

THE POSSIBILITY OF JUSTICE AND PEACE: THE  
REPRESENTATION OF 1915 AND ARMENIANS IN KURDISH  
LITERATURE

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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.

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## ABSTRACT

### THE POSSIBILITY OF JUSTICE AND PEACE: THE REPRESENTATION OF 1915 AND ARMENIANS IN KURDISH LITERATURE

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The main purpose of this study is to examine the borders of ethical justice and peace based on the confrontation with 1915 in Kurdish literature. The most significant point of this thesis is shaped by the fact that these texts were written after 2000. Consequently, in which point of view these texts were written or what could be intended construct the baseline of the study. Throughout the thesis, I will investigate the development or main problems of literature produced by Turkey centered Kurdish writers and later these writers' approach to the Catastrophe. These two chapters will help us to better understand the contents of Kurdish texts narrating 1915 incidents (the Catastrophe) and Armenians. The relation between prohibition of mourning and the appearance of trauma will determine the possibility of justice and confrontation in these texts.

Keywords: *literature, confrontation, justice, testimony, memory*

## ÖZ

### ADALETİN VE BARIŞIN İMKANLARI: KÜRT EDEBİYATINDA 1915 VE ERMENİ TEMSİLİ

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Bu çalışmanın temel amacı Kürt edebiyatında 1915’le yüzleşmeye dayanarak etik adaletin ve barışın sınırlarını araştırmaktır. Tezin en önemli noktasını metinlerin 2000 yılı sonrasında yazılması oluşturuyor. Dolayısıyla metinlerin hangi bakış açısıyla yazıldığı veya neyi amaçlamış olabileceği çalışmanın esas hattını oluşturuyor. Tez boyunca Türkiye merkezli Kürt yazarların ürettikleri edebiyatın gelişim veya temel problemlerini, daha sonra romanlardaki Kürt yazarların Felaket’i ele alma biçimini incelemeye çalışacağım. Bu iki bölüm 1915’teki yaşanan olayları (Felaket’i) ve Ermenileri anlatan Kürtçe metinleri daha iyi anlamamızda bize yardımcı olacaktır. Yasın yasaklanması ile travmanın açığa çıkması arasındaki ilişki adaletin ve yüzleşmenin bu metinlerdeki ihtimalini belirleyecektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: *edebiyat, yüzleşme, adalet, tanıklık, hafıza*

*To Mary, Xecikê and my mother*

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## INTRODUCTION

The last period of the Ottoman Empire has always been a critical affair for historians, researchers and nations. The Second Constitutional Era, The Balkan Wars, the countries which won their freedoms totally determined the subsequent process and intercommunal relations. As far as the idea of Pan-Ottomanism turned into Islamism and thereafter to Pan-Turkism, the communities in the Empire were being highly influenced by those movements. In fact, the political actor had changed and Committee of Union and Progress had dominated its ideology all over the country. The main idea had become to create a new pure Turkic population for the State. Ethnic cleansing was one of the main tools to create a homogenous population. As a result, a community which was considered to be *millet-i sadıka*<sup>1</sup>, namely Armenians, was systematically exposed to violence of the masses and the Empire nearly one hundred years ago. Lots of discussions were made on the *reality* or *unreality* of that process. Various names appeared such as deportation, mass-killing, catastrophe, disaster or genocide to define that event. Each side has felt to prove themselves and still continues to exaggerate their claims. All the sides approached the affair as a historical problem, but they did not want to see the social, cultural or memorial destructions of 1915. The peace continued to be missed between the sides.

What were the main reasons of that process which included deportation and mass killings? Why has it currently become one of the most critical affairs in the international politics? Why do the states that helped 1915 to take place, have begun to establish currently their politics by owning the victimized side of 1915? Surely, these questions require some other studies to be answered. However, it is a fact that what happened in 1915 affected all the relations in the society. Thus, to a great extent, peace among the parts of those societies continued to be missed as Hans Lukas Kieser says. For these reasons, the problems are being continually transferred to the next generations. Within this respect, the year 2015 became a critical date for confrontation with 1915 because colloquiums, conferences, memorial activities, articles and field works were produced or carried out.

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<sup>1</sup> Loyal nation

Recent years have included a period in which Kurds and Armenians came closer through cultural, social and political activities. After 90s, this convergence basically have shaped as far as some Kurds started to frankly acknowledge that they had a role in the massacres. On 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2014, a Kurdish politician Ahmet Türk made a statement about his apologizes for Armenian and Yezidis on behalf of the Kurds. His words are like that: “our ancestors were misused against Assyrians, Yezidis and Armenians and tortured them. Thus, as Kurds we are saying that we were used out of our will.”<sup>2</sup> The demand for apologize was responded by Tamar Nalcı in an Armenian-Turkish newspaper AGOS after six days. Nalcı interpreted Ahmet Türk’s statements as including denial, the denial of voluntary cooperation.<sup>3</sup> The same apology was repeated by Ahmet Türk in 17<sup>th</sup> February 2014 but the debates on that apology lasted for a long time and the apology was converted into another form: “Let Armenians apologize from some Kurds.” Briefly, although the sides did not even come together, an attempt for peace did not politically bring any solution, but it gave rise to the corruption of the debates.

Here I want to quote a critical question asked by Nurdan Gürbilek too: “What does writing save?”<sup>4</sup> Gürbilek realizes an attempt for compensation in Coetzee’s novels and interrogates how words are used for convincing and killing the people. “Can literature become the echo in this world for those who lost their voices? (Gürbilek, 2015: 114). Nichanian’s argument is crucial to answer this question: disaster requires interpretation for the relation between experience and narration of that experience (Nichanian, 2011: 156-159); and therefore the disaster can be narrated merely through literature. Of course, literature does not work only for narration. What is expected from literary texts is to determine the borders of confrontation, admission, memory, demand for apologize and justice. That makes literature different from history and politics as I will try to concretize in the next chapters.

As I mentioned above, 2015 became a significant year for reconciliation and confrontation with what happened in 1915. Based on the hundredth anniversary of 1915, a course “Armenians in the Ottoman Empire: A Literary Perspective” was

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<sup>2</sup> The complete interview can be read on <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/-ermenilerden-ozur-diliyoruz-/siyaset/siyasetdetay/03.02.2013/1663843/default.htm>

<sup>3</sup> The complete coloumn can be read on <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/4217/ahmet-turkun-inkri>

<sup>4</sup> This question is asked by Gürbilek for her critics of “Orpheus Çıkmazı” (Quag of Orpheus) in *Sessizin Payı*. İstanbul: Metis (2015).

opened by Mehmet Fatih Uslu at Istanbul Şehir University in 2015. Throughout the lectures we read fundamental examples from Armenian literature in the Ottoman Empire to get familiar with some critical concepts. We read some examples written by Armenian writers such as Zabel Essayan, Hagop Oshagan, Gurgen Mahari and Yervant Odian related with massacres against Armenians. In the leadership of Fatih Uslu we discussed those texts by concerning theoretical framework about the concepts like testimony, mourning, literature and writing on disaster. However, the core of the lectures was laying on the description of a keyword *catastrophe* and its promotion together with other keywords I mentioned above. We learned that Hagop Oshagan became the first remnant who named all the systematic process after 1915 as “the Catastrophe” in his well-known text *Mnatsortats* [The Remnants] written in 1931. To transmit what Marc Nichanian says, the term of *genocide* was not invented yet because the incident had not gained a fact property through politization. In that sense, the Catastrophe is the incident itself and differs from the term *genocide* as a historical fact. The fact which is called as *genocide* is the worst insult towards the incident and the ones who witnessed it (Nichanian, 2011: 20-21). David Kazanjian and Nichanian stress repeatedly on the division: “By using the word “Genocide,” we survivors are only repeating again and again the denial of the loss” (Kazanjian & Nichanian, 2003: 127). That kind of division considerably had paid my attention in the course and I also started to use the definition of “catastrophe”.

After reading all documentations and having done the debates on them, we were assigned to write a final paper related with the syllabus. In the first step, I decided to make a research on the debates about the role of Kurds in 1915. Then I thought that it could be directly related to history and I decided to look at Kurdish-Armenian relations within the perspective of Kurdish literature. Ultimately, I had to relate the paper with the main concepts used during the lectures. Then the instructor approved and supported my idea. I started to search for works from Kurdish literature narrating 1915. As far as I read the texts, I realized that it was a kind of literature which narrates the relations between perpetrator/saver and victim. I wrote the final paper and it turned to a MA thesis proposal through the support of the instructor in June of 2015.

Actually, an uncommon opportunity had emerged for me to make a concrete division between history and literature with regard to dealing with victims’ lives after starting to make a research on that field for the paper. It became obvious for me that

history is not the only determinant of the incidents or facts took place in the past. However, history has been the first field which is believed to be transferring the facts to the people. To break such kind of perception, anthropologic studies, oral history, literature, storytelling and works in memory have started to fill the gaps left by history. In this way, the relations between different communities which are individualized by the history could be converted into a collective memory. Consequently, literary perception on 1915 became my main purpose.

As soon as I decided to study on that field, I researched all the materials related to topic. At first, I learned that Özlem Galip made a speech in Hrant Dink Workshop “*The Politics of Remembering: Massacres against Non-Muslims in Kurdish Novelistic Discourse*” took place in 1-2 June 2013. Then one of my friends recommended me that Adnan Çelik and Namık Kemal Dinç had newly conducted a field research in Diyarbakır titled as *Yüzyıllık Ah! Toplumsal Hafızanın İzinde 1915 Diyarbakır* (Centennial Ah! In the Pursuit of Social Memory 1915 Diyarbakır). The theoretical framework, oral narrations and the comments became very beneficial for me to understand the relation between 1915 and memory while reading that research. Then I had a contact with Adnan Çelik, he mentioned on his works about that field and sent one of his article he wrote for the journal of Birikim. I read his short article “Hafıza rejiminde yeni bir alan: 1915, Kürtler ve edebiyat” [A New Field in Memorial Regime: 1915, Kurds and Literature] in Birikim. Then I sent an email to Kurdish Studies Network to take some recommendations from the group members. They provided me with lots of literary texts and articles related with the chapters of this thesis. Through the group, there appeared another article written by David Yeşilmen for a Kurdish journal Wêje û Rexne [Literature and Criticism]: “Di Romanên Kurdî De Avakirina Karakterên Ermen û Têmsîla Wan” [The Construction of Armenian Characters and Their Representation in the Kurdish Novels]. The article written in 2014 has the property of constructing essential views and knowledge for the introduction related with that field. It gives the general comments on the presentation of Armenian characters by summarizing them. In the same issue of the journal another article by Ömer Delikaya appeared: “Peymana Bêdengîyê û Êşa Kesên Ne ji Me; Rengvedana Jinên Ermenîyan di *Zûra* ya Felat Dilgeş û *Bavfile* a M. Ali K.” [The Treaty of Silence and the Pain of Others: The Representation of

Armenian Women in *Zûra* of Felat Dilgeş and *Bayfile* of M. Alî K.]<sup>5</sup>. Although that article mostly concentrates on two short stories, it provides the reader with very essential information on the both stories with regard to memory. Additionally, during the last pages of this thesis, another article “The Armenian Genocide in the Kurdish Novel: Restructuring Identity through Collective Memory” written by Adnan Çelik and Ergin Öpengin in the July of 2016. The paper has a great contribution to that field which tends to victim-perpetrator relations by looking at three Kurdish novels *Kilama Pepugî* [The Lament of the Cuckoo Bird]<sup>6</sup>, *Bayfileh* [Proselyte], and *Pêşengeha Sûretan* [The Exhibition of Faces] with regard to collective memory. Although I had started to write the chapters of the thesis, realizing the increase in the studies on that topic made me happy, but mostly worried me. Actually, the phenomenon of writing on 1915 had reflected to the academic studies after 2000s.

That is why, apart from the previous studies on the subject of “Armenians in Kurdish literature”, I will not only look at the construction of the Kurdish and Armenian characters, but also I will mostly take the subject with regard to the general aims of the authors. If to introduce this thesis, the main aim of it is not to produce a historiography which repeats itself again and again. The main aim of this thesis is not to enable one or two sides to gain a political acquisition either. Otherwise, the thesis could be unfaithful to the victims who lost their lives for the sake of political interests. It is obvious that facing the reality and establishing a justice mechanism could not be, even partly, possible because history and politics have always existed based on rejection and denial on their victims. All of the rejections, denials or prohibitions on mourning disappeared merely for the interest of the regimes. For example, Turkey, if it really became successful, began to judge 12 September coup after 30 years. On the other hand, the massacres against minor identities still could not be faced and judged in real terms.

Before giving the main problematic of the thesis, I will try to explain the reasons behind the increase in the numbers of the works, novels and studies about Armenians. According to Adnan Çelik, the multicultural discourse in the events which were organized by the local governments under Kurdish movement together with the reconstruction of urban identities which comes together with the prominence

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<sup>5</sup> Both of the articles can be reached in *Wêje û Rexne*, n. 2, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> *Kilama Pepugî* was written in Zazakî dialect. Because this thesis mainly focuses on the texts written in Kurmanji dialect, I will not .

of nostalgia of living together, ideological engagements of new generation of Kurdish novelists and the factors such as the proliferation of the opportunities regarding the historical readings which are alternative to the nation state based official history theses gave rise to the production of literary works in this field (Çelik, 2015: 28). But this argument is not sufficient to explain the increase in such memorial works. According to Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2001), the radical democracy globally supplanted liberal democracy in the beginnings of 90s by including minorities or diversities based on freedom and equality after the social movements. Through radical democracy, for Laclau and Mouffe, different identities were expected to be represented in any democratic organization (pp. 1-7). A coherency can be seen between this statement and Cengiz Güneş's argumentation. Cengiz Güneş's views on the transition of Kurdish movement from 1991 to 2011 presents an idea that Kurdish movement left national independence and socialist notions by pursuing a kind of "democracy" after the collapse of Soviet Union. Based on this transition, a multiculturalist discourse was promoted by emphasizing woman rights, ecologic movements and minor identities (Güneş, 2013: 229-240). That conversion in Kurdish movement made possible to imagine Kurdish question by concerning pluralism. This can be one of the most critical reasons to explain why Kurdish literature began to write on Armenians after 2000.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Mithat Sancar (2013) relates the process of remembering and forgetting with the formal ideology of Turkey in his book *Geçmişle Yüzleşme: Unutma Kültüründen Hatırlama Kültürüne* [Confrontation with Past: From Forgetting Culture to Remembering Culture]. For Sancar, the state reminded itself as a victim and it constructs another version of remembering instead of forgetting through ceremonies, formal historical theses and education which feeds nationalism. In this way it was showed that the state did not appear as perpetrator in the tragic sides of history by concentrating on the nation's pain and neglecting the pain of others. However, Sancar claims that the oppressed past will ultimately occupy the present. The same views are shared by Uğur Ümit Üngör (2014): "While silencing certain memories and narratives, the regime produces other memories and narratives. During this process of defining and fine-tuning national memory, again, the violent past is muted" (p. 154). Üngör calls

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<sup>7</sup> The works of some Kurdish bureaucrats after 2000s related with 1915 can be read on *Türkiye ve Ermeni Hayaleti: Soykırımın İzinde Adımlar* translated from *La Turquie et le Fantome Armenien* published by İletişim Yayınları in 2014. The bureaucrats' intention is to confront with 1915 in these works (Pp. 245-260)

that process as “construction of memory”. On the other hand, Üngör signs a conflict within that construction. For him, there emerges a clash between Turkish/Kurdish social memory and Turkish political memory (Üngör, 2014: 157). Üngör argues that the increase in that conflict is about oral history: “had a systematic oral history project been carried out in Turkey much earlier, such as in the 1960s or 1970s, a wealth of crucial information could have undoubtedly been salvaged” (Üngör, 2014: 159). Consequently, the increase in the studies based on oral history calls the oppressed memorials back and discovered what the state covered. This increase can be considered as another possible reason for the phenomenon of narrating 1915 in Kurdish literature after 2000.

Moreover, state violence on Kurds which enabled Kurds to shape a collective memory with Armenians, undoubtedly affected the late emergence of this literature. Here I must state that in addition to Kurdish literature, remnants of the Catastrophe also could not speak or explain what they survived for a long time. As a result, I can argue that the field of Kurdish literature which tends to the happenings in 1915 was shaped between two near memories. Here three dates which create a triangle are essential to state: 1915, the line from 1980 to 90s and the narration time of the Kurdish texts. What determines the collective memory between Armenians and Kurds is considered to be these three dates.

So, what is the main purpose of this thesis? In this thesis, my main aim is to look at the Kurdish literary productions I will list below in terms of confrontation, justice and peace. Based on the information given above, through the thesis I will trace the position of Kurdish literature in the narration of 1915. In other words, to what extent Kurdish literature benefits from the opportunities of literature while narrating that affair will be the main problematic. Nichanian claims that literature is the only instrument to narrate the Catastrophe (Nichanian, 2011: 86). If so, how do the Kurdish texts confront the incidents or mass massacres in 1915? Could Kurdish literature really establish a justice or peace mechanism between Kurdish and Armenian characters? What are the processes which are thought to be enabling justice? Is there any coherency between the attempt to repair the relations in the novels and a search for belated responsibility? I ask these questions because the texts mostly include Kurdish characters whose antagonist or protagonist sides are determined via their approach towards the Armenian characters. For example, a Kurdish character who saved an Armenian is assumed to be a brave in the texts.

Moreover, the intention of authors about Kurdish identity builds the cornerstone of the texts. Here I want to ask the most important question: Why do I approach those texts by analyzing the notion of justice and peace? Three reasons are possible for me to concentrate on that notion: firstly, these texts were written after, at least, 85 years. Those texts appeared as a result of a long time silence by including traumatized memories, self-judgement and the way going to confrontation. Secondly, David Yeşilmen argues that Kurdish writers narrated the Catastrophe in their texts by approaching 1915 via today's perception (Yeşilmen, 2014). Thirdly, the reconstruction of collective memory in those texts (Çelik & Öpengin, 2016: 2) became the result of that perception. That is why, the main intention of those texts and their problematic will give the frame of this thesis. In other words, rather than deconstructing the type of characters, the role of memory and deep analysis of content of the stories, my attempt is to examine the functional side of the texts through the keywords justice, responsibility, confrontation, peace and consensus. This attempt can be the main difference between this thesis and previous studies on the same subject.

The concept of justice is very significant for this thesis because it includes a mutual confrontation with *past* and the possible preparation for the better relations in the *future*. During the thesis, the notion of justice will not be related to law which consists of judgement too, but it will be related to ethical justice. The notion will consist of all the regret, admission, responsibility and demand for apologizing. Whether provided justice can establish peace or not will be another problematic. The notion of peace does not carry a soft humanistic meaning. Rather, it carries a mechanism in which the sides negotiate and ensure the submission of the rights. According to Nichanian, peace and forgiving can be possible in two ways: one of the ways is to narrate through literature and interpretation; and the other way is to apologize (Nichanian, 2011: 158-159). Nevertheless, as I mentioned previously, Ahmet Türk's apology or other political attempts could not be properly effective.

Based on the some views I gave about justice and peace above, rather than focusing on the past, the thesis will contribute to the suggestion of peace which is related to the present and future. As I will show in the third chapter, history provides a field in which clashes emerge instead of negotiation. If to remember Hagop Oshagan's words: History is nothing but a series of denials. (Kazanjian & Nichanian, 2003: 127). Literature fulfils what history and politics cannot: to achieve the

possibility of reconciliation by gathering together the sides in the texts. In that sense, it is literature which substantially promotes the possibility of justice and peace which could not be fulfilled by the politicians.

All the texts I will analyze in this thesis were written in Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish language after 2000. Some of them directly narrated the Catastrophic time, while others tried to demonstrate the traumatic side of post-catastrophic period on the characters. The texts written in novel format are as such: Mehdi Zana's *Ay Dayê* [O! Mom] (2005), Sabri Akbel's *Evîna Pinhan* [Hidden Love] (2006), Hesenê Mete's *Gotinên Gunehkar* [Sinful Words] (2007), Yaqop Tilermenî's *Bavfileh* [Proselyte]<sup>8</sup> (2009), Eyub Guven's *Guhar* [Eardrop] (2011), Mehmet Devîren's *Kortika Filehan* [The Hollow of Non-Muslims] (2013), Îrfan Amîda's *Pêşengeha Sûretan* [Exhibition of the Faces] (2013). Some of them were written in a short-story format namely Amed çeko Jiyan's *Varjabad* (2010), Felat Dilgeş's *Dilşa* (2003), Mehmet Dicle's *Ta* [Rope] (2013).

Here, it will be helpful to introduce the chapters of the thesis. In the first chapter, I will try to draw a portrait of Kurdish and Armenian relations related with Ottoman Empire policy in three different periods. In the first period which is the years between 1839 and 1876, Kurdish-Armenian relations will be given related with Tanzimat Reform Edict. While doing that the reasons behind the broken relations will be stated by giving social structure. In the second subchapter, internationalization of Armenian issue will be investigated within its resemblance to the emergence of Kurdish nationalist movement. The main focus of this subchapter is Hamidian Cavalry's formation and actions as well as the massacres took place between 1894 and 1896 in Kurdistan. In the third subchapter, the way from collaborative lives of Kurds and Armenians to the massacres took place in 1915 will be given. While doing that, I will try to focus that process as a critical fact rather than an incident finished in a specific time.

In the second chapter, main focus will return to the process of Kurdish literature from its birth to the present. The second chapter is also divided into three subchapters. The first subchapter directly focuses on the emergence of a literature together with newspapers and journals published in İstanbul or abroad from 1898 to 1923. The main characteristics of these publications are to concentrate on political

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<sup>8</sup> The English translation of the title of *Bavfileh* belongs to Özlem Galip.

situation of Kurds, the relation with Armenians and to publish some classical Kurdish literary productions. The second subchapter is about exile of Kurdish literature in Soviet Armenia, Europe and some Arabic cities like Damascus and Beirut from 1923 to 1990. This term can be considered as the breaking point for Kurdish literature because literary productions were firstly produced in that period. In the last and the third subchapter, development in Kurdish literature from 1990 to the present will be demonstrated. It will be stated that together with this period the bans over Kurdish literature have had blurred borders. This chapter is substantially necessary to understand the first and the second chapters. The political, social and literal works about Kurdish nation-building process extensively took place in that period. The effects of that situation may be broadly seen in the third chapter.

Main arguments and debates of this thesis will be given in the third chapter. Based on thinking the possibilities of literature, I will try to ask whether Kurdish literature can establish justice and peace while it narrates the Catastrophe. The chapter has three subchapters. In the first subchapter, I will concentrate on the division between fact and fiction, document and monument and literature and testimony. The attempt of Kurdish writers to historicize the narrations will be discussed in terms of technical problems. While doing that, I will examine the position of Kurdish literature towards the notion of the Catastrophe and its relation with the notion of justice. Whether these texts handling the Catastrophe take the stories as literature or historical facts will be the cornerstone of this study. Then I will try to relate the way between literature and history with testimonies. Of course, we have to be careful on the characteristics of the testimonies. Because all the texts were written after 2000, all of the testimonies are fulfilled by an elder who was very little during the Catastrophe and cannot remember the incidents or the Catastrophe is narrated through testimony of the testimonies.

The second subchapter will be tending to the mourning of Muslimized Armenian characters and the possible trauma which emerged very late. According to this subchapter, the mourning of Muslimized Armenian characters is argued to be incomplete and deficient. This argument will be related to what is claimed in the first subchapter. Making a decision between history and literature is essential to locate the aim of justice in those texts. That decision-making is totally about focusing the technical side of the texts. Such kind of technical reading will convert itself into a close reading by looking at the testimony and mourning. The identical transformation

of witnesses has an essential role for understanding the factual sides of the stories. On the other hand, identification of remnants with the Kurdish identity creates an impasse on the notion of justice between victim and perpetrator. This will be the second problematic of the thesis.

In the last subchapter, I will try to give examples from Kurdish texts whether admission, paying price and penance system can work or not. Based on the last subchapter, it will be questioned whether a courtroom established in those Kurdish texts could provide justice or not. In that sense, I will try to discuss the possible borders of literature in filling the gaps of history. To do that the contribution of possible justice to history or literature will be discussed. As stated above, one of the points of triangle was the line from 1980 to 90s for Kurds who were exposed to state violence. In that sense, 1980 and 1990s can be regarded as a period in which Kurds survived what Armenians did. Whether the state violence led Kurds to be aware of their crime or not will be analyzed through some concepts like regret, responsibility, admission and demand for forgiveness.

In the conclusion, I will try to give the brief summary of this thesis by remembering the three chapters. I will again argue that those texts which handle the Catastrophe cannot provide a justice or peace mechanism through literature based on what Nishanian and Agamben says. Those writers' intentions carry some technical mistakes. On the other hand, the purpose of Kurdish writers is considerably valuable because they have tried to move a critical topic into late emerged Kurdish literature in the narrow political context of Turkey.

Throughout the thesis, the sources will be analyzed from Kurdish, Armenian, Turkish and foreign sources. The first two historical chapters will help us to comprehend better the third chapter. Although these two chapters include historical views, the thesis will mostly focus on the influences of social memory on literature because the Catastrophe is what still continues. As a famous quotation, while Armenians tried to prove that they had been massacred, Kurds are trying to prove that they exist in this country for a century. That is why, in the chapters, my aim will be to problematize some arguments rather than proving one of them.

## CHAPTER I

### FORMALLY *MİLLET-İ SADIKA*, INFORMALLY *KİRVE*<sup>9</sup>: A HISTORY OF PROUD OR SHAME

#### 1.1. A General Portrait of the Relations between the State and Non-Muslim Groups in the Ottoman Empire

As having a multi-ethnic and multi-religious social structure, the Ottoman Empire was experiencing lots of problems caused by the wave of national movements during 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Empire had encompassed a huge geography which includes Anatolia, Southeast Asia, North Africa and the Balkan states. For this reason, multi-religious basement of the population like Muslims, Christians, Jews and Gypsies; and multi-ethnic structure like Armenians, Kurds, Arabs, Greeks, Turks, Pomaks and Circissians were shaping the general social structure of the empire. On the other hand, the state was being governed through *millet system* and all the ethnic identities were categorized under religious identities. In other words, *Millets* were the religious communities organized around the principal churches such as the Greek Orthodox and the Armenian churches in the Ottoman Empire, which constituted the mainstay of the Ottoman administration (Birtek and Dragonas, 2005, xv).

Undoubtedly, although supplying the non-Muslim communities with autonomous features, that kind of administration system was creating a sharp hierarchy among the Muslim and non-Muslim groups who settled in a state with Islamic identity. As a result, within the millet system, “different religious groups lived as closed communities governed by their own leaders regarding certain financial, legal and administrative issues, and had limited contact with other groups” (Aydınün & Dardağan, 2006; 320). What were the reasons behind this fact? The sanctions that were fulfilled to the various kinds of religious communities were different, especially for non-Muslim groups. For example, Some *millets* alone had to pay certain taxes, notably a levy on land holdings, *kharaj* (Modern Turkish, *haraç*) and/or a poll-tax, *jizya* (Modern Turkish, *cizye*) (Braude, 2014: 4) and as a result the

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<sup>9</sup> *Kirve* is a person who directly attends and becomes the main part of a Sunnite and Alewite ritual which comes from Ezidi tradition. A boy who will be circumcised is kept by a *kirve*. In this way, strong relations are promoted between *kirve*'s family and circumcised boy's family.

Ottoman Empire, which regarded Christianity and Judaism as religions containing elements of true revelation, provided non-Muslims with protection in return for higher taxes than those paid by Muslim (Aydingün and Dardağan, 2006: 325). In this case, Tanzimat Reform Edict had four basic reforms mainly for the non-Muslim subjects: “the establishment of guarantees for the life, honor and property of the sultan’s subjects; an orderly system of taxation to replace the system of tax-farming; a system of conscription for the army and equality before the law of all subjects whatever their religion” (Zürcher, 2001: 53).

If so, to what extent did the meaning of *millet* system get a transformation after Tanzimat reforms declared in 1839? Ottoman Empire which had heterogeneous social structure was facing with national movements while it was coming to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. French Revolution had a deep impact on the non-Muslim nations who were settling in Ottoman geography. Christian *millet* in the Ottoman Empire was being supported by the European or other Empires for having insufficient rights. In this way, Ottoman became more accessible to the intervention of other Empires and countries like Russia or France in terms of *millet* rights. To prevent the intervention of these countries and to protect the centralization of the Ottoman Empire by keeping all the non-Muslim groups in the Empire, Tanzimat Reform Edict (or known as Edict of Gülhane) was declared in 1839. In the Tanzimat Edict, “the life, property and honor of all subjects were guaranteed by the state (*emniyeti can ve mahfuziyeti ırz ve namus ve mal*) and new arrangements about confiscation, property safety, tax collecting and conscription were introduced” (Şahin, 2009: p. 35). That kind of so-called privileges were imagined to keep all the citizens equal. On the other hand, “somewhat ironically, as a direct consequence of Tanzimat reforms of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire developed into an authoritarian and centralized state” (Aral, 2004: 465). Moreover, the relation between subject and the state had been transformed and that kind of relation had been put into a juridical process. However, these changes started the dissolution of the classical *millet* system (Şahin, 2009: p. 35). This is mostly because “contrary to expectations, the introduction of European rules and institutions during the Tanzimat period and the gradual adoption of Western human rights doctrine by the state resulted in a sharp increase of complaints raised by subjects against the state” (Aral, 2004: 467).

## 1.2. Kurdish-Armenian Relations in the first period of the 19th century (1839-1876)

Tanzimat Reform Edict, of course, had a direct effect on two large communities, namely Kurds and Armenians, who settled in the common fields in Empire. Kurds and Armenians inhabited more or less in the same areas for the centuries. However, in the middles of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the relations began to be worsened through the involvement of the states. According to Uğur Ümit Üngör, Kurdish-Armenian relations were affected from three circumstances: (1) 1839 Tanzimat Reform Edict which aimed to modernize Ottoman Empire and to promote the resistance power against internal and external pressures; (2) The fact that “Armenian issue” gained an international status together with Treaty of San Stefano and Congress of Berlin in 1878; (3) the construction of Hamidiye Cavalry in 1890 (Üngör, 2015: 41). As a result of these facts, the relations between Kurds and Armenians were gradually destroyed. Here, it will be necessary to focus on that process which began to get worse.

Most of the regions in which Kurds and Armenians were all together settling were being called as “Kurdistan”. When the Ottoman Empire expanded towards the east in the sixteenth century to include the Kurdish territories, the terms “Kurd”<sup>10</sup> and “Kurdistan”<sup>11</sup> were commonly in circulation and frequently used in Ottoman sources (Özoğlu, 2004: 33). Cities like Diyarbakır<sup>12</sup>, Van, Muş or Bitlis were the Kurdish cities in which Armenians were living together with Kurds. According to the population sources, fulfilled by Kemal H. Karpat (1985), there were nearly 1.630.000 Armenians settled in Van, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Erzurum, Mamuretülaziz and Sivas in 1882 (p. 54). On the other hand, Kurds were counted under the category of Muslim identity. As a result, while Kurds were supposed to be the members of Muslim *millet*, Armenians themselves were being categorized under Armenian *millet*. Beyond all of that, contrary to the discrepancies as to ethnic and religious identities, Kurds and

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<sup>10</sup> By saying Kurd, it is meant either *Kurmanjs*, *Zazas*, *Sunnites* or *Alawites*.

<sup>11</sup> According to Namık Kemal Dinç the term Kurdistan was used by the state bureaucracy and formal documents until 1925 (“Kadim Anavatandan Bir İnkâr Coğrafyasına” in *Osmanlı Kürdistanı*. BGST, 2011. Pp. 14-54). However, Philip G. Kreyenbroek claims that the terms Kurd and Kurdistan was forbidden after Dersim Revolt in 1938 and “Mountainous Turks” began to be used to define Kurds (“On the Kurdish Language” in *The Kurds: A Contemporary View*. London and New York: Routledge, 2005. Pp. 68-83).

<sup>12</sup> Today the city called as Diyarbakır. It is named Diyarbakır in the state sources. For more information check out the research named as *Yüz yıllık Ah! Toplumsal Hafızanın İzinde: 1915 Diyarbakır* (pp. 17-18) conducted by Adnan Çelik and Namık Kemal Dinç.

Armenians were shaping common daily life throughout the same fields until the last period of 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Before looking at the broken relations between both of close communities, it is necessary to give some information about their social relations. Armenians were being called as *fileh*<sup>13</sup> which refers to a religious diversity by the Kurds. However, it was only associated with ethnic diversity. Both the communities had common daily life practices. Basically, one of the main motivations to build reasonable relations was the imagined institution of *kirvelik*. *Kirvelik* is named as “imagined kinship”, “pseudo-kinship”, “virtual kinship” or “semi-kinship” in the literature of anthropology (Çelik and Dinç, 2015: 71). Moreover, it is claimed by İsmail Beşikçi (1970) that *kirvelik* was an institution which aimed to remove the inter-communal alienations (p. 375). In this way, Kurds and Armenians came together under the institution of *kirvelik* and built close relations. Moreover, As far as we are concerned with the religious and ethnic status of Armenians in the Empire, it can be argued that Armenians were not superior to all other identities. As a result, while we think that *kirvelik* was a mechanism that aimed to prevent the communities which had disadvantages in social hierarchy to be aggrieved (Çelik and Dinç, 2015: p. 73). In this way, it can be claimed that Muslim Kurds got in touch with Armenians for them not to be aggrieved. The notion of *pismam*<sup>14</sup> was another motivation to have better relations. Armenians and Kurds were calling each other as *pismam* in many cases. On the other hand, it was not that powerful as *kirvelik*. Based on this fact, Armenians and Kurds were communicating with each other in Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish language. In a nutshell, although Kurds and Armenians had similar daily life practices, Kurds were culturally dominating Armenians.

The majority parts of Kurdistan in which Kurds and Armenians were living together were governed through the tribe leaders who were named as *mirs* or emirates. Hakan Özoğlu (2004) states that rather than classical tribe institution, emirates or confederations had a heterogeneous structure and had close relations with the state (p. 45). As a result, it would be better to approach these social constitutions as emirates. Such Kurdish emirates which were built in 1515 in the leadership of Mevlana İdrisi Bitlisi began to be restricted by the Empire after 1839. According to

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<sup>13</sup> *Fileh* means non-muslim.

<sup>14</sup> *Pismam* means son of uncle. *Pismam* is used by Kurdish and Armenian characters in many Kurdish novels such as *Gotinên Gunehkar*, *Kortika Filehan*, *Pilingê Serhedê*, *Guhar* and *Ay Dayê*.

Martin van Bruinessen, until that time, tribe leaders were the most powerful force through Kurdistan. These leaders, who had close relations with the state had a role to bring together the resentful ones and protect the non-tribal ones. Moreover, because of having a *de facto* autonomy through the area, they could collect the taxes and, to some extent, move freely. This is because tribes or emirates were the creature of the state with the aim centralizing itself (Bruinessen, 1992: Ch. 3). On the other hand, with the reign of Mahmud II in 1808, and particularly in the 1840s, the Ottoman Empire reversed its provincial administrative policies and switched to a more centralized mode. As a result, until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, it never allowed a strong Kurdish principality (Özoğlu, 2004: 65-67), and those kinds of principalities were divided into smaller tribes (Üngör, 2015: 41). Together with Tanzimat Reform Edict, those tribe leaders who are agha, transmitted their social power into local Muslim leaders, namely sheikhs (Bruinessen, 1992: Ch. 3-4).

To make it clear, before the reforms, “many Kurdish tribes had been exempted from paying taxes in exchange for keeping the peace and not interfering in the trade routes between the commercial centers of eastern Anatolian” (Dennis, 2008: 32). As the autonomy of the tribe leaders was damaged by the state, the power of tribe leaders shifted to local sheikhs. Moreover, the *Tanzimat* reforms prevented the emergence of a strong representative of Kurdish ethnic identity to extend his influence far beyond his own tribe, and actually fostered the fragmentation of Kurdish identity (Dennis, 2008: 45).

As I said before, Tanzimat Reform Edict in 1839 had the intention of centralization by making all the subjects equal. On the other hand, Armenians in Kurdistan did not directly benefit from the reforms stated above. Throughout the Tanzimat, “the Armenian people came to realize that the Ottoman statesmen were unable to deliver these rights to the extent they had promised, leading to disillusionment with the state” (Millan, 2011: 2). Moreover, Armenians controlling the patriarchate in İstanbul did not see themselves as responsible for welfare of whole Armenian masses; and as a result, wealthy Armenians in İstanbul did not have strong relations with those Armenians who were settling in Kurdistan (Millan, 2011: 21). On the other hand, even the power of patriarchate and amiras was restricted by the state (Artanian, 1988: 52-53). Briefly, if it is to focus on the effect of Tanzimat on the Armenians, “their status as *gâvurs* (infidels) had improved somewhat since implementation of the *Tanzimat*, yet they continued to be perceived by the Turkish

population as ungrateful, deceitful, and disloyal groups with a penchant for profiting from all the others” (Kevorkian, 2011: 10).

Of course, the effects of Tanzimat did not only limit itself within a decade, but its effects continued until 1876. Either Kurds or Armenians were negatively affected by that kind of rules. During the 1840s many of the powerful Kurdish *beys* were upset at the *tanzimat* reforms on the ground that it upset the "traditional" arrangements between themselves and the state (Dennis, 2008: 32). This is because “Tanzimat State attempted to penetrate into the eastern provinces by using its *despotic power* and *infrastructural power*” (Koç, 2011: 8). In this way, the hegemony of tribe leaders were transmitted into sheikhs as we said before. Hans-Lukas Kieser states that deactivating the Kurdish autonomy in 1940s was a kind of *internal colonialism* (Kieser, 2005, 65).

Actually, Garo Sasuni claims that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Armenian community had better relations with the Ottoman Empire than Kurds and Arabs. That is why they could not recognize the necessity of Kurdish rebels which would be determining the independency of Kurds and Armenians. On the other hand, the Kurdish side was approaching Armenians as *rayah*<sup>15</sup> except for Armenians who mobilized with Kurds (Sasuni, 1992: 67). Bedr Khan Revolt may be one of the most important cases in the mid-1840s to understand the political relations between Kurds and Armenians. “For many Dashnak party members the period Bedr Khan's rule was an ideal time of peace and prosperity between Kurds and Armenians” (Dennis, 2008: 34). Additionally, the dissolution of the emirates in Kurdistan led Bedr Khan to rebel against the State by taking the support of other tribes. That revolt took place in Cizre and Botan for seven years and ended in 1847 by banishing Bedr Khan Family to İstanbul. Bedr Khan’s main attempt was to create an independent area together with Armenians in Kurdistan. On the other hand, as Garo Sasuni claims, the duality of Armenians –namely those of who are in İstanbul and mountainous Armenians- had led the revolt to confront an unfavourable result. The patriarchate in İstanbul had close relations with the Ottoman Empire and sent a letter to *Bab-ı Ali* in which some complaints about Kurds appeared. As a result, the state army raided the area by taking the support of Vaspurakan Armenians and Bedr Khan was beaten in 1847 (Sasuni, 1992,:74-75). Of course, this was not the basic reason for the revolt to be

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<sup>15</sup> Rayah: Non-Muslim subjects in Ottoman Empire.

ended. “The invasion of the Nestorians of Kurdistan by Mîr Bedirkhan and the massacres against them, with the insistence of great powers, enabled the Ottoman government to take action against the Bohtan emirate, which it had long before contemplated” (Duman, 2010: 19).

As a result of Bedr Khan revolt, the possibility on the independence of Armenians and Kurds disappeared because both North and South sides of Kurdistan and Armenia were encompassed by the State. Moreover, as some Pathriarcate Armenians collaborated with the State, the possibility of alliance between Kurds and Armenians demolished and there had been a start of emerging huge gap between both communities for the next period (Sasuni, 1992: 79).

Meanwhile, Armenians in İstanbul had closer relations with the Empire contrary to Kurds. They could have critical roles in the bureaucratic system of the state. For example, each grand vizier and minister of internal affairs had at least on Armenian advisor from 1850 to 1876 (Artinian, 2004: 93). Moreover, one of the main developments in that period was Armenian National Constitution which was constituted in 1863 by the committee including Krikor Odian, Rusinian, Servichen and other new intellectuals and suspended in 1891 by the Sultan. “The constitution maintained the patriarchy and the civil and ecclesiastical councils, but subordinated them to a general assembly, which was the kernel of the new organization” (Davison, 1973: 124). From 1869 until 1892, the Armenian National Constitution functioned and general assembly met regularly (Polatel, 2009: 64).

Briefly, that period had direct impacts on Kurdish and Armenians relations with respect to the international politics. Although some reforms were fulfilled for Armenians in the Ottoman, they remained deficient and they did not continue for a long time. On the other hand, the intentions of Armenians for institutionalization cannot be argued for Kurds. The institutional side of Kurds was destroyed and it brought about some revolts against the state in that period. “The *tanzimat* reforms left an enduring political vacuum in eastern Anatolia during the 1850s and 1860s which, in part due to the tenuous Ottoman presence, no significant figure could fill” (Dennis, 2008: 45).

### **1.3. A new Period: Kurdish-Armenian Relations in Hamidian Era (1878-1908)**

While it was coming to 1876, Abdülhamit II ascended the throne and became the Sultan of the Empire. The period of Abdülhamit II was an era in which there appeared lots of radical changes. One of them was the change of regime in the State and constitutionalism became the recent regime by declaring *Kanun-i Esasi* in 1876. On the other hand, together with Abdülhamit II, there had been a regime of Islamic tendency rather than enlightening Tanzimat (Kieser, 2005: 159). As a result of this fact, Ottoman Empire was trying to have much better relations with Kurdish Muslims than non-Muslim Armenians.

Of course, such kind of transformation could be observed by other countries. The states like Russia, France or England were trying to protect the rights of non-Muslim *millets* in the country. As a result, Britain and Russia established consulates in Diyarbakir, Erzurum, and Van during the 1860s and 1870s both as a geopolitical strategy of preventing each other from gaining greater hegemonic control and also as a means of monitoring Ottoman treatment of the Armenians (Dennis, 2008: 44). Additionally, as Janet Klein argues, there were lots of inner and external threats against the state during the last period of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Russia was considered to be the most dangerous threat in Eastern Anatolia for the state; and the most dangerous inner threat was thought to be Armenians. For the state bureaucracy, Armenians were the main tool for the Russia to leak the region (Klein, 2013: 17-18).

After being hardly defeated by Russia in 1877-78 war, Ottoman Empire was obliged to enter into an agreement. Consequently, Berlin Congress was held in July of 1878 within the observation of other states. Through the Treaty of Berlin, Armenian Question became an international matter. After Serbs gained their autonomy in the Ottoman Empire in 1829 and Greeks accessed independence in 1829, Armenians aimed to reform their conditions and to gain autonomy at the Treaty of Berlin (Ahmad, 2008: 175-176). That intention was actually supported by Russia in the treaty. According to Article 61:

The Sublime Porte undertakes to carry out, without further delay, the improvements and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by the Armenians, and to guarantee their security against the Circassians and Kurds. It will periodically make known the steps taken to this effect to the Powers, who will superintend their application (Hurewitz, 1956: 414).

This Article which should have been performed in six *vilayets*, namely Diyarbakır, Erzurum, Van, Mamüretü'l Aziz, Bitlis and Sivas had serious problems for the Ottoman Empire and Abdülhamit. That is why, the Empire did not want to easily accept that kind of sanction at the first glance. As far as this Article was formulating an international juridical basement on which Armenians could rely on, Kurds were assuming that the same Article would be considerably hazardous. (Kieser, 2005: 167). Most importantly, it determined the approaches of Kurds and Armenians against the State and the international power. As Kieser claims, there were restrictions or risks for Kurds rather than constructive perspectives and Kurds could not rely upon the endeavours of international powers (Kieser, 2005: 174). On the other side, Armenians had a different perception on that Article. “Encouraged by the promises of the Treaty of Berlin, the Armenians experienced a new sense of national consciousness, which in turn engendered rising expectations” (Dadrian, 1995: 35). In this perspective, Kurds –if it is to look from the International Law– were delivered to the hands of Abdülhamit II by them (Kieser, 2005: 174).

As we stated before, most of the Kurdish *bey*s or emirates had been passivized by the state and the State had taken a large-scale control in Kurdistan. That is why, local leaders were deprived of their old powers throughout the area. While it came to 1880, there have been some protests against the state. “One of them was belonging to Sheikh Ubeydullah. To show his dissatisfaction with the treaty, in July 1880 Ubeydullah warned Tosun Pasha, the *mutasarraf* (governor of a subdivision) of Baskale:

What is this I hear, that the Armenians are going to have an independent state in Van, and that the Nestorians are going to hoist the British flag and declare themselves British subjects? I will never permit it, even if I have to arm the women (Özoğlu, 2004: 74).

Undoubtedly, that could be one of the main breaking points for the relation between Armenians as a continuation of Bedr Khan Revolt. In this respect, “Ubeydullah demanded that the Kurds should be allowed to control Kurdistan, arguing that it would serve the cause of law and order” (Jwaideh, 2006: 82-83). For many historians focusing on Kurdish history, that kind of perspective can be considered as the basic nationalist movement of the Kurds in the 19th century. Additionally, “Naci Kutlay focuses on the point that why not the aghas or begs but the sheikhs fulfilled the former places of *mîrs*: he argues that religious leaders were

more respected and strong in the eyes of the Kurdish people” (Duman, 2010: 23). This is because Sheikh Ubeydullah was from a religious Naqshbandi order. In the first period of the revolt, Sheikh Ubeydullah did not move just like Bedr Khan and collaborated with Nestorians and other local powers to perform more effective rebel. “The argument for Kurdistan, like the ephemeral League, was a useful counterweight to Armenian nationalist claims, especially if Shaykh Ubayd Allah managed to co-opt, as he tried to do, Armenians and Nestorians into his revolt” (McDowall, 2004: 58). However, the revolt was strictly suppressed in the last months of 1880 and Sheikh Ubeydullah was banished to Makkah.

Undoubtedly, the Sheikh Ubeydullah revolt determined the approach of Abdülhamit II toward Kurds by building another kind of relation because there were some Kurds who supported the state against Sheikh Ubeydullah. Moreover, during 1877-78 war, Kurds, including Sheikh Ubeydullah was in favour of the state; but because those kinds of forces were looting the Armenian commodities, they were not of help to the State (Klein, 2013: 83). As a result of this fact, Hamidiye Cavalry which was led by Sunni Kurdish tribe leaders was built in 1891. “A significant reason for the formation of these regiments was to ensure the loyalty of the Kurdish nobility to the Ottoman state” (Özoğlu, 2004: 106). Through that kind of policy together with the effects of Tanzimat which suppressed tribes, Abdülhamid aimed to have closer relations with Kurds and to break the forces of Kurdish powers. Moreover, “modelled after Russian Cossack forces, the Hamidiye light cavalry regiments were established by Sultan Abdulhamid II to fight primarily against Armenian nationalism and Russian expansionism” (Özoğlu, 2004: 106). According to Bruinessen, “the obvious result of the new competences that the appointed chieftains-cum-officers received was an inordinate increase in their powers, leading to unavoidable abuses. Another effect was the reinforcement of some tribes at the expense of others leading to changes in the regional balance of power” (Bruinessen, 1992: 185). Additionally, rather than the provinces like Diyarbekir, Hamidiye regiments were gathered on the border lines of Ottoman during 1895 such as in the Mardin incidents (Verheij, 2012: 134-135).

Based on these facts, substantially, Hamidiye Cavalry leaders had better relations with the state by taking some privileges from it. In 1892 Mekteb-i Aşiret-i

Hümayun<sup>16</sup> was built to enable the integration of the tribe members to the Empire. Beyond that, as Kieser states (2005) giving gun, providing exemption of tax, ensuring special law facilities, removing conscription were the main privileges given to Hamidiye Cavalry members (p. 20). “These forces were used even as late as the Balkan Wars in 1912–13” (Özoğlu, 2004: 67).

So, what was happening in the Armenian side during that period? After Berlin Congress no reform was fulfilled for the non-Muslim subjects in the Empire and as a result there emerged a kind of socialist and nationalist revolutionary movement among Armenians inspired by Russian and Balkanian revolutionary movement (Kieser, 2005: 1999). On the other hand, it did not take a long time and the movement lost its effect. Of course, that was not the only nationalist reaction emerged by Armenian revolutionists. As Garo Sasuni transmits, the well-known tale of Hirimyan Hayrig, *Iron Digger* was pervaded among Armenians and it could socially trigger the Armenian Independent Movement. As a result, the educational process was performed by constructing Institutions of Armenian Education which imbued the notion of independence to the Armenians in Van and Muş. As a result, United Front of Armenian Revolutionary was built together with Armenians in Tbilisi in 1885<sup>17</sup> (Sasuni, 1992: 117-118). David Gaunt specifically concentrates on the process and clarifies it:

Because there was a significant Armenian population living inside the Russian Empire the influence of Russian anti-Tsarist political developments grew strong and the main Armenian political groups became the social-democratic Hunchak party formed 1887 and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutiun usually shortened to Dashnak) formed in 1890, there was also a liberal party, the Armenakan started in 1885, and which included a revolutionary faction. Gradually the Dashnaks emerged as the most influential of the many parties (Gaunt, 2007: 6).

The main aim of this movement in the leadership of Dashnak and Hunchakian was to get rid of “dark tyranny of Asians” and oppressive “Kurdish sword” (Kieser, 2005: 203). That kind of organization, undoubtedly, was regarded as a big threat against the interest of Turkish and Kurdish leaders. Moreover, as having support of Russia and diplomatic approach of European powers, Armenians were being more suspicious for the Ottoman government (Klein, 2013: 46).

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<sup>16</sup> Imperial Tribe School

<sup>17</sup> In Sasuni’s work the year that organization was built is claimed to be 1880. However, the other sources write in consensus that the year was 1885.

While it came to the summer of 1890, the first feet of that nationalist wave had been seen in Erzurum. The city was declared as to be the capital of Armenia and Patriarch was demanded to write a letter to the Sultan to fulfil the reforms. On the other hand, Muslim groups got involved in the incident and killed lots of Armenians. For Kieser, this happening showed the division among Armenians some of who are revolutionary and others who are mostly afraid of the politics of revolutionaries and the state (Kieser, 2005: 204-205).

In 1894, Sasun began to be the other centre for Armenian revolutionary forces. Sasun was a district in which Armenians and Kurds had close population rate. “According to V. Cuinet the distribution of the population of Sasun was as follows: Muslim 10,370; Armenian 8,389; Yezidi 970; Others 372 (Uras, 1988: 727). Hunchakian activist Mihran Damadian and Hampartsum Boyadjian had their own way to Sasun in 1891-92 to start the fire of rebellion. The revolt which began in the summer of 1893 was suppressed in 1895 by killing lots of Armenians. One year before the massacre, a Kurdish sheikh had read the edict of Sultan that ordered killing of rebellions and in this way he moved his tribe towards Sasunian Armenians (Kieser, 2005: 212). As far as those killings were directed by Ottoman administrators, “Kurdish tribesmen (the role of Hamidiye has still not been fully clarified, but appears less important than often assumed) then moved into the area, killing between 1,000 and 3,000 Sasunis and burning their villages to the ground” (Verheij, 2012, 94).

The similar incidents were happening in Van too, a city in the easternmost part of Anatolia. “By 1894 there had been outbreaks of violence by Armenian revolutionary groups in most of the vilayets [provinces] of Eastern Anatolia. Guns were being shipped into Van from Persia and most of the Armenian population of that city and others were cooperating with the rebels” (Duguid, 1973: 148). On the other hand, Abdülhamid took some precautions “By 1896, the [Hamidian] Kurds began looting villages around Van more often, leading Armenian revolutionary groups to retaliate with raids against the Kurds and any Ottomans who supported them” (Millan, 2011: 59).

Another attack against Armenians took place in Diyarbekir in 1895 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> of November. After the clashes between Armenians and Muslims, “between 300 and 1,200 Armenians and other Christians and between 70 and 200 Muslims had lost their lives (Verheij, 2012: 86). Again this clash took place because Abdülhamit

accepted the reforms which he resisted to fulfil for a long time for Armenians. Moreover, most of the Muslims were assuming that an Armenian Kingdom could be established and they could be dependent upon that Kingdom. In the beginning of incidents, a sound of bullet emerged while Muslims were in Friday praying. It was not clear who did it, but Muslims had left the mosque and had assaulted the Armenians they saw, they raided Armenians' houses and attacked their commodities. It is claimed by Verheij (2012) that all the assailants were indigenous and Kurds from countryside were apparently not involved in the 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> November massacre, although they probably wanted to take part (p. 134). Moreover, Kurds mostly attacked the towns like Çermik, Çüngüş, Palu, Hani, Lice, Silvan, Mardin and Cizre districts.

As a result of all these happenings in Erzurum, Diyarbakir, Van and Sasun, the years of 1894-96 can be considered as a breaking point for the case of Armenians in the Empire and for understanding 1915. "Some historians choose to place genocide in a continuum of Armenian victimization beginning with the 1894-96 massacres of about 100,000 Armenians during the reign of Sultan Abdul-Hamid II (1876-1908/ 09)" (Bloxham, 2003: 23). Moreover, the main reason why total massacre was not perpetrated by the Ottoman regime in 1894-1896 was its commitment to Islam, to the millet system, and to restoring the old order (Deringil, 368). Moreover, those happenings showed that "the actions of the Kurdish Hamidiye regiments in 1894-96 provide the obvious historical illustration that such practices were not only to be expected but were explicitly prompted by the Ottoman authorities" (Bloxham, 2003: 40). Another approach about these massacres is that Armenian's conversion to Islam between 1895 and 1897. According to Selim Deringil, the geographical "climate for conversion" seems to have been most intense in the vilayets of Diyarbakir, Mamurêtu'laziz, and Sivas, although some of the most dramatic cases, such as the massacres and conversions that occurred at Urfa, lie beyond this geography (Deringil, 2009: 347). Moreover, based on the reports of Mehmet Emin Zeki Bey, Ismet Chérif Vanly states the Armenian response to the massacres of 1895-96 by killing the Kurds in Armenia and north Kurdistan during the Russian incursion of 1914-15 into Bayazit, Erzurum, Eleşkirt, Van, Bitlis, Rawanduz and Muş. The large scale massacres were done by well-armed Armenians who were advance forces of the Russian Army. Based on what the report, "together

with famine, epidemics and deportation, led Zeki Bey to estimate the total deaths among non-combatants amongst the Kurds at 500.000” (Vanly, 2005: 197).

In a nutshell, this period demonstrated the concrete and sharp division among Kurds and Armenians as a continuum of the first period I stated above. In the last years of 1890s strict clashes took place from Kurds and Armenians. Consequently, Hamidian Era prepared a basement for 1915 as far as some Kurdish powers were begun to be supported by the state.

#### **1.4. Young Turks and the Effects of 1908 on the Kurdish-Armenian Relations and Its way onto 1915 (1908-1915)**

Abdülhamit II had suspended the constitution of *Kanun-ı Esasi* in 1879, and a long process of despotism had begun until 1908. After Young Turks were affected by the European notions, they had already started to transform the modernization movements into the Empire. The fact that Abdülhamit switched on a despotic regime was disturbing those intellectual powers. As a result, in 1908, Abdülhamit II was dethroned and the constitution was put into action. On the other hand, together with this process, the notion of Ottomanism was revived again and then Balkan Wars in 1913 caused the State to perform Pan-Islamist policy. Actually Kieser claims that the revolution of 1908 was a process in which military officers who saw the State during Abdülhamit II under threat seized the power, rather than a process in which a liberal revolution took place (Kieser, 2005: 391).

Second Constitutional Era had an impact on the nations in the State too, as well as Armenians who were mostly exposed to violent. They were satisfied with that period and took a deep breath. Moreover, after 1908, the Dashnaks gave up the revolutionary strategy in order to work through parliamentary reform inside the existing Ottoman state (Gaunt, 2007: 6). According to Garo Sasuni, while Armenians had begun to change their attitudes against the state for the sake of their economic and political interests, some Kurds had begun to be the enemy of that new regime because they were supporting Abdülhamit II. On the other hand, Klein asserts that in some cities such as Erzurum and Harput in which Hamidiye Cavalry members took the power, the masses supported the new regime. That division between Kurds and Armenians led them to be strictly on the different sides. Moreover, it was the political or class interests rather than citizenship rights that determined this division (Sasuni, 1992: 144). In this respect, Moundjian’s comment proves what Garo Sasuni

says: “As Christian subjects of the empire, Armenians would now be relieved from heavy direct taxation by the central government and indirect levies by Kurdish chieftains” (Moumdjian, 1999: 30). Beyond all of that, Hakan Özoğlu considers the period between 1908 and 1920 as a shift from Kurdistan to Kurdish nationalism (Özoğlu, 2004: 70). On the other hand, it is debatable whether that kind of nationalism had an effect on Armenian massacre in 1915 or not.<sup>18</sup>

Although Dashnak members began to integrate with the new regime, it cannot be claimed that all the Armenian civilians or politicians were on the side of the State. Actually, Dashnak members and Committee for Union and Progress (CUP) were in deal to perform some reforms for the Armenians in the State. On the other hand, some groups who demanded much more than the reforms rejected the parliamentary reform and resumed to fight for liberation. Gaunt claims that in 1911 the CUP had shifted from a multi-ethnic stance to clear “Turkification” position thus reducing the prospects of internal reforms to alleviate the condition of the non-Muslims (Gaunt, 2007: 6). Of course it was not all about the attitude of revolutionary Armenians who rejected the reforms. A massacre had taken place in Cilicia in 1909 and lots of Armenians were killed during that massacre. In this way, as far as Armenians advocated the new constitutional regime until 1913, “events such as the 1909 massacres in Adana strongly indicated that constitutional Turkey was not the just and ideal state which Armenians believed it to be” (Gaunt, 2007: 30).

On the Kurdish side, some Hamidiye Cavalry leaders had been knocked out or they had been arrested. Zeki Paşa and İbrahim Paşa, who were known as the most powerful leaders of Hamidiye were being tried to be passivized. Most of the Kurdish leaders were removed from the villages where they previously handed. Moreover, the ones who were exposed to violent actions of tribal leaders like Zeki Paşa were on the side of new regime. On the other hand, a new kind of politics was emerging among Kurds. That politics was, to some extent, was carrying nationalist features and Kurds were beginning to leave some features of traditional ways of politics. In 1908 *Kürt Teavün and Terakki Cemiyeti* (KTTC) was built in İstanbul with the aim of opening schools, publishing journals and newspapers, opening universities in Kurdistan or making Kurdish as a formal language. Here, “KTTC is the best example to display

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<sup>18</sup> This is totally about the debates on the period when Kurdish nationalism started. Some of the researchers indicate Sheikh Ubeydullah Revolt, while others indicate the year 1913. And for some researchers Sheikh Said Revolt in 1925 is the starting point of Kurdish nationalism. For more information: *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism* by Abbas Vali will be useful to read.

the affiliations of the Kurds with the new regime and their vision related to the position of Kurds in the Ottoman Empire (Duman, 2010: 46).

The relation between new emerging Kurdish intellectuals and Armenians could be easily seen in the Kurdish newspapers which gave a clue on that period. *Kurdistan, Kürt Teavvün ve Terakki Gazetesi (The Kurdish Solidarity and Progress Newspaper)* and *Roji Kurd* were the newspapers that gave some information about Kurdish Armenian relation.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the intellectuals' political approach was carrying four basic elements some which were, "to civilize Kurdish people and Kurdistan; (...) to promote peace and an alliance with the Armenian community, (...) to prevent the establishment of Armenia in the eastern region of the Ottoman Empire." (Işık, 2014: 2).

The ways went to 1915 is not that a clear process to handle with while we consider the Kurds and Armenians relations. Before 1915, there were happening some massacres in some cities like Harput, Van and Erzurum. Beyond all of that, Ottoman Empire was continuing to lose ground after Bulgaria declared their independency. After the State was beaten in the Balkan Wars, CUP was reinforcing its Turkification and homogenization process in 1913. In this way, Armenian bureaucrats began to carry their national problems to international area by constructing a united front. Moreover, those bureaucrats were losing their connections with CUP and beginning to hate them. As a result, in those days, Armenian revolutionaries and Kurdish powers were likely to have a collaboration to take autonomy for both the communities (Sasuni, 1992: 157). On the other hand, together with WW1, the reforms for Armenians lost its validity and that collaboration could not be put into practice.

A war had started between world powers in 1914 and at the beginning Ottoman wanted to remain neutral. On the other hand, Enver Pasha, the Minister of War, was favour of Germany and wanted to take place in the war with Central Powers. Of course, that war would be the breaking point for ethnic cleansing and homogenization with Turkification as well as Islamization for CUP. After a hidden agreement between Enver Pasha and German ambassador on 2<sup>nd</sup> August of 1914, Ottoman Empire formally became a member of the World War 1 by attacking the Russian ships in 1914 2<sup>nd</sup> December.

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<sup>19</sup> For the exact and deep analysis, look at the thesis by *Kurdish and Armenian Relations in the Ottoman Kurdish Press (1898-1914)* by Ayhan Işık submitted to İstanbul Bilgi University in 2014.

As far as the State got involved in the war, in 1915 February, there had been some orders to remove Armenian officers in the essential positions and to kill the Armenian soldiers who were fighting for Ottoman. Moreover, it was being thought to deport the Armenians from the Anatolian provinces. The reason given for the deportation was that the Armenians were collaborating with the enemy and had rebelled in one or two places (Gaunt, 2007: 11). The first decision was taken in 1915 of 24<sup>th</sup> April and as a central area first executions took place in İstanbul. Çankırı, Ankara and Ayaş were the other secondary places to where Armenians were being exiled or punished. The Turkification and Islamization processes were on its own way during these incidents.

So, what was happening in Kurdistan? As we mentioned above, the tribal leaders were beginning to lose their effects on the society and sheikhs were being the most powerful force for the Kurds. By the way, Molla Selim Revolt took place in Bitlis was opposing to the reforms for Armenians in 1914. As soon as the wave of massacre encompassed all the Anatolia, it also appeared in Kurdish cities such as Diyarbakir, Mardin, Van or Siirt. Moreover, it is rather questionable whether massacre actions against Armenians took place in Kurdistan were fulfilled via religious motivations or tribal effects or nationalist motivations. It was not totally like the CUP ideology. Actually CUP wanted to homogenize the fields in terms of nationality and religion and as a result wanted to Turkify the bourgeoisie. On the other hand, there was a common daily life practice, Islam, between Kurds and Turks. This situation made more possible the massacre in Kurdistan. Moreover, the tribal leaders were trying to get their old powers to have their hegemony on the Kurds. As a result, through the *fatwas* of the sheikhs and direction of the tribal leaders, ordinary people began to either kill the Armenians or loot their commodities.

Diyarbakir can be considered as the most important city in where the massacre took place. According to the population sources, there were nearly 50,000 or 60,000 Armenians who were inhabiting in Diyarbakir during 1914 (Çelik and Dinç, 2015: 41). The days of operations against Armenians in Diyarbakir were same with the assault days in İstanbul. Most of the deported Armenians from Harput, Erzurum and Erzincan were exposed to pass from Diyarbakir, and they could not find any opportunity to go out of there (Çelik & Dinç, 2015: 52). Dr Reşit was the governor of the city and through his direction and close relation with the local elites, there had been a clear way to massacre. In addition, “When Reşid acceded to the

governorship of Diyarbekir province, he brought with him 30 mainly Circassian Special Organization operatives” to absorb more effective power (Üngör, 2005: 40). Reşid was calling the settlers in Diyarbekir to kill the Armenians by permitting them to take all the commodities of Armenians. In Diyarbekir, the number of Armenians who were massacred is estimated to be 2,000. (Akçam, 2004: 174-175; Lewy, 2005: 96).

Of course, Diyarbekir was not the only province in where those massacres took place. Van, Bitlis, Harput or Mamuret ul-Aziz, Urfa, The Euphrates Line were becoming the main places of massacres against Armenians. According to Uğur Ümit Üngör (2015), there was not such kind of hatred stemmed from religion because many Kurdish sheikhs did not approve these massacres (p. 44). On the other hand, there were too much sheikhs who collaborated with the government. They were giving *fatwa* by saying that “if you kill seven Armenians, you will go to heaven.” Moreover, there were very famous tribes such as Raman Tribe who directly involved in that process because they wanted to take back their force. Looting, Islamizing the saved Armenians and forced marriage with Armenian women were the main results of that massacre. Nevertheless, many of the Armenians were protected and saved by Kurds too. For example, according to Fatma Müge Göçek, there were 36,000 Armenians who were saved in Dersim (Göçek, 2015: 37).

Who were the main actors who take role in the massacres? The views on the perpetrator of mass-killing vary from researcher to researcher. For example, according to a research conducted by Adnan Çelik and Namık Kemal Dinç, notables, *begs*, *aghas* and sheikhs in Diyarbekir were main actors (Çelik & Dinç, 2015: 211-255). For Fırat Aydınkaya, ordinary Kurds were included to that “practice” via the power of local sheikhs and *meles*: “Through their fatwas and approaches, most of the sheikhs became the legitimizers, providers of ideological fortification and agitators of the masses of the Catastrophe” (Aydınkaya, 2015). Thinking on Hamidian Cavalries, Bruinessen argues that “in the subsequent deportations and large-scale massacres of Armenians in 1915, the Kurdish tribal regiments do not seem to have taken part. It was the regular army did most of the killing, although some of the Kurds no doubt did their share of looting” (Bruinessen, 2005: 42). Again, while some Kurdish intellectuals intended to protect and save Armenians, other intellectuals approached Armenians as a threat for the establishment of Kurdistan and supported

the massacres.<sup>20</sup> Briefly, Recep Maraşlı gives a general comment of what was said above: “The support and attention of the community have a fragmental structure which includes visible attacks, carelessness in the some places and secret or visible protection in other places” (Maraşlı, 2008: 273). For example, lots of Armenians were saved by Alevi and Ezidi Kurds. Maraşlı states that Alevi Kurds and people from Dersim district did not attend the massacres and became a relatively safe area. Again Ezidi Kurds hosted and protected the Armenians who went to Deir ez-Zor (Maraşlı, 2008: 274).

After the massacres, some critical changes were fulfilled to annihilate any possible signs belong to Armenians. As a result of the massacres, the names of the Armenian villages or towns changed.<sup>21</sup> There had been a long process of silencing because the saved Armenians were afraid of talking about it. Of course Armenians were not the only ones who went into a silencing process. Most of the Kurds also experienced that silencing because they felt responsibility and delinquency. That responsibility, to some extent, was taken because Kurds were exposed to the similar violence after 1923. Today, the silencing gives its place to remembering and talking about the Catastrophe and either the grandchild of Armenians and Kurds are beginning to speak about that critical and historical topic. This is actually a usual result of identity politics which is a production of the stress on cultural identity based on “radical democracy”. On the other hand, the identities changed and those identities survived through re-wounded remnants.

In this chapter, I tried to give the relations between Kurds and Armenians by focusing the process from 1839 to 1915. It is obvious that the political actors could not administrate the process got worse and the ordinary inhabitants of the region Armenians were exposed to harsh violent of the state and Kurds. In the next chapter, I will try to handle Kurdish literature from 1898 to the present. Actually, we will see how the nationalist discourse of Turkey gradually affected Kurdish literature after the massacres took place against Armenians. In other words, it will be obvious that the incidents in 1915 continually affected the bans over Kurdish literature. The next

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<sup>20</sup> The comment belongs to Yener Koç.

<sup>21</sup> There is a full list of such places whose names were changed after 1915 in Recep Maraşlı’s book *Ermeni Ulusal Demokratik Hareketi ve 1915 Soykırımı* (459-497).

chapter can be read as a quotation from a Turkish general who said “we have dispatched the *Zos*, it is *Los* turn right now”<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Zo refers to Armenians, Lo refers to Kurds

## **CHAPTER II**

### **BELATED MODERNITY OR OVERDOSE BANS: KURDISH LITERATURE IN TURKEY**

In this chapter, my purpose will be to concentrate on the Kurdish literature in Turkey, its development process, its features and its problems. However, it will not be easy like in a kind of straight literature because Kurds and eventually their literatures were divided into four parts. Political, historical, colonial and social inhibitions created by nation-states, namely Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, have engendered Kurds to produce their literature mostly in exile. Even if Kurdish writers chose to write a Kurdish literary text within the borders one of those nation states, they were put into jail, banished or assassinated up until some political steps were fulfilled about Kurdish question. Additionally, the division of Kurds into four parts has still strong diversities on the politics, religion, language and culture for each of them. If the Kurds in diaspora are kept in mind, it is possible to confront with a large community which is deprived of unity of those elements stated above. On the other hand, “the effects of the political separation by state borders — and thus in formal education, military service, state radio and television and participation in different political systems — have made the Kurds of Iran, Iraq and Turkey more different from one another than they had been before” (Bruinessen, 1996: 29).

As we stated above, the main issue of this chapter is Kurdish literature in Turkey.<sup>23</sup> It is initially necessary to state that Kurdish was a formally forbidden language even in public sphere until 1991 in Turkey. Therefore, Kurdish literature gave its first and critical politic and literary yields in diaspora like Cairo, Geneva, London and Folkstone. On the other hand, such productions could not be totally introduced as literary works because Kurdish publication started with newspapers and journals by political figures. Kurdish publication which was forced to be publishing in diaspora quite a while, continued to publish their works respectively, first of all, in Yerevan and Moscow after the construction of Turkish Republic; and secondly in German cities and Stockholm after coup d'état in 1980. As seen, that kind of literary production was mostly affected by the politically breaking points in

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<sup>23</sup> For this thesis, Kurdish literature will be referring to the literature of Kurds in Turkey.

Turkey. However, through the liberal politics in the beginning of 90s, Kurdish literature returned into the current borders of Turkey and resumed its publications from here. After 2000s, this literature gradually gained too much publication houses, literary productions and in this way it got its peak after that time. On the other hand, that does not mean that Kurdish literature is produced only in Turkey; there are still lots of Kurdish writers who live and continue to their works in European cities.

For the rest of this chapter, I will attempt to schematize Kurdish literature chronologically by taking all of the processes I mentioned above. The reason for this kind of classification is based on the difficulties about writing a Kurdish literary history. According to Farangis Ghaderi (2015), the loss (or unavailability) of Kurdish manuscripts, the exclusion of oral literature and the literature of certain dialects, the invalidity of information about pre-modern Kurdish literature and the question of periodization are the main problems of Kurdish literary historiography (p. 3-23). However, what I will try to do is to take Kurdish literature from the first modern literary productions to the present. One reason for that intention is to present the fields on which Kurdish literature expanded, to show the transformation of the nation-building and multi-culturalist discourse in Kurdish publication and to make it clear why Armenians and 1915 were almost completely presented in post-2000 Kurdish literature.

### **2.1. Nation-Building through Newspapers and Journals (1898-1923)**

During the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many of the nations in the Ottoman Empire were on the way of modernization through newspapers, theatres and novels. Armenians published their first newspaper *Azdarar* in 1794, Greeks published *Salpinx Elliniki* in 1<sup>st</sup> August 1821 and Ottoman Turks published *Takvim-i Vekayi* in 1831. On the other hand, Kurds could publish their first newspaper *Kurdistan* in 1898 in Cairo. This situation may bring us to think about belated modernity of Kurds because publishing was one of the main tools of nationalist movements during that period. Before giving the information about some first Kurdish newspapers which were published just before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is necessary to review the theoretical relation between newspapers, modernity and nationalism because Kurdish journalism previously started before Kurdish novel.

One of the main theories about the fact that publications have a critical role on national consciousness process within modernism was put forward by Benedict

Anderson through his fundamental concept *print-capitalism* in his well-known book, *Imagined Communities*. According to Anderson, “the newspaper is merely an ‘extreme form’ of the book” (Anderson, 2006 :34) and he argues that newspaper and novel have the courageous effect on the development of national community because they spread in national language and they report on events from the invisible position of the imagined community, namely nation (Anderson, 2006: 32-35). Moreover, there may emerge some questions on the functions of newspaper and journals for that imagined community. Timothy Brennan states that newspapers and novels are the major vehicles of the national print media, which help to standardize language, encourage literacy, and remove mutual incomprehensibility (Brennan, 1990: 49). In this case, those publications can be considered as the main tool for turning out the colonial relations and the tool for writing their own history or agenda.

If it is to focus on the Kurdish publications, the modernistic mechanism which is attributed to nation-building can be disputable within discourse of Kurdish literature. What were the main motivations for Kurds to transform their considerably oral literature<sup>24</sup> into a modernistic textual style? How did the political or sociological conditions have a direct effect on this transformation? Of course, these questions have to be answered for another work. On the other hand, what is interesting here is that Kurdish modernity is a more belated one contrary to the other nationalities in Ottoman Empire. According to Gregory Jusdanis, “traditional structures do not simply yield to modernization but coexist with new institutions. ‘Belated’ societies, however, exhibit an uneasy fit between traditional and modern constructs” (Jusdanis, 1991: 16). Of course, Kurds did not have to be literally modernized; nevertheless, they had to use those tools for their national building through “great” and “universally” recognized literature (Jusdanis, 1991: 7).

Based on the information above, it is necessary to look at the first Kurdish publications. In 1898, the first Kurdish newspaper *Kurdistan* was begun to be published in Cairo by Mikdat Midhat Bedirxan. The four-page newspaper had 31 issues lasted until 1902. As Malmîsanij says, like Benghazi and Lebanon, Cairo was the central place for the exiles where the city was not directly under the control of Ottoman Empire. Additionally, Cairo had lots of opportunities for printing houses.

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<sup>24</sup> Of course, Kurds did not base their literature only on oral tradition. There were lots of *Diwans* written by Melayê Cizîrî, Ehmedê Xanî, Şerefhan or Elî Herîrî. On the other hand, oral literature could be considered as more stronger than written texts.

For these reasons, Cairo became the first central place for *Kurdistan*; Genoa and London became other places in which the newspaper administration had close relation with Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) (Malmîsanij, 2013: 22-23).

According to Celilê Celil, the newspaper which had liberal paradigms gradually radicalized in relation to the despotic governance of Abdülhamit 2<sup>nd</sup>. On the other hand, it did not have any aim for the independence through war or *bravery* on the mountains. In the one side the only way of independence was shown as education and the *Kurdistan* gave a huge place to the classic Kurdish literature like the poems of Hacı Kadirê Koyî, Şerefxan's *Şerefname* and *Mem û Zîn* of Ehmedê Xanî. In this way, the examples of classical Kurdish literature gained a modernistic characteristic.

On the other side, the newspaper had common position with CUP about the unity of Ottoman Empire and had some hesitations about its division. Moreover, *Kurdistan* mostly stressed on the Kurdish-Armenian relations<sup>25</sup> and it was warning Kurds not to attack the Armenians. Abdurrahman Bedirxan who was the editor of the newspaper after the 5<sup>th</sup> issue was calling Kurds and Armenians to unite their powers against the injustice in the empire. In this way, *Kurdistan* had close relations with two Armenian newspapers *Nor Tar* and *Trochak*. On the one side, the attacks against Armenians in Sason were worrying Kurdish and Armenian politicians. Two main characteristics of Hamidiye Cavalry were shown by them as *pillage* and *looting* (Celile Celil, 2013: 25-54). Nonetheless, as Fırat Aydınkaya says, the newspaper which mentioned about Kurdish-Armenian relations in its 16 issues, mostly concentrated on the class division among Kurds and Armenians. Besides, the newspaper did not confine itself only to that division; rather, the newspaper mentioned about the *troublesome Armenians* under the control of Russia who aimed to Christianize/Armenize the Kurds. That was the sign of either ethnic or religious division too. Nonetheless, it was being argued that Armenians were the subordinate community who must not be attacked. That is why this argument was shown as the fact that Kurds did not have any kind of meta-politics such as ethnic cleansing or mass-massacre. Consequently, the newspaper's attitude towards Armenians varied

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<sup>25</sup> One of the basic works on the Kurdish-Armenian relations was fulfilled by Ayhan Işık in his master thesis titled as *Kurdish-Armenian Relations in the Ottoman-Kurdish Press (1898-1914)* for Istanbul Bilgi University in 2014. Another source is Celilê Celil's *Kürt Aydınlanması* published by Avesta in 2001.

with respect to the main political standing or collaboration with any power (Aydinkaya, Agos, 2015).

The second and another important newspaper is *Kurd Teavün ve Terakki Gazetesi*<sup>26</sup> which was published between 1908 and 1909. The newspaper was published by *Kürt Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti*<sup>27</sup> which was considered to be the only representative of Kurds by Arabs, Turks and Armenians. The first issue was published in December 9<sup>th</sup> of 1908 and its editorship was carried out by Diyarbekirli Ahmet Cemil (Ahmet Cemil from Diyarbekir) and owned by Süleymaniyeli Tevfik (Tevfik from Süleymaniye). İsmail Hakkı Babanzade, Said-i Kurdi and Sheikh Abdulkadir were the main writers of the newspaper. Celilê Celil states that some of the basic problematic in the newspaper were about the social changes among Kurds, national unity, the Kurdish history with full of bravery, positive sides of their national characteristics and culture-education. (Celil, 2013: 12). In the third issue of the newspaper İsmail Hakkı Babanzade was stating as “Maturation on language paves the way for our progress. The first way for the nation’s independence will be through education, and the key of education is language” (3<sup>rd</sup> issue, cited by Celilê Celil). Again, the Armenian and Kurdish relation was stated in this newspaper too. As Ayhan Işık states, in the nine issues of the newspaper the relations between two communities were discussed. Accordingly “Kurdish civilization should compromise with other people especially with the Armenian people according to the manifesto. This was their main aim” (Işık, 2014: 81). However, Fırat Aydınkaya states that the newspaper traced such a publishing policy in which it covered the pogroms took place between 1894 and 96, and tolerated what happened to Armenians by impeding the way of judgement in countenance of Armenians through saying “let us not reopen the old wounds” (Aydinkaya, Agos, 2015).

By the way, *Hêvî Kürd Talebe Cemiyeti*<sup>28</sup> was established in İstanbul in 1912. Kurdish students who studied at high schools in Istanbul founded the society and Kadri Cemilpaşa, Fuad Temo, Ömer Cemilpaşa, Abdullah Cevdet, Memduh Selim became the important members of it (Işık, 2014: 88), (Duman, 2010: 6). This society firstly published *Rojî Kurd*<sup>29</sup> (1913), *Hetawî Kurd* (1914) journals and *Yekbûn*

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<sup>26</sup> The Kurdish Solidarity and Progress Newspaper

<sup>27</sup> Kurdish Solidarity and Progress Community

<sup>28</sup> Hope Kurdish Student Society

<sup>29</sup> *Rojî Kurd* has an essential location for literature in terms of consisting of the first modernist short-story *Çîrok* (tale) written by Fuad Temo in the 4<sup>th</sup> issue.

newspaper (1913) and continued to their works until the beginning of World War 1. These publications were written in Kurdish and Turkish. According to Celîlê Celîl, the society carried out much more energetic actions among Kurds rather than *Kürt Teavûn ve Terakki Cemiyeti*. Main strategy was promoted as the progress in culture and education rather than Turkish opposition for independence. Creating Kurdish writing language, studying the history and culture of their society, promoting national consciousness were some of the aims of the Society. For the writers “Kurds have been detracted from civilization, science and culture. Kurds realized their illiteracy and the fact they have to learn writing and reading in their language” and the repression on Kurds was shown as the basic reason for this problem. Feudal and fundamentalist social structures were demonstrated as another reason (Celîl, 2013: 74-91). As a result, it is possible to argue that “The student society Kurdish Hope (Hevi) of 1912 along with other previous organizations cannot be seen as a nationalist association, for it did not aim at forming a Kurdish state and at propagating Kurdish autonomy or secession” (Özoğlu, 2004: 81).

The World War 1 had affected the Kurdish publications like the works of other communities. Many of the writers participated in any front-line of the war. As far as the War was over, Kurdish intellectuals resumed their work in İstanbul by establishing *Kurdistan Teali Cemiyeti*<sup>30</sup>. The journals like *Jîn* (life) (1918) and *Kurdistan* (1919) were published by this society. Additionally, the newspapers *Serbestî* (freedom) and (1918-19) *Jîn* (life) (1920) were published. *Serbestî* was not directly established by *Kurdistan Teali Cemiyeti*, but it had close relations with that society (Serfiraz, Kürt Tarihi, 2013, 37). It is possible to argue that *Kurdistan Teali Cemiyeti* pursued the classical nationalist-western movement because the newspaper like *Jîn* was defending the creation of a nationalist history as the main goal of the movement (Bozarıslan, 2002: 846-847). The same opinion is shared by Hakan Özoğlu. According to him,

Although there existed earlier Kurdish political organizations, the SAK [Kurdistan Teali Cemiyeti] is chosen to represent the Kurdish nationalism for two reasons. Firstly, SAK was the best-organized Kurdish political organization and was actively involved in creating a uniform Kurdish identity and in disseminating its ideology. Second, its social composition was highly heterogeneous; it consisted of the representatives of different notable families claiming to represent the Kurdish intellectual and nationalist class. (Özoğlu, 2004: 14).

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<sup>30</sup> Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan (1918)

The nationalist side of the society has been argued to be an effective tool for nationalist propaganda. In spite of being composed of different ideas, the newspapers like *Jîn* concentrated on Kurdish literature examples, Kurdish music, Kurdish dance and Kurdish clothing (*Jîn*, 1919: n.8). “If its constitution does not state that the SAK was a Kurdish nationalist organization, its subsequent activities and publications definitely attest to this fact. The best evidence for this statement comes from the newspaper *Jîn*. This newspaper published many articles that were unmistakably nationalist propaganda” (Özoğlu, 2004: 82).

One of the critical point is about the attitude of the society and newspapers towards Armenians and massacres in 1915. We can give an example from some columns in *Jîn* namely “Wilson Prensipleri ve Kürtler” (Wilson Principals and Kurds) by İhsan Nuri Paşa and “Kürdistan ve Kürtler” (Kurdistan and Kurds) by Kamuran Ali Bedirxan. As far as M.Emin Bozarşlan narrated and summarized, İhsan Nuri Paşa mostly concentrates on the possibility of Kurdish dependence to Armenians through international powers and states that Armenians must not take a risk in such a dangerous game (İhsan Nuri, cited by Bozarşlan, 28). On the other side, in his “Kürdistan ve Kürdler”, Kamuran Ali Bedirxan mentions on the superiority of Kurdish population against Armenians and claims that mass slaughter did not reduce the population of Armenians. For Bedirxan, Armenians were deprived of the power for enabling Kurds to obey themselves in governance created by Armenians (Bedirxan, cited by Bozarşlan, n.9.). On the other hand, although massacres against Armenians newly took place, there was no reference to those slaughters.

## **2.2. Exile, Political Movements and Its Relation with Literature (1923-1991)**

Before starting to look at this subchapter, here it must not be forgotten that Kurdish language was formally forbidden in public sphere in Turkey until 1991. Throughout this period, Kurdish intelligentsia and politicians continued to their works mostly in exile or diaspora. However, it can be argued that after 1923, the literary side of intelligentsia traced another way apart from the political side of intelligentsia. In other words, some countries supplied Kurds with their linguistic rights. In this chapter, I will mostly concentrate on the Soviet and Swedish ecoles of

Kurdish literature. Besides, while classifying those ecoles, I will try to give some information on the literary productions produced by some Kurdish political groups like *Xoybûn* (existence) and *Azadî* (freedom). By the way, it is necessary to state that Kurdish political movements also have to be analyzed in this process because political restrictions by new Republic did not allow Kurds to produce their own literature in that context.

First of all, it is necessary to look at what was happening in newly established Turkish Republic related to Kurdish movements. As far as Turkish Republic was established, so many nationalist restrictions were taken to reinforce their regime. “The policy forbidding the use of the Kurdish language in public would have upset anyone with a private or politicized Kurdish identity (Romano, 2006:106). *Azadî* society which had the nationalist aims was established in the leadership of Cibranlı Halid Bey who had his education in Tribal Schools in which cadres for Hamidiye Cavalry members were trained. *Azadî* located its works in Erzurum and it organized the Sheikh Said revolt in 1925. After the revolt was suppressed, many of the group members had to flee to Lebanon to establish another group namely *Xoybûn* together with Armenian Dashnak members in 1927 (Bruinessen, 1992: 279). “The *Khoybun* also played a role in the creation of various Kurdish committees and associations in northern Syria and in the larger cities of the Levant including Aleppo, Damascus, and Beirut and as such could be considered a “school” of Kurdish nationalism in the Levant” (Tejel, 2009: 18).

After *Xoybûn* was established, the party members organized Ararat Mountain Rebellion to build an independent Kurdistan in 1929-1930. As a result of the revolts, “Turkey responded very aggressively to any Kurdish movement, be it militant, cultural, or intellectual, in the following period” (Özoğlu, 2004: 101). After the suppression of Ararat rebellion, *Xoybûn*, in the leadership of Celadet Alî Bedirxan, tried to fill the gap of political defeats with cultural renaissance in Syria. As Hamit Bozarslan argues, the period between 1938 and 1959 could be considered as a politically silent period (Bozarslan, 2002: 850). For this purpose, they published journals *Hawar* (1932-1943), *Ronahî* (1942-1945) and *Roja Nû* (1943-1946). Here, *Hawar* which was published in Damascus has a critical role on either Kurdish language or literature because of its technical and content structure. *Hawar* journal was published in French and Kurdish languages and in Latin and Arabic alphabets until its 23<sup>rd</sup> issue. After this issue, the journal was written only in Latin alphabet as

the sign of Latinization in Kurdish literature. The main aims of the Kurdish intelligentsia gathered around *Hawar* were “to restore the Kurdish Language, develop teaching in Kurdish, and ensure the rebirth of popular literature” (Önen, 2012: 97). Celadet Ali Bedirxan, Osman Sebrî, Qedrîcan, Nûreddîn Yûsiv and Cegerxwîn were some of the writers in *Hawar*. The journal was consisting of Kurdish stories, poems, information on Kurdish grammar and political writings. As far as those intellectuals considered language as the main condition of national existence, they focused on the contribution to Kurdish culture and identity (Önen, 2012: 1).

Another substantial improvement in Kurdish literature took place in Soviet Union as far as the basis of new Turkish Republic had been constructed. The massacres took place against Armenians had affected the Yezidi Kurdish population and they were forced to migrate to Armenia after 1918. Throughout this process, Soviet Armenia became the main centre for Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish language and literature after, for example, Armenian Government decided to allowed Kurds to do their linguistic works in 1927 and Kurds could open their own schools (Goren, 2013: 20).

At first, Kurds were doing their linguistic and literary works in Latin with the improvements of Aisor Margulov and Erebe Şemo until 1945 when the Cyrillic alphabet was imposed to them through the suppression of Russian government (Galip, 2012: 13). In this period, as I will state below, the literary productions were made possible by critical names like Erebe Şemo and Elîyê Ebdilrehman. These two names produced a book *Xwe Xwe Hînkirina Zimanê Kurdî* (Learning Kurdish by Yourself) with Latin alphabet (Goren, 2013: 20). The literacy made possible by these developments has produced a significant number of writers engaged in important literary and socio-political activities including the creation of a literary language that is an instrument of social progress and communist education among this minority people (Vanly, 1992: 166). On the other hand, the literary activities in Damascus, I mentioned above, and the literary activities in Yerevan did not know about each other and they did not have any interrelation (Goren, 16: 2013). Beyond all of these, a well-known newspaper *Rîya Teze* was began to be published in Kurdish, Russian and Armenian in 1930 and its publication lasted until 2003. Moreover, Kurds could promote their cultural actions through *Yerevan Radio* by presenting Kurdish folkloric examples. In this way, “modern communications, printing, radio and the cassette

recorder, contributed much to the creation of the Kurdish ‘nation’ as an ‘imagined community’, that is, as a community of people whom one never meets face to face but whom one knows to exist and to be like oneself’ (Bruinessen, 1992: 38).

After giving the essential overview of Kurdish literature and cultural atmosphere in Yerevan, it is necessary to look at specifically the critical works produced here. First of all, Erebe Şemo, born in 1897 in Kars, wrote his well-known novel *Şivanê Kurmanca* (The Kurdish Shepherd) in 1935 in Yerevan. This novel has a special location in Kurdish literature because it is the first Kurdish novel<sup>31</sup>. In this novel, Şemo writes an autobiographic text in which he mentions on the difficulties of his life and memories (Goren, 2013: 22). According to Galip and Pariltı, in *Şivanê Kurd*, a political problematic is given in a propaganda way by tending to thought instead of a focus point and that makes the novel considerably weak (Galip, Pariltı, 2010: 31). Erebo Şemo wrote other novels namely *Dimdim* (Dimdim) in 1966, *Jiyana Bextewar* (Happy Life) in 1969 and *Hopo* (Hopop) in 1969. Together with Erebe Şemo, Eliyê Ebdilrehman, born in Van in 1920, migrated with his family to Caucasia in 1926 and he was graduated from Yerevan University in 1937. Ebdilrehman wrote many literary texts including poems, memories and novels in Yerevan until his death in 1995. The novels *Xatê Xanim* (Lady Xatê) written in 1958 and *Gundê Merxasa* (Village of the Courageous) in 1968 are two critical novels belong to him. Beyond all of that, another critical figure Hecîyê Cindî wrote more than thirty books on the Kurdish folkloric components (Goren, 2013: 10).

Based on the improvements mentioned above, Soviet countries like Georgia, Azerbaijan and especially Armenia undoubtedly became a triggering power for the development of Kurdish language and literature. Although the alphabets changed due to political reasons, Kurds had the chance to keep their languages alive through linguistic works, literary productions and radio broadcasting.

The third exile period for Kurdish literature emerged in Sweden after coup d'état in 1980. On the other hand, it is necessary to briefly look at the general situation of Kurdish literature in Turkey before the coup. Kurdish newspapers or books could not be published until 1948. However, after the Second World War, due to American and European pressure, the Turkish regime took on the trappings of a

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<sup>31</sup> “Opinions differ about the publication date of *Şivanê Kurmanca*. Some scholars assert that it was published in 1927; however, Ahmadzadeh (2003) and Aydogan (2011), all confirm the date to be 1935.” Cited by Özlem Galip

bourgeois democracy, and from time to time permitted the use of the Kurdish language (Blau, 1996: 25 and Kreyenbroek, 2005: 74). Together with such steps, Kurdish intellectuals started to produce their literary works in Turkey to a less extent. “After 1948 some Kurdish intellectuals spoke about the Kurds not openly but indirectly with hints in magazines they published in Turkish” (Malmisanîj, 2006: 19). *Şark Postası*, *İleri Yurt* and *Dicle-Fırat* were some journals published in Turkish by Musa Anter, Canip Yıldırım and Edip Karahan in the 60s and 70s. In other words, “a limited amount of writing and publishing appeared in Turkey in the 1960s and slowly grew through the end of the 1970s, years characterised by softer state policies and development of Kurdish political activism” (Scalbert Yücel, 2011: 8). However, those works were met by the severe measures of the authorities. For example, a court was immediately opened against Musa Anter because he wrote some Kurdish words in his well-known poem *Qimil* (Aelia, 1959). Another similar example, in 1968 Emin Bozarslan was arrested and held in prison for four months because he wrote a Kurdish alphabet book and made a translation of *Mem û Zîn*. “A few books were published after 1975; between 1975 and 1980 nine books were published altogether and all of them were banned (Malmisanîj, 2006: 19). To make it clear, the limited liberal atmosphere in Turkey until 1980 coup d’état gave its place to more strict policies and in this way it became almost impossible to write directly or indirectly on Kurds.

After coup d’état in 1980, the way to exile opened one more time for Kurdish intellectuals while they were banished to Sweden. Here, Kurdish writers took some roles in literature as well as politics (Laleş, 2012, 370). That is why, it can be possible to argue that Swedish *ecole* became literally more effective than Soviet *ecole* or Hawar *ecole* in Damascus. In other words, other *ecoles* were creating literary productions in a nationalist propagandative way, while the writers in Swedish *ecole* had an independent path by mostly tending on literary discourse.<sup>32</sup> Those writers like previous writers of *Hawar*, *Riya Teze* or *Roja Nû* gathered around collective works such as *Nûdem*, but produced, at the same time, independent works. Moreover, according to Clemence Scalbert Yücel, there were some reasons for this transition:

They switched to literary activities in Sweden for different reasons: the effect of living in ‘exile’ and their experiences of nostalgia and loneliness, and the difficulty of engaging in politics from abroad. However time, economic resources, and also relationships available in the diaspora must not be

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<sup>32</sup> The same argument is put forward by Lal Laleş in his article “Türkiye’de Kürtçe Edebiyat” in *İnatçı Bir Bahar: Kürtçe ve Kürtçe Edebiyat* published by Ayrıntı in 2012 and put forward by Clemence Scalbert Yücel in her “Is There an autonomous Kurdish Literary Field in Turkey?” published by *Nationalities Papers* in 2011.

forgotten: indeed for instance the Swedish state had given writing or publication grants that sometimes enabled writing to be the exile's main activity (Yücel, 2011: 9-10).

In this atmosphere of independence in Sweden, totally eleven publication houses were established by Kurdish writers namely Nûdem, Roja Nû, Orfeus, Apec, Helwest, Sara, Welat, Pelda, Jîndan, Newroz and Kurdistan (Aydoğan, 2011: 1). Mehmet Emin Bozarslan, Bavê Nazê, Hesenê Metê, Rojen Barnas, Mustafa Aydoğan, Firat Cewerî, Silêman Demir, Mehmed Uzun and Mahmûd Baksî are the some writers who gave their literary productions in Sweden. Although some of them returned back to Turkey after 2000s, many of them continued to live in Sweden. By year of 2011, İbrahim Seydo Aydoğan explained that 66 novels<sup>33</sup> of total 197 novels were written in Sweden (Aydoğan, 2011: 1). Through these novels, writers mostly focused on homelessness, identity, exile, Kurdish folkloric elements like *dengbêjs*<sup>34</sup>, socio-economic problems of Kurds and the lives of desperate and lonely characters. Moreover, very critical journal *Nûdem* (1990-2000) mostly affected by *Hawar* was published in the editorship of Firat Cewerî by translating well-known texts from world literature and including short-stories. "The journal *Nûdem*'s aim was to be a literary platform, freed from all 'political constraints', established itself as a key moment (Scalbert Yücel, 2011: 13). Beyond these works, Kurdish schools to teach Kurdish and Kurdish libraries opened in Sweden. Briefly, Kurdish writers who could write their rights, cultural elements, to a large extent, in Turkish until 1980 began to publish their novels freely in Kurdish. Meanwhile, through establishing publishing houses Kurdish literature gained a kind of market in which it had the chance of being an international literature.

### **2.3. Blurred Borders of Bans against Kurdish Language and Its Comeback to Turkey (1991-2016)**

As mentioned above, the productions in Kurdish language was banned after 1923 and Kurdish literature gave its most critical productions in exile quite a while.

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<sup>33</sup> Another source by Malmisaniş argues that totally 103 books of 628 written in Kurdish language from 1923 to 2005 were first published in Sweden (Malmisaniş's report *The Past and the Present of Book Publishing in Kurdish Language in Turkey* conducted for Next Page Foundation in 2006.

<sup>34</sup> *Dengbêjs* are story-tellers who transmitted the narratives in melodic ways to their audiences. In this way they could protect the main Kurdish myths, themes, stories and epics. *Dengbêjs* became one of the main characters in Kurdish literature too. Mehmed Uzun's *Hawara Dicleyê*, Mahmut Baksî's *Bavê Nazê*, Süleyman Demir's *Sorê Gulê* and Hesenê Metê's *Tofan* can be counted as some of the texts in which the tradition of *dengbêj* appears.

These bans continued until 1991 led Kurdish literature to give its first critical in abroad far away from their homeland. “The ban on publishing Kurdish books and periodicals was lifted in 1991 by rescinding law # 2932. Article 28 was repealed in 2001. On 3 August 2002, the Turkish Parliament adopted the European Union Harmonisation Package” and a legal arrangement making private courses for teaching Kurdish legal and allowing radio and TV broadcasting in Kurdish under certain conditions was approved” (Malmisanîj, 2006: 20-21). Under this subsection, I will attempt to focus on two processes: one is from 1991 to 2001 and the other is from 2001 to the present.

While it came to 1991, some liberal policies had been carried out and to a small extent Kurdish was began to be used either in public sphere or in publication. Consequently, lots of publication houses were opened in Diyarbakır and İstanbul such as Nûbihar (1992), Weşanên Enstîtuya Kurdî (1992), Avesta (1995), Aram (1997) and Pêrî (1997). However, “even though there was an easing of restrictions on publishing during the 1990s, only two novels were written in that period: Îhsan Colemergî’s *Cembelî Kurê Mirê Hekarî* and Îbrahîm Seydo Aydoğan’s *Reş û Spî* Colemergî’s *Cembelî Kurê Mirê Hekarî* was first published by Apec in Stockholm, then a few years later by Avesta in Istanbul. This means that Aydoğan’s *Reş û Spî* was the only novel published during the 1990s in Turkish Kurdistan” (Galip, 2012: 24-25). One of the reasons can be considered for the Kurdish writers to confront death threat by *unidentified persons* or the possibility of being sent to jail during this period. For example, “the 1996 Istanbul edition of the romantic epos *Mem and Zîn* written in Kurdish in 1695 was banned and confiscated, and as the translator M. Emin Bozarıslan did not live in Turkey, the publisher İhsan Türkmen was sentenced to 13 months and 10 days of imprisonment and a fine” (Malmisanîj, 2006: 16).

Other essential production centres continued to become journals and newspapers. The generation of 90s “often published in the literary and cultural journal *Rewşen* (Enlightened) (1992–95), which later became *Jiyana Rewşen* (Enlightened Life) (1996–2000)” (Scalbert Yücel, 2012: 363). Moreover, newspapers like *Özgür Gündem* (Free Agenda), *Azadiya Welat* (Freedom of Country) and *Özgür Ülke* (Free Country) were began to be published. However, most of the members of these publications were killed or imprisoned, their buildings were bombed and they were mostly closed by the state authorities in 90s.

One of the limited positive aspects of this blurred liberalization movement in Turkey, as Abdullah Keskin who still makes the editorship of Avesta publishing

house argues that Kurds in Turkey had confronted for the first time with the literature through the productions in Soviet Union and writings in *Hawar* journal (Keskin, interview: 1999). The fact that Kurds in Turkey confronted the literature that much late is undoubtedly the result of nationalist politics of the state.

As I mentioned above, because Turkish Parliament adopted the European Union Harmonisation Package, some other steps were taken and the blurred liberalization of 90s gave its place to some more liberal policies. In this respect, Kurdish radios, TVs, publication houses could perform their works under certain conditions to the present. As Sami Tan mentions, the first school for teaching Kurdish was opened in Batman in 2004 and 2027 people were registered to the course. On the other hand, the courses were closed because people objected to pay money for learning their own mother tongue in 2005 (Tan, 2012: 124). Besides, the first Kurdish Language and Literature department was opened in 2010 and numerous literary works were produced there some of them which are published in *Wêje û Rexne* and *Zarema* journals. Those works promoted the development of Kurdish language and literature and opened a way for the gap in the literary criticism for Kurdish.

If it is to look at the post-2000 Kurdish literature, statistics show a large numbers of productions. With the establishment of additional publishing houses such as Vate (2003), Lîs (2004) and Bîr (2005) Kurdish literature began to promote itself. The examples from Kurdish writers, particularly from Mehmed Uzun, Firat Cewerî, Hesênê Metê and Kurdish writers from different Kurdish regions were translated into Turkish. In this case, Kurdish literature could obtain a limited market to reach the readers and the introduction of this literature could be possible for non-Kurdish readers. The book fairs in İstanbul, Diyarbakır and other cities included Kurdish publication houses and contrary to the previous times, this literature found out a place for the readers. The varieties of the contents have raised and the writers began to narrate different kinds of themes.

To conclude, the years between 1991 to the present became rather productive for Kurdish literature. Although there had been very few examples from Kurdish literature, post-1991 process until 2002 created a frame for Kurdish literature. According to Malmisaniy, “publishers with more than 20 Kurdish books are: Aram, Avesta, Deng, Doz, Elma, Weşanên Enstîtuya Kurdî, Nûbihar, Pêrî. These 8 publishers have published 320 (48,9 %) of all the Kurdish books published in Turkey

so far. The production of the two publishers (Avesta and Pêrî Publishing Houses) with the greatest numbers of publications are 130 books (19,9 %)” (Malmisanîj, 2006: 26). Nevertheless, as the state of emergency in 2016 Kurdish Institute performing works on Kurdish language in İstanbul, Kurdish Writers Association, *Tîroj* journal were closed. Some Kurdish writers such as Dilaver Zeraq, Rênas Jiyan, Murat Özyaşar, Şener Özmen, İlhami Sidar, Lal Laleş and Kemal Varol were disemployed or detained. That policy substantially has influenced negatively the production of Kurdish literature.

It is surely impossible to write all the development processes of Kurdish literature throughout a short chapter. The language itself became the affair of politics, history and social movement rather than literature. However, it will give an idea to connect other two chapters for this thesis. The gap of eighty five years between 1915 and 2000 demonstrates the nationalistic identity construction of Kurds as stated above. In other words, Kurdish literature emerged within a nationalistic discourse and its effect was seen on post-2000 Kurdish literature in Turkey. Until now, we have learned a connection between 1915 and the nationalist politics of Turkey on the development of Kurdish language. Throughout the next chapter, I will try to give concrete examples from Kurdish literature which are related to the first two chapters. In other words, the continuity between 1915 and the bans over Kurdish literature will be related to the representation of Armenians and 1915 in Kurdish literature throughout the third chapter.

**CHAPTER III**  
**AN ATTEMPT FOR PEACE: SPECTER<sup>35</sup>-LIKE VICTIMS AND DEMAND**  
**FOR EXCUSING**

*“However this war may end, we have won the war against you; none of you will be left to bear witness, but even if someone were to survive, the world would not believe him. There will perhaps be suspicions, discussions, research by historians, but there will be no certainties, because we will destroy the evidence together with you.”*  
(From *The Drowned and the Saved* by Primo Levi)

**3.1. An Introduction: How to Approach the Texts**

So far, we tried to focus on how Kurdish-Armenian relations got worse and fluctuation in the development of Kurdish literature in Turkey. In this chapter, my main purpose will be to look at the examples of Kurdish literature deeply which handles the subject of 1915 and Kurdish-Armenian relations. However, as we mentioned above, Kurdish literature got its peak after 2000 and nearly all of the examples about that issue were written after 2000. Of course, literature did not become the only way which tends to Armenian-Kurdish relations after that period. Field works, academic studies or conferences traced and undermined the questions lying behind that relations after 2000. This effort must be including an attempt to enhance broken relations, to stand against the formal ideology of the State and to follow a way for social peace. Nevertheless, it has always been a critical question whether those works fulfilled by Kurds got any response from Armenians or not. In other words, all the works for this subject could be more valuable when both sides would have taken mutual roles. Maybe real justice and confrontation could be provided through collective works. However, our main mission is to look at the possibility of literature in such a critical affair. Here literature is important because “the Catastrophe, as victims lived through, is the experience itself and this experience can be merely read from the literature of remnants” (Nichanian, 2011: 190).

If so, we have to ask these questions: why does Kurdish literature immediately start to narrate about 1915 after 2000? Because of belated emergence of the memory of remnants? Or for political and social fate partnership among

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<sup>35</sup> The term “specter” is used by Derrida. *Specters of Marx: The State of Dept, The Work of Mourning & The New International.*

Armenians and Kurds? What are the main purposes to utter on such belated happenings? The desire for peace through admission and regret? Or a catharsis through a confrontation with the victim? In this chapter, I will try to give more suitable answers to those questions. Kurdish writers, to some extent, take the responsibility of the Catastrophe and demonstrate all the conflicts and negotiations on it. Nevertheless, the 85 years gap between 1915 and 2000, as stated in the second chapter, brings us to consider the nation-building attempts of Kurdish intellectuals via political, social, cultural and literary works. In addition to become familiar with the process of Kurdish literature based on Turkey, the Kurdish texts in this thesis will be helpful to better understand that 85 years gap. This gap, at the same time, may be interpreted as the explanation of diachronic identities formed by the victim and the perpetrator.

As I stated in the introduction, I will look at these Kurdish texts: Mehdi Zana's *Ay Dayê* [O! Mom], Sabri Akbel's *Evîna Pinhan* [Hidden Love], Hesenê Mete's *Gotinên Gunehkar* [Sinful Words], Yaqop Tilermenî's *Bavfileh* [Proselyte]<sup>36</sup>, Eyub Guven's *Guhar* [Eardrop], Mehmet Devîren's *Kortika Filehan* [The Hollow of Non-Muslims], Îrfan Amîda's *Pêşengeha Sûretan* [Exhibition of the Faces]. Some of the texts were written in a short story format namely Amed çeko Jiyan's *Varjabad*, Felat Dilgeş's *Dilşa*, Mehmet Dicle's *Ta* [Rope]. Although all of the Kurdish texts narrated about 1915 and its afterwards, some of the novels like *Kortika Filehan*, *Guhar*, *Evîna Pinhan*, *Gotinên Gunehkar* and short stories from *Varjabad* and *Dilşa* directly focus on 1915 and its traumatic sides on the Armenian characters. On the other hand, *Bavfileh*, *Pêşengeha Sûretan* and *Ay Dayê* relate the traumatic sides of Armenian characters with the Kurds politically subjected to violence during and after 1980s. Besides a short story *Maria* from *Ta* mostly focuses on the traumatic side of 1915 from giving a story took place in 2005 without focusing on any political pressure on Kurds. "Talan, komkujî, şewat, qirkirin, ferman, roja qiyametê, roja qirkirinê" (Yeşilmen, 2014) and *hovitî*<sup>37</sup> are the words mostly used in texts to describe the incidents. The stories generally take place in Diyarbakır, Mardin, Şırnak and some Kurdish towns as well as İstanbul and Sakarya. The construction of characters changes from text to text. In some stories such as *Kortika Filehan*, *Guhar*, *Ay Dayê* and *Bavfileh*, there are very good and very bad Kurdish characters in the

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<sup>36</sup> The English translation of the title of *Bavfileh* belongs to Özlem Galip.

<sup>37</sup> Pillage, massacre, burn, destroying, doomsday, the day of destroying and wildness.

texts (Yeşilmen, 2014). On the other hand, some texts like *Pêşengeha Sûretan*, *Varjabed*, *Maria* and *Gotinên Gunehkar* the characters are constructed not only through the dialogues taking place among each other, but also through their psychological analysis.

Trauma, testimonies, mourning, admission and regret become one of the main cornerstones in those texts. Most of the texts aim to build a kind of confrontation with 1915 through bringing Kurdish and Armenian characters together in their texts. This effort is valuable. On the other hand, the possibilities of literature, its location about a historical fact and the problems of representation can certainly show the main purpose of textual examples. Before discussing the relation between literature and the Catastrophe, let me give an example from a tragedy to better understand the effort of Kurdish writers on the historical tragedy.

In spite of the rule of King, Antigone secretly buries her brother Polynekes's corpse by envisaging the possibility of death. However, the funeral ceremony must be completed for the spirit of the dead to go to Hades without coming back and for the mourning on him. In other words, it has been banned to mourn on Polynekes. For this purpose, Antigone completes all the rituals for the corpse of her brother by herself. By doing all of that, Antigone breaks the ban of mourning and while doing that she is caught in the act. What is incomplete here is the confrontation of Antigone with king Kreon who said "no one will mourn" and face-off with each other in public sphere. In other words, mourning becomes possible only through such face-off, namely "being caught" (Kaptanoğlu, 2009: 32).

Based on this story there can emerge some questions to interrogate the effort of Kurdish writers about confrontation: Did the Kurds become a kind of Antigone while Kurdish writers narrated 1915 in their literature? Can the texts be shown as a funeral ceremony to mourn precisely? Can we imagine Kreon as the State who prohibited mourning? The answers to these questions will be given after looking at the common sides of the texts.

After a long introduction, it is necessary to mention the main problematic of this chapter. It will trace the possibility of justice and peace between Kurdish and Armenian characters in the Kurdish texts on 1915. The possibilities of literature and its relation with the representation of the Catastrophe in literary texts will be examined through the thesis. I will discuss the notions of Levi, Agamben and Nichanian in the next pages, but it is necessary to state that these thinkers' views are

generally focusing on the narrators who identify themselves with the victims.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, I will basically look at the constructions of Armenian and Kurdish characters and their relations which broadly demonstrate the intentions of the authors about narrating 1915. Moreover, one of the main debates will be on the Kurdish writers who mostly identify themselves with the perpetrator's identity instead of the victim's identity. The ambivalent property of the perpetrator which carries Kurdish and Islamic identity will be the breaking point of that debate. While doing that, I will manage the problematic through three subchapters: firstly, I will discuss the dichotomies between fact/fiction, monument/document and testimony/novel. This subchapter will be related to the historical facts I stated in the first chapter. Secondly, I will discuss the representation of mourning, trauma and silence. While doing that the testimony of Kurds will be shown as admission about 1915. Last and thirdly, I will try to analyze the texts by showing the borders of penance, price and confrontation. In the third subchapter, Agamben's view on law and ethics will help us to better understand the texts. The main problematic will be based on how the narrators constitute Kurdish and Armenian characters. In other words, this thesis will mostly look at the characters of the texts to understand the main aim of the authors.

### **3.2. Fact/Fiction, Monument/Document and Testimony/Novel dichotomies**

Walter Benjamin, in his famous article "Theses on the Philosophy of the History" makes a division between historicism and Marxist historical materialism. According to the thesis, unlike to historical materialism, historicism is the history of victor and argues that "...if one asks with whom the adherents of historicism actually empathize [,] the answer is inevitable: with the victor" (Benjamin, 2007: 256). For Benjamin, historians talk about history as treasure and legacy, while the oppressed class in history approach history as wreckage, mass of ruins and a pillage place (Gürbilek, 1993: 34). So, it can be considered that the victor builds its history on the interest of elites and denial of what oppressed ones experienced. It is totally about the formation of knowledge and its relation with power. Therefore "the historical time that we thought was past turns out to structure the contemporary field with a persistence that gives the lie to history as chronology. (Butler, 2004: 54). Here

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<sup>38</sup> That comment belongs to Mehmet Fatih Uslu.

chronology must be thought with continuity. For this reason, *document* or archaeological thought based on causality and continuity becomes the main cornerstone of victor's history. According to Foucault (1972), history based its formation on archaeology "in its traditional form, undertook to 'memorize' the monuments of the past, transform them into documents, and lend speech to those traces which, in themselves, are often not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say" (p. 7). Here, there is a strict relation between what Benjamin says historicism and archaeology or document. Nevertheless, the main issue is about testimony if we will correlate the texts with document or monument. Nichanian's view may be a guide to

Everything leads us to believe that testimony—which used to be *document* — is now demanding to be read as *monument*. As long as testimonies were merely documents, they were read (if they were read) as the silent vestiges of memory that would help us to reconstruct the facts or that would bear each time the traces of a tragic experience, as the instruments of a universal memory, current or to come. A document is always instrumentalized, it serves something else than itself. A monument, on the other hand, exists only for itself (Nichanian, 2009: 94).

If so, how can we associate the theoretical introduction given above with literary examples? After the narration of a metaphorical story between a mute son who suddenly cries out and the disaster of a father, Marc Nichanian and David Kazanjian put forward that analogy: "Literature is that scream, that crying out, which accompanies, for all eternity, the father's death. Literature does not save the father! It saves the 'disaster'" (Kazanjian & Nichanian, 2003: 145). Based on this analogy, it is rather obvious that literature cannot be researched through historicist formation of knowledge. In other words, literature opens the doors for those who barely survive from a disaster. It takes the past experiences of oppressed ones as monument rather than document.

On the other hand, there has always been a debate on literature and testimony with regard to presenting the Catastrophe. Is there any testimony which can demonstrate the mortal sides of disaster? In his reputed work *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, Agamben states the impossibility of testimony with such words:

The Shoah is an event without witnesses in the double sense that it is impossible to bear witness to it from the inside- since no one can bear witness from the inside of death, and there is no voice for the disappearance of voice-

and from the outside-since the "outsider" is by definition excluded from the event (Agamben, 1999: 35).

If testimony cannot present a mortal disaster, how can the trauma, mourning or melancholy become possible to narrate the brutality of a disaster? According to Marc Nichanian, because testimonies cannot be a source for historiography, the texts of testimonies should not be read as historical texts or literary texts but as only a text (Nichanian, 2011: 38) and claims that literature is the only way for the narration of the Catastrophe (Nichanian, 2011: 86).

Based on the theoretical background above, it is necessary to look at the texts I will be probing. Although the texts tend to different sides of the Catastrophe, it is observable that the monumentation of the Catastrophe becomes the main concern of them. That is why, the fictional side of the texts becomes suspicious. Mehdi Zana's *Ay Dayê* [O! Mom] includes two different stories one of them which belongs to Şemun who witnesses 1915 and the other of which belongs to his son and namesake Şemun who survives 1980 coup d'état in Turkey. The first story begins with a wedding scene in 21<sup>st</sup> April of 1915 in a village of Şırnak Daraherbil. After Armenians and Chaldeans get the news that they will be killed, they escape to mountains. The main character Şemun and Osman Agha are always in touch. The tribe leader Osman Agha refuses to kill non-Muslims and protects them by victualing. Armenians and Chaldeans in the mountains are saved and they announce that they will be dependent on Osman Agha's tribe. The first story finishes with completing unfinished marriage. The second story is about son Şemun's testimony about coup d'état took place in 1980 in Turkey. Şemun, at the age of 67, is tortured together with Kurdish characters in famous Diyarbakir Prison<sup>39</sup> in 1983. In spite of stating Christian identity, he is blamed to be an active member of Muslim Brothers and is blamed to aid and abet to PKK. Then Şemun is released after six months and decides to go Paris by thinking also what was happened in 1915. Based on the information given above, the last 6 pages of *Ay Dayê* are left to a lament by Rohat Alakom, photography from deportation, a bibliography and four photography of the

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<sup>39</sup> This prison is rather "famous" because most of the political Kurdish figures were tortured, punished or killed in that prison after 1980 coup. The Prison was put into the list of "the worst 10 prisons ever" by The Times in 2008. Kurdish movement's discourse in 90s is mostly based on the happenings in the prison. Here are some articles written about it: Onur Günay, "Şiddetin Eleştirisi: Diyarbakır Askeri Cezaevi (1980-1984)" in *Yazınca*, no: 11, 2009. Welat Zeydanloğlu, "Torture and Turkification in the Diyarbakır Military Prison". Chapter in *Rights, Citizenship & Torture: Perspectives on Evil, Law and the State*, Welat Zeydanloğlu and John T. Parry (eds.), Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2009, pp.73-92. Moreover, a documentary *Diyarbakır 5 Nolu Ceza Evi* was directed by Çayan Demirel in 2009.

main character Şemun in text. To raise the persuasiveness of what was narrated in the text, the narrator tries to exhibit the *real* side of the story. Therefore, the fictional side of the text stays in the background as far as 1915 is perceived to be a case which has to be proven. That situation may be a result of accepting and admitting the Catastrophe very late by Kurds.

Another anxiety emerges in Felat Dilgeş's *Keşe Tûma* [Tûma's Monk]. The story is about a monk whose mother is saved by Kurds. His mother is saved by a Kurdish character Melekê Xero while she is 5 and she is married with an Armenian man. His son is born here in Silopi district of Şırnak. The monk is argued by the narrator to be angry at Kurds because the past massacres in 1915. In spite of getting angry at Kurds, the monk is always imagined as a nephew of Kurds because his mother is saved by a Kurdish family. The last sentence of this short story is as such: "If you have the chance to go to Midyat, go up to him, make him happy and surely let him know that we are hereafter conscious; that we are not enemies but friend of each other"<sup>40</sup> (Dilgeş, 2014: 126). Moreover, the narrator states that Keşe Tûma died in 2005.<sup>41</sup> This text is considered to be an example of oral history rather than a fictionalized story. The narrator's aim is to be forgiven by a surviving Armenian character through directing the narratees.

The short story *Zûra* by Felat Dilgeş has similar features with *Keşe Tûma*. The sense of reality can be directly observed in this short story too. *Zûra* (Anoş) is saved and brought up by a religious Kurdish man Şêx Mihemedê Dûderî. We confront with the biography of *Zûra* within the chronological events. *Zûra* is married with Şêx's son Fehmi in 1930 and then they are banished to Aydın in 1937. Although they are allowed to turn back to their villages, *Zûra* denies it because her parents had been killed there. She gets ill in 1989 and she is hospitalized in a psychiatric hospital. She does not know anybody and talks the names of her siblings Aqub, Misaq and Coyana in her sleep. Again, in the last pages of the text, the anxiety for narrating the reality increases. *Zûra* is in deathbed and her memories surface and the doctor mentions that she undertook a shock during her childhood. Moreover, Ömer Delikaya also agrees with the anxiety for reality in that story. According to him, the Kurdish character Şêx Mihemedê Dûderî really lived in Kulp a town of Diyarbakır

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<sup>40</sup> "Ku riya we bi Midyadê ket, seriyekî lêxin, dilê wî xweş bikin û pê bidin zanîn ku êdî em hişyar in, ne neyar, dost û yar in."

<sup>41</sup> During the first chapter of the book in 2003, Keşe Tûma was living.

(Delikaya, 2014: 184-185). Such attempts to show reality are the usual results of narrating a traumatic incident which has always been covered and has not been talked about.

Another example is from *Guhar* which narrates daily relations of Armenians and Kurds in Derik district of Mardin in 1950s. Those relations are shown rather idealistically and no problem can be seen between the sides. In that sense, the plot concentrates on how Armenians take Dêra Sor [The Red Church] which is the only steadily stayed church from 1915. Throughout the dialogues the secondary testimonies are given to ensure the narratee's persuasion. As far as the main character Kêvo (Kevork) listens to the testimonies from Antranik, he is informed through the presentation of some historical knowledge. Antranik mentions about a well-known Armenian historian Raimond Kevorkian and through the facts given from his book, Antranik gives information on Armenian society during and after 1915. Actually, such an attempt based on a proof which shows Kevorkian's book as a reference makes it difficult to decide that it is a literary or a historical text. Even worse, in the text Kêvo says the narrated time of the story: "...this year is 1957 and we opened Dêra Sor [The Red Church] with our effort..."<sup>42</sup> (Güven, 2011: 129). There is a contradiction. The narrated time is 1957 and Raimond Kevorkian was born in 1953. Can it be possible to write a book during the age of 4? This passage must be a typical example of anachronism. For the sake of gaining the belief of reader, the narrator falls into his trap and makes the literature as an affair of history.

Another important aspect is the relation between testimonies of remnants and literature. According to Nichanian, as soon as an incident which is narrated by a remnant as a "testimony duty", transforms into a fact, it becomes the issue of history and archive. This is because literature itself exhausts during confrontation with the brutality of the facts transmitted through literature in which testimonies are narrated. Literature has come to an end. As a result, testimonies after 1915 encounter with the collapse of literature and all the memory genres about incident. Archive emerges during such a collapse and witness who suspects memory and literature while facing with the priority of archive (Nichanian, 2011: 78-81). Therefore, there is nothing that can transmit the Catastrophe except for literature.

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<sup>42</sup> "...îsal 1957 û me deriyê Derê Sor bi destê xwe vekir".

In all the Kurdish texts narrating 1915 and its after, a character or more than one characters who witnessed the Catastrophe appear. On the other hand, one of the main characteristics of these characters is to be Muslimized Armenians. If we take into account that, surviving means denial and the fact that it is impossible to survive without the denial of the Catastrophe (Nichanian, 2011: 32), the characteristics of those characters remain incomplete. Those characters narrated their experiences in the Kurdish novels, but through their Muslimized identity. It is essential to remember again what Agamben had said: “The survivors speak in their [those who died-real witnesses] stead, by proxy, as pseudo-witnesses; they bear witness to a missing testimony. And yet to speak here of a proxy makes no sense” (Agamben, 1999: 34). If so, the Muslimized characters must be narrating their incomplete testimonies based on the position of the perpetrator. As a result, “what remnants do is to deny themselves; to deny what they were exposed to, and to deny what is unbearable in their experience” (Nichanian, 2011: 91).

In *Gotinên Gunehkar*, a Muslimized character Mekrus (Markus)<sup>43</sup> narrates his familial experience during and after 1915 to a Kurdish character Behram in an imagined world (Metê, 2013: 58-80). *Gotinên Gunehkar* was written by Hesenê Metê in Sweden. The text is about Behram’s confrontation with the real experience of Mekrus who can be assumed as a specter. The theology student Behram has a long dialog with Mekrus who is the father of householder of Behram. During the dialogue, Mekrus mentions the screams of women and curses to a Kurdish character Behram in an imagined world. In *Pêşengeha Sûretan* again a Muslimized character Mele Selîm (Aram) who becomes a *mele*<sup>44</sup> tells his experience to a Kurdish character Servan (Amîda, 2011: 246-254). Mele Selîm or Aram is saved by a *seyda* a religious man, and his sister is saved by a Kurdish man. On the other hand, Mele Selîm’s sister Fatima Xanim uses that quotation while she was on deathbed: “I am someday Muslim, someday Christian”<sup>45</sup>(Amîda, 2011: 170) In spite of that quotation, Mele Selîm uses that words: “I am neither Muslim nor Christian. It has been a long time I quitted them. The truth is with humanity”<sup>46</sup>(p. 171). This dialogue took place during Mele Selîm catches his sister on her deathbad after Selîm learned his familial

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<sup>43</sup> Here, original Christian names of the characters will be given in brackets because they carry no longer their original names.

<sup>44</sup> Effective Muslim leaders in Kurdish society, mullah.

<sup>45</sup> “Ez rojekê Mihemedî, rojekê Îsawî me”.

<sup>46</sup> “Ez ne Mihemedî ne jî Îsawî me ez xulam. Ji zû ve ye min dev ji wan qeriyaye. An jî wan. Heqîqet bi insên re ye.”

background. Actually, both of the Muslimized Armenian characters are not reconciled with Islam and have complex identities. Moreover, when Fatîma Xanim tells her story to her brother, she does not know that Mele Selîm is her brother Aram. She asks that question after telling her family's story: "I wonder if I forgive, will God forgive that? [...] Even if God forgive, I will not forgive that"<sup>47</sup> (p.173). Although these characters do not completely accept an Islamic identity, they are known as their Islamic identity in the public sphere. Nevertheless, unlike other Muslimized Armenian characters, Fatîma Xanim mostly demonstrates the traumatic side of the Catastrophe rather than focusing on the incidents itself because she carries an identical problem. In another text, the main character of *Guhar*, Kêvo, listens to the testimony of a Muslimized Guhar (original name is not given) and the novel finishes. However, although the author uses the name of Guhar as the title of the novel, we only confront with Guhar's name at the end of the text in which the testimonies of Guhar are rather fragmented. In another novel, *Bavfileh*, Taybet searches for the story of Muslimized Hedla (Prapiyon) and she narrates all she experienced after 1915 (Tilermenî, 2009, 176-181). Taybet is a Kurdish student who searches for Hedla based on a manuscript in which Hedla's story is written left by a teacher. According to the manuscript, Hedla was saved by a Kurd in Mardin and she has confronted with lots of damages. She has to be Muslim and leave her Armenian identity. Based on that manuscript, Taybet and her three friends confront with the reality of 1915 "which helps them establish a relationship of continuity and association with the state violence against the Kurds during the 1990s that they themselves have experienced fragmental" (Çelik & Öpengin, 2016: 17-18). Here just like Guhar, the testimonies of Hedla are rather partial and traumatic because the factual side of the Catastrophe appears in her mind.

While we read all these testimonies, nearly all of them seem like each other. All the testimonies are based on the narration of incidents or personal experiences. In other words, narrating what had happened is the basic purpose of the texts. The violent and mass killing scenes took place in 1915 are demonstrated through brutality. Therefore, Mekrus, Hedla, Guhar and Fatîma Xanim carry wounded memories affected by those violent scenes in their heads. The brutality appears not only during the testimonies, but also in the inner world of Muslimized Armenian

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<sup>47</sup> "Gelo mirov bibexşîne Xwedê jî bibexşîne? [...] Xwedê vê efû bike jî ez efû nakim"

characters and within the actions of Kurdish characters. For example, a Muslimized Armenian character transmits the violent scenes through a dream or in an imagined world. For example, in the short story *Varjabed* by Amed Çeko Jîyan, the main character Mirza Mihemed (Varjabed) sees the broken legs, cut heads in his dream and reader learns what had happened through those dream (Jîyan, 2010: 25). Mirza Mihemed is saved from the Catastrophe because he is a craftsman who is assumed to be useful for Kurds. In the story, the inner world of Mirza Mihemed and his trauma are given during thinking of the massacres or confronting with a church. Another example is from *Gotinên Gunehkar*: one of the main characters Mekrus (Markus) narrates the screams of women and curses to a Kurdish character Behram in an imagined world (Metê, 2007: 93). Again, in *Kortika Filehan*, a Kurdish character Misto has a dialog with Êsiv and says: “Are not you still aware of that? It is said that those non-Muslims<sup>48</sup> swallowed their gold coins not to give anybody. We go to split their stomach and take their gold coins, and we will be like *aghas*”<sup>49</sup> (Devîren, 2013: 68). These two guys are the men of Evdilkerim agha supporting the policies of the State. The tyranny of Evdilkerim agha and his men shapes the centre of the story. The agha insults two Armenian characters Hinous and Lolên and misbehaves to the women. During the massacres, he directs the people. On the other side, his brother Mihemed and Armenian character Matyous are *kirve*. Matyous is protected by his kirve and takes the revenge of his killed mother and beloved. The portrait of violence is given through a bad narration in the story.

These passages directly focus on the brutality of mass killing and raise the dose of violence to persuade the narratees that mass killings really took place. In the texts, the violent is directly associated with body rather than soul except for Fatîma Xanim and Maria. Moreover, the quotations stated above take the affair as an incident but not a fact. Consequently, based on the theoretical information given above, these scenes make it hard to make a decision that these texts are real as a historical fact, or a fictionalized novel. Here the critical side is that the testimonies of Muslimized Armenian characters or the brutality of scenes are given through dreams, imagined worlds or monologs.

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<sup>48</sup> Non-Muslim (fileh) refers to Armenians

<sup>49</sup> “Kero ma qey tu pê nehisiyayî? Dibêjin ji bo ku van filehan zêren xwe nedin kesî dadiqurtînin. Em ê herin zikê wan biqelêşin û wan zêran ji xwe re derxin, em ê jî wekî axa xurt bibin”

To conclude this subchapter, these texts generally concentrate on the real or factual side of the stories. This argument is supported by Adnan Çelik and Ergin Öpengin too:

A feature found across most of the novels is an engagement in a particular type of de-historicization, such that in most of the novels touching upon the role of the Kurds in the 1915 events, the *real* agent of the acts is the state, that is the Ottoman/Turkish government; in this rendering, particular groups of the Kurds are “deceived” by the state’s tricks and become “instruments” in the massacres. In the same vein, many of these authors seem to evaluate, analyse and judge 1915 from the standpoint of the present day (Çelik & Öpengin, 2016: 12).

It sometimes becomes possible through reading the texts as monument rather than document by raising the dose of brutality in violent scenes. By saying monumentation, I refer to the attempt for proving the truth of the stories or testimonies by means of literature. Here, “the ‘truth’ of testimony does not coincide with historical truth, with that of the fact” (Nichanian, 2009: 92). The monumentation of the testimonies or incidents brings us to consider the texts a production of archive. However, “Testimony [...] guarantees not the factual truth of the statement safeguarded in the archive, but rather its unarchivability, its exteriority with respect to the archive -that is, the necessity by which, as the existence of language it escapes both memory and forgetting” (Agamben, 1999: 158). What does that mean? It means although literature is the only way for narrating the Catastrophe, these Kurdish texts generally show the historical side of stories and make monument the testimonies by betraying the possibilities of literature. However, “testimony as document belongs to the witness according to the fact; testimony as monument belongs to the witness according to the sign” (Nichanian, 2009: 94). Thus, it contradicts the possibility of testimonies on the Catastrophe. In the second subchapter, I will try to relate that kind of factual attempts with the representation of mourning, trauma and silence of Armenian characters and the testimony of Kurdish characters as admission.

### **3.3. Mourning, Trauma and Silence: Mutated Identities**

In the beginning I tried to summarize the tragic story of Antigone. She was trying to complete the mourning ritual of his brother. At the end, she was being caught by the King. Kurdish literature, as we said before, became a kind of wounded literature. On the other hand, although some examples were previously produced

within Turkey or abroad, Kurdish writers began to narrate the Catastrophe after 2000 based on memorials. So, what did trigger the Kurdish writers to mention on the Catastrophe after 2000 rather than between 1915 and 2000? What did Kurdish writers attempt to do? Before responding to these questions it is necessary to look at some views on mourning, trauma and belated versions of them.

According to Freud, what makes melancholy different from mourning is the fact that melancholy is the usual result of unsuccessful mourning. “Like mourning, a reaction to the real loss of a loved object; but over and above this, it is marked by a determinant which is absent in normal mourning or which, if it is present, transforms the latter into pathological mourning” (Freud, 1957: 250). Based on Derrida’s famous work Nazile Kalaycı argues that “those dead ones who were not recompensed and who was not mourned on will move to the future as a ‘specter’ and will make lives uneasy” (Kalaycı, 2015). Here, it is important to clarify what Derrida says: “As soon as one no longer distinguishes spirit from specter, the former assumes a body, it incarnates itself, as spirit, in the specter” (Derrida, 2006: 4). For that reason, maybe, “Derrida suggests that justice cannot be rendered to the living alone. Responsibility cannot only concern itself with the presently living, but must include an address to, and a being addressed by, the specters of the dead and the unborn” (Fritsch, 2005: 82). Briefly, in this case, all these mechanisms on mourning and melancholy which is the presupposition of trauma are about loss.

We have to interrogate the fact that why those losses are imagined as specter of the future. “The law that determines the ones who are worth to be mourned on and the ones who have the potential to be killed is the basic law of legal order” (Kalaycı, 2015). This law is the legal order which makes the mourning as prohibited for precarious lives (Butler, 2004: 19-49). Nichanian’s comment is worth to be quoted: “After all the attempts for peace, admission, testimony, confrontation, two subjects which reconciling cannot predict become visible: prohibition of mourning and domination” (Nichanian, 2011: 203). In other words, domination as a mechanism which performs prohibition of mourning creates a barrier on reconciling. Based on this fact, admission of perpetrator makes the testimony and mourning of victim more visible.

We mentioned on the factual sides of the texts and stated that these novels or stories generally contribute to historiography. So, how can we approach to the mourning and testimonies of Armenian and Kurdish characters (as an admission) in

these texts? During asking this question we will recall again what Nichanian says: “the scene of peace consists of admission, testimony and forgiving” (Nichanian, 2011: 18). When we look at the texts, we read the belated emergence of mourning of the victims. And we should not forget that the mourning appears through Muslimized Armenian identity. The mourning and testimonies of Mekrus (Markus) in *Gotinên Gunehkar*, Mirza Mihemed (Varjabed) in *Varjabed*, Anos (Zûra) in the short story *Zûra*, Mele Selîm (Aram) and Fatima Xanim (Aşxen) in *Pêşengeha Sûretan* and Hedla (Prapiyon) in *Bavfileh* belong to a Muslimized Armenian identity. The characters do not mourn through their Armenian identity but a gained identity after the Catastrophe. That is why those characters’ mourning and testimonies are incomplete and defective. To clarify with what Freud said, these are the typical examples of successful mourning because they identified themselves with another gained identities which are Muslimism and Kurdishness. And the identification process works in such steps: The Armenian characters are being saved, they are Muslimized, they substantially oppress their Armenian identity and they go into a long silence process. Nevertheless, those characters’ traumas rise to surface while they are remembered that they are actually *fileh*, non-Muslim or remnant. For example, a bride of Şêx Mihemedê Dûderî calls Zûra (Anos) as “bone of non-Muslim”<sup>50</sup> (p. 107). Hedla (Prapiyon) is called as *zedega*<sup>51</sup> (p. 178). In *Gotinên Gunehkar*, while Behram calls Mekrus (Markus) as Markus, he suddenly boggles because this name recalls his background. Mirza Mihemed (Varjabed) has severe trauma while he has relation with his wife because he had been circumcised according to Islamic rules. At the end of the story Varjabed takes the razor and injures his body because he wants to get rid of what traumatized his mind and body. That is why, if it is to make a general comment, Muslimized Armenian characters have an ambivalent position. On the one side, their testimonies are based on a perception that 1915 took place as a factual incident. On the other side, they go through a trauma in their inner world and their trauma emerges through their Christian identity.

Here, it must be noted that the problem in the testimony and mourning of Muslimized Armenian characters cannot be only associated with the problems of

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<sup>50</sup> “hestiyê fila”

<sup>51</sup> Adnan Çelik and Ergin Öpengin’s note: “The word is derived from *zêde* “extra, surplus” and the nominalization suffix *-ga*. It is meant to indicate an additional and unwanted person in the household.”

Kurdish texts we analyze. It is all about a factual affair which means Muslimized Armenians really survived and they had their testimonies after a long silence period. And it mostly reflects the factual or historical sides of texts rather than its fictional sides because the writers build their stories mostly on real history.

Additionally, the Armenian characters who protect their Christian and Armenian identity are not completely in a mourning process. And this depends totally on being saved by Kurdish *aghas* or *meles* and such kind of process prohibits a potential mourning of Armenian characters. For example, Şemun and his family in *Ay Dayê* save their lives during massacre and Şemun says: “We have such a chance that we live together with Kurds and that Osman agha is the owner of this field”<sup>52</sup> (Zana, 2005: 33) and they want to celebrate that being saved by Osman agha’s tribe (61-62). Again, an Armenian character Antranik who protected his identity uses these words: “Let me say one more thing; most of the Kurds saved us during 1915”<sup>53</sup> (Güven, 2011: 129). This statement is confirmed by Kêvo’s aunt: “it is true that non-Muslims were mostly killed, but let you know that there would be no non-Muslims in this town if Muslims had not protected us”<sup>54</sup> (p. 58). All of these quotations explain that such steps protected Armenian identity and possible mourning. In other words, Kurds are the subjects with whom Armenian characters identified themselves. Moreover, testimonies of those characters refer to a special debt to Kurds which enabled Armenians to stop mourning.

Another important side of the texts is about the testimonies of Kurdish characters. To take into account the relation between perpetrator and the victim, the testimony of Kurdish characters can be read as admission. On the other hand, it is generally obvious that the admissions emerge through Muslim identity but not Kurdish identity. In other words, as we stated above, Kurds are who saved Armenians from massacre, but Muslims or local powers are the perpetrators who become the main topic of admission.<sup>55</sup> Mele Musa in *Zûra*, Heci Ehmed who supports the State in *Varjabed*, Evdilkerim Agha in *Kortika Filehan*, Shakyk al-

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<sup>52</sup> “Lê şansê me heye ku em û gelên Kurd tevî hev in û bi hevdu ra dijîn û şansê me yî herî mezin jî; yekî fena Osmanê Quto meznatiya eşîreta Hilaliya û vê mintiqê dîke.”

<sup>53</sup> “Ha ez tiştêkî dinê jî bivêjim, dema 1915 an de pîr Kurda em hefidandin”

<sup>54</sup> “Rast e fileh pîr hatin kuştin lê tu baş zanibe, ger misilmanan em neparastina, niha wê li navçeyê fileh tune bûna.”

<sup>55</sup> Here I must note that this argument is not totally valid for every Muslim character in the texts. Some *meles* disagree with the ferman of the Empire and give a fatwa not to kill Armenians. Mele Mihemed in *Ay Dayê*, Şêx Mihemedê Dûderî in short story *Zûra*, Mele Îskender in *Guhar* are the examples.

İslam's fatwa in *Ay Dayê* and Mekrus's words during his dialog with Behram show Islam and local powers as initial responsible and guilty who collaborate with the State.

In the short story *Zûra*, a religious character Mele Mûsa calls out to Muslims: "You know that one of the conditions of Islam is to go to Hajj (...) If one of you kill one non-Muslim, seven doors of heaven will open for you"<sup>56</sup> (Dilşa, 2014: 101). Here we must note that Mele Musa is a character who escaped from the military service and was put into jail. He is released under the condition of killing Armenians. The same dialogue emerges in *Ay Dayê* too and a religiously effective man defends the mass killing of non-Muslims (Zana, 2005: 10). As we stated above, the reality side of *Ay Dayê* constructs the Islamic identity as the main perpetrator. However, the local power Osman Agha is the savior who protects the Armenians and Chaldeans by opposing some local religious leaders. In *Kortika Filehan*, during a dialogue between Evdikerim agha and a state officer, it is stated that killing of Armenians is *halal* and that *meles* confirm that (Devîren, 2013: 40-41). Through that dialogue, the relations among feudal powers, religious leaders and the State are given. In *Kortika Filehan*, that process starts as far as Evdikerim Agha is assigned as the head of thirteen villages. He takes the power and supports the killing of Armenians as well as Matyous's mother and beloved. In *Varjabed*, it is stated that the state misused religion by a Kurdish agha while he negotiates with other feudal powers (Jîyan, 2010: 16). In *Gotinên Gunehkar* the main reason for mass massacre is shown as Islam and pillage (Metê, 2013: 25). In another text *Bavfileh*, it is narrated that Kurds were misused against Armenians by the state during deportation. Consequently, it can be argued that the testimonies of non-Armenians are the signs of admission which show the State as the main perpetrator who misused Islam. Kurdish identity is mostly shown as savior who tries to repress the mourning of the remnants. This is totally about the intention of the writers who at the same time aim to protect Kurdish identity from the responsibility of 1915.

In the second subchapter, I tried to interrogate the belated re-appearance<sup>57</sup> of incomplete mourning and testimony. Although there are some characters in

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<sup>56</sup> "Hûn dizanin ku çûyîna hecê şertekî îslamê ye (...) her kî ku yekî Fileh bikuje, wê heft derên cinetê li ber wî vebin".

<sup>57</sup> The term "the belated re-appearance of traumatic memories" belongs to Miriam Carolin Raethel. In her thesis "Witnessing from a Distance: Postwar Literary Representations of the Holocaust" Raethel searches for the German Literature examples which focus on Holocaust.

melancholy or trauma in the texts such as *Bayfileh*, *Pêşengeha Sûretan*, *Varjabed* or *Guhar*, the fact that these characters are Muslimized Armenians and being saved by Kurds make their mourning and testimonies as defective and incomplete. These characters have repressed their Armenian identity and, actually, they survive through another gained identity. In other words, the identity is mutated. Nevertheless, the short story *Maria* written by Mehmet Dicle is different from other texts because Maria is a third generation Armenian character.

Moreover, the testimony of Kurds can be read as confession because they find excuse on how the State misused Islamic side of Kurds. This fact has a coherency with the factual side of the stories based on the historical background I mentioned in chapter I. As I show in the first chapter, the historians and researchers also have political attitudes on protecting the Kurdish identity from ethical responsibility of 1915. However, the debates on the origins of Kurdish nationalism are shaped over how Kurds or Kurdish elites related with the state. It must not be forgotten that Islamic identity has a strong effect on that kind of relation. According to Hamit Bozarslan:

For the vast majority of the Kurds, ‘Kurdishness’ was in fact another way of expressing their Muslim and Ottoman affiliations. For centuries, and particularly during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, being a Kurd meant being a Muslim, by contrast with a non-Muslim, particularly Armenian-and to a lesser extent, Assyrian (Bozarslan, 2003: 171).

Bozarslan states this argument because he claims that some of the Kurdish elites were defending a Kurdish state while others were opposing it by building close relations with the state and identifying themselves as Muslim (Bozarslan, 2003: 170). For example Kemal Mazhar Ahmed argues that the old Hamidian Cavalry members who attended the massacres should be perceived as the state soldiers rather than Kurd. Therefore, their behaviours should not be understood in a way that Kurds generally participated in the massacres (Ahmed, 1996: 246). Based on those views, it is possible to argue that the formation of Kurdish identity was fragmentally interrupted in different times. The priority of Islamic identity to Kurdish one led Kurds to approach Armenians with respect to the state demands. Furthermore, this position of Kurds was provoked by Turkish bureaucrats. What Kurdish authors try to do is to write on Armenians and 1915 massacres based on these statements. In other words, Kurdish writers agree with the notion that Kurdish identity was not

completely constructed because Islamic identity led them to build a kind of relation with the state. In other words, Kurdish identity is also mutated from 1915 to 1990s.

So, what can we deduce from all the arguments I mentioned above? What is the meaning of the factual attempt of stories and the situation in which mourning emerges through literature? Why did Kurds attempted to a series of admission after nearly 90 years? Why does the violence on body become the main concept rather than mourning and trauma? Why cannot we imagine the Catastrophe without blood in these texts? In the third subchapter I will try to search for answers for these questions.

### **3.4. The Borders of Penance, Price and Confrontation**

"I never appear as judge"; "I do not have the  
authmity to grant pardon .... I am without authority"  
(Levi, 1989 :77, 236)

In his famous work *The Remnants of Auschwitz* Agamben problematizes the notion of ethics together with legal order or law for the responsibility. Here, I must state that I mentioned the prohibition of mourning by law or legal order in the second subchapter. In that sense, it is a law which dominates oppressed identities and makes them invisible in public sphere. Agamben considers gesture of assuming responsibility as a juridical behaviour rather than ethical one. According to that statement, "The ultimate end of the juridical regulation is to produce judgment; but judgment aims neither to punish nor to extol, neither to establish justice nor to prove the truth. Judgment is in itself the end and this, it has been said, constitutes its mystery" (Agamben, 1999: 19-22).

Based on these statements, it is essential to ask whether literature could establish justice or not and whether penance, price or confrontation become indispensable titles of that justice or not. I will try to argue the notion of justice by plying between ethics and legal order. Nurdan Gurbilek asks: "is there any justice mechanism which judges Devil but does not the system itself?" (Gurbilek, 2015: 30). Agamben tries to give an answer for that question:

As jurists well know, law is not directed toward the establishment of justice. Nor is it directed toward the verification of truth. Law is solely directed toward judgment, independent of truth and justice. This is shown beyond doubt by the *force of judgement* that even an unjust sentence carries with it. The ultimate aim of law is the production of a *res judicata*, in which the sentence becomes the substitute for the true and the just, being held as true

despite its falsity and injustice. Law finds peace in this hybrid creature, of which it is impossible to say if it is fact or rule; once law has produced its *res judicata*, it cannot go any further” (Agamben, 1999: 18).

In other words, law is a mechanism which protect “the Devil” itself. This mechanism, at the same time, is a mechanism which prohibits mourning. Here we have to interrogate the relation of Kurds with legal order. Institutionalization of a state is the main presupposition of establishing a legal order or law. If Kurds do not have a real and complete legal order, can literature become a utopic court room to ensure justice and to punish the responsible?<sup>58</sup> For this to answer, it is necessary to look at the examples from the texts to be giving answer to this question.

The mechanism of penance occurs by either Armenian or Kurdish characters in the texts. However, it is debatable whether these mechanisms can establish a negotiation and justice or not. In some texts, the possibility of penance emerges by Kurdish characters by opposing to the massacres. In *Kortika Filehan*, Evdilkirim agha’s brother Mehemed who helps Matyous opposes to his brother by saying: “If someone tortures, that torture comes back again, if it does not find you, it will find your children. This time we will be tortured”<sup>59</sup> (Devîren, 2013: 41). In other texts, the penance mechanism is provided through divine justice. A Kurdish character in *Guhar* says: “God does not forgive their action”<sup>60</sup> (Güven, 2011: 57). The Kurdish character tries to ensure justice by transferring penance mechanism to God. Mele Mihemed in *Ay Dayê*, Şêx Mihemedê Dûderî in *Zûra*, Mele Mihemed in *Pêşengeha Sûretan* argues that killing those non-Muslims is a sin for Allah. Armenian characters also establish a penance mechanism. Mekrus’s mother in *Gotinên Gunehkar* uses Armenian words against that sinful act: “May the one who is supposed to open this door not benefit of it, may a happy and healthy life in brightness not be vouchsafed him/her”<sup>61</sup> (Metê, 2013: 75). Again Matyous in *Kortika Filehan* says “Although everything finished, their torture will not beat the rap after that day”<sup>62</sup> (Devîren, 2013: 58). These texts mostly concentrate on 1915’s itself by confirming this

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<sup>58</sup> The analogy between literary texts and court room belongs to Marc Nichanian. According to Nichanian, texts are like an utopian court room which benefits from testimonies by multiplying them (Nichanian, 2011: 78).

<sup>59</sup> “Mirov zilmê bike rojekê dê ew zilm bê, ji te re bimîne ji zarokên te re namîne, îcar em ê werin li ser qetlê.”

<sup>60</sup> “Xwedê mafê wan nahêle”

<sup>61</sup> “Ayn treski vor tûris pana anitzal ila, godri, or çidesne astutzime kidna” The translation from Armenian to Kurdish belongs to the writer.

<sup>62</sup> “Her tişt qedîya ji vir wê de ev zilma ku wan kirîye, ez bawer im ji wan re jî namîne”

argument: “victims can get their freedom only during the case of having the option for punishment” (Kaptanoğlu, 2009: 36). In a nutshell, Kurdish characters, Muslimized characters and Armenian characters generally demand to establish a penance mechanism by referring to the fate and God. However, in *Kortika Filehan* two men of Evdilkerim agha who collaborates with the state are killed by Matyous and a woman.

There are other texts which establish a bridge between 1915 and 1980 or 1990 when Kurds are exposed to the state torture. These texts can be considered as the texts in which the penance mechanism concretizes. In other words, it is the time to pay price for Kurds. In that sense, one of the basic quotations from the texts which establish a bridge from 1915 to 1980 or 1990 can be “em şîv in, hûn paşîv”<sup>63</sup>. In the texts, *Kortika Filehan* Matyous, in *Bavfileh* Arman, Antranik in *Guhar*, Mele Selîm (Aram) in *Pêşengeha Sûretan* and a saved Armenian woman Borê in *Ay Dayê* uses the same sentence. For that reason, Kurdish characters are tortured in *Ay Dayê* in 1980 and the Armenian character Şemun is also tortured; Aram in *Pêşengeha Sûretan* is tortured together with Kurdish characters in 1990s; and four political Kurdish students who are exposed to the state violence appear in *Bavfileh* during 90s. More obviously, Mele Selîm, Arman and Şemun witness the torture against Kurds in 1980 and 90s. Again, there are some Kurdish characters like Nadyazîn’s father, who were banished in the political atmosphere of 1990s in *Bavfileh*. Here the first half of 90s is important because Kurds were generally exposed to unidentified murders, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial execution during that period.

According to Adnan Çelik and Ergin Öpengin, the quotation “em şîv in, hûn paşîv in” demonstrates a collective memory between Armenians and Kurds (Çelik and Öpengin, 2016). Moreover, it is possible to state that this sentence plies between Armenian characters’ penance mechanism and Kurdish character’s price mechanism in these texts. In other words, “em şîv in, hûn paşîv” refers to two separate periods in which Kurds and Armenians try to create a common justice mechanism. The result of “em şîv in, hûn paşîv” can be seen in *Bavfileh*. In a communication with Muslimized Hedla a Kurdish soldier talks about the torture of the state on Kurds. And Hedla responds as: “You also tortured as seventy years ago”<sup>64</sup> (Tilermenî, 2009: 178).

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<sup>63</sup> “We are supper, you are after supper.” The sentence is said by Armenian characters to mean “we have been tortured, and you will be tortured after us”.

<sup>64</sup> “We jî berî heftî salî heman zilm li me kir”

Consequently, the price Kurds paid in 1980 and 1990 can be read as the result of political responsibility of the Catastrophe. Nevertheless, it is disputable whether narrating the massacres against Armenians together with the political pressure on Kurds in 90s is ethical or not.

In the texts, price is not only paid through exposition of political torture of Kurds. In *Gotinên Gunehkar* a Muslimized character Mekrus says: “Knowing the realities is sinfulness”. After knowing everything from Mekrus, Behram begins to feel as sinful. And theology student Behram opposes to all religions after learning everything about 1915 from Mekrus.

In spite of all the arguments above, a very good short story *Maria* by Mehmet Dicle has lots of distinctive features than other texts. The text generally provides an ethical justice in such a critical affair. Memê Bavfileh and Musa are two friends who intend to get gold from treasures, but they need a map which is brought by Mem’s cousin Dikran from France to Diyarbekir. Dikran comes to Diyarbekir with his 12 years old daughter Maria. Mem, Musa, Dikran and other two guys follow Maria to determine the place where they dig. Meanwhile, Maria goes into asleep and wakes up by crying. As far as they dig the place they confront with an old swore and bones of four people. Thereafter, they carry the bones which are put into bags. It is written that Maria sees, at the same time, some spirits and she puts them into bottles. And then she throws those bottles into Dicle River. The five men go to an old Armenian place in which homes, church and the graves are still damaged. They dig four places to bury those bones. After burying them, gong sound arises from a church for four times through blowing wind and Musa unconsciously begins to cry. Musa gets ill the next day and decides not to search for treasure anymore. Dikran has left a letter which tells all the truth to him. Dikran apologizes from Musa for convincing him. He mentions about the dreams of Maria which continued for three years. She was dreaming the old village of Dikran’s family which interrupts her sleep. And Dikran promises to send a map to Musa to find a treasure in which Musa can gain some golden enough for his dreams and the story ends. What makes this short story different from other texts is to take the Catastrophe as a fiction by having no political anxieties. There are two characters Dikran and his daughter Maria who have protected their Armenian identities. The main character Musa pays no political price, but he goes into an ethical interrogation and leaves his old habits. Most importantly, what enables Musa to think like that is to confront with the reality of 1915 on a

graveyard but not a political repression on Kurds. In that sense, the short story *Maria* establishes an ethical justice to a great extent.

If it is to make a general comment on the texts, I want to argue that confrontation is tried to be ensured by the notion of penance and price in those texts.<sup>65</sup> The political atmosphere in 1980 and 1990 and the torture which Kurdish characters were exposed to in this atmosphere lead them to establish an analogy between 1915 and post-1980. On the other hand, for the reason I stated in the first and the second subchapters, the presentation of an ethical confrontation with 1915 is not that much possible. It can be seen that the main attempt of Kurdish writers is to discover and to make visible the Catastrophe through literature. However, it is disputable whether Kurdish writers successfully could do that or not. Even if they can achieve that historically, they cannot do the same literally. And it is not suitable for the narration of the Catastrophe through literature.

So, how can we connect all these three points on the texts stated above? The Kurdish writers inculcate the some *aghas*, *meles* and Muslim identity for the massacres. *Aghas* and *meles* are not punished and are remained as a camouflage which protects Kurdish identity from being the actor of the incidents. This is all about the statement which Kurdishness was another way of expressing their Muslim and Ottoman affiliations as I stated above. However, it is Kurdish identity which is punished at the end of the texts because Kurdish identity formation was redefined, completed and socialized to a great extent. This is mostly valid for the texts which focus on 1980 and 90s too. Another identical problem is about the characteristics of Armenian characters. They have been Muslimized and through that identity they have to oppress what they survived. If literature is a courtroom, as Nichanian says, let us ask these questions: who is the perpetrator? Who is the victim? And who is punished? The texts enable us to ask these questions because they were mostly written as a fact rather than fiction. By referring to the first chapter, these writers merely rewrite the constructed history. A real confrontation nearly becomes impossible. The *aghas* and *sheikhs* do not confront what they did and they are not punished, but all of them are fulfilled by Kurdish identity. Such an attempt is another

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<sup>65</sup> Nonetheless, there are oral stories about the doom of perpetrators after 1915: those whose works go bad, perished, get in trouble and expose to divine justice. The examples can be seen in the *Yüzyıllık Ah! Toplumsal Hafızanın İzinde 1915 Diyarbakır* (173-184).

way of contribution to the formation of Kurdish identity and its protection. It must not be an overinterpretation while we read the texts based on the writers' intention.

To conclude this chapter, the texts which directly narrate 1915 try to ensure penance mechanism through the curse of Armenian characters and taking revenge of massacred Armenians. On the other side, the specters of 1915 emerge within the political context of Kurdish characters in special years 1980 and 1990. Kurdish writers attempt to ensure historical injustice between Kurds and Armenians through literature by reversing injustice into a justice. However, while doing that, Kurdish writers apply to factual side of history in those texts. This is the technical side of the texts. On the other side, Kurdish authors fictionalize the responsibility of Kurds by taking the Muslim identity of Kurds to forefront. Kurdish writers likely to say "yes, Armenians were killed, but through Muslim identity. It is Kurdish identity who saved Armenians from massacre. And the state which misused Muslim identity of Kurds has been still torturing Kurds too." In other words, Kurdish writers take a political position based on the violence started just after 1923 by building and protecting Kurdish identity. This point is rather critical for two reasons: firstly, Kurdish identity is also assumed to be a victim of the state. The writers create an analogy between Kurdish and Armenian characters throughout 80s and 90s. In this way, Kurdish identity is tried to be deprived of the responsibility of 1915. Secondly, it refers to a diachronic identity between the victim and perpetrator. The identity of perpetrator takes shape as it touches the identity of the victim. In that sense, it is possible to see that Kurdish characters face-off themselves with respect to the responsibility of 1915. Nevertheless, the ambivalence of Kurdish identity creates a predicament about the position of Kurdish characters against Armenian characters. This is mostly caused by carrying two different identities: Kurdish or Islamic identities which may be interpreted as a victim or a perpetrator.

In that sense, the ethical responsibility on the Catastrophe is assigned to another identity through the contribution of history. This aim is mostly caused by what David Yeşilmen says as mentioned in the introduction: "Those writers approached and narrated the stories from the point of today's view." That view totally refers to the political attitude towards that affair. Such attitude of the authors makes the mourning possible for the authors themselves but not the characters. As a result of this fact, Kurdish characters pay price through their political identity. In other words, that price stems from a political attitude, but not from ethical

responsibility against Armenian characters. And the characteristics of that price do not provide the readers with any ethical justice, but a kind of political justice. And this is totally about the late development of Kurdish literature as I tried to mention in the second chapter. The obstacles that Kurdish literature confronted can be considered as a continuum of the historical background I gave in the first chapter. Actually, that continuum is another concrete version of “em şîv in, hûn paşîv in” quotation given in the texts. Consequently, the main argument of this thesis is that as far as an attempt for taking responsibility appeared in the texts, the Kurdish writers cannot substantially establish neither ethical nor juridical justice. This argument is mostly based on the identification of the authors with the identity of perpetrator instead of the victim. The punishment process works for Kurdish characters only to confront with the Catastrophe itself. That is why Kurdish characters’ confrontation with 1915 is not too much possible in those texts with respect to their Kurdish identity.

## CONCLUSION

The fact that memory appeared again after a long period must be a usual result of silence caused by trauma. To prohibit the visibility of mourning in public sphere, undoubtedly, prohibits the partnership in pain and creates a kind of subalternity. As I stated in the introduction, Turkish state has always reminded its victimized side for the tragic events in the history and ignored the pain of others. Additionally, what makes a disaster more terrible is to bury the identity of victim. Victim who oppressed her/his identity becomes someone else who carries trauma only personally. Victim who oppressed her/his suffered identity loses the memory. And to me, what this identity narrates is no longer a testimony but merely a personal experience because impossibility of testimony minimized itself into a personal experience.

The belated re-appearance of traumatic memories has become one of the main work fields after 2000. In other words, Kurdish literature is not the only field which faced the reality on traumatic, testimony and memorial sides of the Catastrophe. “Particularly since the year 2003, narratives that concern themselves with the portrayal of German civilian suffering during World War II have made a sudden and almost explosive appearance in the public arena in Germany” (Raethel, 2010: 74). In that sense, we have to approach those examples by take global dynamics into consideration. In global sense, bans over mourning which prolonged for decades by the States made all the experience and testimonies of the victims deficient. That is why, Nazile Kalaycı argues that “nevertheless, the mourning which is prohibited, and the increase in such mourning in the present led to a narration crisis” (Kalaycı, 2015). Additionally, as stated in the introduction, the pluralist and representative democracy, good or bad, has had an influence over the rights of minorities. Through that way, their memory has begun to be shared or remembered.

The main aim of this thesis was to show that Kurdish literature has been in an effort to enable an ethical justice through narratives, but it became, to a great extent, unsuccessful for the reasons I mentioned. Before summarizing the arguments, we have to look at what Nichanian says. According to him, “behind every action for peace, the prohibition of mourning (or the manipulation of mourning or usurping mourning) is hidden” (Nichanian, 2011: 183). How can we relate the prohibition of

mourning with these Kurdish texts? Is it all about the mechanism of the state or is it the result of the fact Kurds also were dominated by that state? Nichanian makes it clear through what we argued in this thesis: “whether there is a demand to be forgiven or not, the globalization of admission, regret and to reconsider them (...) may hide perverted easiness, bluffs and intrigues” (Nichanian, 2011: 211). The demand for forgiveness, on the other side, may be possible to convert the relation between perpetrator and victim. Based on the notion of Primo Levi, such kind of convert can be considered as *grey zone* within context of admission and forgiving. However, if most of the Armenians were Muslimized, for whom the justice would be established or who would be apologized? As Orhan Koçak says in his critic on Akif Kurtuluş’s novel *Ukde*, “the main, indirect addressee does not exist; this absence makes nonsense the apology” (Koçak, 2015: 104).

During the thesis, first of all, I argued that the Kurdish writers took the Catastrophe as a historical experience experienced by Kurds and Armenians. Based on this experience or fact, it has been seen that traumatic side of memory is suspended in some texts which took the affair as a historical text rather than literature. The writers approached the narratives and the stories of victims or remnants as a monument, rather than document. As a result, proving the stories as a truth became the main purpose of some texts. Such kind of intention does not serve to Kurdish texts for ensuring justice between Armenian and Kurdish characters literally. Moreover, other texts have suspended the (incomplete) testimonies (or personal experiences) of remnants by raising the overdose scenes of brutality. The increase in narrating the brutal scenes through narrator and characters is an attempt to prove the truth of the stories. In other words, those writers took the affair of 1915 as a historical incident rather than fiction. That is why, such scenes do not ensure a possible justice or peace between Kurdish and Armenian characters. Furthermore, the brutality in those scenes does not work more than re-killing the victims.

The second path to the main argument is about demonstrating the testimonies of Muslimized Armenians and Kurdish characters. The testimonies of Muslimized Armenians can be read as personal experience or memorial because after the Catastrophe they oppressed their identity, they went through trauma and they were got silenced. Here, the inherent impossibility of testimony must be stressed again. Testimony was possible through being a victim. Moreover, because Muslimized Armenians had been identified with another acquired identity, their memories begin

to carry deficient properties. In other words, they are not Armenian characters anymore. If so, to what extent can we argue that those texts establish a justice and peace mechanism between Kurdish and Armenian characters? On the other side, the Kurdish characters who expressed what they saw can be read as an admission. However, their admission is mostly based on Muslim identity rather than a Kurdish identity. According to the admissions of Kurdish characters, the State used Kurds in the name of Islam and they cooperated with the state during the massacres. This is totally about the intention of authors who aim to exclude the perpetrators from Kurdish identity.

In the third phase of the thesis, I tried to generalize all punishment, price and confrontation by thinking the first two subchapters. While thinking all historical relations we looked at in the first chapter, Kurdish writers attempted to overcome the historical trauma through literary justice by establishing punishment and price mechanism. However, the price mechanism occurs only within the Kurdish political context in the texts which narrates the process between 1915 and 1990s. Kurdish characters pay price through their political identity. The price is caused by the political attitude of Kurds against the state, but not by the ethical responsibility for Armenian characters. As a result, paid price in 1980 and 1990s does not provide Armenian characters with ethical justice. In other words, literature does not have a functional side to build ethical justice between Kurdish and Armenian characters, but the price paid by Kurdish characters in 1980-90s gives rise to a confrontation with 1915 and Armenians. In that sense, the quotation of “em şîv in, hûn paşîv” can be regarded also as a Turkish idiom “su testisi su yolunda kırılır” which means “live by the sword die by the sword”.

If to make a general comment on those texts, Kurdish writers could not be successful, to a great extent, in establishing a justice or peace while they tried to narrate the Catastrophe. In addition to the reasons I stated above, Kurdish writers take a political position by attempting, again to a great extent, to exclude Kurdish identity from the responsibility of 1915. For these writers, the State misused Islamic identity of Kurds and those of two institutions are imagined as the main responsible for 1915. Best-case scenario is to share the responsibility of 1915 between Muslim identity embedded in Kurdish identity and the State itself. This argument is directly related with the last two chapters of this thesis. If we look at the years between 1915 and 2000, the 85 years gap may be explained as nation-building process of Kurds.

After 90s, and especially after 2000s, Kurdish writers literally tried to resume that nation-building and its protection. Kurdish writers' attempt to exclude Kurdish identity from the location of perpetrator and to evaluate the responsible with Islamic identity may be interpreted with the result of 85 years gap. But I have to repeat it again: for this thesis, I solely focused on the texts, but not the historical role of Kurds in 1915.

It must be accepted that as far as Kurdish language gained a limited freedom after 1990, especially after 2000, the literature itself started to narrate such kind of stories, testimonies or memories. The main problem in the most of the texts is all about technical problem. In other words, the narration format of these texts is rather problematic because the relationship between testimonies and literature is imagined as a classical genre. In that sense, the intention of Kurdish writers to ensure justice and peace between Armenians and Kurds is important and valuable, but it is, literally, an incomplete and deficient attempt.

It is rather valuable to write on such a critical affair within the denier construction of historiography. However, sincerity of the narration of these events is based on a perception of some political anxieties about Kurdish identity. The texts we analysed could provide an ethical justice if the authors had not have a political position on the ambivalent characteristics of Kurdish identity. To blame Islamic identity usually serves for historiography as we seen in the first chapter. Ethical justice and peace could be possible if Armenians had remained as Armenians and Kurds had remained as Kurds. The real confrontation could be possible in that way. That is why I showed the short story *Maria* as a good example which carries most of the features I mentioned above.

There may be some incomplete and false information or interpretation in this thesis. Kurds and Armenians have always been the most delicate subject of this geography. Above all, writing a thesis related with both of the communities/nations requires an in-depth investigation to cope with critical points. The texts may remain superficial, but I tried to interpret all the texts based on essential concepts. In the future, I have an intention of analysing the texts with respect to different fields such as memory in cinema or music.

My last words are about the situation of studying on such field. As I stated above, the relation between historical context of Turkey and memory is based on forgetting others' pain. Therefore, I tried to profoundly investigate the reflection of

that memorial conflict in the third chapter again. However, I must state that some academic attempts in or outside of Turkey to abolish the denier and exterminatory mechanism have many risks in terms of the political and social atmosphere of Turkey. Demand for social justice is not found reasonable for the continuity of the state. For example, most of the academics in Turkey were put in jail or disemployed because they signed a “peace petition” as a result of the state attack on Kurdish region in 2015 after the state of emergency in 2016. The secrets everyone knows<sup>66</sup> are still approached as “dangerous”. The nationalist discourse of Turkey does not enable the academics to cover the oppressed realities which clashes with that nationalist discourse. The studies were mostly prohibited or treated “inappropriate”. I hope such attempts for justice and peace in Turkey are not approached in that way, and works on that field are supported for the sake of freedom of speech. Otherwise, what the state prohibits may lead to long-term harms much more.

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<sup>66</sup> The quotation belongs to Mahmut Mutman.

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