşdir” (the Turks and the Kurds are brothers). In their placards it is written that “Hain Apo” (Traitor Apo), “Ermeni Apo” (Armenian Apo), “Kahrolsun PKK” (Down with PKK), “Devlet millet elele” (The state and the people together). The soldiers from Special Team distributed candies to the children at the celebration place (Hürriyet, 22 March 1994, Hürriyet gave the news with a headline “Kimse Apo'yu İplemedi” - Nobody gave a damn to Apo).

Germany”.¹⁷⁹ It appears that the PKK had adopted increasing the level of violence in Newroz demonstrations in European cities as a policy in 1994. Related to this, this action was described through these words in *Özgür Halk*:

During the marches which were made in accordance with the soul of Newroz which symbolizes togetherness, resistance and rebellion in the history of the Kurds, the patriotic Kurds who said ‘Newroz fire is thickened best by human bodies, not sticks and twigs’, met their bodies with Newroz fire. And through this action, Kurds destroyed the Europe inside them.¹⁸⁰

The action of burning one’s self to death, especially one that happened in 1994, was being elevated as a type of “purification” by *Özgür Halk*, in its March edition in 1995. “Lighting the Newroz fire on the body” was mythified. It was expressed as a necessary condition for the nationalization of the Kurds, as the only way of “purification from the dirtiness of centuries”:

Newroz plays a historical role in the nationalization of the Kurd... Newroz, becomes Kurd’s bathing, cleaning, solidifying his liberation first in his body and soul, in fire. Kurds could only have cleaned the dirt and sediments of centuries by Newroz fire!¹⁸¹

As such, Bedriye Taş and Nilgün Yıldırım became a part of the Newroz legend of the PKK by being called as Ronahi and Berivan.

It may be said that the decision of PKK in its 1995 congress to detach itself from socialist discourse and symbols – such as those in its party flag, have a role in its embracement of such mystical symbolization of Newroz. After this decision, it was stressed more that Newroz was “national”. Thus, instead of an ideological symbolization around Marxism, a resistance myth which personified Kurdishness was emphasized.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ In the letter Bedriye Taş and Nilgün Yıldırım left, stated that they protested the German government, who announced the PKK is illegal, put pressure on PKK supporters and gave military support to Turkey (*Özgür Halk*, April 1994).

¹⁸⁰ *Özgür Halk*, April 1994.

¹⁸¹ *Özgür Halk*, March 1995.

¹⁸² This discontinuity was expressed in this way: “Yes Newroz, is a call for struggle, it is an invitation for national liberation, national unity and institutionalization of those things! If you still have a piece

It may be argued that the Newroz discourse of PKK has gone through another discontinuity beginning with 1998. The former structure of PKK's Newroz myth which centered on Mazlum Doğan was tried to be expanded in a way to serve the consolidation of Abdullah Öcalan's leadership. In addition, the Kawa legend was tried to be adapted to PKK's policies of the period. In parallel, the argument that the PKK was the only representative of Kurdish people – although this had also been the former discourse – was emphasized more:

The collapse of Ninova – the castle of tyranny – at March 21st of 612 B.C., is also the day which the peoples reached their free futures. With the collapse of Ninova, our people had gained their first state organization like the Med Federation for the first time in history. Think: Kurdish people who realized such an organization, state-isation 2700 years from now, has unfortunately not realized a second Med movement up to date. Only *Özgürlük Hareketi*¹⁸³ [the Movement of Freedom] can realize a contemporary Med movement today, which our people made the history and the peoples gained 2700 years ago. *The birth of Med-ia has definitely been as a coalition or federation of peoples*, it is completely libertarian and it is at the side of justice. Just as how our people had destroyed oppression, tyranny and cruelty in history with their leadership to peoples of the region, how they had realized the fraternity, liberty and solidarity of the peoples, *Öncü*¹⁸⁴ [the Leader] also realizes the same historical today, aiming at the rebirth of humanity with a more scientific and socialist content.¹⁸⁵

...

Newroz, was not remembered, known or celebrated in the past... Newroz, which was made devoid of its essence and almost forgotten, has been gained with *Mazlums... We will comprehend the Öncü in the person of Önderlik* (The Leadership),¹⁸⁶ in order to understand this tradition of resistance was created.¹⁸⁷

PKK declared the Newroz of 1999 as *Önderlik Newroz'u* (the Newroz of the Leadership) and the year 1999 as *Önderlik Yılı* (Leadership's Year), as Abdullah Öcalan was captured at February 15th of 1999.¹⁸⁸ The discourse of PKK about Newroz has become radicalized, centered on Abdullah Öcalan. The capturing of Öcalan by the international collaboration of security forces resulted in the stress on anti-imperialism in PKK's discourse. Once again, "Kurdistan" was defined within the front of oppressed peoples and stressed to be in a key position in the "global

of patriotism, let's give a support to national matter! Otherwise, being 'newspaper socialist' or refugee leftist does not give one the quality of being patriot (Özgür Halk, March 1995).

¹⁸³ The term refers to PKK.

¹⁸⁴ This is an undefined concept. It seems that sometimes refers to PKK, and sometimes Öcalan.

¹⁸⁵ Emphasizes are added. Özgür Halk March 1998.

¹⁸⁶ The leadership is accepted as an institution and it is stated as Abdullah Öcalan and dead people for motherland. In other words, this concept clearly refers to Öcalan.

¹⁸⁷ Emphasizes are added. Özgür Halk March 1998.

¹⁸⁸ Serxwebûn, March 1999, Year 18, number 207.

payback” which would result in the world revolution. It was claimed that it was being desired to take revenge from all oppressed peoples through the person of Öcalan:

It seems that the counter-revolution front of the world wants to take revenge because we had destroyed the enslaving Assyrian Empire in history. The last generation of Assyrians, are afraid to be subjected to the wrath of the Kurds like their ancestors. Because they see well that the Revolution of Kurdistan may lead to a Middle Eastern revolution, and a Middle Eastern revolution may lead to a world revolution or a global payback. They are afraid that the Kurds, who enlberated the whole Mesopotamian peoples by destroying the Assyrian Empire yesterday, can also put whole the oppressed in the process of liberation and destroy despotic governments in the world getting smaller and smaller today. For this reason, the dominators, who had never managed to collaborate much in history, are developing it against all the oppressed peoples in the person of Leader APO and PKK today.¹⁸⁹

1999 Newroz demonstrations were violent and intense despite all the precautions by the state.¹⁹⁰ According to the declaration of the General Directorate of Security, 12 thousand people attended legal or illegal demonstrations in 20 major cities. Newroz was celebrated illegally in 15 major cities. 19 people -of which 16 people were security officers – were wounded by gun. 2.474 people – of which 1695 were in İstanbul - were put under custody.¹⁹¹

The biggest discontinuity in PKK’s discourse on Newroz happened in the year 2000, as following Abdullah Öcalan’s declaration for “Democratic Republic” project. In line with this project which proposed to resolve the Kurdish question within the boundaries of Turkey through democratization of Turkish Republic, Newroz’s “uniting character for people” has begun to be emphasized instead of its feature of “distinguishing” Kurdish people as being a Kurdish festival. Mustafa Karasu who is a member of PKK’s *Başkanlık Konseyi* (Council of Presidency) has stated it as follows:

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ On the other hand this tension was tried to be declined. The leader of ANAP Mesut Yılmaz said that he would join the Newroz festival in Siirt Kurtalan with popular singer Mahsun Kırmızıgül. Head of the police department of Şanlıurfa Salih Tuzcu distributed to the public some pencils, story books, balloons, and key keepers with a written slogan “Happy Nevruz to you, We like You” with the colors of yellow, red and green. Radikal 21 March 1999, Milliyet, 21 March 1999.

¹⁹¹ Milliyet, 23 March 1999, Radikal, 23 March 1999.

In the 21st century during which cultures were synthesized and cultural exchange has amounted to a great scale, good sides of the cultures will be appropriated by all humanity. Similar to the case that at the beginning 1st May was the celebration of laborers and throughout time it has become the celebration of all humanity... Newroz, like 1st May celebration, will be accepted by all humanity. Although PKK is seen as a Kurdish movement, in fact it is a regional movement. Beyond that, it is a movement of humanity. From this point of view, it is not enough to accept Newroz as a Kurdish celebration, and accepting it as such results in narrowing down its meaning.¹⁹²

Karasu denoted that in order to unite people what needed is common spiritual impulses and moral values, and Newroz is very convenient for this, Newroz can be the “cement” between the people of Middle East, Turks in Central Asia, Turks in Turkey and Kurdish people. What then seems is that in the “new Newroz strategy”, the element of resistance gave its way to the element of “brotherhood”:

Most of the Middle Eastern peoples already celebrate Newroz. Turks in Central Asia celebrate, and now Turks in Turkey will celebrate...This Newroz should be turned into a kind of cement and bridge for the Middle East Democratic Union. We will unify the peoples with this culture. Newroz will create Democratic Middle East Union by means of common cultural values, just like how European culture created European Union. The sense of brotherhood and freedom that Newroz involves are important moral values to the strategy of democratic republic that we want to realize in Turkey.¹⁹³

In parallel to these statements in the journal, the PKK’s Council of Presidency has made a written declaration before Newroz. Newroz was defined by this declaration as the common festival of Kurdish people and the people of the Middle East, and it was demanded to transform the new Newroz of the new age into a festival which is to be realized through a feeling and enthusiasm dedicated to free and democratic unity of people, on the basis of peace and brotherhood. Besides, in the same declaration state authorities were invited to share the enthusiasm of Newroz and to join the peace festivals.¹⁹⁴

PKK’s new Newroz strategy seemed to be welcomed by the state authorities. In his speech the president Süleyman Demirel evaluated Nevruz as “a perfect ground” to

¹⁹² Serxwebûn, March 2000.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Özgür Bakış, 20 March 2000.

share the universal values such as peace, friendship and brotherhood.¹⁹⁵ The Prime Minister Ecevit referred to the definition “the festival of friendship and brotherhood, which has its roots in the depth of history” for Nevruz.¹⁹⁶

Among the cities in the region only Diyarbakır¹⁹⁷ was allowed for the Newroz celebrations and this was the first Newroz celebration ever realized as legally in Diyarbakır.¹⁹⁸ The newspapers dated 22nd of March mentioned that how enthusiastically “Nevruz” happened after fifteen years and how “peace in the whole country” slogans were spelled out.¹⁹⁹ From this year onwards, the legal Newroz celebrations in Diyarbakır have become a realm where the demands for peaceful co-existence are expressed. The placard, “Ne İnkâr Ne Ayrılık! Demokratik Cumhuriyet” (Neither Denial, Nor Separation! Democratic Republic) became the most mentioned point by the journalists about the celebrations in Diyarbakır.²⁰⁰

On the other hand, it should be added that this new discourse or policy was not completely embraced by the Kurds. For instance, in Adana, some groups did not follow the decision of HADEP (People’s Democracy Party); made illegal protest and

¹⁹⁵ Cumhuriyet, 22 March 2000.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ HADEP (People’s Democracy Party)’s President of Diyarbakır province (Ali Ürküt) declared that they would have been glad if the governor attended the Newroz celebrations in Diyarbakır (Cumhuriyet, 12 Mart 2000).

¹⁹⁸ Vedat Çetin stated in his article in Özgür Bakış only Diyarbakır was led to celebrate the Newroz and it shows that Diyarbakır was selected as a pilot city among the regional cities. By Newroz, in 2000s, instead of “T.C.”, “düşman” (the enemy), “savaş” (the war), “bölücü” (the separator), “terör örgütü üyesi” (the member of terrorist organization), “ülke topraklarının bir kısmını bölmeye yönelik eylemler” (actions aimed to divide a part of the land); a new literature will be created. Çetin stated the attitude of the masses in Diyarbakır in Newroz celebration, “Yapılan sohbetlerde, ‘izinli Newroz’un hiçbir tadı olmaz’ sözü ortamda bulunanlarca yarım ağız ve anlamlı gülümsemelere neden oluyorsa da, Newroz 2000 bir kilometre taşı olma özelliğini taşıyor. Bugüne kadar her yılın 21 Mart’ında Newroz kutlamaları nedeniyle, devlet sendroma girerdi. Oysa Newroz, Kürt sorununun politik kavşağıdır; Ortadoğu’nun inkara gelmez bir realitesidir Kürtlerin ‘olmak ya da olmamak’ anlamında ön koşuludur...” (Özgür Bakış, 19 March 2000).

As a matter of fact, in Diyarbakır the celebration plan of HADEP is like that: Other than the classical celebrations, clear peace messages will be given. Kurdish identity will be shown not very rigidly. Popular singers will be invited to the celebrations like Edip Akbayram, Fırat Başkale, Seher Dilovan, Koma Amed, Koma Rojhelat. Modern voice techniques and platform will be used (ibid).

¹⁹⁹ See Hürriyet, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, Türkiye 22 March 2000.

²⁰⁰ The columnists stated not that these placards are the result of PKK policy; instead of this, the columnists emphasized that they are the peace, freedom and brotherhood demands of the masses (Hürriyet, Milliyet, Radikal, 22 March 2001).

clashed with the police. In this protest, a “Newroz is Rebellion” (Newroz İsyandır) written placard was opened.²⁰¹ This tendency continued with increase in the following years especially in Adana, Mersin and İstanbul, which are highly industrialized cities of Turkey with intense immigrant Kurdish population, such that in 2002, the “peaceful” Newroz celebrations in Diyarbakır were compared to the “Palestine scenes” from these cities by the columnist.²⁰² Nevertheless, it is hard to evaluate these protests as open oppositions to the PKK.

V. 4. ‘W’ Crisis

In the point arrived in 2000, it seemed that PKK’s discourse, which structured Newroz as not having a “distinguishing” quality, but being a “cement uniting people”, has converged to the state’s official discourse on *Nevruz*. Yet, the main differentiation point between these two discourses, which is on the problem of whether or not to recognize the Kurdish identity, has broken out with the ‘w’ crisis.

The ‘w’ crisis emerged with the rejection of the HADEP’s application petition for permission in İstanbul by İstanbul Governorship Police Department, in 2000. The reply document sent by the Police Department was as follows:

In the related article of the Law about the National Festivals and General Holidays, Newroz is not accepted as a national festival. Besides, the word ‘Newroz’ in your application petition is not a Turkish word in terms of its spelling. In the 81st article of the Law of Political parties, there is the statement that political parties cannot use another language other than Turkish. Because of the reasons mentioned above, if you apply in a manner in accordance with the law, your application will be taken into consideration.²⁰³

Thereafter, a big debate was launched on ‘w’. HADEP has called the governor of İstanbul to resign; as recalling that previously the Motherland Party had carried out its propagandas in English, the head of İstanbul Office of Human Rights Association,

²⁰¹ Cumhuriyet, 22 March 2000, Türkiye, 23 March 2000.

²⁰² See 22 March 2002 dated Hürriyet, Milliyet ve Radikal newspapers, especially the writings of Taha Akyol and Ertuğrul Özkök.

²⁰³ Sabah, 19 March 2000, Milliyet, 20 March 2000, Hürriyet, 20 March 2000.

Eren Keskin stated that “is the Article 81 in question valid only for Kurdish language? The governor of İstanbul should be removed from the office.”²⁰⁴

In an article issued in the journal, *Özgür Bakış*, the concepts of the new Newroz discourse as “peace”, “brotherhood”, “togetherness” and “common-existence” were emphasized. On the other hand, the “w” in the word, Newroz, was indicated as the symbol of recognizing the existence of Kurds:

Although in itself, it is a Kurdish revival legend, Newroz is also a celebration of the Middle Eastern peoples for brotherhood, solidarity, peace and unity. Kurds’ attitude is as such and Newroz is everyone’s celebration who has this attitude. Therefore, the letter ‘w’ in Newroz is not a simple ‘w’. ‘W’ is a sign, symbol. It is the demand for existence, peace, brotherhood, equality and mutual life. ‘W’ is the sign of the existence of the Kurd. Nobody can say that whether the existence problem of a people with a population around 40 million is tied to the letter ‘w’. If the logic that refuses the letter ‘w’ is a refusal of people, a cultural degeneration, not-destroyed taboos of fear and great complexes, the emphasis on the letter ‘w’ is defending culture and traditions of the self against the refuse. ‘W’ is the cultural richness of this geography. It is the common cultural heritage of the Kurdish and other peoples of the region.²⁰⁵

In this way, the Newroz’s “w” emerged as a sign being a realm of struggle between the state’s official discourse that recognizes all the citizens as Turkish and the Kurdish nationalist movement’s discourse that demands the recognition of a separate Kurdish identity. In other words, the ideological struggle carried out on Newroz has got tangled at Newroz’s “w”. For instance, in Adana, as referring to the prohibition on “w”, the security forces ripped out the letter “w” from the pancarte, on which the slogan “*Newroz devrimci Kawa'nun mirasıdır*” (Newroz is the heritage of revolutionary Kawa) was written, and only then they let the pancarte to be taken into

²⁰⁴ Hürriyet, 20 March 2000, Radikal, 20 March 2000.

²⁰⁵ Özgür Bakış, 14 March 2000. Rıza Zelyut’s article in Güneş was an example of an ultra-nationalist reaction of “w” crisis. Zelyut, who absolutely deny Kurdish language, claimed that insisting on “w” is an attempt of creating separation: “The word Nevruz is written ‘nevroz’ in Persian. The supporters of the terrorist organization tried to create separation. It is a fact that there is no the letter ‘w’ in Middle Eastern languages. Above all, it is apparent that there is no language Kurdish as such. Therefore, we can easily determine that this kind of spelling is a product of PKK’s policy of separation. Hope from now on we celebrate Nevruz’s, not Newroz’s” (Güneş, 21 Mart 2001).

the celebration area, yet quite ironically they did not interfere the letter “w” in the word Kawa that was written in the same pancarte.²⁰⁶

V.5. Covering Newroz: Newroz in Newspapers

The ideological struggle between the state and PKK did not stay confined to these two sides; various components of the press have entered into this struggle, too. In this section, along with liberal columnists who have a moderate approach to Kurdish question, the reactions of mainstream nationalist, extreme nationalist and Islamist columnists that vary quietly will be mentioned. By this way, how the ideological struggle on Newroz is conceived by different political circles can be understood.

V.5.a. Critical Liberal Columnists

Some columnists accepted Newroz as a Kurdish festival and criticized the state’s attitude towards Newroz. These writers have taken a critical stance against the particular discourse, *Nevruz* as the Turkish Ergenekon Festival, even sometimes in a sarcastic²⁰⁷ manner. Taha Akyol, who was one of the writers criticizing the state policy for the Kurdish question, has told in his writing titled as “Nevruz Lectures” (*Nevruz Desleri*) that the feeling nourishing the ethnic nationalism is that of

²⁰⁶ Celal Başlangıç’s article, *Radikal*, 24 March 2003). In 2001, some writers of *Radikal* and *Yeni Gündem* tried to find a mid way by using both versions of the name of the festival. However, this attitude does not seem to rescue themselves from ideological clashes; *Yeni Gündem* wrote *Newroz/Nevruz*, while *Radikal* wrote *Nevruz/Newroz*. See *Yeni Gündem*, 16 March 2001, Mehmet Metiner’s writing; *Radikal*, 27 March 2001 Avni Özgürel’s writing as examples of this attitude.

²⁰⁷ For the writings which looks down this discourse especially see Melih Aşık, “Lastik Yakma Bayramı”, *Milliyet*, 22 March 1994, and “‘Nevruz’u Kutlarken”, *Milliyet*, 22 March 1996). In 1991, at the beginning of the state’s discourse, Emin Çölaşan also looked down the policy of the Ministry of Culture about the *Nevruz* as a Turkish Ergenekon Festival, even though he did not mention about this issue in his later writings: “We witness another disrespect [the first disrespect he mentions is that Turkish flag was brought down in HEP’s Newroz celebration in İstanbul] nowadays in which Kurdish occurrence in agenda. *Nevruz* is the festival of those people who have been celebrating it for years. *Nevruz* is the holly festival of the Kurds. Now, our this state found a practical solution to this issue and The Ministry of Culture declares it! *Nevruz* was a Turkish festival! Have a heart! (El İnsaf!) I have been living in this country exactly for 49 years, but I have heart such a Turkish festival for the first time! If *Nevruz* was Turkish festival, what were you doing until now? Why did not you celebrate this festival? Why you were/are object to Kurds who want to celebrate it? ... How much a disrespect attacking to Turkish flag by our Kurdish origin citizens, it is the same kind of behaviour which is incorrect and includes disrespect to Kurds (*Hürriyet*, 23 March 1991).

oppression, and deepening of this feeling in real or imaginary terms turns nationalism into a sickness:

While transforming Nevruz into a Turkish festival and mentioning the Nevruz of Uyğurs who live thousands of kilometers away from here, not mentioning the Newroz in the folklore of Kurds who are our neighbor, *enişte*, *yenge*, colleague and more importantly who are the citizens we have been living together for ten thousands years, is wrong. Does not it make Kurdish citizens insult, does not it deepen their sense of being oppressed?²⁰⁸

Nevruz'u bir 'Türk Bayramı'na dönüştürüp bin kilometre uzaktaki Uyğurlar'ın Navroz'undan bahsederken komşumuz, eniştemiz, yengemiz, iş ortağımız ve hepsinden önemlisi bin yıldır beraber yaşadığımız vatandaşlarımız olan Kürtlerin folklorundaki Newroz'dan bahsetmemek yanlış olmaktadır. Bu Kürt vatandaşlarımızı rencide etmez mi, 'ezilmişlik' duygusunu derinleştirmez mi?

From a similar point of departure, Cengiz Çandar has ended up his column titled as “Nevruz, Newroz, Nevroz” by saying “Have a Happy Newroz”. Çandar in this writing criticized in an ironic manner “*devletleştirme*” (statization) of Newroz, which he accepted at the very beginning as belonging to Kurds, as putting a stress on the events happened in Newroz celebrations in the previous years:

Tansu Çiller, other than auditing hospitals, went to Iğdır to join actively Newroz celebrations. She jumped over the fire and crashed egg. 'Jumping over fire' is a Kurdish way of celebrating and a ritual about the 'Kawa the Smith Legend' reminding Ergenekon Legend. In Turkey, Newroz which is statized took this ritual from Kurds and transformed into a 'sui-generis' format. However, not every Kurd can jump over 'fire'. In the period of the Çiller's prime ministry, Kurds who wanted to jump over fire were caused great pains. It is natural that if Kurds 'jump over fire', it is 'separatism'. On the other hand, if Çiller 'jumps over fire', it means 'celebration' and 'brotherhood'.²⁰⁹

Tansu Çiller, hastane denetlemelerden gayrı nevruz kutlamalarına da aktif bir biçimde katılarak Iğdır'a gidiyor ve orada 'ateşten atlayıp' yumurta tokuşturuyor. 'Ateşten atlamak' Kürtlere ait bir kutlama biçimi. Ergenekon destanı'nı andıran,

²⁰⁸ Milliyet, 22 March 1996.

²⁰⁹ Sabah, 22 March 1997. Cengiz Çandar's writing was criticized by an academician Fatih Akbaba from Gazi University at “Nevruz in Turkish Culture Vth International Knowledge Festival”: “The columnist named Cengiz Çandar... in his column, titled his writing besides Turkish Nevruz, in another kind of alphabet system, which can give motivation of encourage to those who searches for an alternative out of Turkish. He not only continued his attitude during his article, but also finished it with the writing, which is not Turkish” (<http://www.akmb.gov.tr/ata/metinler/v.4.htm>). For the writings that consider Newroz as a Kurdish celebration and criticizes the state discourse about Newroz also see Derya Sazak's “Cizre'den Iğdır'a”, Milliyet, 22 March 1996, Mehmet Altan, Sabah, 24 March 1997, Server Tanilli, Cumhuriyet, 20 March 1998, Taha Akyol, Milliyet, 22 March 2002.

Kürtler'in 'Demirci Kawa Efsanesi' ile ilgili bir ritüel. O bakımdan, Türkiye'de 'devletleştirilen' nevrüz, 'ritüel'i Kürtler'den alarak, 'kendine özgü' bir hale sokuluyor. Ama her önüne gelen Kürt 'ateşten' atlayamaz. Çiller'in başbakanlığı döneminde, bunu yapmaya kalkın Kürtlere kan kusturuldu. Kürtler, 'ateşten atarlarsa', bunun 'bölücülük' olacağı tabiidir. Çiller atlarsa, bu bir 'şenlik' ve 'kardeşlik' olur.

V.5.b. Mainstream Nationalist Columnists

Some Kemalist columnists have advocated conceiving Newroz as an element of "common culture" rather than considering it in reliance on Turkish ethnicity. These writers did not claim Kurds are Turkish but they argued for embracement of a common identity for Turks and Kurds. This common identity was defined in terms of Turkish language and culture. For instance, Ahmet Taner Kışlalı has touched upon two points in reference to the *Nevruz* celebrations in Uzbekistan, in 1999 which was broadcasted by TRT; first, *Nevruz* is really the common festival of Turks and Kurds, and second, the importance of "common identity" instead of racial origin or being of the same race. For Kışlalı what is significant is the point that Newroz constitutes a common feature, not a difference. Even there is a racial bond with Central Asia Turks, a differentiation in language and culture has happened. Those Turks who live in Turkey has a "common identity" not with those in Central Asia but with Kurds in Turkey. On the other hand, Kurds in Turkey has differed from the other Kurds, too; moreover, owing to the existence of different dialects spoken among the Kurds living in Turkey, the common language among those Kurds is Turkish. Kışlalı has stated that he supported the idea of development of this common culture rather than that of giving cultural autonomy to Kurdish people.²¹⁰

V.5.c. The Extreme Nationalist Columnists

The extreme nationalist columnists have immediately adopted the discourse, *Nevruz* as Turkish Ergenekon Festival and carried this discourse. The newspaper, Tercüman had reported the news on the armed demonstrations realized by PKK and TKPML/TİKKO in the Newroz of 1989 as "PKK and illegal leftist organizations that

²¹⁰ Cumhuriyet, 24 March 1999 for the writing that share the similar views see Ali Tayyar Önder, Radikal 23 March 2001.

celebrated Iranian's '21 March Nevruz Festival' as 'International Day of Fight Against Racism' carried out various actions at country-wide" (Tercüman, 21 Mart 1989). It was the same newspaper which just immediately after the declaration of Ministry of Culture in 1991, has begun to issue writings in line with the discourse, *Nevruz* as Turkish Ergenekon Festival. In the writing titled as "New day Festival", Hüsametdin Karanfil was telling that every year Turks celebrates 22th of March as a liberation festival in the memory of the event that Turks arrived their fatherland after melting the iron mountains surrounding Ergenekon where they had lived for 400 years. Furthermore, in his writing he gave place to the following statements: "*Nevruz Festival* which, *as it happens every year, in this year, too* will be celebrated through run, conferences and sportive activities has a history as old as Turkish history."²¹¹

In a similar way, in his column at the newspaper, Ortadoğu, Hüsnü Yusuf Gökalp was claiming "Nevruz festival" to be an element that makes Turkish nation as a nation:

Nevruz is one of the values that make Turkish people as a nation, coming from over 10 thousand years history... Nevruz had an importance role in defending our national unity and completeness. We know that a nation becomes strong if it has a heritage of rich memories, demands for living together and defending the heritage together. This celebration is a cultural heritage from our ancestors that we want to maintain together and it has an important place among our other similar values...It symbolizes the spreading Turkish nation again over the entire world."²¹²

Nevruz Bayramı, 10 bin yılı aşan bir tarihin içinden gelen, Türk milletini millet yapan değerlerden biridir... Nevruz'un tarihimiz boyunca milli birlik ve bütünlüğümüzün korunmasında çok önemli rolü olmuştur. Biliyoruz ki milleti, miras olarak aldığı zengin hatıraları, birlikte yaşama konusundaki arzu ve istekleri ile mirasını beraberce koruma dileği içinde oluşu güçlü kılmaktadır... Bu bayram, atalarımızdan bize miras kalan ve onu beraberce yaşatma arzusu duyduğumuz bir değerimiz olup, benzeri değerlerimiz içinde çok önemli bir yere sahiptir... Türk Milleti'nin yeniden yeryüzüne dağılışını da temsil etmiştir.

NAP (Nationalist Action Party) itself, too, took the responsibility of bearing the discourse of Turkish Ergenekon Festival *Nevruz*, and spent a great effort for its dissemination. From 1998 onwards NAP began to join actively to the *Nevruz* celebrations, and when it became a partner of the coalition government with 1999

²¹¹ Emphasis is added. Tercüman, 21 March 1991.

²¹² Ortadoğu, 21 March 2001. For the writing that offers Newroz for the collaboration between Turkey and Central Asia also see Mustafa Aşula, Türkiye, 23 Mart 2000.

elections it started to put a greater emphasis on these celebrations. The celebration held in Yozgat was organized by the NAP's local organization in the city. The *Nevruz* celebrations in Bursa turned into a public demonstration of NAP, and the attendant groups shouted some slogans like “*Çatlılar Ölmez!*” (*Çatlıs never die!*), “*İşte Nevruz Böyle Kutlanır!*” (That is how *Nevruz* is celebrated!). Devlet Bahçeli, the party leader of NAP burned the *Nevruz* fire.²¹³ In 2001, NAP prepared a law proposal to celebrate *Nevruz* as a national celebration. In the justification of the proposal, “this special day that is at the same time celebrated as Ergenekon celebration, and an official festival in Turkish Republics must be an official festival in Turkey, too, since it will lead to living a common happiness and cause a mutual glad of the people who share the same language, history and religion.”²¹⁴ NAP's vice president Şefkat Çetin, tells the “oversensitivity” that NAP has for *Nevruz* and the “mission” that the party takes responsibility in the following words:

Nevruz is a traditional festival of Turkish nation. The root of this festival is based on the Ergenekon legend of the Turkish history. Now, it is one of the biggest festivals in the geography where Turks live from Balkans to Central Asia. Since this festival was neglected for a while in our country, unfortunately it was left into the hands of the separatist organization. Nationalist Action Party and all nationalists made people remember this old celebration and now this pleasant tradition is transformed as spring festival and owned by our nation.²¹⁵

Nevruz Bayramı Türk milletinin geleneksel bir milli bayramıdır. Bu bayramın kökleri Türklerin tarihi Ergenekon efsanelerine kadar dayandırılmaktadır. Bugün de Orta Asya'dan Balkanlara kadar Türk milletinin yaşadığı bütün coğrafyalarda kutlanan en büyük bayramlardan birisidir. Ülkemizde belli bir dönem ihmal edilen bu milli bayramımız ne yazık ki bölücü örgütün ellerine terk edilmişti. Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi ve tüm Ülkücüler, gerekli sağduyuyla milletimize bu eski bayramını tekrar hatırlatmış ve artık bir bahar bayramı şekline dönüşen bu güzel geleneğimiz topluma mal olmuştur.²¹⁶

V.5.d. Islamist Columnists

Islamist columnists had an attitude against an ideological struggle over Newroz. These columnists were defending to bring the Islamic identity to the fore rather than

²¹³ Milliyet, 23 March 1998.

²¹⁴ Yeni Şafak, 22 March 2001.

²¹⁵ Ortadoğu, 21 March 2001.

²¹⁶ Ortadoğu, 21 March 2001.

the ethnic identities. Therefore, they were against the both discursive constructions of Newroz. They often claimed that Newroz must not have a value for Muslims, since it is a “Zoroastrian celebration” and “a belief out of Islam”. Since they did not situate themselves on any side of this struggle, they made arguments around the Zoroastrian root of Newroz or its role in nation-building as a tool. Ali Bulaç’s column titled as “Newruz Hurafesi” can be a good example for this approach:

Kurdish nationalist who defined themselves by referring to Turkish nationalists announced Newroz as a ‘national day and festival’. If we look deeply, these celebrations from burning fire to Kava the Smith legend is similar to the Ergenekon Legend of the Turkish nationalists. In the first quarter of the last century, how Panturkists degenerate the history of Turks before and after Islam, and undertook the task of building a new national identity which has no ontological and historical basis, Kurdish nationalists, who follow Turkish nationalists step by step, too, are constructing an identity for themselves in the same way. While doing this, they are making a kind of degeneration in the history of Kurds before and after Islam. Nationalism cannot be constructed without making degeneration on the history and destroying historical events... I do not think that from now on, Kurds, who have been living for immemorial times and who became an honored nation with the acceptance of Islam, will continue to accept Newroz as their national festival and express themselves by the way of taking burned car rubbers as a symbol and a spiritual ritual. The state attitude is more interesting in front of this newly emerged *hurafe* - after 1980. Until a few years ago, Newroz did not mean anything to the state. But now it is celebrated with ‘enthusiasm’ by participation of high level state officials and Ministers like the other national festivals. In fact, it is taken exaggeratedly precautions to keep the celebration in the very hands of the state ... For Muslims, Newroz has not any holly or national value.²¹⁷

Türk milliyetçiliğine bakarak kendini tanımlama yolunu seçen Kürt milliyetçileri Nevruz’u ‘ulusal gün ve ulusal bayram’ ilan ettiler. Yakından bakıldığında Nevruz’da ateş yakıp Demirci Kava’nın destanından mülhem bu kutlamalar, pek de uzak olmayan mesafeden Türk milliyetçilerinin Ergenekon Destanı’na tekabül etmektedir. Nasıl geçen yüzyılın ilk çeyreğinde Türkçüler, Türklerin İslam’dan önceki ve sonraki tarihlerini bir tür suistimale uğratıp, bundan ontolojik ve tarihsel temeli olmayan yeni ve ulusal bir kimlik inşasına gittilerse, Türk milliyetçilerini adım adım takip eden Kürt milliyetçileri de aynı yöntemlerle kendilerine bir kimlik inşa etmekte, bu arada Kürtlerin İslam öncesi ve sonrası tarihlerini bir tür suistimale uğratmaktadırlar. Milliyetçilik, tarihi suistimal ve tarihsel olayları tahrif etmeden kurulamaz... Kadim zamanlardan beri bu bölgede yaşayan ve İslam’la şeref bulmuş bir halk (kavim) olan Kürtlerin, bundan sonraki tarihleri için kendilerine Nevruz’u ulusal bir bayram kabul edeceklerini, yakılmış araba lastiğini bir sembol ve manevî bir ritüel olarak seçip bununla kimliklerini ifade edeceklerini hiç sanmıyorum. 1980’lerden sonra nezhur olarak ortaya çıkan bu bid’at ve hurafeye karşılık devletin takındığı tutum daha da ilginç. Birkaç sene öncesine kadar hiç umurunda değilken, şimdi her sene devlet en üst düzeydeki yetkililerin, bakanların katılımıyla Nevruz’u neredeyse diğer ulusal bayramlar gibi ‘çoşkuyla kutlamak’ta, hatta bu

²¹⁷ Zaman, 24 March 2001. For the similar view see Rahim Er, Türkiye, 23 March 2000. For the view that offers Ottoman policy against terrorism, although it is with Turkish nationalism and statist perspective, also see Beşir Ayvazoğlu, Zaman.

günü hiç kimseye bırakmamak için tedbir üstüne tedbir almaktadır... Müslümanlar için Nevruz'un ne kutsal ne ulusal bir değeri var.”

Ömer Vehbi Hatipoğlu had presented the first example of this kind of approach, before the Newroz celebrations in 1992 with a column titled as “*Nevruz'da Kıyamet Kopmayacak*”. He was warning the Kurdish people against the scenario turning Newroz into a pattern like in *Cahiliyye* Period when the fire dance of Zoroahs existed.²¹⁸ In 1992, after the violence in celebrations, he wrote his second column titled as “*Çözüm Ümmet Şuurudur*” and he proposed Islamic identity as the solution for Kurdish question:

Islam, which offers to support the oppressed, wants to emphasize on its own universal statements. Instead of highlighting Kurdish identity in the name of solving the Kurdish problem, we have to emphasize our Muslim identity, without making concessions from this identity, try to solve the Kurdish problem... Our goal is the solution of the problems of the *ümmet*. This possible by the *ümmet* consciousness instead of nationalist consciousness.²¹⁹

Mazlumdan yana olmayı emreden İslam, bunu yaparken de kendi evrensel çözümlerinin vurgulanmasını ister. Kürt halkının sorunlarını çözeceğiz diye Kürt kimliğini ön plana çıkarmak ve bunu vurgulamak yerine, Müslüman kimliğimizi her zaman ön planda tutarak, bunu vurgulayarak, bundan ödün vermeyerek ve onun gereği olarak Kürt sorununu çözmeye talip olmak gerekir diye düşünüyorum....Hedefimiz ümmetin sorunlarının çözülmesidir. Bu ise kavmiyetçi çözümle değil, ancak ümmet şuru ile gerçekleştirilebilir.

However, in 1997 when Refah Party was the partner in coalition and Erbakan was the prime minister, there was a change in the writings issued in Milli Gazete about Newroz. In this period, the newspaper gave up publishing the writings in this style. In the news, some statements like “Celebration for 5000 years”, and “Yellow-red-green as Turkish colors” were taken place.²²⁰

In conclusion, it can be said that for the official state discourse that accepts the citizens as Turk by definition, Newroz discourse of the PKK, which signifies the existence of the Kurdish identity and which won a big support, constituted a serious danger. Since they conceived this issue as a threat for the existence and the unity of

²¹⁸ Milli Gazete, 21 March 1992.

²¹⁹ Milli Gazete, 23 March 1992.

²²⁰ Milli Gazete, 21-22 March 1997.

the state rather than a political problem, the state officials developed the discourse of “Turkish Ergenekon Nevruz Festival” to eliminate this problem. It seems that the ideological apparatuses of the state were used for this discourse to be adopted. However, it can be claimed that the state’s discourse became unsuccessful, since it did not have a cultural reference. On the other hand, there emerged important discontinuities in the discourses of PKK referring to Newroz. These discontinuities were mainly dependent on the moments of the military and ideological struggles with the state. The emphasis on “resistance” in the Newroz discourse left its place to that on “peace”. Not “distinguishing”, but “uniting” role of Newroz on “peoples” began to be accentuated. However, Newroz has been continuing to signify the distinctive Kurdish identity through the spelling of the word in Kurdish version. Since then, Newroz continued to pose a danger towards “national unity” for the state which tries to construct a cultural unity by its own discourse, but tries to define this unity by the mediance of Turkishness identity.

CONCLUSION

In this study, transformation process of Newroz, which is an antique festival, into a modern and an influential ideological tool through integrating with the impressive story of Kawa the Smith was explored. It can be claimed that each phase throughout this process developing in a multi-dimensional and patchy pattern coincides with a moment in the Kurdish nationalist movement.

In its early phase, the Kurdish nationalist movement moved through two main channels. The opposition in the first channel developed as response to the Ottoman modernization and centralization process which threatened Kurds' traditional way of life. This movement, which was mainly led by the sheikhs, did not necessitate the Kawa legend; the uniting component of this movement was religion. The other channel unfolded itself through Kurdish nationalism as an intellectual movement. *Kurdistan Teali Cemiyeti* was one of the most important representatives of this movement. The members of this organization advocated a modern view of nationalism in the journal *Jin*. They aimed at providing "Kurdish nation a place that it deserves within community of nations". In accordance with this goal, the writers of *Jin* aspired towards creating a modern nation, like in Europe, out of the traditional Kurdish society. In the effort to construct such a nation, they tried to reveal the cultural differences that distinguished Kurds from other nations. Beginning from the first issue of the journal, Kawa was attributed with a special significance as conceiving it as a myth of descent and resistance. In the lack of historical information about Kurds, they denoted the "Kawa event" as one of the most significant among the national events of Kurds. Kawa legend also provided a tool for establishing a sense of continuity between generations of Kurdish people. In this period on the other hand, the day 21 March remained as a "New Year's Day" in the *Jin* journal.

In the case of İhsan Nuri, who was a nationalist intellectual and the military leader of the Ağrı rebellion defeated by Turkish state, it is seen that he tried to prove the

existence of a separate Kurdish nation when he was in exile after the rebellion. His efforts led him to Kawa legend, too. However, İhsan Nuri determined a different date for festival in the memory of the legend, of which name means to take revenge. The festival of Newroz, on the other hand, for İhsan Nuri, was an Iranian festival.

In the period after the defeat of these first generation of Kurdish rebellions when in Turkey, crucial developments happened in Iran and Iraq. In Iran the first Kurdish state was established in 1946, even though it was short-lived. In Iraq, the Kurdish nationalist movement was very strong and gained crucial cultural and legal rights. These movements became also important producers of the symbols of Kurdishness. By the time the Kurdish intellectuals in Turkey reached once more the Kawa legend, this legend had already been united with the Newroz festival in the discourse of the Kurdish movements outside Turkey.

During the 1970s, Kurdish nationalism clustered around the Marxist organizations. Therefore the members of this movement sought the characteristics which “distinguish” the Kurds and which were “progressive” at the same time. In the course of this period, Kawa legend and Newroz were situated at the foreground as the symbols expressing the “revolt against tyranny”. These movements put more emphasis on the class character of Kawa and thereby, in this era when Kurdish movement was appeared as a people’s movement, Kawa appeared as a leader of the people. These movements tried to articulate a socialist Kurdish cultural unity against the hegemonic culture of the Turkish state by the mediation of the idea of oppression.

Nevertheless, this process of construction was interrupted by the military coup in 1980. Following the military coup, Kurdish nationalism accelerated with the perception of being oppressed even more than before as a result of increasing pressures and denial of Kurdish identity. In such conditions, Newroz, inherited from the pre-1980 period, was incorporated by PKK, which was the dominant of actor in Kurdish nationalism. Yet, as reflecting the changing socio-historical conditions, the characteristics of the myth appropriated by the movement underwent some changes: Kawa the Smith was reconstructed as the Contemporary Kawa. In this new discourse

on Newroz, the emphasis on the notion of class in the discourse of Kurdish nationalist movement was gradually replaced by an emphasis on the ethnicity. In line with this transformation, Newroz was being constructed as the day when the Kurdish people, who were attempted to be destroyed, initiated the resistance. For this resistance, Mazlum Doğan's suicide action in the Diyarbakır Prison on 21 March 1982 was taken as the embodiment of this reconstructed myth; Mazlum Doğan was named as the "contemporary Kawa". Newroz that was given meaning as such was appropriated as a tool, for creating counter hegemony in the current struggle against the hegemonic culture which was articulated by the Turkish state. It was utilized in order to create a rebellious Kurdish national unity.

On the ruler-side of this hegemonic struggle, the state's official discourse was responsive to Kurdish nationalism's attempts, rather than being static. It saw the demand for recognition of Kurdish identity as a threat for national unity which is officially defined as the union of citizens who are by definition Turkish. In response to this threat, on the one hand it used means of violence against the Kurdish demonstrators with the aim of eliminating this counter-hegemonic initiation of Kurdish nationalism. On the other hand, through initiations to adopt Newroz as an official festival but in the form of *Nevruz*, it tried to absorb counter-hegemonic element in its official discourse. By this way, Newroz was tried to be presented as an element of the category of Turkishness. Thereafter, the struggle in order to fix the meaning of Newroz appeared as a struggle on the spelling of the name of the festival.

On the other hand, throughout this struggle, there happened considerable discontinuities in the Newroz discourse of the PKK related to the moments of the military and ideological struggles with the state. The most important discontinuity was declaring Newroz as a "peaceful" festival with its "unifying" feature to the other nations of Middle East, Central Asia as well as Turkey's Turks in accordance with the its new project of "Democratic Republic" after the capture of Abdullah Öcalan. However, it seems that this new discourse of the PKK was taken as a temporary policy rather than a real change by its supporters. Moreover, a considerable amount

of the Kurds has not followed this new policy. Therefore, it is expected that Newroz will be continued to be a resistant myth for the Kurds in Turkey.

To conclude, it can be argued that almost a century lasted process of constructing Newroz as a myth to be utilized for Kurdish cultural or national unity, with its ruptures, inconsistencies and ambiguities, resulted in a big success. Today, Newroz serves a common field for Kurdish people not only in Turkey, but also in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and even in Europe. In Turkey, Newroz has been continuing to signify a separate Kurdish identity against the official discourse and it is still a battlefield for ideological struggle.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX: A

THE LIST OF JOURNALS AND NEWSPAPERS

Akşam (The Evening).

Cumhuriyet (The Republic).

Güneş (The Sun).

Hürriyet (The Liberty).

Kava December 1978, January 1979.

Milli Gazete (The National Gazette).

Milliyet (The Nationality).

Sabah (The Morning).

Ortadoğu (The Middle East).

Özgür Bakış (Free View).

Özgür Halk (Free People). November 1990-March1999.

Özgürlük Yolu (The Way of Freedom). March 1976- January 1979.

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Tercüman (The Interpreter).

Türkiye

Yeni Şafak (The New Dawn).

APPENDIX: B

THE LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Ayşe Yıldız, Interview by author, Sıhhiye, Ankara, March (21th) 2005.

F. Kanat, Interview by author, Kızılay, Ankara, July 2005.

Mehdi Zana, Interview by author, Kızılay, Ankara, February 2005.

Naci Kutlay, Interview by author and Azat Zana Gündoğan, Balgat, Ankara, November 2004.

Nurettin Elhüseyni, Interview by author, Kadıköy, İstanbul, June 2005.

Ruşen Arslan, Interview by author, Kızılay, Ankara, March 2005.

APPENDIX: C

DEVLET BAKANI AYVAZ GÖKDEMİR'İN TÜRK DÜNYASI'NDA NEVRUZ II. BİLGİ ŞÖLENİ AÇILIŞ KONUŞMASI

Değerli büyüğümüz Sayın Tanır, değerli millet vekillerimiz Sayın Paçacı, Yüksek Kurum'un değerli Başkanı, dost ve kardeş ülkelerin değerli büyükelçileri, bu salonda bulunan aziz misafirlerimiz, değerli bilginler, değerli dinleyiciler, kardeşlerim. Hepinizi, saygıyla selamlıyorum. Nevruz bayramınız kutlu olsun.

Tarihe meraklı olanlar ve tesadüfen gözü ilişmiş olanlar biliyorlar ki, imparatorluk döneminde, imparatorluğumuzun teşrifatında, protokolünde yer almış, kendisine mahsus merasimleri olan bir Nevruz bayramı var idi. Cumhuriyet devrinde böyle bir resmi bayram tanımıyoruz. Bizim yetiştiğimiz alanlarda, babalarımızın, yani Cumhuriyetin ilk nesillerinin zamanında resmi bir Nevruz merasimi ve Nevruz protokolü görülmedi. Ancak halkımız Nevruz'u kutluyordu. Mart ay ile Mayıs ay başına kadar ki surede mahalli şartları da göz önüne alarak muhtelif kutlamalar, muhtelif eğlenceler yapıyordu. Nevruz diye bir kelimeyi de biliyorduk. Takvimlerde de Nevruz bayramı işaret edile geliyordu.

Bir döneme geldik ki, birileri çıktı, "Nevruz bizim özel bayramımızdır, bize mahsus bir bayramdır," dediler, ve bu bayramı bir takım menfi etkinliklerin, bölücü hareketlerin, Türk milletini, Türk Devletini rahatsız edici eylemlerin zemini olarak kutlamak istediler. Adı bayramdı, ama fiiliyatı hiç de bayrama benzemiyordu. Sonra renkler çıkardılar. Sarı, yeşil, kırmızı. Tabiat bu renklerle dolup taşıyor. Biz Türkiye'nin her tarafında, insanlarımızın üzerinde bu renkleri görüyor ve seviyorduk. Türkülerimize geçmişti, al, yeşil. Alı yeşilli, alını yeşilini toplayıp götürmek manasında pek çok Türkümüz vardır. Koynu kıyafeti dediğimiz zaman da gözümüzün önünde allar, yeşiller, sarılar canlanır, dalgalanır dururdu. Fakat bu renklerimiz de bir tekele almak, inhisar etmek tavrını gördük. "Bu bizim özel rengimizdir," dediler ve bu renklerle kaldırdıkları flamayı ayyıldızlı bayrağımızın yanına rakip bir bayrak gibi koymaya teşebbüs ettiler.

Bunun politik boyutları, asayiş, emniyet güçlerimizi, kolluk güçlerimizi ilgilendiren tarafları bir yana biz değerli arkadaşlarımızla dedik ki, şuna bir bakalım, bakalım. Gerçekten, bir defa, bu Nevruz nedir? Bir kavmin, bir ırkın, bir derede bir tepede yaşayanların özel bayramı mı, onlara mahsus bir bayram mı? Türk milletine, Türk kültürüne bu bayramın nisbeti nedir? Bu renkler tarihte mevcut bir ırkın, bir kavmin, bir devletin, devletçiliğin özel rengi, özel flaması mı? Şuna bir bakalım. Bu hadiseye bir de ilmin ışığını turalım.

Muhtelif gayretlerden sonra, geçen sene, Birinci Milletlerarası Nevruz Bilgi Şöleni'ni yaptık. Bilgi Şöleni'nin ardından da o çalışmalarını kitaplaştırdık. Gördük ki, Nevruz, benden önceki Sayın konuşmacıların, Sayın Reşat Genç'in, Sayın Cevad Heyet'in de ifade ettikleri gibi, Sayın Cumhurbaşkanımızın mesajlarında ifade buyurdıkları gibi, bir kavmin bayramı değil, herhangi bir sınıra hapsedilebilecek bir bayram değil, hele hele herhangi bir sebeple bölücülüğe, kana, kine sebep yapılabilecek bir gün değil, bir kavga günü değil. Kesinlikle bir sevinç günü, bir varoluş günü, yaşama sevincini ifade etme günü, bir barış, dostluk, kardeşlik günü. Peki, kimde var? Herkeste var. Hunlar devrinden itibaren Türk tarihinin her safhasında bir Nevruz sevincini; Nevruz bayramını görüyoruz. Bu günde Türk kozmogonisiyle birleşen bir kutlama günü görüyoruz. Ergenekon destanımızla birleşen bir Nevruz görüyoruz.

Nevruz sadece Türklerin bayramı mı? İranlıların da bayram. Nevruz kelimesi Farsça, Farsların da bayramı. Daha ileride, onlara benzer bir kültür içindeki Türklerin de bayramı. Hasılı, Orta Asya'da, Ön Asya'da, Orta Doğu'da yaşayan ve bizim devamımız olarak Balkanlara kadar giden Türklerin, Türklerle akraba, komşu, içiçe yaşamış bütün kültürlerin hepsinde Nevruz kutlamaları var.

Bu bölgedeki kavimler, milletler zaten birbirleriyle son derece yoğun kültür alışverişinde bulunmuşlar, bazen aynı bayraklar altında, siyasi birlikler halinde yaşamışlar ve benim diyen herkesin bayram imiş Nevruz, işte bunu gördük. Ve elbette Türk kültürünün içinde de çok köklü bir yere sahip olduğunu gördük, Nevruz'un.

Öyle bir bayram ki, devlet tarafından empoze edilmiş değil, devlet tarafından icat edilmiş de değil. Halkın içtenlikle benimsediği, kutladığı, çok köklü, geçmişi yüzyıllara dayanan bir bayram. Devlet de bu bayramın mevcudiyetini kabul ve tescil etmiş. Nevruz, işte böyle bir bayram. Yani devlet kutlasa da kutlamasa da halk Nevruz'u kutlayacak, bunu da gördük.

Bütün bu gördüklerimizi kameralarla tescil ettirdik. Değerli bilginleri çağırdık. Sadece Türk bilginlerini değil, Türkolojiyle, bu bölge kültürleriyle ilgilenen başka bilginleri de çağırdık. Onların verdikleri tebliğleri de kitaplaştırdık ve kamuoyuna intikal ettirdik.

Tabiatla gördüğümüz, gelinlerimizin, kızlarımızın, hatta belli ölçülerde erkeklerimizin üzerinde gördüğümüz renkler karşımıza bir bölücülük bayrağı olarak çıkınca, doğrusu renklerle de aramızdan bir soğuk rüzgar geçmedi değil. Ürktük. "Renkler konusuna da bir bakalım," dedik. Arkadaşlarım televizyonlarda anlatıyorlar, bana enteresan geldi. Sizinle de paylaşmak istiyorum. Bu kırmızı, yeşil, sarı renklerini bir kompozisyon içinde ilk defa 7. - 8. yüzyıla ait Göktürk beylerinin mezarlarından birinde cesedin üzerinde kefen olarak görüyoruz. Cesede üç kat kefen giydirmişler, al, yeşil, san birbirlerinin üstüne gelecek şekilde. Bu mezarı 1935 yılında Sovyet arkeologu Kielev açmış. Kielev, mezarı açınca, üç kat kefen görmüş mevtanın üzerinde, kırmızı, yeşil, sarı. 1161 tarihinde eserini yazan İranlı, İslamın büyük alimi Abdülcélil el-Kazvini, Selçuklu sultanlarının ordularında Sarı, kırmızı, yeşil bayraklar kullandıklarını belirtiyor. Eserinin adı, Kitabı'n-Nakz Bir dini tartışma, itikat tartışması kitabı, ama o vesileyle tarihi bilgiler de veriyor. İşte bu kitapta, hani biz tarihte Sarı, yeşil, kırmızı bayrak varsa, kime aitti, diye anıyoruz ya, sarı, kırmızı, yeşil renklerinin Selçuklularda bayrak olduğunu okuyoruz. Sonra, Mahmut Şevket Paşa'nın askeri teşkilatla ilgili kitabında, Osmanlı padişahlarının da, Zat-i Hazret-i Padişahi'ye mahsus fors, devlet başkanlığı forsu olarak bu renkli bayrağı, sancağı kullandığını öğreniyoruz. "Al, yeşil bayrağı düğün mü sandın" vb. gibi Yemen Türkülerine kadar intikal eden mısralar da bu yüzden söylenmiş. Çünkü al, yeşil bayrak kalktığı zaman sefer-i hümayun var, harp var, darp var, ayrılık var, gurbet var manasında, "al, yeşil bayrağı düğün mü sandın" deniliyor. Onun delaletiyle yine hafızalarımızı tazelersek, köylerimizde al, yeşil, sarı bayrak düğün bayrağı, gelin bayrağı olarak kaldırılır, bunu da biliyoruz.

Osmanlı vezir ve paşalarının özel forsları, rütbelere göre sancakları arasında da aynı renkleri görüyoruz. Bunlar arasında da san, kırmızı, yeşil renkli bayraklar olduğunu tespit ediyoruz. Tımarlı sipahilerinin sancağıyla yeniçeri sancakları arasında da aynı renkleri görmekteyiz. Çanakkale'de gösterdiği yararlılıklar dolayısıyla Miralay Mustafa Kemal'e, yani aziz Atatürk'e Sultan Reşat'ın verdiği altın liyakat madalyasının şeridi de sarı, kırmızı, yeşildir. Bu zikredilen kaynaklar çok sahih kaynaklardır. Mustafa Kemal Paşa'nın liyakat madalyasındaki sarı, kırmızı, yeşil şeridi de isteyen herkes fotoğrafları tetkik etmek veya müzeye giderek görmek imkanına sahiptir.

Orta Asya'daki, Kafkasya'daki kardeşlerimizden bize Nevruz tabloları geldi. Çağdaş Nevruz tabloları olan bu tablolarda, gördük ki, çağdaş Türk ressamı da Nevruz'u, Nevruz sevincini ifade ederken bol bol sarı, kırmızı, yeşil renk kullanmaktadırlar.

Geçen yaz Manas'ın bininci yıl kutlamaları dolayısıyla Kırgızistan'a gittik. Orada, bin yıl öncesinin dekoru ve şartları içerisinde çok başarılı bir canlandırma, büyük bir prodüksiyon vardı. Binlerce insanın rol aldığı bir gösteriydi. Sahnesi tabiatı, dağların arasındaydı, dağlardı, ve gerçekten de Manas'la birlikte yaşıyormuş, Manas'la omuz omuza dövüşüyormuş gibi, Manas'ı gözümüzle görüyormuş gibi olduğumuz bir zemin ve çerçeve idi. Orada da Manas'ın, Manas devrinin bayrakları dalgalanıyordu. Tabiatıyla, bu gösteriyi hazırlayanlar, bu canlandırmayı yapanlar Türkiye'deki san, kırmızı, yeşil tartışmalarının dışında, belki de bundan habersiz soydaşlarımız, kardeşlerimizdi. Bayraklar arasında bir kurt başı gördüm. Yakınımda oturan bir arkadaşına işaret ettim, "Görüyor musun, otuz senedir başımızı belaya sokan kafa orada sallanıyor," dedim. Orada yaşadıklarından bir diğer gözlemimi de Sayın Bayan İnönü'yle, o zamanki Dışişleri Bakanımızın değerli eşleri Sevinç Hanımefendi'yle paylaştık. "Hanımefendi bakın," dedim, "Türkiye'de birileri boşuna gayret ediyorlar. Orta Asya'da Manas'ın bayraklarından birisi de sarı, kırmızı ve yeşil." Sevinç Hanımefendi de

hayretle ve sevinçle “Gerçekten,” dedi, “çok hayret verici, çok sevinç verici bir hadise.” Manas'ın bayrağı olarak da Sarı, kırmızı ve yeşili görmüş olduk.

Şimdi, kim diyorsa ki, “Ben Nevruz'u severim, Nevruz benim bayramımdır” böylece o, “ben iyi Türküm, Türk geleneğinden kopmamış bir Türküm. Türk geleneklerini evinde, ocağında, köyünde, çevresinde yaşayan ve yaşatan bir Türküm” demiş olur. Türkten ayrılmak isteyen, “ben Türk değilim” demek için kendine mahsus bir kültür çevresi, kendine mahsus bir bayram bulmak isteyen, kendine Nevruz'dan başka bir bayram aramak zorundadır. Nevruz onların bayramı değildir, o zaman.

İlle de Türkiye gökleri altında bir sarı, kırmızı, yeşil bayrak kalkacaksa, o bu gökler altında rakipsiz olarak dalgalanan ayyıldızlı bayrağın kardeşi olur, tarihten gelen kardeşi olur. “Sen, bu şekline, bu heybetin, bu güzelliğin, bu şerefine yükselmeden evvel senin yerine naçizane biz vardık,” demiş olurlar. Bu renklerle Türkiye’de bölünmek, Türkiye’yi bölmek parçalamak, bu renkleri bölücülüğün alemi haline getirmek isteyenler de bundan vazgeçsinler, kendilerine başka renkler bulsunlar. O renkler bizim renklerimizdir. Halen Türkiye’nin Doğusunda, Batısında, kuzeyinde, güneyinde köylerimizi dolaştığımız zaman, hangi kavmi gruptan, hangi etnik menşeden olursa olsun, bu renklerin Türkiye rüzgarlarıyla serile serile, savrula savrula başörtüsü, omuz örtüsü, elbise olarak giyildiğini göreceğiz.

Bu çok da zahmetli olmayan araştırmaların, müşahedelerin, tespitlerin sonunda devlet olarak biz kendimizi bütün milletimizle, bütün vatandaşlarımızla barışık hissediyoruz. Ve istiyoruz ki, bu Nevruz günleri, bu Nevruz sevinçleri bir kardeşlik zemini olsun. Bir dostluk zemini olsun. Bu hassasiyetler Sayın Dr. Heyet'in de dediği gibi, İnsanları birbirinden ayırasın, İnsanları birbirine yaklaştırsın. Aynı milletten olan İnsanların gönüllerini bir kardeşlik, dostluk duygusuyla doldursun, doyursun. Komşu milletten olanları da birbirine barışık kılsın. Madem ki müşterek bir bayramımız var, o bayramın sevinciyle komşu milletlerle de, birbirimizle de, daha dostane, daha yakın münasebetler kuralım. Bizim temennimiz budur. Bu istikamette ilim adamlarımızın yapacağı her çalışmaya destek olmaya çalışıyoruz, bugüne kadar destek olmaya çalıştık, bugünden sonra da destek olmaya çalışacağız.

Sayın Dr. Cevad Heyet, az önceki konuşmasında, siyaset adamlarıyla ilim adamları arasında bir çizgi çekmek ihtiyacı hissetti. Bendeniz bir siyaset adamıyım. Siyasi görevlerini doğru yapmaya çalışan bir siyaset adamıyım. Sayın Dr. Heyet'in de dahil olduğu buradaki bilim adamlarının, değerli bilginlerimizin, Türkiye'nin ve Dünyanın bütün bilginlerinin emrinde, hizmetinde, desteğinde olmayı şeref sayan bir siyaset adamıyım. Bu duygularla milletimin, burada bulunan aziz vatandaşlarımızın, misafirlerimizin Nevruz bayramlarını bir kere daha kutluyorum. Biraz şaşırmış olanlara da, “Gelin, aklınızı başımıza toplayın. Sağduyunun sesine kulak verin. İlimin sesine kulak verin. Bu vesileyle, özellikle size de, her ne kadar şuurunuz karışık olursa olsun, bir kardeşlik eli, bir dostluk eli, bir şefkat eli uzatıyoruz. Gelin, bu elimizi tutun. Tutmazsanız, vay halinize!” demek istiyorum.