

POLITICS AND ART:
THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE KURDISH OPPOSITIONAL MUSIC IN
TURKEY

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Thesis Abstract

Talat Balca Arda, “Politics and Arts: The Transformation of the Kurdish Oppositional Music in Turkey”

This study examines the question concerning the formation of the Kurdish political identity through the works of art and the transformation of “the Kurdish Resistance” in Turkey. To develop answers to these questions I investigated several Kurdish oppositional music groups that are popular in Turkey and worldwide. By focusing on the activities of the MKM (Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi / Mesopotamia Cultural Center) and its members composed of the Kurdish musicians, managers and administrators, I try to show the current dynamics in the formation of the Kurdish resistance through the works of art. At this point, I particularly focus on the transformation of the representation of the Kurdish political movement through music and art by comparing its evolution vis-à-vis the recent liberal approach of the government party the AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi / Justice and Development Party) to the Kurdish question that is popularly called as the “Democratic Opening Policy” or shortly “the Democratic Opening” which is firstly declared to public as Kurdish Opening in mid 2009. I concluded that the Kurdish movement together with its cultural institutions do not welcome the Democratic Opening Policies by claiming that the AKP government misrepresents the Kurdish problem, reduces it to a problem of cultural minority whereas the Kurdish question is a political question that asks for a constitutional transformation to satisfy the demands of the Kurds concerning political autonomy and self government as well as official education in the Kurdish language. In my interviews that I conducted with the artists and other members of the Kurdish cultural institutions they express these critiques through describing the new approach of the AKP to the Kurdish question as an “insincere” move. Throughout the research I tried to analyze how the criteria and definition of being and claiming an oppositional Kurdish artist has changed in time according to the transformation of the political sphere in Turkey and in the world. At this point, I also tried to describe the formation of the Kurdish national imaginary through the art.

Tez Özeti

Talat Balca Arda, “Siyaset ve Sanat: Türkiye’de Kürt Muhalif Müziğinin Dönüşümü”

Bu çalışma, Kürt siyasi kimliğinin sanat ürünleri aracılığıyla kuruluşuna ve Türkiye’deki “Kürt muhalefeti”nin dönüşümüne dair soruları incelemektedir. Bu konudaki sorulara cevap bulmak amacıyla Türkiye ve dünyadaki çeşitli Kürt muhalif müzik gruplarını inceledim. Özellikle MKM (Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi) üzerinde durarak üyeleri olan birçok müzisyen ve idari çalışan ile görüşüm ve Kürt muhalefetinin sanat çalışmaları aracılığıyla gelişim dinamiklerini göstermeye çalıştım. Özellikle bu noktada, Kürt muhalefetinin sanat ve müzikteki temsiline, AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) hükümetinin liberal politikaları ve 2009 ortasında önce Kürt Açılımı olarak açıklanan Demokratik Açılım süreci karşısındaki evrimini inceledim. Kürt muhalefeti ve kültürel kurumlarının Demokratik Açılım politikalarını benimsememe gerekçesinin AKP hükümetinin Kürt meselesini bir kültürel probleme indirgeyip azınlık siyaseti haline getirmesi olduğu sonucuna vardım. Halbuki, Kürtler’e göre bu sorun aynı zamanda siyasi bir mesele olup Kürtlerin siyasi özerkliğini ve kendi kendilerini yönetme imkânını sağlayacak bir anayasal değişimi ve Kürtçe’nin resmi eğitim dili olmasına dair talepleri bünyesinde barındırıyor. Birçok sanatçı ile yaptığım görüşmelerimde, AKP hükümetinin Kürtlere yaklaşımı “samimiyetsiz” olarak değerlendirildi. Bu araştırma boyunca, Kürt muhalif sanatçısı olma iddiasına dair tanım ve ölçütlerin Türkiye ve dünyadaki siyasi değişimler doğrultusunda nasıl dönüştüğünü analiz etmeye çalıştım. Bu anlamda, Kürt ulusal tahayyülünün sanat aracılığıyla nasıl kurulduğunu tanımlamaya çalıştım.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Main Concern and the Theoretical Background of the Study

The 1980 military coup harshly suppressed the Turkish left and introduced the conservative Turkish-Islamic synthesis as the new norm of the Turkish identity. As a response to the intense state violence and oppression in the early 80s the armed conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state has begun. During the armed clash in Turkey's southeastern provinces that started in 1984, the Kurds were excluded by successive Turkish governments as "security threats", as the alleged collaborators of the armed Kurdish militia, the PKK that fought against the Turkish army for the political recognition of the Kurds. As a result, in addition to the deaths and devastations in the region one to three millions Kurds were forced to evacuate their villages in the southeast and migrate to the urban areas of Turkey during the 1990s. However, the election of the AKP in 2002 and the consequent flourishing of liberal, Islamic and pro-Kurdish NGOs in Turkey have changed radically the political approach towards the Kurdish question. While AKP's coming to power gave rise to the Turkish official policy of seeking integration to the European Union, it also coincided with the pro-Kurdish Political Party's (HADEP at that time) victory in the local elections in southeastern and eastern Turkey, where the Kurds won for the first time in 37 municipalities including major cities such as Diyarbakir, Batman, Siirt and Van. These conditions allowed the multiplication of the demands of Kurdish people as well as considerations of the problem by the Turkish intellectuals and NGOs. As a result, from the 2000s on, in Turkey the historical primacy of security of the

sovereign state has been challenged by the liberals and Islamists who put forward the priority of the security and well-being of all populations, including the Kurds. Consequently, even though Kurds continued to be targets of violence by the Turkish state, the discursive space has changed dramatically disclosing new and multiple forms of politics within the liberal democratic sphere.

In this historical and political context, in order to answer my principal question concerning the historical formation of the Kurdish political identity and the transformation of the “Kurdish Resistance” in Turkey I investigated several Kurdish oppositional music groups that are popular in Turkey and worldwide. By focusing on the activities of the MKM (Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi / Mesopotamia Cultural Center) and its members composed of the Kurdish musicians, managers and administrators, I try to show the current dynamics in the formation of the Kurdish resistance through the works of art. At this point, I particularly focus on the transformation of the representation of the Kurdish political movement through music and art by comparing its evolution vis-à-vis the recent liberal approach of the government party the AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi / Justice and Development Party) to the Kurdish question that is popularly called as the “Democratic Opening Policy” or shortly “the Democratic Opening” which is firstly declared to public as Kurdish Opening in mid 2009.

Kurdish musical performances are widely perceived as a popular presentation of the Kurdish political and ideological resistance in the public sphere: Particularly the MKM presents Kurdish music as the historical memory of the Kurdish identity, and in the current age of politics of “difference”, the MKM effectively uses the works of music as a means to support its political claim concerning the presence and difference of the Kurdish identity. Consequently, today the Kurdish musical works

play a significant role in criticizing the official discourse of the Turkish state that considers all of the citizens of Turkey as a homogenous group, namely as Turks.

However, in the course of integration to the European Union strengthened by the approval of Turkey's candidate status to the EU at the European Council's Helsinki meeting in December 1999, the liberal approach of the AKP government, entitled the Democratic Opening Policy whose most concrete implication was the introduction of the TRT6 -the first official TV channel that broadcasts in Kurdish, made the question concerning the recognition of the Kurdish identity more complicated. Through the Democratic Opening Policies the AKP government promises that the right to give children Kurdish names, to name streets and places in Kurdish and to do academic research on the Kurdish language and literature will be guaranteed. Thus, in September of 2009 the institute of "Living Languages" in Mardin Artuklu University was formed with YÖK's (Institute of Graduate Education in Turkey) permission and the institute was designed to accept students in September of 2010 (Star Gazetesi, September 11 2009). Moreover, the ban on the use of the Kurdish language in jails was abolished in 2009 (Habervaktim.com, 12 May 2009). Recently, the ban on making political propaganda in Kurdish was abolished in 2010 (Dunyabulteni.net, 8 April 2010).

The formation of the TRT6 in January of 2009 marks a significant transformation in the Turkish state's approach to the Kurdish question, since it seems now that the presence of the Kurdish cultural difference is recognized and managed by a government for the first time in the history of Turkey. However, the Kurdish political movement, composed of the armed militia of the PKK (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan / Kurdistan Workers Party), the political party BDP (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi / Peace and Democracy Party) as well as the cultural organization the MKM

do not consider the recent liberal approach of the AKP government adequate and satisfactory. On the contrary, representatives of the Kurdish political movement including musicians and artists from the MKM claim that the Democratic Opening Policy of the AKP government is not only inadequate but also it aims to delegitimize the presence of the Kurdish political movement as the true representative of the Kurdish people. In contrast to the AKP government's liberal solution, members of the Kurdish political movement asked for the recognition of the Kurdish political and cultural rights constitutionally, for the political autonomy of the Kurds in the southeast of Turkey and the right to official education in Kurdish in public schools in order to solve the Kurdish question permanently.

To analyze the reflections of this political conflict between the AKP government and the Kurdish political movement in the sphere of art and music, I conducted research on performers of the Kurdish oppositional music by asking the following questions: Why and at what point does the liberal approach of the AKP government to the Kurdish question is not considered adequate and satisfactory by the Kurdish political movement? What are the expectations and requirements of the MKM to identify works of Kurdish musicians as critical and oppositional? What makes the musical works "oppositional art" and part of the Kurdish resistance according to the musical authorities in the MKM? How do the members of the MKM define and describe the Kurdish music? What are the different responses of the contemporary Kurdish musicians to the AKP's new liberal approach in terms of the recognition of the Kurdish cultural difference? Do they agree or disagree with the government? What are the major expectations from and critiques of the AKP government's Democratic Opening Policies?

Thus, in this research I explored the effects of the transformation of the Kurdish question and the new sides of conflict between the AKP government and the Kurdish movement after the governmental attempts to recognize the cultural aspects of the Kurdish identity. Moreover, I questioned the possibilities for an agreement and reconciliation in the Kurdish issue after the reformation of the political sphere by the liberal policies of the AKP in the course of Turkey's integration to the European Union. In addition to these major questions, in this study I also explored some other interesting issues that came up during my research and my interviews with the Kurdish musicians while I discovered my problematic status of Turkish researcher on Kurdish question since the high rate of ethnicizing this political debate and its partners on Kurdish question in Turkey. This ethno-nationalist approach of the reconciliation between the Turkish government and the Kurdish people that I stated in the next part of this chapter can also be the reason why this process can end up with a deadlock since the ethno-nationalist approach limits "the friendship" of an ideal Derridian democracy to a so-called natural tie of birth that can never be eliminated.

In the chapter entitled "The modernization process of the Kurdish music", the interpretation of the modern Kurdish music is examined through its similarity to the modernization of the Turkish music in the nation-building process that was based on the Western-Eastern synthesis and through the mimetic reflexivity of art on its audience. The chapter on the possibility of the "international recognition" of the Kurdish music explored the opinions and expectations concerning the recognition of the Kurdish music worldwide and the meaning of internationality and universality of the music for its performers. The section about the "quest for sincerity" ("samimiyet") by the MKM members who blame other Kurdish artists of supporting

the AKP and thus of being “insincere” (“samimiyetsiz”) analyzed the severe critiques of the Democratic Opening Policy by the Kurdish political movement and investigated MKM’s own critical definitions and descriptions of the Kurdish culture, music and art. Moreover, I also dealt with the question concerning the different cultures and subaltern existences within the Kurdish political and cultural movement and, I tried to question whether diversity within the Kurdish political movement is possible. At this point I tried to understand whether the Kurdish movement is open to accept diversity within itself while struggling for the recognition of the Kurdish cultural difference within Turkey. In brief, throughout the research I investigated possibilities of living together with differences and asked whether reconciliation between the sides of conflict is possible.

At this point, the research also aims to analyze the different levels of interaction between and within the performers of the Kurdish oppositional music after the introduction of the liberal reforms by the AKP government. I particularly focus on this issue in the chapter 4 “the Quest for Sincerity”. Moreover, in the chapter 6 “Differences and Subaltern Groups within the Kurdish Political and Cultural Movement” I try to analyze the manifestations of difference within the Kurdish cultural performances and the ways in which these differences are perceived and evaluated by the cultural authorities of the Kurdish political movement. Following these questions, in the chapter 7 I also study the statements of the Kurdish music performers and leading members of the Kurdish movement on the modernization process of the Kurdish sound where the synthesis of traditional Kurdish musical traits interacts with the Western ones. Thus, this study allows me to analyze the formation of the Kurdish national imaginary and the role of the art and music in the formation of the Kurdish national identity. In the final chapter about

“Internationality” I focus on the relations between the Kurdish oppositional music and the international audience in order to analyze the presumed requirements for the universal recognition. In brief, all of the chapters mentioned above address different levels of identity formations through the Kurdish art performances. In this study I particularly concentrate on the ways in which art manifests itself in the Kurdish nation building process which can be considered a formation of both the counter-hegemony against the hegemony of the Turkish state and also the hegemonical body for the formation of the Kurdish identity. I argue that the contemporary Kurdish oppositional movement presumes, produces and shapes a particular understanding of Kurdish identity through the performance of music and art.

To interpret the results of the research I used Jacques Derrida’s approach to “the politics of friendship” (Derrida, 1997) as my main theoretical source. In his book with the same name Derrida analyzed various connotations of friendship while he introduces a certain kind of democracy as the model of friendship whose equality is based on fraternity. The possibility of the fraternal friendship after the long lasting conflict between the Kurds and the Turkish state and the limits of the “Democratic Opening” in terms of introducing a fraternal friendship is one of the questions of my study. Derrida defines the ideal of democracy on the basis of friendship in the sense that the friend is considered fraternal even s/he is absolutely unfamiliar to and radically different from oneself. Consequently, friends should not be limited to the equal, the intimate and the same but friends should also include the radically different others. The analysis of the subaltern existences within the political movement of the Kurdish resistance is therefore as important as the analysis of the conflict between the Kurdish movement and the Turkish state. I explored some

aspects of subalternity such as the presence of women, gays and ethnic minorities (such as Zazas) in the MKM.

In addition to these issues, I also explored Theodore Adorno's views about the musical context and its relation to the resistance while I interpret the statements of my interviewees. Adorno describes art as a tool to imagine a better reality and a better world through a direct confrontation and negation of the present actual world that is in fact a dystopia for Adorno. For Adorno, this ability of the music derives from its quality of being a language without being a conventional system of signs so that the music can reveal what is beyond the existing systems (Adorno, 1997 & 1999). I followed Adorno's arguments in the chapter concerning the "Internationality" where I discussed how the Kurdish music seeks to be universal and yet remain oppositional. In the case of universality, Immanuel Kant's aesthetic judgment comes into play when he defines "the beautiful" as something that cannot be described through concepts but enjoyed universally (Kant, 1987). At this point, I tried to analyze the relation between the Kurdish music that seeks to be universal and contains political messages and the Kantian aesthetic judgment that presupposes enjoyment without conceptual perception as the requirement of being universal.

Moreover, Adorno's writings on the role of "bars and cafes" (Adorno, 2002) helped me to study various arguments concerning the places where the Kurdish music performances take place and where the Kurdish musicians also earn their income. Furthermore, Roland Barthes' definitions concerning "the levels of listening" (Barthes, 1991) provided me with some explanations while I interpret the reasons and effects of the ban on the Kurdish music as well as while I question why several Kurdish musicians disfavor singing in Turkish. I discuss this issue in the section concerning "the ethnic plurality".

Through such analysis of the statements of my interviewees I tried to examine the current situation of the Kurdish music and to understand what Kurdish music's current situation offers us to learn about the Kurdish resistance and the formation of the Kurdish identity through the interactions with different audiences, and the new stage of the conflict between the Kurdish movement and the Turkish state in a new period when demands for peace and reconciliation are at stake. On the other hand, it can be said that this research on the formation of the Kurdish identity requires a more comparative approach based on the other examples throughout the world to define the general and specific characteristics of the relation of resistance and art to the identity formation. I hope to continue and look more closely to this issue and develop a more comparative perspective in my doctoral project.

Research Methodology, Location and Schedule

In the course of Democratic Opening, serious critiques by the Kurdish artists appeared in the media. Most of them were the declarations of the MKM's members and I decided that the MKM was an ideal site for me to find answers to my research questions concerning the perception and responses of the Kurdish musicians and artists to the AKP's new liberal approach to the Kurdish question. Furthermore, the practice of the ethnic music with western sound and their popular collaboration for oppositional music in the MKM attracted my interest since many other leftist art centers miss this art perspective. The MKM and its environment allowed me to study the effects of these novel mechanisms of governance on the everyday lives of the Kurdish artists as well as the ways in which the Kurdish oppositional groups negotiate and resist to the liberal approach of the government. I collected data using

in-depth interviews as well as participant observation in art performances sometimes just as a listener and for other times I recorded their performances and took pictures for the MKM's archive just as an insider since MKM's members asked me to do that. For the first run of my in-depth interviews, I asked friends of friends of mine having close relationship to the Kurdish movement to present me to the leading staff of the MKM. I was very careful for the first interviews in my naming or pronunciation of some sensitive terms such as the Kurdish pronunciation of the MKM and not the Turkish one. I can say that in my third interview, the past interviewees as well as the staff members started to salute me when I came to the MKM's cafeteria for tea even after some time; they even came to chat with me if I was alone at a table and they enjoyed teaching me Kurdish words and the way they are written. Sometimes, they spoke in Kurdish among them if they did not want me to understand what they were talking but I assume that after some time they started to tell these chats in joking ways to me even if they did not want it to be recorded. I think that they regard me as an outsider but also as a potential insider in time and even they began to ask me if I could help for English translations when some foreign guests visited the MKM. From January 2010 to the June of 2010 I conducted interviews with 10 members of the MKM composed of managerial staff and musicians. Between March 25 2010 and April 1 2010, I also conducted 6 interviews with the Kurdish musicians who are connected to the Kurdish political movement yet living in diaspora, namely in Germany and in Belgium. Moreover, I interviewed with 3 famous Kurdish musicians who are independent from the MKM in order to compare their statements with the statements of the musicians directly connected to the Kurdish movement. Besides this, in order to observe the Kurdish audience and

performances during the research period I participated to 5 concerts and one press conference and recorded them to study them further.

The actual start date of my research is December 2008 when the TRT6 started its first test broadcasts as the first official Kurdish TV Channel. At that time, I conducted my very first interview with the members of the MKM about the TRT6 to explore their reactions on the issue. I think that the current period of the “Democratic Opening” introduces a new level in the conflict between the Kurdish movement and the Turkish state, and thus, helps me to understand the new content and limits of the Kurdish resistance. Through participant observation I established connections both with the MKM’s members and Kurdish singers. I visited them during their performances as well as in the MKM’s local office in Taksim, Beyoğlu. These formal and informal conversations helped me understand the ways in which Kurdish musicians perceive and conceptualize their art and the new reconciliation process imposed by the AKP government. Moreover, during my research I followed the pro-Kurdish newspaper “Özgür Gündem” and the pro-Kurdish news agency “ANF (Fırat News Agency)” and analyzed their content in order to examine the opinions and critiques developed by the Kurdish intellectuals, artists and writers about the Democratic Opening process, the introduction of the TRT6 and the participation of some other Kurdish musicians and artists to the TRT6 and the democratic opening process.

To be a Turkish Researcher on the Kurdish Question

During my research, the reason why I was studying the Kurdish music and the cultural policy of the MKM, and why I was interested in the Kurdish issue is highly questioned by my friends from the masters program, by my highschool friends as well as by my family, and usually my interest in the Kurdish question is considered “problematic” since it is known that I am not from Kurdish origin and even I am not a member of a minority group in Turkey. My ethnic origin was also a matter of curiosity and wonder in the case when my interviewees asked about me, and tried to find out an ethnic connection with me in order to prove themselves that I can understand them because I experienced the same suffering and paid the same price for my suppressed ethnic origin. In almost all cases my ethnic origin was investigated so that they can trust in me or they can be proud of me as a Kurdish woman who was educated and conscious enough to state academically or publicly her own national problems in scientific ways. Sometimes, I had to mention that my grandmother was from Sivas, a city known for its high population of Kurdish Alevis. Even though in the beginning of my study I thought that the birth place of my grandmother was irrelevant to my research my interviewees care too much about my connection to the Kurdish ethnic origins. I assume that their care about my ethnicity or their quest for our common ethnic origin stems from the severe critique of the Kurdish resistance by outsiders. Thus, I realized that most of my interviewees believe that only an insider can be trusted in and only her research can be “sincere” (*‘samimi’*) and objective because of the same reason. I remember my participation to one of the “Barış İçin Sanat” (Art for Peace) meetings (a collective body of alternative art performers) together with the MKM’s members. During the meeting

all the participants talked about their minority status while I felt that I was apolitical and even ugly since I had no minority status and no history of severe suppression in ethnical terms in Turkey. Thus, I can be called “a white Turk” if one looks at my so-called ethnically Turkish ancestors, my family’s educational level and middle class status. I also remember a Belgian activist, who is a friend of my father’s old Belgian friends, introducing me to her Kurdish friends in Liege and talked to my “Turkish” ear: “Don’t make me regret for it, don’t harm them”. “Where are you from?” is actually a tricky question since the answer of this question can end up with one’s inclusion or exclusion to the debate.

To be honest, I was firstly interested in art and its potential for displaying the resistance. Moreover, the Kurdish question and its art policy were just well-related cases to explore this issue in a context where the Kurdish issue is a subject that nobody in Turkey can keep himself excluded from. I did not define myself “Turkish” since my graduation from the high school because I think that the ethno-national perceptions of someone’s identity are fictional and stereotypical and not natural. Yet, as I saw during my research ethnic-national origins still matter as a tool of power networks for inclusion, exclusion or otherization even though I preferred to eliminate this ethnical identification for myself. On the other hand, it is true that I have not experienced the pressure of being a Kurd in Turkey and I have grown up surrounded by the Turkish nationalist ideas, but I hope that this does not mean that I cannot feel empathy and I cannot understand what the Kurdish artists want to display in their music. In my personal life, too, I try to imagine the term of friendship in Derrida’s perspective as unlimited and not only based on the sameness just like the way in which I interpreted the results of this research. However, I expect that this research and my interpretation can be criticized based on my so-called “ethnicity”, and

moreover, my interpretations can be even considered as “a denial” of my so-called ethnicity. Both of these critiques would be based on ethno-national perceptions. Yet I think that this ethno-nationalist approach can also be the reason why the reconciliation process between the Turkish and Kurdish camps always ends up with a deadlock since the ethno-nationalist approach limits “the friendship” to a so-called natural tie of birth that can never be eliminated.

Therefore, naturalized ethno-national identities appear as a major obstacle before the peace process since a naturalized understanding of ethnic identities reproduce and maintain conflicting camps as radical others. In brief, I do not think that I have to be a Kurd to investigate the Kurdish music; I am a painter and not a musician but still we can be friends.

CHAPTER 2

THE SHORT HISTORY OF THE KURDISH MUSIC IN TURKEY

In this chapter, I would like to introduce some famous figures of the Kurdish sound in Turkey whom most of whom my interviewees from the Kurdish music performers mentioned several times defining them as the major inspirations of their art. These early performers of the Kurdish music and their history portray the transformation of the meaning of the Kurdish music as well as the development of the relation between the Kurdish art and the Kurdish political movement. All of the information gathered is from some popular and official websites and especially from the sources such as the ANF News Agency (Firat News Agency) that is useful to explore the general views of the important figures of the Kurdish movement.

If one look at the Kurdish music's history in Turkey starting from 1980s, Turgut Özal's amendment for lifting the ban on speaking and singing in Kurdish must be emphasized particularly. This legal arrangement permitted the spread of Kurdish music albums freely whereas before that time Kurdish music albums were sold and distributed secretly. Turgut Özal, the prime minister of the time, declared to the press that "the Kurdish language is now free" after his meeting with the Milli Güvenlik Kurulu (MGK - National Security Council) in 1991. The ban on the Kurdish language introduced by the constitution of 1982 prepared by the military administration that came to power with the coup on 12th September 1980 was lifted with the law number 2932 on 12th April 1991. The press announced the news as from that time on "the Kurdish language is free" (Birgün Newspaper, 4 January 2009).

This was a radical change since during the years that followed the 1980 military coup there had been strict censorship on the use of Kurdish language. The

names of the 2842 of the 3524 villages of Adıyaman, Urfa, Antep, Mardin, Diyarbakır and Siirt were changed because these names were Kurdish. Moreover, in every state institution in the eastern and southeastern province of Turkey, the signboards “speaking in other language than Turkish is banned” were placed. After the coup even former members of the parliament such as Şerafettin Elçi were sentenced to legal punishment because of their open declaration of their Kurdish origin. Some officials of the State Institution of Statistics were sentenced because of the same the reason that they gave place to the Kurdish language in the part of spoken languages. The ban on the Kurdish language became constitutional in 1982 with the article 26 that said “any thought cannot be explained, spread, published in a banned language by law¹” and with the article 42 that said “any language besides Turkish as mother tongue cannot be taught in the institutions of education and courses to the Turkish citizen²”.

Because of the the lack of any constitutional guarantee on using the Kurdish language in the public, Turgut Özal’s amendment in 1991 and later on the emergence of the first official Kurdish TV Channel of Turkey in 2009 did not prevent the court cases and arrests of the Kurdish music performers because of their use of the Kurdish language. For the most part the claim of the public prosecutors is “the encouragement of terrorism” by the Kurdish artist. Recently, the ban on making propaganda in Kurdish was abolished in 2010 and the ban on the use of the Kurdish language in jails was abolished in 2009. However, still no constitutional arrangement was prepared to protect the recent laws that allow speaking Kurdish in jails and making political propaganda in Kurdish.

¹ 1982 Turkish constitutional article 26: “Düşüncelerin açıklanması ve yayılmasında, kanunla yasaklanmış olan herhangi bir dil kullanılamaz.”

² 1982 Turkish constitutional article 26: “Eğitim ve ders kurumlarında Türk vatandaşlarına Türkçe’nin dışında başka bir dil anadil olarak öğretilemez.”

The below-mentioned agents of the Kurdish music primarily belong to this period of severe censorship between the years of 1980-1991. Furthermore, some others performed Kurdish music after the Özal's amendments between the years 1991 and 2000. These early generation of the Kurdish political music are considered as the major inspiration by the current Kurdish artists.

The First Years of the Broadcast in Kurdish: Radio Erivan and the First Famous Figures of the Kurdish Music

Radio Erivan (Radyona Rewane): A branch of this official radio broadcast in Kurdish starting from 1955 in Erivan, Armenia. Radio Erivan is described as the common language, voice and consolation of the Kurdish people even though Radio Baghdad from Iraq and Radio Urmiye from Iran made Kurdish broadcasts since 1939, it is claimed that Radio Erivan is much more popular because it broadcast in the regional accent of the eastern provinces of Turkey and gave place to the music of “bilur” (kaval) and “fig” (mey) (Kurdish folkloric music instruments). It was told that the Radio Erivan was listened in the guest rooms of the villages or in some houses by a wooden radio charged with batteries and, all the listeners knew well about Soviet leaders since their names were repeated frequently in the news presented before the music programs. The Radio Erivan presented the Kurdish broadcast of the dengbej music at 4 pm, generally listened by the youth and at 9 pm, by the old generation. It was stated that Erivan Radio allowed the transfer of the Kurdish music heritage to the younger generation while the ban on the Kurdish music in Turkey persisted and the Turkish translation of their old Kurdish well-known songs were heard in the TRT, the official channel of Turkey (Birgün Newspaper, 6 September 2008).

Fatma Îsa: She is one of the famous female dengbejs of the Radio Erivan. Her singing of the love ballad “De Miho” was the mostly appreciated one for most of her listeners and, and today this song is played as the MMC’s (Kurdish Music Channel) generic music. Fatma Îsa is known for only singing in one of RojTV’s program after her resignation from the radio because of the reason of shyness and her preference for singing in weddings with female relatives. She died in this year, namely in 2010 in Krasnodar in Armenia and buried with a ceremony prepared by the Kurdish Culture Autonomy (Rojaciwan.com, 17 January 2010).

Aram Tigran: Armenian singer of the Kurdish songs, Tigran worked for the Radio Erivan and immigrated to Europe in the 90s. In his 11 albums there are Kurdish (both Kurmanci and Zaza dialects), Arabic, Turkish, Syrian and Greek songs. He sometimes used poems by famous Kurdish poets such as Cegerxwîn or Qedrîcan in his songs. “Mazlum Şêrê Kurdistan e” is one of his songs that the lyrics were written by the Kurdish militia (ANF News Agency, 15 October 2007). In 2005, Kurdish singers composed an album that includes Aram Tigran’s 14 songs. Three of my interviewees, Rotinda, Kawa, Seytixan, participated in this project as singers. Tigran died in Athens in 2009 and was buried in Brussels since his wish about being buried in Diyarbakir was rejected by the Turkish government that claims Tigran is not a Turkish citizen. Osman Baydemir, the mayor of Diyarbakır from the BDP, brought Diyarbakır’s soil to his grave (Hurriyet Newspaper, 15 August 2010).

Mihmed Shexo: Mihmed Shexo was a Kurdish singer from Syria. He managed to sing with his “saz” while singing was considered a sin in the Kurdish culture in Qamishlo (Syria). He went to Lebanon in 1970 to have artistic education and there he set up his musical band, “Serkeftin”. Then he joined the Radio Baghdad in Iraq.

After his first album, “Ay Gewre”, in Syria he sentenced imprisonment for several times. He refused to prepare programs for the Radio Tehran because the administration wanted him to change “Kurdistan” in his songs to “Gulistan” (kurdishmagazine.com). He died in 1989. Ali from the music band Agire Jiyan sang the covers of his songs in his 3rd album.

Şakiro (Şakir Deniz): He was Dengbej Reso’s student and known as one of the last representative of the tradition of Dengbej music. His amateurly recorded cassettes were spread to Iran, Iraq and Syria from Turkey. He died in 1996 in Izmir. He was also Özcan Deniz’s (popular singer in Turkey) uncle. I remember Kawa, Kurdish singer and one of my interviewee, who blames Özcan Deniz for not following his uncle’s path and not assisting Kurdish movement. For his song “Wey diil” Rojda recorded a duet with Şakiro by using Şakiro’s former recordings.

Ayşe Şen (Eyşe Şen): She left Diyarbakır because of the severe patriarchal critique of her songs, even she could not come back for her mother’s funeral and she composed her song of “Dayike” to mention her suffering. This song has also interpreted by Şiwan Perver. She became famous for her radio broadcast in Turkish in Antep. In 1963, she migrated to Istanbul and gave concerts there in Turkish and Kurdish. After her first album composed of Kurdish and Turkish songs, she had to leave Turkey and go to Germany because of the oppressions supported by the Turkish state. In 1979, she started to sing for the Radio Baghdad using the nick name Eyşana Eli. She died of cancer in 1996 (ANF News Agency, 21 January 2009).

Ahmet Kaya: He worked for a while as a taxi driver in Istanbul before he became a well-known singer in the mid-1980s. His first album, “Ağlama Bebeğim”, was released in 1985. His popularity continued to rise in the 1990s when in 1994 he released the album: “Şarkılarım Dağlara” which was sold in a record, 2.8 million

copies. During his career he recorded approximately 20 albums and was known for his protest music and fight for social justice. Recurring themes in his songs are love towards one's mother, sacrifice, and hope. On 10 February 1999 in the annual music awards ceremony of the Music Critics Association at which he was nominated as the Musician of the Year, he spoke about his Kurdish background and said that he wanted to broadcast the first Kurdish video clip in Turkish televisions. He announced that he had recorded a song in Kurdish (*Karwan*, released on the *Hoşçakalın Gözüm* album in 2001) and intended to produce a video to accompany it. At this event he was attacked by some famous Turkish singers such as Serdar Ortaç, Ebru Gündeş and many others because of his stance on the use of Kurdish. Kaya went to France in June 1999 escaping various charges arising from his political views. Among them were the accusations that he had performed in front of a poster for the PKK at a 1993 concert in Germany, and that he had made statements in support of Abdullah Öcalan. In March 2000 he was sentenced in absentia to three years and nine months in prison on the charge of spreading separatist propaganda. He died of a heart attack in Paris in 2000, at the age of 43, and is buried in Père Lachaise cemetery. His memory is kept alive by his wife Gülten Kaya.

Ciwan Haco: He was born near in Qamishlo in Syria. His grandfather was originally from Mardin, Turkey. After finishing high school, he left for Germany in order to continue his studies. He studied music at the University of Bochum for three years. He is now residing in Sweden. Ciwan Haco is one of the very first Kurdish singers who combined Kurdish folk music with western style pop music, rock, blues and jazz. As of today he has released 14 albums and a live VCD and DVD of his famous Batman concert in 2003 to which more than 200.000 people attended. Ciwan Haco is known for his lyrics that are often intentionally simple and to

which the main recurrent theme is love, with variations around this same theme. The main song from his last album *Off* (2006), *Li hêviya te* (“Waiting for you”) features vocals in both Kurmanci and French language (the latter being sung by a female vocalist. Very popular in the Kurdish diaspora as with the Kurdish people in Middle-East, Ciwan Haco has held plenty of concerts in many parts of Europe.

Şiwan Perwer: From 1975 on he became a protest singer. When asked why he did not choose fame and fortune he answered “I want my songs to bring a message about my people, about their reality, their situation, their suffering, social misery, about occupation. I must give Kurdish Music a face, a personality. I want to serve my people with my music” (sivan-perwer.com, 2007). He was studying mathematics. Yet gradually he taught himself music by studying other people’s music and developing his musicianship. He has become the best known Kurdish musician in the world, accompanying himself on the *tambur*, Kurdish 3-course lute. At this time he has recorded more than 30 cassettes, records, numerous CDs, film and video music. He cannot go back to his homeland since the day he left his country in 1976. Today he lives in Germany, though much of his time is spent travelling and performing all over the world. In 1991 he appeared at the “Simple Truth”, Live aid concert, performing alongside Peter Gabriel, Sting, Paul Simon, Tom Jones, Gipsy Kings as well as other international artists. The proceeds from this concert went to the aid of the Kurds in the Iraqi Kurdistan fleeing the Gulf War and was considered as one of the most important aid concerts for that region. Şiwan Perwer has a career expanding over 30 years and has received many honour Doctorates, International World music prizes and is considered a Cultural Ambassador of Kurdistan. In the year of 2004 Şiwan Perwer, with a philanthropic initiative and mainly for the improvement of

culture in society, established the Şivan Perwer International Cultural Foundation in Frankfurt.

The History of the MKM (Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi – Mesopotamia Cultural Center - Navenden Çanda Mezopotamya - NÇM in Kurdish)

The MKM is Kurdish movement's one of the major institutions that introduces and promotes products of the Kurdish culture. The MKM was established in 1991 and now it has 15 branches and offices in 12 cities of Turkey. Its center is located in Beyoğlu, Istanbul. Since the foundation of the MKM, many Kurdish artists and musicians who are members of the MKM have been put on trial, have been sentenced to imprisonment or other severe punishments or they had to leave Turkey to escape legal punishments.

The founders of the MKM are Musa Anter (Kurdish writer, who several times put on trial for “propagating Kurdisness” and murdered in 1992), İsmail Beşikçi (Turkish researcher who was put on trial many times for his several researches on the Kurdish question and spent 17 years of his life in the Turkish prisons), Feqi Hüseyin Sağnıç (writer and linguist of the Kurdish language who died in 2003) and İbrahim Gürbüz (Kurdish businessman) together with several artists and intellectuals. Most of the MKM's founders are also listed as the founders of the Kurdish Institute in 1992. The MKM defines its mission as struggling against the assimilationist politics exercised on the Kurdish people and against the cultural corruption, and fighting for the preservation, defense and development of the cultural values of people of Mesopotamia. They state that institutionalization of the MKM aims to strengthen freedoms for everybody in the world.

“El Yordamıyla Renkler” (Gropely Colors) is the presentation documentary of the MKM prepared for the celebration of its 5th anniversary. Firat, the manager of the MKM’s artists, gave me this documentary to support my study on the history of the MKM. The documentary includes several interviews with the members of the MKM and other artists and intellectuals such as members of Grup Yorum and the chairman of the Human Rights Association (IHD – İnsan Hakları Derneği) of that period. The documentary was prepared both in Turkish and in Kurdish. The main emphasis in the documentary is on the difficulty of being the first institutional body that promotes Kurdish culture and also the problems concerning supporting Kurdish culture in an environment where Kurdish identity was totally neglected. Nuray Şen, a Kurdish poet and the chairperson of the MKM of that period, expressed MKM’s task as exploring the Kurdish history and bringing it back to today’s world while finding out the connections between the Kurdish history and the Kurdish movement. One of the interviewees in the folklore department of the MKM mentioned that the aim of the MKM is appropriating the Kurdish culture. According to the Kurdish folklore unit in the MKM, they have to work to reclaim the motives of the Kurdish folklore that for a long time appropriated by the Turkish folklore groups. In my interview with Rotinda Yetkiner, a Kurdish singer and the current art co-director of the Kurdish political movement’s media RojTV and MMC (Mesopotamia Music Channel), expressed that he is one of the founders of the MKM:

I was in a quest in the years of 80s... if I talk about my own experience it can be accurate because I am one of the founders...you know this time, the bans were extreme even the ban on the Kurdish language was in effect...but thanks to the Kurdish movement, they had to step back...in the 90s, they abolished the ban...at this time, there were many Kurdish music bands, Kurdish artists...they had everything except a place or a school for them...this was the Kurdish movement’s

offer...we opened the MKM at the end of the year 90 but 91 is the exact start date³.

Rotinda stated that the MKM is a school in all aspects and a new beginning since for the first time Kurdish people were performing art in their own language and, this was great in the sense of making Kurdish people feel as real humans, as free individuals. Rotinda mentioned that he was teaching 120 children in his chorus and every student of the MKM “if he does not deny himself” would be probably successful. Here, “denying himself” is imagined as not internalizing and contesting for one’s ethnic values and national characteristics.

Ali, the soloist of the popular Kurdish music band Agire Jiyan, joined to the MKM when he was 17 years old and he told me that every Kurdish artist must participate in the activities of the MKM once in his life:

One has to take his education here; what one finds in the MKM is the morality and the culture. How much one puts this morality and culture into practice is another thing... But I think one has to take the education of the MKM both for educational and artistic purposes... Then, it is not important whether one continues to live here or not- it is his choice⁴.

Ali claimed that he was introduced to many valuable friends in the MKM and that they worked together for several projects. He concluded that he benefited from both the artistic education and the companionship (“yoldaşlık”) in the MKM.

Koma Asian’s members mentioned their reason to join the MKM as their refusal of the idea of the market. They consider the music as their payback to the Kurdish people:

³ Interview with Rotinda Yetkiner: “89’lu yıllarda ben büyük bir arayış içindeydim. Kendimden anlatsam biraz da, çünkü kurucularından biriyim. O dönemde biliyorsunuz yasaklar çok daha ciddi boyutlarda- hatta dil yasağı var- Kürtçe dili yasağı vardı- mücadele sonucu geri adımlarını attılar...90lı yıllarda sanırsam serbest bırakıldı. O dönemde de bir sürü Kürt grupları var, sanatçıları var, ama bir şeyi, okulu, mekanı yok. Özgürlük mücadelesinin tanıdığı bir şans oldu... MKM’yi biz 90lı yıllarda 90ın sonunda ama 91de açtık.”

⁴ Interview with Ali from Agira Jiyan: “Her Kürt sanatçısı MKM’den geçmelidir... MKM eğitimi almalıdır. MKM’deki ahlaktır, kültürdür. Ne kadar alır ne kadar uygular o ayrı. O eğitimden hem sanatsal hem eğitimsel, geçmelidir diye düşünüyorum. Ama burada yapar yapmaz yaşar yaşamaz kişiyle ilgili bir durumdur...”

I am a case point, I was exiled when I was 8 years old without knowing it, my friends were exiled, too...we experienced such pain, our people did...we cannot work for the market or we cannot work to make more money through selling our music... our only purpose is to assist our people, to present our people's suffering to the world through the universal language of the rock sound⁵

Mehmet, the performer of traditional Kurdish dengbej music, expressed that the MKM is the place for him to use his dengbej music in the service of the Kurdish movement: "there are so many things that the guerilla offered us in terms of art. Yet, we are unable to evaluate and make use of all these contributions...⁶".

In their statements, one can assume that they regard sometimes their music as a payback to the Kurdish people, their own people who have shared the suppression all together and, they name this payback as the artist's "conscience". I think that at this point one can talk about a feeling of "guilt" of the artist for not being sacrificed himself such as the ordinary Kurds or the militas, yet, the MKM provides a new battlefield where they can join to compensate this feeling of guilt through works of art. Mehmet also emphasized that in a city like Istanbul they were unable to share the experience of Kurdishness with other people and that is what the MKM is for.

Moreover, Mehmet Akbaş, a former member of the MKM and a Kurdish singer from Alevite and Zaza origin, who is now living in Germany, stated that the MKM was the first station for him when he joined the MKM in the year 1998. He defined that time as a period of chaos that started particularly after the arrest of Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK, by the Turkish intelligent service in November 1999. At that time Akbaş was the soloist of the Zaza music band Venge Sodiri, which played a leading

⁵ Interview with Koma Asian: "Mesela ben 8 yaşında sürgünün ne olduğunu bilmeden sürgün edilmiş bir insanım. Arkadaşlarım öyle. Çok acılar yaşadık. Halkımız da yaşadı. Bu saatten sonra kalkıp piyasaya, ya da yaptığımız müzikten para kazanmaya uğraşamayız yani. Bizim tek amacımız halkımıza hizmet edebilmek. Halkımızın acılarını belki evrensel bir dil olan Rock'la dünyaya duyurmak."

⁶ Interview with Dengbej Mehmet: "Gerillada o kadar şeyler var ki, sanatsal olarak, ama biz bunları değerlendirmekten çok aciziz."

role in introducing songs from all the accents of the Zaza language. As part of the MKM, the Venge Sodiri did not expect any financial benefit but struggle for the preservation and promotion of the Zaza culture. Therefore, Mehmet Akbaş defined the MKM “as a pioneer institution”⁷.

Moreover, Kawa, a Kurdish singer, who is living now in France, told me about the success of the MKM in terms of resisting against all kinds of Turkish state’s oppressions. For Kawa, thanks to this resistance and thanks to the high price that many members of the MKM paid so far, Kurdish music met with the large audience of the Kurdish people and MKM have great music bands such as Koma Amed and Koma Azad. Mehmet Akbaş also mentioned the hard conditions under which the members of the MKM work. In my interview with Akbaş, he underscored the fact that the psychological aura of the war time always influences the work of the artists:

MKM’s conditions are not normal- you cannot compare the MKM for example to the BGST since the media does not regard the MKM in the same way that they approach to the BGST... BGST has enough opportunities such as [their producer] Kalan Music and they have Boğaziçi University behind them. Bajar [a music band of the BGST] released an album and even though their release was so glittering the media didn’t use the arguments that they used against the MKM. Since they have all of these opportunities they should shake the world. I wish each of us had the same opportunities, yet, the MKM does not have these opportunities⁸.

Akbaş stated that one should admit that the MKM has made a serious contribution to the promotion of the Kurdish culture despite their poor conditions. Akbaş mentioned that this is thanks to the presence of the artists who are sacrificing their musical life for the survival of the MKM. As Mehmet Akbaş state, artists who are still MKM’s

⁷ Interview with Mehmet Akbaş: “O anlamıyla MKM bir ilkler mekanı aslında...”

⁸ Interview with Mehmet Akbaş: “MKM’nin koşulları normal koşullar değil... MKM’yi bir BGST gibi düşünemezsiniz. Basının, sistemin BGST’ye bakışı ile MKM’ye bakışı farklıdır. BGST’nin o kadar olanakları var arkasında, Kalan Müzik var, Boğaziçi var. Bajar bugün bir albüm yaptı tüm basın argümanları çok az kullandı ve o kadar şaşalı gelişe ...imkan var sallamalısn artık... keşke hepimizin öyle imkanları olabilse MKM’nin işte o imkanları yok.

members could only produce 2 albums in the 30 years whereas an artist normally has to do one album for every two years. He concluded that nobody can consider the MKM as if it has normal conditions. To change these conditions the state must regard the MKM in a different way, the MKM has to get good connections with the media while it possesses a very well-settled place in Beyoğlu, in the heart of Istanbul.

I also questioned Bajar about its attachment to the BGST and why Bajar is not part of the MKM's project. Vedat from Bajar answered me that the discourse of "every Kurdish artist has to pass through the MKM" is a statist argument: "There are 20 million Kurdish people ... Thus, there should be numerous differences...so the MKM is not the cultural ministry of the Kurdish people isn't it?"⁹ Vedat defined BGST as another organization that focuses on the problems of all people and minority groups living in Turkey and, that is a sign of its refusal of the statist understanding, whereas the MKM has some insufficiencies in its policy in the sense that the MKM does not perfectly appropriate all the colors of Mesopotamia, for instance they did not have a work on the Syrian culture and so forth.

However, what I personally observed in the MKM's recent performances such as the concerts in the Bostancı Performance Center and Yedikule Zindanları in 2010, in the programs there were several international oppositional singers or local ones singing in different languages. Actually, İlkay Akkaya sang in Turkish "Ciao Bella" in Bostancı, one singer from the former music band Koma Asmin performed in Armenian and Syrian, Tunisian singer Amel Mathlouthi sang several songs in Kurdish, Turkish and Arabic in Yedikule Zindanları. Yet, the MKM underscored the priority on practicing the Kurdish music and supports primarily its spread.

⁹ Interview with Vedat: "Bir yirmi milyon insan bu Kürtler... Madem böyle bir şeysin. Çok farklı şeylerin olması gerekiyor. MKM yani Kürtlerin kültür bakanlığı değildir değil mi?"

Besides this, in the MKM, they talked about the police attacks and arrests in the former MKM concerts and activities, as well as the former court case against the use of militia costumes in a show of the theatre group of the MKM. Actually, right now, Rojda, artist of the MKM, is sentenced to 2 years imprisonment because of singing songs of the Kurdish militia or Zelal Gökçe, Nurcan Değirmenci and Meral Tekçi (members of Koma Aheng) are sentenced to 10 months imprisonment in November 2009 because of singing “Oramar” (a Kurdish song prepared by the Kurdish militia). Fırat, manager of the MKM’s artists, mentioned that right now 15 members of the MKM were arrested. He also stated that Rojda’s arrest took place at the same time when she was invited to Tayyip Erdoğan’s Artist Meeting:

Right now, there is the discussion about the constitutional amendments...but Rojda is right now sentenced to 20 months imprisonment...I told this to a journalist, if this is possible we do not want any progress that derive from the democratic opening, always something bad happened to us after the introduction of this democratic opening (he laughed)¹⁰.

However, he defined that there is a change in the use of violence by the state and in term of the tools used by the state in the sense that earlier the physical violence in the form of police attacks were widely used by the state, yet today even it is still practiced, right now the judicial practices are much more frequent: “As if they try to kill us in the corridors of the courts, so they do not use bullets like in 90s but we are dealing with courts’ documents just like the bullets¹¹”. He claimed that right now there are 7 or 8 court cases against the MKM and therefore, their chairman had to immigrate to Europe. He also emphasized that for any organization to which the

¹⁰ Interview with the manager of the MKM’s artists Fırat: “Açılımın yapılacağı günde Rojda içeri alındı, anayasa tartışmalarına geçileceği sırada Rojda 20 ay ceza yedi...Bir gazeteci aramıştı bununla ilgili sen ne düşünüyorsun demişti...dedim...açılım dendi dava açıldı, anayasa tartışması oldu, ceza yedi...mümkünse gelişme istemiyoruz...”

¹¹ Interview with Fırat: “Öyle bir yola girmiş ki, mahkeme yollarına getirip götürüp öldürteceğim diye herhalde... Yani 90lardaki gibi kurşun sıkıyor ama kurşun gibi mahkeme tutanaklarıyla uğraşıyoruz.”

MKM applied, the required documents are as the same as for an organization that they apply abroad, whereas in fact only an identity card and some usual documents are sufficient for other institutions to organize a performance in Turkey. I told Fırat that since the MKM can organize its concerts in Bostancı Performance Center, Harbiye Theatre or Yedi Kule Zindanları (the major places for music organizations in Istanbul), this can be considered also as a sign for the transformation of the Turkish state's practices towards the MKM. Fırat answered me:

But they raised too many difficulties for Bostancı... and in Agire Jıyan's concert 4 years ago, the police and security measures were extreme... it is just like the police attacked Harbiye, their number was approximately 2000... Harbiye is the one of the most prestigious concert halls...nonsense¹².

In brief, it can be interpreted that the form of the relationship between the Kurdish movement and the Turkish state as well as the tools of exercising power mobilized by the state has transformed. Nowadays the state started to mobilize more effective judicial mechanism to suppress the Kurdish movement without being seen as an extremely violent force. To be sure, as Mehmet and many others mentioned, this does not mean that the state gave up using physical violence against the Kurds.

The MKM has several departments of art: folklore, modern dance, theatre, movie-making, and music. The music department is considered to be the main one since the Kurdish culture is considered as the inheritance of the dengbej music that was transferred orally from generation to generation. Formerly the MKM also had a department of children's chorus that Fırat, the manager of the artists, claimed the core unit for the future members of the MKM. However, Ali from Agire Jıyan mentioned that the MKM sometimes seems only having 7-8 soloists whereas the MKM has to stress also on being a school. Even though there are some courses for guitar and

¹² Interview with Fırat: "Bostancı'da da bizi çok zorladılar ama Harbiye konseri vardı 4 yıl önce. Polis Harbiye'yi bastı öyle diyeyim yaklaşık 2000 polis Harbiye'deydi. Harbiye gibi Türkiye'nin en iyi açık hava konser yerini polis bastı, saçmalık..."

bağlama (folkloric instrument), the MKM now does not have children chorus. Ali thinks of forming a chorus for educating soloists. Firat also agreed that right now there are some interruptions of chorus' works but he insisted that chorus' works are essentials since many of the MKM artists have been educated in these chorus and this period of neglect ended up in the rise of the arabesque music and in the interruption of the MKM's connection with the new generations. Works of the workshops or art courses were driven by trainers and not by artists themselves because of artists' busy schedule. Firat told that the registration for workshops starts in September or October every year. He emphasized that the MKM's education programs are also important since they allow connection of 200 students and their families and this connection fortifies the community. I asked if there are any problems concerning the female students' families or if they have problems for getting familial permission to join the art trainings. Firat expressed that there are some students both female and male getting education without familial approval but this is not because patriarchal issues yet because the MKM's disoriented reputation in the sense that families worry about their children:

There was a student... she came here for two years and yet her family did not know it, she got guitar lessons and she succeed in the exams of the conservatoire...her family learned that she was here and got education and entered conservatoire through the MKM, they came here many times and shouted out 'how could you hide my daughter here without our permission?'-however right now, this family enjoy our programs and they have not got away from the MKM...There are also some examples like that¹³.

In brief, the MKM's course schedule can be considered such as a tool for both education of the Kurdish artists and communication with the Kurdish community.

¹³ Interview with Firat: "MKM bazen aile bilmediği zaman farklı algılayabildiği bir yer o yüzden aile kaygılanabiliyor- ama hatta bir arkadaş var, 2 yıl gidip geldi ailesinden gizli bizden gitar dersi aldı konservatuar eğitimi aldı bizden konservatuarı da kazandı- birkaç ay evvel ailesi duydu bizden gelmiş gitar öğrenmiş konservatuar eğitimi bile alıp kazanmış MKM üzerinden- aile bizi gelip gördükten sonra birkaç defa kaygıyla geldi nasıl kızımızı nasıl bizden izinsiz kapatabilirsiniz aslında hiddet ile geldi şimdi MKM'den çıkmayan bir aile- yani şey örnekleri de var..."

MKM's claimed financial resources do not include the education programs since the students are mostly from poor families and sometimes they pay 20 or 50 Turkish Lira for a month, but the MKM do not push them to pay. Firat mentioned that the MKM has always been in a financial crisis even before the today's worldwide economical crisis and that they usually pay their rent with the income that they earn through participating public organizations with their performances such as BDP's or Özgür Politika Newspaper's nights. Besides that, for the albums of the MKM's singers, Firat claimed that they do not have extra profit unless they obtain the cost of albums since the albums can be listened freely on the internet. He reminded that Agire Jiyan's first album was sold one million copies secretly when Kurdish music was banned. However, right now even Sezen Aksu's album cannot be sold so much. That is to say music albums do not bring anymore a financial benefit anymore. For him, albums only assist to introduce musical works today and therefore, Kom Music, the MKM's production company, still produces albums. However, many of the MKM's artists have financial problems even sometimes they cannot have the money to come to the MKM's office in Beyoğlu from their home in Istanbul. Yet, Firat stated that the MKM's money is not communal even if they try to assist financially some poor friends as much as they can personally.

Financial Resources of the MKM's Artists

Most of the MKM artists cannot cover their living expenses through their earnings from their works of art. Mehmet, the dengbej musician, mentioned that he is also a construction worker. Ümit, a member of Koma Asian works in a textile firm. Another Kurdish musician from Germany, Roni, also stated that he goes to weddings

where he has to waste his time and energy for money while he can use it for his art. Roni actually works in a factory in Köln, and he carries his mobile phone for recording some melodies that come to his mind: “a Kurdish artist do not earn money from his art, on the contrary he supports his art with the money he earns from other sources¹⁴”. I think that, this condition derives from Kurdish artists’ disfavor of the market relations. Moreover, the support of the cultural institutions of the Kurdish movement is poor and these institutions favor some artists while excluding some others. The Kurdish cultural agencies have the power and authority to introduce the Kurdish musicians to the Kurdish audience, thus, the limited support of the Kurdish cultural authorities is distributed selectively among the Kurdish artists. Indeed, only the Kurdish musicians who are active members of the Kurdish political movement can occupy administrative positions such as Rotinda or Seyitxan, the co-art directors of the RojTV and MMC. Rotinda and Seyitzan declare that they have a modest yet sufficient financial source to compensate their living expenses. Among the Kurdish artists I interviewed only Kawa talked about his satisfaction about his earnings that he can get only from making art and music.

Ali, the soloist of the famous music band Agire Jiyan declared that he had to quit the MKM for a while for financial concerns in his 10th year when he got married. Ali said that in the MKM he did not earn any money from the concerts and from the album whereas his request from the MKM for a support for his marriage was rejected. He stated that most of the money he can earn is from the wedding events that the MKM arranges for him, and Ali does not want to sing in the bars even though this could satisfy the musician economically. Ali said that he does not like the audience of the bars who can act as the boss of the artist and therefore the artist

¹⁴ Interview with Roni: “Kürt sanatçı kendi sanatından para kazanamıyor tam tersine maddi yardım yapıyor.”

cannot conduct his art: “ The bar audience says : I am giving money so you have to entertain me- if the listener came to see you to satisfy his needs you cannot practice art¹⁵”. Ali concluded that maybe playing in a bar can develop the ability of the artist. However, Ali stated that he preferred to play only in the Babylon (a famous music venue in Taksim) where the elite audience usually comes to listen to the music so that the artist can really perform his art.

Mehmet Akbaş, Kurdish musician living in Germany, works as barmen for five days a week to compensate his everyday expenses, and he talked me about how he collected money through working as a barmen for his album that will be released in the summer of 2010. I asked him whether he plays in bars or in the wedding events even though I knew that Akbaş’s experimental music, which is electronic music in Zaza dialect of Kurdish, was not appropriate for this kind of activities. He answered me that he cannot sing if there is humming and murmur in the hall. He told me about a reception of Newroz that he joined:

I started to sing and in the meantime they served meal to the audience- actually it was an elegant reception for foreigners mostly- yet I started to hear the sounds of the forks and knives while I was singing my second song...I said ‘Please accept my apologies but I cannot sing under these conditions, please enjoy your meal’¹⁶.

He also declared that he tried to sing in some “türkü” (ballad) bars, yet later on he gave up even though this kind of job could satisfy his financial needs, and that is why he preferred to work as barmen five days a week instead of singing under murmur and humming. On the other hand, Vedat from the BGST expressed that Kurdish people have to have some music venues in the cities that they can come together,

¹⁵ Interview with Ali: “Para veriyorum beni eğlendireceksin- bir kendini eğlendirme mantığı- kendi duygularını tatmin etme mantığı ile gelen dinleyici olursa sen sanat da yapamazsın.”

¹⁶ Interview with Mehmet Akbaş: “Bir yerden uğultu geliyorsa şarkı söyleyemem..bir yerde ben çıktım bir Newroz resepsiyonuydu. Şarkı söylemeye başladım, insanlara yemek dağıtmaya başladılar- güzel bir resepsiyondu, yabancılara yönelik- çatal bıçak sesleri geldi ben 2. şarkımı söyledim...ve “kusura bakmayın” dedim, “bu koşullarda şarkı söyleyemeyeceğim, afiyet olsun”...”

visit frequently on the weekends and listen to music there: “Where can a student from Diyarbakır enjoy music in Istanbul? There are many Kurdish students here, yet where are they meeting? There is a problem here...”¹⁷. Vedat also mentioned that Bajar played in Studio Live (a popular bar in Taksim) yet their event was not advertised correctly and adequately, and the administration of Studio Live did not give the tickets to “Biletix” (the online ticketing company for the events), since they worried about losing their usual customers because of a concert of a Kurdish music band, Bajar. However, as Vedat told me, after their concert there, Studio Live changed its mind and publicized Bajar’s second concert in Studio Live through “Biletix”. Therefore, Vedat insisted that they have to struggle for their recognition in the public sphere. Even he emphasized that the “democratic opening” can have a meaning if it guarantees a quota for the Kurdish music in every festival in Turkey: For him, “the issue of appearing in the public sphere” cannot be solved only through giving their rights to the Kurds or only through opening Kurdish institutes; to appear in the public sphere first and foremost the public should be persuaded. Vedat also argued that a music band has to be selective in term of choosing the place where it plays if the music does not want to be a “meze” (an appetizer by being a background music). Yet, Vedat stated that bars cannot be excluded from the sphere of art since bars are also meeting points for musicians and their audience.

Rojin, autonomous Kurdish soloist, claimed that an artist has to perform in any place if she is a professional. She stated that in terms of Kurdish music Istanbul is a place to perform music in every place whereas Anatolian cities are rather places for concerts. She stated that she sings in Bakırköy’s “türkü” (ballad) bars where she

¹⁷ Interview with Vedat: “Diyarbakırlı falan..Mesela üniversiteli gençler nerelerde? Bir sürü üniversiteli Kürt var. Bunlar nerelere gidiyorlar? Nerelerde buluşuyorlar? Nerde eğleniyorlar? Öyle bir sıkıntı var aslında..”

earns the money for her living expenses and where also she meets with many friends and journalists.

At this point, there are two contesting arguments: One defines “bars or cafes” as inappropriate places to sing Kurdish music, and the other ones claim that “bars or cafes” should be considered as public meeting places and therefore they are important in terms of persuading the public opinion about the presense and legitimacy of the Kurdish art and Kurdish identity. The view of the first group reminds one Adorno’s arguments who described cafes and bars as places where music is commodified. Adorno points out that this is “exiled music herself, pushed to the edge of existence, holds out loyalty there: music as background” (Adorno, 2002). This means that for Adorno a listener in a bar or cafe cannot be a critical listener, instead he just consumes the music whereas for Adorno the audience should be conscious and critical which is the precondition for social change. For Adorno, the ultimate beauty of the music in its enigmatic truth content must be both heard and thought so that the active listening can create intersubjectivity between the listener and the sound composition which drives him beyond status-quo, the existing societal system (Leppter 2005). Thus, for the supporters of the first view, the music in the background becomes also a kind of silence and lack of communication for the Kurdish artist. According to this point of view the Kurdish music can only accomplish an emancipatory task for the Kurdish people or for all humanity if it creates a conscious and critical discontinuity in the system.

On the other hand, for the supporters of the “public appearance of the Kurdish music” as much as possible, performances in “bars or cafes” has the potential to create a symphaty towards the Kurdish music in Turkey, where Kurdish music stands together with Turkish music. A space for familiar and recognized noises creates a

territorial propriety that Barthes defines through the notion of first listening, namely “the alert” (Barthes, 1991), through which the unfamiliar sounds that belong to an outsider can be appropriated. According to this view, as much as Kurdish music is performed in different bars, cafes and other public places Kurdish music will become no more a threat but a legitimate sound of the public sphere. Following this view that underscores the significant effect of the public practice of art, Kurdish music can perhaps reach to non-Kurdish music audiences, who enjoy to know about different musics and to share different sounds, and thus eliminate the possibility of otherization. However, when one looks at the actual practices of the Kurdish music in the public one sees that these performances for the public does not help much to include differences and to appropriate the outsiders. For instance in the wedding events and bar performances that musicians mostly define as “a way to make some money”, usually Kurdish musicians sing and play for the Kurdish audience and thus, such performances generally misses the opportunity to bring differences together.

MKM’s Recruitment Policy of the Artists

Not everyone can enter the MKM, yet Firat, the manager of the MKM’s artists, told me that there is only a small number of exceptions for rejection and it occurs if the candidate has financial and marketing or celebrity concerns for doing art or if he performs arabesque music or wedding music that only a keyboard and a bağlama can be sufficient or if he sings in bars. These conditions mean for him the absence of the will to develop oneself. However, one can enter the MKM without knowing musical notes but this one must has the will to learn them and the only criteria for a MKM artist is to have the will to work. Firat mentioned that there are 6-7 applications from

the musical bands to join the MKM this year and their forms of application were discussed according to the musical and political measures and every one of them right now is MKM's artist.

A MKM artist can frequently join the MKM's events but must participate regularly to the hard practices and trainings; they can share the MKM's studio for rehearsal and then can have a chance to release an album with the support of the MKM. I asked Koma Asian's members, young rock musicians in their twenties, about how they joined the MKM since they were recently admitted. They mentioned that firstly one has to perform a presentation of 5 songs in front of a jury composed of the MKM's music trainers and musicians and also the administration staff. They told me that the candidate can be a mediocre musician but the jury is primarily interested in the content of his songs or if the candidate can offer a different interpretation of the song it can also affect the jury. Firat stated that he votes firstly for the MKM's need secondly for his musical taste and that he voted for a rock band much more joyfully since rock music is still experimental for the Kurdish music. Koma Asian's members state that there is a second presentation for the theory where the candidate presents his views about the world, the politics and how he thinks about the Kurdish movement. Then the candidate has to be approved by the musical unit and then by the MKM general administration. They stated that their frequency of coming to the MKM also counts in the sense that the MKM wants to know if the candidate really wishes to join to the MKM or applies only for having some opportunities to participate to the MKM events and for introducing themselves to public and thus to become famous. Firat, the manager, also talked about a period of 3-5 months where these candidates frequently visit the MKM, join the workshops, so that they can learn the system and also the MKM can learn about them. Then, r they

can get through the two exams composed of “practical” and “theoretical” sections. Their previous participation to some programs can be also a reference for them. Besides this, Firat told me that he remember many candidates now his friends in the presentations bearing headscarves or long skirts and with their sleepers on their foot which means for him, not having an artist’ stand but having a religious tenure. They only reject candidates who does not have social and political concerns or who wishes only to be famous and apply for using the MKM’s connections for pragmatic concerns. He emphasized that the music section decides which group or soloist would have an album and that Agire Jiyan made only 3 albums in the last 18 years. Therefore, actually the MKM does not favor the famous ones. Firat picks up musicians for several events according to the activity’s content. For instance, for a political night a musician famous for political songs goes or if it is a folkloric event this time a folklore group is sent to the event. In this context, Koma Asian expressed that the fact that they play rock music was an advantage for them to join to some youth events. Furthermore, I asked Koma Asian’s members whether their families have early connections to the MKM. One of them stated that his father’s uncle is one of the MKM’s founders and that her family visits frequently the MKM when they pass through Taksim. The other one claimed that there is nobody connected in his family while they have the sympathy for the MKM. However, to be a member of a militia family is not sufficient to be accepted and some of my interviewees who have Kurdish militias in their families mentioned their refusal or their waiting status which means that the MKM actually searches for artistic abilities. However, the “theoretical” exam that a candidate has to pass to join the MKM is a tricky one in the sense that for a MKM artist to criticize the Kurdish movement in the context of

suggesting alternative policies of resistance is perhaps not approved since the candidate faces a jury that decides what is true and the best for the Kurds.

I asked also Vedat from the BGST, whether they have some similar procedures for recruitment of the artists for the BGST. He answered me that any artist willing to participate to the extremely hard working conditions can join the BGST. However, there are some main principles of appropriating “anti-nationalism or anti-gender-rationalisms” and besides this the members come together periodically for reading and lecturing and discussing these issues. He mentioned a nationalist guitarist who was a member of the BGST: “There was a guy in Kardeş Türküler...we did never said ‘get out’ but we discussed the nationalism with him...”¹⁸ However, the nationalist guitarist left the BGST: “I wish he did not quit and he made progress. As you know nationalism is also an illness¹⁹”. Considering the terms of admission, one can say that the brotherhood in the sense of friendship with its practice of democracy in a community of art is limited to the people who share the main ideas of this group. Indeed “sameness” is the first and major requirement of belonging to a group even though the MKM and the BGST declared that anybody can be their member.

¹⁸ Interview with Vedat: “Ama mesela bizim bir gitarist çocuk vardı Kardeş Türküler’de... Ama biz hiçbir zaman sen git demedik yani tartıştık bilmem ne.”

¹⁹ Interview with Vedat: “Keşke kalsaydı...Keşke değişseydi..Yani sonuçta o da bir hastalık...Napıcaksın yani...”

CHAPTER 3

POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

AKP’S LIBERAL APPROACH TO THE KURDISH QUESTION WITH
“THE DEMOCRATIC OPENING POLICY”

AKP’s new liberal approach to the Kurdish question was named firstly in mid-2009 as “Kurdish Opening” and then it was renamed as “Democratic Opening”. However, the transformation of the governmental approach to the Kurdish question is not an overnight change. The current AKP government in the last 8 years has discussed this issue as part of the extension of its liberal approach. For some critics, AKP’s catch-all party character and the expected support from the of Kurdish voters play an important role in AKP’s liberalization of the approach to the Kurdish issue: As part of the Democratic Opening Policy the AKP government firstly cancelled the ban on giving children Kurdish names and labeling streets, villages and towns in Kurdish. Moreover, the AKP government promised to establish Kurdish language departments at prominent universities in Turkey and right now Mardin Artuklu University includes the Institute of “Living Languages” that encompasses the Arabic, Persian, Syrian and Kurdish language education since 2009. Thus, the formation of the TRT6 in December of 2008, the first official TV channel in Kurdish, marks a radical change in the perception of the Kurdish question by the Turkish government and public opinion. In January of 2010, the AKP published a booklet entitled “Sorularıyla Cevaplarıyla Demokratik Açılım: Milli Birlik ve Beraberlik Projesi”²⁰ (“Questions and Answers About the Democratic Opening: the Project of National Togetherness and Brotherhood”) that includes 30 questions and answers about the

²⁰ Retrieved from <http://www.akparti.org.tr/acilim220110.pdf>

Democratic Opening, - there are some points stated in this booklet that I want to mention to describe AKP's perspective:

- Turkey's unitary structure of one nation is protected. The idea that Democratic Opening makes concession about Turkey's unitary system is a black propaganda (a lie) –The national unity does not mean ethnic unity- a nation can be composed of diversity in terms of ethnicity.
- Democratic Opening aims to handle firstly the issue of terrorism and every single problem and economical position of ethnic and sectarian diversity and intends to decrease these complications.
- The official language of Turkey is Turkish. However, the AKP will remove all the obstacles about one's right to learn, to speak, to sing and to listen to her mother tongue or publish or broadcast in official and private channels in her mother tongue. Turkish is also the only language of education.
- Since the Kurdish question stands forefront, many press groups and agencies named the Democratic Opening as “the Kurdish Opening”. However, Democratic Opening encompasses problems of all the minorities.
- To eliminate terrorism, the government has to take also economic, cultural, social and psychological measures beside security measures, whereas former governments focused only on the latter.
- Democratic Opening is not a sudden movement of the AKP government. The AKP has worked on the prosperity of the eastern and south-eastern parts of Turkey for 7 years.

- The AKP government does not offer a concession to an illegal structure of terrorism with the Democratic Opening. Instead Democratic Opening is designed to guarantee the citizens' their major human rights.
- In the process of Democratic Opening, the AKP's genuine partner in the dialogue is the 72 millions of citizens of Turkey. AKP's policies are also supported by several NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations), scientists, members of media; however, the terror organization is not part of the dialogue and negotiation. Despite all the efforts of the AKP firstly the oppositional parties the CHP and the MHP and then some other political parties preferred "to bring oil to the fire" (they did not support the Democratic Opening and by doing so they provoked more severe complications of national problems)

Considering some points stated in the AKP's booklet about the "Democratic Opening", one can assume that AKP's policy considers the Kurdish question as a minority problem and it refuses the PKK as a legitimate partner in the process of negotiation and dialogue. As a result, the AKP continues the former official policy of the Turkish state that divides the Kurds between the loyal ones and the illegitimate terrorists. In this perspective, the pro-PKK cultural agencies of the Kurdish political movement such as the MKM can still be the target of state's pressure and the ban of the DTP (former pro-Kurdish political party) can be considered as a legitimate act. However, the DTP got the votes of the majority of the Kurds in the south-eastern part of Turkey and the PKK has recruited militias from the same region where the Kurdish people mostly settled. In this context, most of my interviewees emphasized the insincerity of the Democratic Opening by claiming that this new policy aims to

eliminate the Kurdish political movement and its agencies. They mentioned that the state's both physical violence and judicial measures still target the agents and supporters of the Kurdish movement:

- The DTP, the former pro-Kurdish political party was banned by the Constitutional Court on 11 of December, 2009 because of its alleged ties to the PKK. Moreover, 37 members of the party are banned from political activity such as the co-presidents of the DTP Ahmet Türk and Aysel Tuğluk.
- Many Kurdish children between the ages 8 and 15 were sentenced to years of imprisonment because of their alleged support and propaganda for the PKK especially for throwing stones to the police during the demonstrations. Recently, some judicial arrangements were applied to decrease the extremely severe punishments, yet this new arrangements are still considered insufficient by the members of the Kurdish movement.
- During the KCK (The Alliance of the Kurdistan Community- a political organization of the PKK) operations in December 2009 more than 1000 members of the DTP/BDP (pro-Kurdish party) including current mayors were arrested and they are still detained in the prisons.
- Several members of the peace committee of the PKK that entered Turkey on 19 of October 2009 from Mahmur and Kandil were arrested in June, 2010, the court case about other members still continues.

Furthermore, my interviewees repeatedly mention the disregard of the voice of the sorrow of the Kurds. Aynur, a well-known independent Kurdish singer, stated that in every Kurdish house, there are loss and war traumas that have to be voiced

whereas the Democratic Opening is still a unilateral act imposed by the government and nobody knows clearly what its intentions or accomplishments are. However, right now, in her view, there is only one progress that is the proliferation of the discussions on the Kurdish issue:

Now we can talk about it [the Kurdish question] comfortably while in the past we could not- [in the past] we were careful about our sentences or we could not say what we wanted to say since we were wondering what the cost of it would be...²¹.

Just like Aynur, Vedat from the music bands Kardeş Türküler and Bajar that are part of the BGST (Boğaziçi Gösteri Sanatları Topluluğu / Bogazici Community for Performance and Art) emphasized the slow progress of the Democratic Opening process and the lack of the constitutional amendments that will guarantee the rights of the Kurds. For Vedat the slowness of the process results in rise of the tension in the conflict. Vedat explains AKP's lack of consistency with AKP's election concerns, since the AKP can neither risk the votes of the nationalist Turks nor give up with the votes of its Kurdish supporters.

Moreover, the members of the MKM argue that thanks to the Democratic Opening, the Turkish state seeks to be seen as the legitimate representative of the Kurdish culture while it undermines the legitimacy of the cultural agents of the Kurdish political movement as the true representatives of the Kurds. Thus, for the cultural agents of the Kurdish political movement, the Democratic Opening is a state project to establish a cultural hegemony that serves nothing but to suppress the resistance of the Kurdish movement by marginalizing its political demands and associating it with terrorism.

²¹ Interview with Aynur Doğan: "Rahat konuşabiliyoruz değişen o oldu- konuşamıyorduk...Dikkat ediyorduk cümlelerimize, kelimelerimize...veya söyleyeceklerimizi söyleyemiyorduk.. acaba neye mal olur diye..."

In the following sections I will focus on the Kurd's quest for sincerity and I will state and analyze more in detail the reaction of the Kurdish cultural agents to the Democratic Opening of the liberal AKP government, to the formation of the TRT6 and to the Artist Meetings organized by the government. I will try to find answers to the following questions: Why and for what reasons does the TRT6 is not considered by the Kurdish cultural agents as an adequate and true solution for the Kurdish question? After the introduction of the democratic opening policies, how and in what ways concepts such as hegemony and resistance are reconsidered and redefined by the members of the Kurdish cultural agencies of the Kurdish movement especially by the MKM?

CHAPTER 4

THE KURDS' QUEST FOR SINCERITY AND THE POLITICAL AND DISCURSIVE STRUGGLE TO BE RECOGNIZED AS THE "TRUE" REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KURDISH CULTURE

*We know that there are no friends, but I pray you, my friends, act so that henceforth there are. You, my friends, be my friends. You already are, since that is what I am calling you. Moreover, how could I be your friend...if friendship were not still to come, to be desired, to be promised...If I give you friendship, it is because there is friendship (perhaps); it does not exist, presently (Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 1997, p. 235)*

For Derrida, one cannot enclose the friend within our knowledge in the sense that the friendship does not require reciprocity and equality but the logic of gift giving without return rather than a calculated exchange. Therefore, friendship is not a matter of self-love or self-affirmation but the friend is someone who accompanies me with his alterity. In other words, Derrida defines the friend as a "dissymmetrical other" rather than the equal, the intimate and the same. Consequently, friendship is not a club for limited membership but it is unlimited. If one considers the Aristotelian statement, the relation of father to his child is monarchical, the relation of man to his wife is aristocratic and, finally the relation of brothers is the democratic model in politics. I think that this understanding of democracy in the model of Derrida's friendship can assist to investigate "The Democratic Opening Policy" of the AKP government and its reflections on the Kurds in Turkey in the period of reconciliation between the Turkish state and the Kurdish movement. My assumption concerning the appropriateness of the term friendship also appears in many arguments of my interviewees while the Kurds talk about their disagreements regarding the process of the Democratic Opening. I will try to state some relevance of my theoretical ground

of Derrida's historical analysis of friendship in his book *the Politics of Friendship* especially for "the quest of sincerity" that most of my Kurdish interviewees introduce as the major requirement for the reconciliation. Among the Kurdish artists and musicians the question concerning "sincerity" plays a crucial role in identifying, who is the true representative of the Kurdish music. In the interviews that I conducted with the members and musicians of the MKM as well as with the members of other independent Kurdish music bands, lacking sincerity is usually introduced as a sign of being a betrayer and of assisting the Turkish state's hegemonic ideology. Particularly after the introduction of the AKP's liberal democratic policies about the Kurdish question, and the consequent formation of the first official Kurdish TV channel TRT 6 and Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan's meeting with the artists, a division among the Kurdish music performers took place. This division was usually expressed in terms of being or not being sincere. At this point, I want to introduce the popular definitions of sincerity and its meaning as the marker of friendship in the period of reconciliation between the Kurdish cultural agents and Turkish government.

Yet, this chapter's main argument through the analysis of the statements of several Kurdish musicians from both the MKM and other independent groups and people coincides with Elizabeth Povinelli's critique of the Australian Multiculturalism that intends to recognize the cultural rights of the Australian native populations, namely the Aboriginals, and include them to the sphere of liberal governance. Povinelli defines the current multiculturalist discourse as a new hegemonic apparatus of the state to ensure the future of the nation, and its core institutions and values rather than shaken it (Povinelli, 1998). I argue that this idea can also explain the critiques towards the Democratic Opening Policy's procedures

and help one to understand better why the lack of sincerity is frequently mentioned by the Kurdish musicians and artists that were interviewed. Moreover, this new wave of multiculturalism can be understood by Gramsci's term of hegemony, even if it is addressed especially to the class struggle and domination. It shows also the reasons behind Kurdish movement's mistrust in state's hegemony, which is a process by which "educative pressure is applied to single individuals so as to obtain their consent and their collaboration, turning necessity and coercion into freedom" (Gramsci, 1971). Whereas in Gramscian terms the freedom produced by the instruments of the ruling class molds the "free" subject to the needs of an economic base, in the case of the Turkish state and the Kurdish movement, the Turkish state seeks to introduce itself as the supporter of the Kurdish cultural rights through the instruments of the Democratic Opening Policy, such as the TRT6.

The Critique of the TRT6

The recent declarations of the members of the Kurdish movement about the formation of the TRT6 criticize the legitimacy of the first official Kurdish TV channel established by the Turkish state. The TRT6 started its official broadcast on 1 of January, 2009 with several interviews with the political and other important actors while Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the prime minister, ended his 10 minute long speech with a statement in Kurdish: "TRT Şeş Bi Xêr Be" ("May TRT6 go well" – "TRT6 hayırlı olsun"). First of all, members of the MKM and the Kurdish cultural agents do not consider the formation of the TRT6 as a present of or an opportunity provided by the Turkish state. They rather believe that such an approach ignores the long history of the Kurdish struggle for freedom and its political gains. For the members of the

Kurdish political movement the TRT6 is not a gift of the Turkish state but a result of the struggle and sufferings of the Kurds of the last 20 years (Özgür Gündem Newspaper, 5 January 2009). Members of the Kurdish political movement argue that the presentation of the TRT6 as the marker of the Turkish state's new liberal character reproduces state's hegemony and underestimates the political power of the Kurdish movement.

In a television program at NTV (A prominent news channel in Turkey) Gülten Kaya, the wife of the prominent Kurdish singer Ahmet Kaya, who died in Paris in exile, in the year of 2000, said that "Kurdish people's suffering is voiceless" (Aktifhaber.com, 1 July 2009). The program showed Ahmet Kaya's formerly banned Kurdish music clip for the first time on televisions. When the journalist asks Gülten Kaya about her comments on this first broadcast of the music clip, Gülten Kaya stated that after the death of Ahmet Kaya this does not mean anything for her. She added that the cost of broadcasting this music clip was too much; there was too much suffering for her and for the listeners of Ahmet Kaya. She said, "the broadcast of this clip after so many years cannot bring Ahmet Kaya back; he is dead now, and nothing can compensate this loss" (Aktifhaber.com, 1 July 2009). Then, Gülten Kaya said then that if this music clip had been broadcast 9-10 years ago they would not have experienced such hard times. In her view, the lyrics of the song are not effective anymore because it is too late. In an interview she gave to the Kurdish media, she also states that the attempt of the current government to bring Ahmet Kaya's tomb back to Turkey would not mean anything unless all of his songs are broadcast without any ban and TRT6 becomes more than a symbolic and a delusional channel for the Kurdish people (Özgür Gündem Newspaper, 1 January 2009).

One can consider the Kurdish critique of the TRT6 as a struggle for the representation of the Kurdish subjectivity. The fact that the TRT6 is a state-promoted Kurdish channel aims to dilute the differences between the government and the Kurdish movement in terms of representing the Kurdish people. Right now, the fight is for the form and the way of representing the Kurdish subjects.

Another point that was emphasized by the Kurdish cultural agents is the lack of “sincerity” on the Turkish state’s side. While many Kurdish people are in jail because of accusations concerning speaking in Kurdish in the public sphere, a Kurdish TV channel that broadcasts in Kurdish for 24 hours is a sort of hypocrisy. They claim that the TRT6 is settled down to omit the Kurdish movement or to pacify the Kurdish uprising. Moreover, the TRT6 is accused of decreasing the rating of the Roj TV which is considered by the Kurdish cultural agents as the true and legitimate TV channel that represents the Kurdish resistance. In my interview with the members of the MKM, the terms such as “sincerity, innocence, trust” are defined as the qualities that the Turkish state and the current government of the AKP lacks. They mention that the quick and easy settlement of a Kurdish public channel, the TRT6, is also a matter of question, which proves the lack of sincerity in this move. Moreover, it is noted that the Kurdish deputies’ presentations in Kurdish in the national assembly are still banned and the Kurdish language is still defined as an ‘unknown language’ by the official discourse of the Turkish state. That is to say the right to speak or sing in Kurdish is not guaranteed constitutionally. Musicians and artists in the MKM argue that all of these show the hypocrisy of the Turkish state’s liberal reforms. Furthermore, they state that while the TRT6 can use the banned letters “W, Q, X” that are also part of the Kurdish alphabet, today, the participants of the Kurdish political movement as well as Kurdish ordinary people are not allowed to

use them even in naming their children in Kurdish. This means that the usage of these letters is only legal when it is used by the Turkish state.

This question became especially visible in the example of the censorship of Ahmet Türk's (the former leader of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party – DTP) speech in Kurdish in a meeting in the Turkish parliament on the World's Mother Tongue Day, 24th of February, 2009. Whereas Tayyip Erdoğan used Kurdish words in his opening speech of the TRT6, Ahmet Türk's speech was banned by the government itself. This means that, there is a sort of double-standard in terms of state's different reactions to the use of Kurdish by the members of the Turkish government and Kurdish movement.

Therefore, the Kurdish authorities and media define TRT6 as a “second-hand Kurdish TV channel”. For them, if the AKP government was sincere in this move, the AKP should discuss the formation of an official Kurdish TV channel together with the Kurdish cultural and social institutions before the establishment of the TRT6 (Özgür Gündem Newspaper, 27 December 2008). Yet, because the Turkish state did not talk to them beforehand, and never recognized members of the Kurdish political movement as legitimate representatives of the Kurdish culture, the MKM and other Kurdish cultural institutes also refused to prepare programs for the TRT6 after its formation. Many Kurdish cultural groups, musicians and music bands did not give a positive answer to the TRT6 since they state that they do not want to take part “in the game of the AKP government”. At this point, Kurdish movement's critique of the AKP government's “sincerity” can be considered as a critique of what Gramsci defines as hegemony. For Gramsci, state institutions secure the consent of the people by political and cultural hegemony so that the state power domesticates all resistance by including it (Cox, 1987, p.251). So then “hegemony” means the formation of

domination without the use of physical violence. Following Gramsci's critique of power, Kurdish cultural authorities claim that the AKP government by exercising hegemony aims to appear as if it secures Kurdish citizen's cultural identity and promotes the idea that Kurdish resistance accomplished its mission and there is no need for any other body to manifest Kurdish identity besides the Turkish government. Thus, Kurdish movement's critique of the TRT6 as a corrupt promotion of the Turkish government ties Kurdish identity to the Kurdish resistance.

Participation to the TRT6 as a Betrayal of the Kurdish Artists and as the Corruption of the Kurdish Art

Another controversy related to the formation of the TRT6 is about the Kurdish music performers or Kurdish artists who accepted to prepare programs for the TRT6. Some critiques about them present these artists as the collaborators of the Turkish state and consequently as the betrayers of the Kurdish political movement. The critiques of the several Kurdish artists about their commitment to the TRT6 were discussed in large in the Kurdish media. The news that Nilüfer Akbal, a famous Kurdish singer, who decided to take part in the managerial team of the TRT6, revealed various interpretations. Nilüfer Akbal invited the Kurdish artists in exile to join to the TRT6 instead of having a miserable life abroad. In response to this invitation, the Kurdish musician and the art director of the RojTV, Rotinda Yetkiner states that Nilüfer Akbal cannot be able to support the Kurdish culture in the TRT6 and adds that Nilüfer will rather be the part of the Turkish state's plan of assimilation (Özgür Gündem Newspaper, 26 December 2008). Yetkiner names the formation of the TRT6 as the artistic version of the "Koruculuk" (The Kurdish Paramilitary funded by

the Turkish state to fight against the PKK). He says that the TRT6 makes the Kurdish people the enemy of other Kurdish people by dividing the Kurds as the loyal ones who watch and are satisfied with the TRT6 and the betrayers who still persist on demanding political recognition and autonomy for the Kurds. In the case of Dezz Deniz, the Kurdish hip-hop music performer, the Kurdish media affirms that she refutes her declarations in the interview published by Radikal Newspaper where she was presented as if she is in the managerial team of the TRT6. The interview entitled “TRT ŞEŞ’in Son Transferi” (The Latest Transfer of the TRT6) is considered as a manipulated news by Dezz Deniz. She articulates that she will not join the TRT6 as long as this channel is not supported by the Kurdish people’s will and the Turkish state continues to deny the Kurdish reality (Özgür Gündem Newspaper, 11 January 2009).

It is very important to underscore that in this context the TRT6 marks a shift in the definition and understanding of the resistance. Now, only singing and performing in Kurdish can no more be considered as a resistance. It is also expected that the singer/performer is clear in his/her political choices in terms of supporting the Kurdish political movement. Right now, the two camps are restructured on the basis of claims concerning who is the real Kurdish singer or who represents the true Kurdish music.

Kurdish artists who joined to the TRT6 are named the “White Kurds” in the critiques by the writers of Özgür Gündem newspaper. It is claimed that despite all the quests of Rojin and Akbal they can only recruit some local artists for their programs since the majority of the prominent and famous Kurdish art performers do not want to collaborate with this corrupted version of the Kurdish reality (ANF News Agency, 8 February 2009). They are considered as “the Kurdish people of the Turkish state”.

On the one hand, the term “White Kurds” is used to imply the ones whose Kurdish identity is “distorted” or “corrupted”. On the other hand, the Kurdish political movement insists on being the true representative of the Kurdish resistance and the Kurdish people.

What are considered as the signs through which the TRT6 illustrates a distorted version of Kurdishness? Primarily, there is a strong emphasis on the censorship practiced in the TRT6. Consequently, the question that comes into mind is the following: While the TRT6 marks the cultural recognition of the Kurdish people, what kind of the Kurdish people are recognized? The ANF News Agency (The major news agency of the Kurdish political movement) announces that the Kurdish words “Berfin” and “Amed” are banned in Ozan Yusuf’s songs in Rojin’s TV show at TRT6. Ozan Yusuf, a local singer, claimed that he regreted to participate in Rojin’s show because of the censorship of the TRT6. Yusuf gave an apology to the Kurdish people in the sense that he accepted to be seen in the TRT6. He added that “there is no way for the Kurdish artists to express themselves in the TRT6” and “no Kurdish national values can be presented in the TRT6 because of the strict censorship” (ANF News Agency, 8 February 2009). In the same news, MKM’s director, Veysi Güneş, also agreed with Yusuf and concludes:

TRT6 is the new strategy of the Turkish state to assimilate the Kurdish culture. Ozan Yusuf quickly understood his mistake and apologized from the Kurdish people. We appreciate this act and are very happy to hear that he saw the truth. We ask all the Kurdish artists not to be part of the TRT6 (ANF News Agency, 8 February 2009).

Afterwards the announcer of the TV show, Rojin herself criticized the censorship in the TRT6:

Can you imagine a TV show announcer who is unaware of the messages and issue of her own TV program beforehand, and then directs this same TV program? Can you imagine that everyone that I invited as the TV announcer is refused by the director of the TV

channel or every word I say is censored or intervened? This means that the directors of the TRT6 acts as if my program is a crime and I am a potential criminal (ANF News Agency, 14 April 2009).

When the TRT6 denied Rojin's claims about the censorship, Rojin decided to resign from the TRT6 because of the suppression of her freewill while preparing her TV show. However, Rojin's resignation from the TRT6 does not satisfy the readers of the Özgür Gündem newspaper

"Rojin left the TRT6 for the same reason she had left us before. Even though Rojin apologizes from the Kurdish people, this is not enough". They address to Rojin: "You would not be forgiven" "You would not be purified even if you clean with the water of one hundred streams."- "You joined to the side of the Turkish State while 16 other Kurdish TV channels are present yet banned by the Turkish state. The way that you wanted to be loved by them broke our heart. Dear Rojin, even if you were deceived by the promise about democracy, we, the conscious nationalist Kurdish people were never deceived by the TRT6. I had worked as a teacher there; I used to have many Turkish friends, unfortunately, according to my own experiences I had realized that they would never accept me with my Kurdish identity. I gave up trying to persuade them (Özgür Gündem's Readers' Comments, April 2009).

The pro-Kurdish Newspaper Özgür Gündem claims that Rojin, who was formerly considered as a militant woman singer (Özgür Gündem Newspaper, 4 March 2006), has disappointed her Kurdish fans when she accepted to prepare a program for the woman in the TRT6, which was called Rojiname, in the same format as the popular Turkish TV shows for the women (Özgür Gündem Newspaper, 13 January 2009). The news states that Rojin could not find any guests for her program. A Kurdish woman Seve Demir claims that she was offered 350 TL to be the guest in the program of Rojin, yet she refused this money. Seve Demir also states also that if

Rojin wants to be honored, she has to leave the TRT6. It is crucial to note another critique of Rojin's TV-Show in the TRT6, namely Rojiname: Kurdish women argue that they do not want to watch the repetition of the same format of the Turkish TV's woman programs in the Kurdish channel. They declare that TV shows for woman in the Turkish media serves to pacify women and their critical approach towards the dominant patriarchal discourse of the state. One can relate this to Adorno's interpretation of the popularization of music: The particular Kurdish music that is considered as ethnical world music and integrated into the market logic is considered as the assimilated music by the Kurdish cultural authorities. They claim that assimilated Kurdish music lost its ability of producing social and political critique. Therefore, Kurdish cultural authorities emphasize that the popularization of the Kurdish music has negative effects on the manifestations of the Kurdish resistance as counter-hegemony. For Gramsci, counter-hegemony should provide a comprehensive critique of the dominant power regime and produce alternative visions, perspectives and political imaginations (Carroll & Ratner, 1996). Therefore, for the members of the Kurdish political movement the Kurdish culture has to define and support another social project that transforms the status of women in the society positively. The Kurdish political movement has a significant group of female militants who explicitly express anti-patriarchal statements. However, for the feminist branch of the Kurdish movement the format of the Rojiname TV show serves only to strengthen the patriarchal values as promoted by the Turkish state.

In brief, the TRT6 is considered to be the manifestation of another distorted way of the Kurdish reality, where neither the free will of the Kurdish artists nor the Kurdish national values can be a part. Besides, the format of the TRT6's program differs from the revolutionary understanding of the Kurdish movement since the

TRT6 reproduces the format of other Turkish TV channels where critical thinking is repressed.

The Question Concerning Participation to the AKP Government's Invitation to The
Meeting with the Artists ("Sanatçı Açılımı"):

The meeting with the artists was introduced in the media as a platform for exchanging ideas between the prominent artists and the AKP government in terms of the Democratic Opening Policy. The meeting was presented in the mainstream media as a free and genuine public sphere where artists could manifest their demands regarding the Democratic Opening Policies and where the Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan could express his good intentions in terms of supporting this process of democratization. In this sense, through what it is said for it in the media, the meeting with the artists appeared as an opportunity of direct contact with the government. The Meeting with the artists planned as series of meetings, first with musicians, on February 20, 2010, second with the cinema and theater artists, on March 20, 2010, and the last one with the writers and literary critics. The last one of these meetings took place on April 17, 2010. Rojin was a participant of Erdoğan's Meeting with the Artists. In my interview with Rojin I asked her whether she got what she expected from the meeting. She stated that she was the only artist contesting for democracy:

It was awful, artists were talking about their own problems... This marks the poor artistic environment of Turkey... I was the only person who put to the agenda the issues that the Prime Minister did not approve on the agenda... I told about the Law concerning the Reform in the East (Şark İslahat Kanunu), I asked to give original Kurdish names for the Kurdish songs which were translated to Turkish back... I wanted him to facilitate the visit of the Kurdish artists to the eastern provinces, I talked about the problems in terms of the broadcast of the alternative Kurdish TV

channels... However, in the meeting I looked as if I was communicating from NASA²².

Rojin also stated that in the meeting she mentioned the problem concerning “the Kurdish children who threw stones” and how this problem overshadowed the process of Democratic Opening. For her, it is now Erdoğan’s turn to take these critiques seriously. Rojin considered Erdoğan as sincere and calm when he was listening to her.

On the other hand, Bogazici Gosteri Sanatları Topluluğu (BGST) was also invited to the meeting and Feryal Öney from the music band “Kardeş Türküler” participated to the meeting. Vedat, the soloist of the Kurdish rock music band “Bajar” (another project of the BGST), declared that they discussed for a longtime in email groups to decide whether or not they should go to the meeting as the BGST while the AKP seems “insincere” in its Democratic Opening Policies. He also stated that this was a usual process in the BGST for important decisions: “Because of the insincerity issues...the danger of being exploited was the issue...we decided to go there because in any case there is always a little that we can contribute, because of the current situation [didn’t change the fact that] people continue to die ...”²³

²² Interview with Rojin: “Genelde sanatçılar kendi sorunları ile konuştular bu korkunç bir şeydi. Türkiye’nin sanatında sanatçının olduğu noktayı gösteriyordu herhalde en aykırı konuşanlardan biri bendim. Belki başbakanın en hoşuna gitmeyecek konular, işte 1955 Şark Islahat planında Kürtçe şarkıların Türkçe şarkılara dönüştürülmesi hususunda, Kürtçe şarkılara isimlerinin iadesi, işte Batılı bütün sanatçıların bölgeye gelmesi bizim, Kürt sanatçılarının gidememesi ile ilgili teklif, işte güzel Kürtçe kanalların kurulması, ben orda NASA’dan bildiriyor gibiydim...”

²³ Interview with Vedat: Ama biz katılmadan evvel çok tartıştık. Bu güvensizlik meselelerinden dolayı.. Bir vizyon olarak kullanılma tehlikesi...Konuştuk böyle mail gruplarında. Bizde öyle olur tartışılır.. Gitmeye karar verdik; çünkü sonuçta öyle bir mesele ki, yani küçük bir şey bile katkıda bulunsak çünkü; öyle bir şey ki, insanlar ölmeye devam ediyorlar.. Bir canı kurtarmak bir şey söylemek ve programlı bir şekilde gidebiliyorsan ve sana orda sansür uygulanmıyorsa ve en önemli nesnelerden bir tanesi oraya gittiğinizde birkaç müzisyenle sohbetiniz olur bir şey yaparsınız Feryal işte orda Emel Sayın ile sohbet etmiş mesela şey muhabbeti falan dönmüş.. ermeni destek... Ermenistan’da konser versek küçük bir adım ama gitmeseydin belki böyle bir şey olacak mı bilmiyoruz ama olabilir protesto edeceksen de git orda et.. Rojda’nın durumu biraz farklı çünkü gerçekten gözaltına alınmış ona da bir şey diyemiyoruz.”

He also declared that the accurate place to criticize the insincerity of the AKP policies is the meeting. He added that nevertheless, he could not blame the MKM singer Rojda for not participating the meeting because she was protesting her arrest that took place just days before the meeting. Vedat said that the sociability between the artists which could be achieved in this meeting was also a precious outcome as in the case of the dialogue between Feryal and Emel Sayın for a collaboration to support Armenian artists. Furthermore, he claimed that he could imagine the feelings of the masses in Diyarbakır or Batman; there is kind of problem of ambiguity about AKP's Democratic Opening since the AKP wants to create its own Kurds. This is because, in his view, the process of opening is prolonged. He emphasized the lack of certainty and clarity as the example of the replacement of the newly founded linguistic department's name "Kurdology" with the department of "Living Cultures" shows. Education in the Kurdish mother tongue and the use of Kurdish for political propaganda were still banned²⁴.

Rojda, one of the major singers of the MKM, had a press conference in the MKM on the aftermath of her arrest two days before the meeting because of a song in the name of "Hewal Kamuran". She sang this song in Diyarbakır. Rojda told me that, this song was about the 13 Kurdish martyrs (who were members of the PKK) and these lyrics were the reason why she was arrested. This press conference was organized to express her refusal to Erdoğan's invitation to the "Artist Opening" ("Sanatçı Açılımı"). Rojda and two other major artists of the MKM, Genim from the music band Koma Çiya and Nurcan Değirmenci stated that Rojda's arrest on the

²⁴ Interview with Vedat "Çünkü şeyi bile veremediler. Bir üniversite açtılar ya bir kürsü kürdoloji diyemediler yani "yaşayan diler enstitüsü" falan yani böyle olunca Kürtler tarafından samimiyet devamlı şey yapılıyor. Bu da kendi Kürdünü yaratma meselesinde de samimi olmak- bir dil hakları meselesi -dil kullanım- sınırsız kullanımı- propaganda dili mi olur bir de şu çok büyük bir haksızlık inanılmaz bir şey yani siz bir çocuğu nasıl- çocuğun anadilde eğitim öğretim hakkı meselesini tanımamak..."

same night when she was invited to have brunch with Erdoğan marked the arbitrariness of the acts of the Turkish state and the insincerity of the Democratic Opening Policies. In my personal interview with Rojda, she claimed that her arrest was intentional and aimed to humiliate her as an artist before other artists who were invited to the meeting. She supported this claim with the fact that she was only called to make a deposition about the song and this generally only required a short visit to a police station, which she used to do it. However, she was kept under arrest for two nights, as if the police did not know where she lives or where she works. She stated that they usually send letters or call for her giving a deposition but this time was different. At this point, Erdoğan's invitation of Rojda to the artist opening meeting was a sign that the government considered Rojda, an artist from the MKM, as a Kurdish cultural authority, as a respondent in the reconciliation process. However, Rojda's arrest re-names her as a "terrorist" artist. When I asked her if her refusal could not be seen as the annulment of dialogue on their behalf, she tells that this brunch did not mean that she becomes a genuine partner in the reconciliation debate. In her words, this artist opening is only a brunch -no one can be heard- no agreement can be an outcome of this meeting. Rojda repeated her views in the press conference:

As long as the pressure on the Kurdish democratic institutions persists, and a thousand Kurdish civilians, intellectuals and artist are in jail because of the ongoing political operations, and Kurdish children who contest against the empire of cruelty with their small bodies but great hearts are tortured and kept within grey walls, we do not consider AKP's democratic opening and its meeting with artists as sincere. Therefore, we, the artists, would not be the instruments of this process of the reduction of the democratic powers²⁵.

²⁵ Rojda's Press Conference in the MKM, Beyoğlu. February 14, 2010 "Demokratik Kürt kurumlarına yönelik baskılar yoğunlaşarak sürdürülen siyasi operasyonlarla binlerce Kürt yurttaşı, aydın ve sanatçı tutuklandı. Soruşturmaya tabi tutuldu, zulüm imparatorluğuna minik bedenleri ama büyük yürekleri ile karşı duran Kürt çocukları işkencelerden geçirilerek gri beton duvarlar ardında hapsedildiği bir süreçte, AKP'nin demokratik açılım adı altında sanatçılarla yapacağı toplantıyı samimi bulmuyoruz. Biz sanatçılar olarak Kürt halkına, demokratik güçlerine uygulanan tasfiye değirmeninde su taşıyan kollar olmayacağız."

Consequently, it can be said that, according to the view of the MKM, the AKP must accomplish some requirements to be also accepted as sincere in this reconciliation period, so that it can become a respondent in this dialogue. In this sense, “the Democracy” of the Democratic Opening Policy, requires the friendship which cannot be based on the calculations about the upcoming election or on the potential Kurdish votes for the AKP but on sincerity.

The Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan, is also personally regarded as insincere besides AKP’s government’s Democratic Opening Policy. Rojda emphasized the arbitrariness of his acts, in his preferences and political stance, since Erdoğan can become the defender of the Palestinian children who are throwing stones to the Israel soldiers while he cannot defend Kurdish children who are throwing stones even if these children are the civilians of the very country where he is prime minister. Rojda stated that she also protested the state when Erdoğan was imprisoned because he read a poem of Mehmet Akif. She claims that Erdoğan is hypocritical in terms of his appreciation of democratization, because Erdoğan can introduce himself as a victim of the absence of democracy and free expression whereas she cannot do the same thing. She explained to me that the intolerance towards the lyrics of “Hewal Kamuran” that talks about the 13 Kurdish martyrs means that the limits of tolerance still persist when it comes to the Kurdish resistance and its agents. In her terms, the recognition of the Kurdish reality by the Turkish state can be achieved only through the Kurdish resistance. In other words, for her the Kurdish reality is what the Kurdish resistance presents. She stated that:

If one side calls the victim as a martyr this is a war. This is a war if you call the death as a martyr. Yet, if one dies and is called martyr while the other side does not accept and respect this, a mutual tolerance cannot be

formed... To be sure, if there are losses in a war, there will always be songs and lyrics written for them²⁶.

She mentioned that this song has to be written to remember and elevate the sacrifice of the PKK militants and their families and, there is no way for reconciliation with the Kurdish people without recognizing and respecting their loss:

Is this so difficult for God's sake? See what is seen! You cannot do this without seeing it- when I visit someone's house; she wants me to write a song for his son. What can I say to this woman? I cannot say that it is forbidden and I cannot name your son as martyr. How can I express this?²⁷

In this context, Kurdish artist's loyalty to resistance and conscience consist in interiorizing the guerilla's and his family's pain, as well as AKP's, the government of Turkey, sincerity depends on interiorizing and sharing the same pain, the pain of the other. This reminds Derrida's argument about mourning: "One has to give the dead anything that it can now be only in us, the living" (Derrida, 2001). In this sense, the AKP and the Turkish public opinion have to mourn in a mimetic way, the PKK member's death by allowing the spread of banned songs of Kurdish resistance in order to be considered as "sincere" by the members of the Kurdish political movement. Only at this point the peace can be achieved. Rojda also stated that the current popular movies touch on the question concerning the September 12 military coup's terror, could be made in Turkey only 20 years after the coup and this is unfair and not respectful to "what was experienced"²⁸. It is somehow just like that the "real"

²⁶ Interview with Rojda: "Diğer taraf buna şehit diyorsa savaştır..s avaştta ölen şehittir.. eğer bir taraf diğer tarafın şehidine saygı göstermezse kabul etmezse, tahammül etmezse- tahammül sınırları kalkmaz ama şu da bir gerçektir ki her ülkede bir savaş varsa ve yitirilenler varsa bunun adına şarkılar da yapılır destanlar da yapılır dile getirilir ne kadar yasaklı olursa olsun."

²⁷ Interview with Rojda: "Çok bu zor allahaşkına, bırakın da yaşanmışlıkları da görün. Görmezden gelemezsiniz ki., gelemesiniz. Birinin evine gittiğimde diyor ki, benim oğluma şarkı yap, ne diyeyim ki ben şimdi bu kadına? Yok yasaktır söyleyemem mi diyim. Oğluna şehit diyemem mi diyeyim, nasıl bir cümle kuralıyım?"

²⁸ Interview with Rojda: "12 Eylül filmleri yapılıyor ama bunu yirmi yıl evvel yapabilirler miydi? 20 yıl evvel Türkiye'de bundan bahsetmek mümkün müydü? Devletin bu kadar işkence yaptığı

peace can only be achieved while each part shares other's loss and memory, so that one can admit that there is no victor of the war. Derrida invites us to explore the possibility of friendship without the necessity of fraternal kinship, without resemblance, without affinity, without analogy" (Derrida, 1994, pp.154-55), where he deconstructs the naturalization of the limitation of fraternity to the biological brother. In this sense, the mourning of the Turkish public opinion for a militia's death can be the sign of friendship which is "unshared, without reciprocity" primarily because it is not an "amour-propre" or narcissistic self-love as the militia is always defined as the other in the Turkish public opinion. Secondly, because mourning for a friend itself lacks reciprocity in Derrida's terms, as with death, one escapes the proximity and the distance of a given friend. Derrida defines mourning, as remaining loyal to the dead one; one becomes friendlier when he loves than he is loved. In this term, Kurdish political and social agents of resistance should be considered as friends and partners in the reconciliation process.

Considering all the above mentioned statements of various performers of the Kurdish music, one can identify a division between those who regard Kurdish question as the cultural recognition of the Kurdish identity and those who identify it as the political recognition of the Kurdish identity besides the recognition of the Kurdish cultural rights. The latter group is totally not satisfied with the AKP's democratic opening policies and its liberal approach to the Kurdish question. This dissatisfaction stems from the limited approach of the AKP to the Kurdish question as a problem of cultural minority. That is why, in AKP's statements in the media, there is the combination of Kurdish question with that of other minorities just as in

Diyarbakır'da insanları çamurdan..kim diyebilirdi..kim iddia edebilirdi..ama şimdi filmleri yapıyor değil mi...şimdi bunu kabul etmeli herkes..bugün bir savaş yaşandı bir acı yaşandı bunun türküsü olacak bunun filmi de olacak..dansı da olacak..bunun folkloru de olacak..bu da kültüredir..bu yaşanılacak..o tarafta... Bu taraf da onu görmeli."

the example of the change of the name of the Kurdish Opening later to the Democratic Opening embracing all the ethnic and subaltern problems and promises to solve these for forming one but democratic pluralist Turkey. This approach of the AKP seems to be perceived as an act of insincerity as it misses to offer the right of representation of the Kurdish people by the Kurdish political movement and introduces the AKP government as the only legitimate representative of the Kurds.

Thus, unlike the former approach of the Turkish state to the Kurdish question that was based on the absolute denial of the Kurdish presence and political demands, the policies of the AKP aim to divide the Kurdish movement from inside by recognizing the presence of the Kurdish culture but not the Kurdish political demands. The lack of steps for constitutional reform to recognize Kurdish cultural and political rights can be considered as the pacification and assimilation of the Kurdish identity. Kurdish cultural rights are recognized not only by the AKP's initiative but thanks to the long lasting Kurdish resistance. Thus, the cultural rights of the Kurds can never be guaranteed as long as they are not persistently supported by the Kurdish political movement and not combined by the constitutional recognition of the Kurds.

As a result of the AKP's Democratic Opening Policies, the distinction between the "Kurdish-speaking citizens on the streets" and the "Kurdish terrorists on the mountains" has persisted, even though a certain part of the PKK members who fight on the mountains at night are the tradesmen in the streets during the day, and although the members of the PKK are sons, daughters, fathers or mothers of the 'Kurdish civilians' in the streets. While the Kurdish movement attempts to form the Kurdish political identity through the collapse of this distinction, the liberal AKP government persistently operates in the zone of indistinction between the citizen and

the terrorist in that it exercises its sovereignty “on account of the security of the population in the region”. Some sections of the Turkish liberal civil society also took over this separation between the civilian Kurds and the terrorists. The formation of the so-called ‘civillian’-‘terrorist’ distinction within Kurds allowed the Turkish government to continue its military interventions in the region. In this sense, “the democracy” of the Democratic Opening Policy is not based on the democracy of friendship since it is defined by the dominant concepts of national identity, national borders and the classical axiom of friendship where Aristotle defines a friend as another self. Hence, the Democratic Opening Policy seems unfriendly to the Kurdish political movement, because it considers the Kurds as outside of the fraternal scope and does not approve them as a true partner in the reconciliation process.

Thus, the attempt to ‘minoritize’ the Kurds is an ideological imposition of the liberals from-above who intend to reduce the Kurdish political struggle for sovereignty and self-government to a rights-based politics of cultural recognition. This rights-based politics of cultural recognition grounds a new form of monoculturalism according to Povinelli’s analysis of Australia’s recognition aboriginal rights. She defines this as an index and requirement of a new national membership for a more radical basis of national unity in the aftermath of the history of shame and traumatic past of struggle and wrong-doings. However, this type of multiculturalism “do not need to experience the fundamental alterity of indigenous discourses, desires, practices or their potentially radical challenge to the nation and its core institutions and values such as democracy and the common law” (Povinelli, 1998, p. 582). The state, now enjoys the right to discern when a social or cultural practice has ceased to function as a difference as such therefore it expands its discriminatory powers rather than restricting them. If one adapts this argument to the

Democratic Opening Policy and the new multiculturalist understanding of the Turkish citizenship (neo-Ottomanism as popularly called), Kurdish political movement and its claim for sovereignty as the co-constitutive power of Turkey is not considered as part of cultural or social rights of the Kurdish people. Instead, the Kurdish movement is only recognized within the community of abstract citizenship of Turkey. In brief, Turkish state's new multicultural imaginary and discourse helps to adjust but not to transform the core state institutions and narratives.

Precisely, this case can be understood by Gramsci's definition of hegemonic power that neutralize, transform or even incorporate with resistance. In this term, the AKP government seeks to constitute a new sense of reality that encompasses the oppressed ones' interests to endure its hegemony and its claim for a unitary nation. The subordination of the Kurds as a cultural minority to a liberalized version of the Turkish national identity is also compatible with the recent policies of the AKP government that intends to separate Kurdish political demands from the Kurdish cultural identity. In this sense, today in Turkey there is an explicit ideological consensus and political solidarity between the liberal intelligentsia and the liberal Islamist AKP government.

At this point it is crucial to note that the Kurdish political movement, which is composed of the PKK, the pro-Kurdish political party, and the pro-Kurdish NGOs, has never identified the Kurds as a "minority" or a "sub-identity" in the liberal sense of the word. Rather, the Kurdish political movement claims that constitutionally the Kurds should be considered as the "co-constitutive" force of the Turkish Republic together with the Turks. Moreover, the Kurdish political movement defines its political objective as political autonomy and self-governance (Türkiye Barış Meclisi -The Peace Parliament of Turkey- 2007). Thus, from the very beginning on the

Kurdish political movement has risen demands concerning political sovereignty and power sharing that were not limited to the liberal demands concerning the recognition of the cultural and legal rights of the Kurds.

CHAPTER 5

THE ANALYSIS OF THE MKM'S DISCURSIVE CATEGORIZATION OF THE KURDS: "SINCERE" AND "INSINCERE" ARTISTS

Judging the Conscience of the Artist: Singing in Kurdish

After the introduction of a new liberal age of the Kurdish question in Turkey and after the claims of the AKP government in terms of representing "the Kurdish reality", the question concerning sincerity is mobilized as a counter-argument by the Kurdish musicians and performers of the Kurdish culture. The sincerity of an artist is defined as the marker of the conscience of the Kurdish resistance and its fight to end the sufferings of the Kurdish people. In this perspective, artists who joined to the TRT6 or sang in Kurdish only after the introduction of the Democratic Opening Policies are called "insincere" by the members of the Kurdish movement since these artists are considered as the collaborators of the Turkish state's new hegemonical project that tends to conceal the ongoing assimilation of the Kurds to the idea of the unitary nation. For the supporters of the Kurdish movement the Turkish state exercises its hegemony through its new liberal tools and new understanding of the right-based recognition of the Kurds as a cultural minority, implements its educative project thanks to some "insincere" performers of the Kurdish art and thus, endures its cultural hegemony over the Kurdish subjects. The reproduction of the cultural hegemony also reflects the current political structure and solidifies the status-quo concerning the hierarchical power relationship between the Kurds and the Turkish state. This part of the chapter seeks to demonstrate the key concept of "conscience"

of an artist and to interpret it according to the Gramscian understanding of hegemony.

The period of reconciliation characterized by the Democratic Opening Policies has resulted in the proliferation of the use of the Kurdish language in the songs or in the statements appeared in the media or public performances that took place besides the TRT6. In this period of the first Artist Meeting of the AKP government, the BDP, the successor of the pro-Kurdish party DTP, also invited Yılmaz Erdoğan and Mahsun Kırmızıgül, popular artists from Kurdish origin, to make movies in Kurdish against the assimilationist politics towards the Kurdish culture. Yılmaz Erdoğan refused the leader of the BDP, Selahattin Demirtaş by claiming that this invitation stems from populist concerns, however he accepted AKP's invitation to the Artist Meeting series. This is a striking example concerning the struggle between the AKP government and the Kurdish movement for the representation of the Kurdish art.

Genim (Hüseyin İldan) is the male soloist of the music band Koma Çiya, one of the oldest music bands of the MKM. They have released various albums since 1991 such as Rozerin, Venamire (1999), Xeli (2004), Dilana Besinor (2006). He stated that he does not approve İbrahim Tatlıses or Mahsun Kırmızıgül to sing in Kurdish. For him, if they sing right now in Kurdish, this is because of their concerns in terms of having more popularity and not because of their concern in terms of supporting their own common mother tongue. Mehmet is one of the members of the group “Genç Dengbejler” (Dengbeji Ciwan). He has been working in the MKM for 9 years. He told me about İbrahim Tatlıses:

He came here from his own cave and he translated all the Kurdish songs into Turkish. What he has done is only serving for the system. Nothing more...his artistic stance is only about converting the Kurdish songs

into nonsense... You cannot compare Ahmet Kaya and İbrahim Tatlıses, can you? İbrahim Tatlıses speaks in Kurdish but for what purpose?²⁹

Mehmet also stated that right now İbrahim Tatlıses is old and it is late for him to come back to his own essence. Xalide, another member of the Dengbeji Ciwan, claimed that only with “conscientious” people we can reach peace and not everybody wants to be with the Kurds since the Kurds are a suffering people. Therefore, even if Hüllya Avşar, İbrahim Tatlıses or Mahsun Kırmızıgül declare their Kurdishness, they do not see themselves in the heart of the problem and Kurdish question and they still consider themselves as others³⁰. On the other hand, Vedat from the BGST said that İbrahim Tatlıses has always wanted to sing in Kurdish and he declared that publicly, but there were still other people, who were not present in the struggle for speaking in Kurdish but benefited from the new convenient period through performing in the TV programs and also there are even some people who even does not know Kurdish such as Berdan Mardini³¹. Meral, the former vocalist of the music bands Agire Jiyan and Koma Asmin and, now a soloist singer, stated that she appreciates Hüllya Avşar, who is half-Kurdish from her father side, for only just one thing: She refused the demand to sing in Kurdish right now because she had not sung in Kurdish before the Democratic Opening. Meral added that there is some kind of a timeline concerning “before the Opening” and “after the Opening” to judge the sincerity of an artist for

²⁹ Interview with dengbej Mehmet: “Adam mağaradan çıktı geldi. Ne kadar Kürtçe şarkı varsa hepsini Türkçeleştirdi. Onun yaptığı sadece sisteme hizmet. Başka hiçbir şey değil. İçini boşaltma amaçlı onun sanat anlayışı. İbrahim Tatlıses ile Ahmet Kayayı karşılaştıramazsın değil mi? İbrahim Tatlıses Kürtçe konuşuyor söylüyor ama hangi amaçla?”

³⁰ Interview with dengbej Xalide: “Türkiye’de akan kanın durmasına dönük vicdanı bir eylemi olması gerekiyor bizimle... Elin taşın altına sokma her babayığının harcı değildir. Herkes Kürtlerin yanında olmak istemez yani. Kürtler acılı bir halktır. Bir Hüllya Avşar, Mahsun Kırmızıgül de İbrahim Tatlıses de Kürdüm diyor ama sorunun içerisinde kendilerini görmüyorlar... Kendilerini soyutlamışlar... Kendilerini ötekileştirmişler.”

³¹ Interview with Vedat: “Hiçbir mücadele vermemiş ortalık rahatlayınca yapanlar yok mu var. İsim verelim Berdan Mardin veririm direk. Noluyor yani? Kürtçe bilmiyor gidiyor program yapıyor. Kürtçe bilmiyor ya arkadaş.. Gidiyor televizyonda program yapıyor... Kürt değil... Olabilir mi yani... Korkunç bir şey yani.. Yani İbrahim Tatlıses’in durumu daha farklı...”

his concern about the Kurdish identity³². In her view, all the Kurdish artists had to defend Kurdish ethnic freedom before it became a popular and state-friendly idea. All the popular artists from the Kurdish origin had to sing in Kurdish before the AKP's involvement if they were sincere and conscientious. However, Rojda blamed Hülya Avşar:

She did not do anything for the Kurdish people...when did she make a movie for the Kurds...when did she stop talking of her lovers in one of her interviews? Is she an artist really? I do not blame her of not doing anything but if I were in her place with all the media support, I would sing this song (Hewal Kamuran) there...if they want they can arrest me...what can it be...I will fight for the Kurdish music and songs...I would sing a folkloric song, sing a lullaby that my mother has sung to me...let say...I would tell my culture and support it...but unfortunately, they became puppets when they become popular in the media.³³

For Meral, MKM's artists and all conscientious artists have already paid the price for the liberation of the Kurdish music:

We have struggled for this for years, we got arrested on stage, we got caught in the scene, we had to leave the performance by force, and we suffered for this- Right now, they are them [the popular musicians] who benefited from it...I do not need to benefit from any of it either...someday, I do not know, one day perhaps, Rojin, Nilüfer Akbal or İbrahim Tatlıses and Mahsun Kırmızıgül will be remembered for performing in Kurdish- this is ugly.³⁴

³² Interview with Meral: "Hülya Avşar'ın burada bir noktada deyimi vardı..cümleleri çok hatırlıyorum sadece bir soru sorulmuştu "Kürtçe şarkı söylemek ister misiniz?" diye sorulmuştu o ne demişti "istemem" "niye" demişti, demişti ki "bu açılım olmadan önce yapsaydım daha doğru olurdu "ama açılım olduktan sonra bunu söylemem doğru olmaz" dedi. Bu noktada da Hülya Avşar'a katılıyorum sadece, söylediği doğru bir şey- öncesi ile sonrası ayrı bir şey- ortada bir açılım var onun öncesi ve sonrası var-insanlar ona göre neyin doğru ve neyin yanlış ayırt edebilir."

³³ Interview with Rojda: "Hülya Avşar da hiçbir şey yapmadı yani.. Kürtler adına film mi çekti.. Kürtlerin yanında mı durdu.. Kürtler o acıyı taşıyo mu dedi? Hangi röportajında sevgililerinden bahsetmedi de ne yaptı.. sanatçı bu mu? Ben yapmıyor diye onu eleştiremem ama bir Kürt olarak bu seviyede olmuş olsam, o medya ile ATV gibi bir yerde programlarda konuşsam, program yapsam, ben o şarkıyı [Hewal Kamuran] orda okumak isterim.. Atsınlar orda beni..nolacak ki..sonuçta Kürtçe parça için savaşırdım..bir halk parçası söyledim..ninni söyledim..derdim annem bu ninniye söyledim..kendi kültürümü anlattırdım...bu kültürün yanında olurdum ama maalesef medyada bu hale gelince kukla oluyorsun."

³⁴ Interview with Meral: "Kürt müziğinin varlığı için biz bunun savaşını verdik biz yıllarca. Gözaltına alındık tutuklandık sahneden yaka paça indirildik bunların acısını ben çektim. Şimdi onlar bunun kaymağını yiyorlar. Gerçi benim o kaymağa ihtiyacım yok ama kötü bir şey yani...ondan da bahsetmiyorum...yani sen hiçbir şekilde kabul görmedin Kürt şarkıcı olarak. Şimdi Kürt müziğini yapanlar için diyorum ileriki tarihlerde öyle bir şey çıkacak belki diycekler ki, Kürt müziğini yapan insanlar Rojin, Nilüfer Akbal..efendime söyleyeyim İbrahim Tatlıses, Mahsun Kırmızıgül de bir film yaptı tamam..Onlar anılacak yani...Bu yani ben buna isim bulamıyorum aslında ..çok kirli bir şey bu."

Rojin and Nilüfer Akbal are two Kurdish singers who participated shows on TRT6. Meral blamed them for joining the AKP's game of democracy by accepting TRT6's offer while at the same time all the Kurdish leaders of the local municipalities were arrested. In fact, Rojin has already resigned from TRT6 because of the severe censorship regarding her performance in her TV show: Rojinname in the TRT6.

Rojin responds to the ones that blame her:

Why are you so angry at me? Do you want to see on TRT6 some ignorant people who will present "Memedo"s song as a song "written by terrorists who are killing the "Mehmetçiks" (common name for Turkish soldier- she imitates the pronunciations of a TRT TV announcer) or do you want to see on TRT6 someone who knows Kurdish history and Kurdish language?...Is the TRT6 also a battlefield...go ask to them!³⁵

When I interviewed with Rojin and asked her about the critique by the MKM about her participatio to the TRT6, she stated that she imagined the TRT6 as a TV channel broadcasting for 24 hours in Kurdish, as an apology of the Turkish state towards Kurdish people and that was why she joined the TRT6³⁶. She expressed that she planned Rojinname as a TV-show educating women and encouraging people to learn Kurdish alphabet by teaching Kurdish funny rolls. She defended her TV show for announcing even Oscar and Grammy nominees that she defines as the proof of the breaking down with the traditionalist Kurdish dogmas in her show. She told that Rojinname was the only program in the TRT6 that had an audience of 6 millions people and still people are criticizing her for joining the TRT6 even though members of the BDP and the Kurdish movement secretly watch her nightshows. She added

³⁵ Interview with Rojin: "Neyime sinirlendiniz bu kadar? "Memedo" şarkısına Mehmetçiği öldüren teröristler (TRT sunucusu ses tonlamasının taklidini yapıyor) yazmıştır diyen cahil beyinler mi orda olmalı yoksa Kürtçeye, Kürt tarihine hakim biri mi orda olmalı? Orası bir mevzi midir değil midir? Lütfen bunu da sorun..."

³⁶ Interview with Rojin: "Tabi ki, devletin politikası var ama devlet inkarın inkarı diyor...bir dili yok sayıp sonra bir dilde günde 24 saat Kürtçe kanal açılırsa, bu bir nevi özür dilemektir...bir adamdan alacağın 100 milyar ise 10 milyar vereceği zaman hayır demezsin..."

that she speaks much more fluent Kurdish compared to the ones who blame her. She also said that her Kurdish name, Rojin, was her original name and not a pseudonym just like those of others³⁷. Rojin brought to the court several times, once before the DGM (State Security Court), for singing a song in which there is the word “Kurdistan”. She said that:

This is a name very common for Kurdish people of Syria for their daughters. This is because they cannot even have an identity, a house, a property, they do not have the right for a civil marriage with their husbands... so they name their daughter as Kurdistan...this was a love song...that is why...another one for my name for a concert...I could not take the stage because of my name but all of it is ended³⁸

When I asked why she did not prefer to make a TV program of the same format for RojTV, she stated that only their own artists [the members of the Kurdish political community], can make TV programs for the RojTV and, her music clips are not broadcast anymore in the MMC.

Rotinda Yetkiner, is the art director of the RojTV (pro-Kurdish TV channel) and MMC (Kurdish Music Channel) that are located in Brussels. He is one of the founders of the MKM, he told me that he had to leave Turkey when he was sentenced for years long imprisonment. In my interview with Rotinda I reminded him that Rojin was the former instructor of the theatre group in the MKM, even though she did not tell this proudly such as a recent MKM artist, and I asked to Rotinda if he would broadcast Rojin’s music clips in the MMC:

If you ask this to me as a person, I would say that I will not broadcast it, I am sure that our audience also would not accept this...these people (such as Rojin) betrayed their own people in strictly speaking...

³⁷ Interview with Rojin: “Bunun dedikodusunu yapan herkesten iyi Kürtçe konuşuyorum. Benim adım Rojin, onlar çakma isimlerle çıkıp birçoğu sonradan ismini Kürtçe yapmış insanlar.”

³⁸ Interview with Rojin: “Suriye Kürtlerinde yaygın bir isimdir- kızlarının adına Kürdistan koymak yaygındır. Çünkü Suriye Kürtlerinin kimlikleri yok, ev de satın alamıyorlar orda- buradaki gibi değil- kimlik yok, mülk alamazlar, nikahları yok eşleri ile- çocuklarının adını Kürdistan koyuyorlar dolayısıyla...öyle bir şarkıydı..onun için dava açıldı- başka bir şarkıydı ona da açıldı konsere ismimden dolayı çıkarılmadım ama çoğu halloldu..bir tanesinden hala..onu da hallettik sonunda..”

nowadays, this is like one gets to the other side in the battlefield and one speaks in the enemy's language.³⁹

He stated that Rojin probably joined to the TRT6 for financial reasons and left it when she had enough. When he talked about Nilüfer Akbal, he emphasized that Nilüfer's voice is so precious among Kurdish female singers and he is so upset when she joined TRT6 since "she had committed the worst sin ever" and "she was no more a beautiful Kurdish girl": "Nilüfer was a very beautiful Kurdish girl"⁴⁰.

Considering all the above mentioned statements, one can clearly say that a Kurdish performer of the Kurdish music is judged according to the period when he/she started to perform in Kurdish: Whether she started to sing in Kurdish before the AKP's Democratic Opening Policies or after the introduction of these policies. Another criterion of sincerity is about whether or not a Kurdish musician was suppressed or interfered by the Turkish state for the manifestation of his cultural difference and whether or not he fought for the right of being and claiming a Kurd. In that sense, if an artist from Kurdish origin supports the AKP's Democratic Opening this attitude is usually considered that s/he serves to eliminate the legitimacy of the political representation of the Kurds by the Kurdish political authorities and thus, s/he serves to satisfy AKP's approach in terms of the limited cultural recognition of the Kurds. Rojin, declared also that she for a longtime has suffered from the Turkish state's interventions on her works before the Democratic Opening process, however, she is still considered as an unconscientious and insincere artist by the MKM and its

³⁹ Interview with Rotinda: "Bana birey olarak, Rotinda olarak soruyorsan, ben Rojin'in klibini yayınlamam, eminim izleyicimiz de kesinlikle buna müsaade etmez. Bu tip insanlar dar günde kendi halkını sattılar gerçekten. Tam kelimenin anlamıyla kendi halkının sırtına hançerle vurmak gibi bir şey. Bugünlerde sen çık git, düşmanın hat saffında yer al- ve düşmanın diliyle konuş."

⁴⁰ Interview with Rotinda: "Nilüfer, Kürt sanatçılar içinde, sesi olarak, gerçekten çok güzel bir renkti...yaşamının en büyük hatasını en büyük günahını en büyük çirkin davranışını yaparak kendi kendini bu halkın gözünden düşürdü; yoksa Nilüfer ses rengi olarak çok güçlü bir sesti ve çok güzel bir Kürt kızıydı ama TRT6'ya girene kadar..."

followers since she accepted AKP's insincere democratic opening concerning the Kurdish question.

However, some Turkish popular singers such as Ajda Pekkan and Sezen Aksu, who once sung in Kurdish, were appreciated by the MKM members. They are considered as "sincere" artists. Rojda appreciated the artistic stance of Tarkan and Sinan Çetin, as well, since they mentioned the nonsense about the killing of brothers. On the other hand, Rojda blamed Kurdish popular artists who do not express this kind of statements even though they are ethnically Kurd and singing in Kurdish. Bülent Ersoy, a well known transsexual singer, is appreciated, too, because of her antimilitarist statements in one of the Popstar TV Shows when she denied sending her imagined son to the military service. A high majority of the Kurdish artists want to perform a duet with Sezen Aksu. Sezen Aksu is respected not only because of her musical talents but also because of her personality. Sezen is defined as an example of being a true artist since she was not an artist of "paparazzi" in their words. Sidar and Yusuf, two musicians from Dengbeji Ciwan (Genç Dengbejler) emphasized that even before, Sezen Aksu has already come to the Kurdistan and Newroz events.⁴¹ Meral also mentioned that Sezen Aksu's concert entitled "Türkiye Şarkıları" ("Songs of Turkey" - 2002) where she sung together with Armenian, Greek and Kurdish chorus:

She took the stage with children of Diyarbakır in her own performance. She sung a song of Çar Newa (a famous Kurdish music band in Germany). She loved it and she never denied the presence of different languages in Turkey...it was a good gesture... it was what it has to be done...it was not like I can do this thanks to the Democratic Opening. All the things done later are not sincere...If you did not sing before, why are you singing in Kurdish right now?⁴²

⁴¹ Interview with dengbej Sidar and Yusuf: "Sezen Aksu Türkiye'de geçmişi olan bir insandır. Kürtler açısından fikirleri insiyatifi olan, saygındır...dinlediğimizde de özüksediğimiz bir sanatçı. Kürdistan etkinlikleri olsun..Dersime geldi..Kendi açımızdan çok özüksüyoruz yani..."

⁴² Interview with Meral: "Sezen Aksu'yu doğru buluyorum neden? Çünkü böyle bir açılım daha yokken böyle bir çalışma yaptı bu ve çocuklarla ilgili bir çalışma yaptı. O konserde ben de vardım. Harbiye'deydi. Bu Diyarbakır Korosu ile birlikte oluşturmuş olduğu Diyarbakırlı çocukları çıkarmıştı kendi sahnesine. Onun dışında Çar Newa'nın bir şarkısını kendisi seslendirdi .Sevdi söyledi bu dilin

Mehmet from Dengbeji Ciwan also respects Sezen's artistic stance because she is sensitive about the Kurdish question even though she is not Kurdish⁴³. Moreover, Tarkan is also one of the popular Turkish singers that they want most to perform a duet. Seyitxan, the founder and member of the Koma Berxwedan, left Turkey and immigrated to Germany in 1978. I met him in Köln at the Kurdish Institute. He told me that Tarkan's arrest for drugs was intentional because he is conscientious enough fight against Hasankeyf's destruction and his arrest was intentional to threaten and to frighten him. Nazan Öncel is also introduced by Genim as "a humanist and oppositional artist" since she wrote a song for Ceylan Önkol, a 12 years old girl, who died in Diyarbakır because of the explosion of a bomb splinter that belonged to the Turkish army.

To be sure, the artists from Kurdish and Turkish origin are judged differently by the MKM's members on the issue about having conscience. While the Turkish popular artists performing art in Kurdish are over-honored, there is not a particular critical statement about several popular Turkish artists who participated the AKP's Meeting with the Artists.

The severe critique of the Kurdish artists who are supporting AKP's approach to the Kurdish question are considered by the MKM members as popular Kurdish artists who have an influence on the Kurdish audience and who provided an

varlığını inkar etmedi yani. Böyle bir dil var ve ben bu şarkıyı söylemek istiyorum, çok güzel bir davranıştı, olması gereken de buydu aslında. Bu olması gerekiyordu. Açılımla beraber ben bunu yapayım edeyim değil, bize gün yüzü göründü hayır... Kürtçeyi raflardan indirelim söyleyelim...Böyle bir yanlış ile Sezen Aksu'nun yaptığı çok farklı...Çok sevdiğim de bir insan..Yeri çok ayırdır...Biraz belli ediyordur kendini davranışlarıyla birçok şeyi de belli ediyordur. Ama diğer noktada yapılan şeylerin hiçbiri bana samimi gelmiyor. Önceden söylemiyordun niye şimdi söylüyorsun?"

⁴³ Interview with dengbej Mehmet: "Sezen Aksu'yu barış adına biraz samimi görüyorum en azından Türktür Kürtler kadar acıyı hissetmese de duyarlılık gösteriyorlar. Ben onun yaklaşımını biraz doğru buluyorum gerçekten. Bir katkı sunuyor."

inaccurate impression concerning the success of the Democratic Opening Policy in terms of recognizing the Kurdish reality fully. In the archives of the pro-Kurdish newspaper Özgür Gündem's website even Rojin and Nilüfer Akbal are mentioned as revolutionary supporters of the Kurdish resistance. Consequently, the difference between AKP's approach and that of Kurdish resistance to the "Kurdish reality" is not well-defined and manifested in terms of claiming to represent the Kurdish cultural identity. Rojin or Nilüfer Akbal, who were introduced as the perfect examples of the Kurdish revolutionary women, later on appeared on TRT6 and thus started to be called as "insincere" artists by the Kurdish movement. Hence, the question concerning sincerity marks the boundary between AKP government and Kurdish resistance. The question of sincerity is mobilized here as critique of what Gramsci defines as hegemony. For Gramsci, state institutions secure the consent of the people by political and cultural hegemony so that the state power domesticates all resistance by including it (Cox, 1987, p.251). 'Hegemony' means the formation of domination without the use of physical violence. Following Gramsci's critique of power, Kurdish cultural authorities claim that the Turkish state by exercising hegemony seems as if it secures Kurdish citizen's cultural identity and promotes the idea that Kurdish resistance accomplished its mission and there is no need for any other body to manifest Kurdish identity besides the Turkish state. Thus, the Democratic Opening Policy created a hegemonical consensus cultures in which Kurdish subjects identifies their interests as the interest of the Turkish state. This helps to reproduce the status-quo rather than transforming it. For Gramsci, the subaltern classes have to create a culture of its own, which would escape the idea that bourgeois values defined as "natural" or "normal" values for the society, and thus the subaltern groups would attract and mobilize the oppressed and intellectual sects of

the society for the interests of the lower classes. Thus, according to Gramsci for the consolidation of the power and hegemony, the cultural domain is a major field of “the war of position”. In the Kurdish case in Turkey, the newly introduced multiculturalist imaginary of the Turkish citizenship as a natural and normal value, seems to promise the good for all, tried to be overthrown by the Kurdish movement through the discourse of “insincerity” and through the otherization of the so-called “insincere” artists of the Kurdish art.

Judging the Conscience of the Artist: Singing for the Kurdish Resistance

“Singing for the guerilla” is a sign of sincerity as long as it is still banned by the Turkish state, thus, it means a threat to the unitary understanding of the Turkish state and is not included in the new multiculturalist imaginary of Turkish citizenship. “Army of the Artists” is one of the catch-up words for singers of songs dedicated to the Kurdish militia. Mehmet from the Dengbeji Ciwan told me about his wish to write a song for the militia:

There was a guerilla in our town. He became a martyr. They came there in the downtown. It was a sad thing...I was not able to write a song at that moment but I thought of it...I want to make the Kurdish resistance benefit from “dengbejlik”. That’s why I am in the MKM.⁴⁴

Rotinda, art director of the RojTV, has many video clips that shows the mountains, where Rotinda sings together with the Kurdish militia. The director of these video clips, Halil Uysal, “became a martyr”, Rotinda said. Female militants are usually the main protagonists in these video clips. Rotinda named them as “the flowers of the mountains” that he can much more easily develop empathy since he is an artist. He

⁴⁴ Interview with dengbej Mehmet: “Bizim orda bir gerilla vardı., şehit oldu., ben gördüm, geldiler köyün orasına.. Çok acı bir durumdu...Bu duygular içerisinde ben bir parça yapmadım ama düşünüyorum yapmayı... Ben dengbejliği ulusal Kürt mücadelesinde değerlendirmek istiyorum. Zaten MKM de bunun için var...”

told me when I asked if he has also love songs, he advised me to listen to the song “Benda Te Me”: “this is about the purest love between two guerillas- I am the witness of their love, they were my friends from university, they joined the PKK, and became martyrs one after 7 years than the other⁴⁵.” He proudly mentioned me that he had a chance to meet with Abdullah Öcalan in the PKK camps. Every two years, he stated that he will come to visit Kurdistan’s mountains. He told that there he can be easily inspired: “Sometimes I can write a full song there per a day, here one per 6 months⁴⁶”. Seyitxan stated that he wrote not about dualistic love but only about communal love of the society which he identifies with the Kurdish and other subaltern groups’ resistance. Other artists that I interview also emphasized that they would like to sing with the Kurdish militia. Xalide claimed that “the guerillas perform a good natural art within the nature and this is because they fight for the freedom of the suppressed people. They are respectable and beautiful people⁴⁷”

On the other hand, Vedat, the soloist of the music bands Kardeş Türküler and Bajar that are not part of the MKM but the BGST, stated that Bajar’s musical tendency is to bring to the agenda the issues of everyday politics and that is what they tell and what can do⁴⁸. Therefore, he said, in their repertoire they do not have songs dedicated to the militia. One of the Bajar’s song, “Berfin” (“Snowdrop” -

⁴⁵ Interview with Rotinda: “Güzel en temiz gerillada yaşanan büyük aşklardır...ben bunların şahidiydim özellikle “benda te me” şarkısı...Benim iki arkadaşım üniversiteden katıldılar...7 yıl arayla her ikisi de şehit düştü.”

⁴⁶ Interview with Rotinda: “Bazen günde bir beste çıkıyordu ama burada bazen 6 ayda bir beste çıkıyor ancak.”

⁴⁷ Interview with dengbej Xalide: “Öyle bir şansım olmadı. Onların sanatına saygı duyuyorum. Güzel sanat yapıyorlar. Doğayla doğa içerisinde...Bütünleşmiş insanlar..Bir yerde karşılaşırsak sahne alır...Çünkü onlar özgürlüklerinin ayaklarını altına almış halkların savaşını veren insanlar, saygı duyulması gereken insanlar...Ve sanatları da doğaldır... Doğaya, kendi acılarına dönüktür... Saygı duyulması gereken insanlar diye düşünüyorum. Güzel insanlar...”

⁴⁸ Interview with Vedat: “Biz tabi daha çok şeyleri anlatıyoruz. Melez şehirler dediğimiz. Bajarın müzikal yönelimi gündelik hayatın siyasetini gündeme getirmek. daha doğrusu biz bunu becerebiliyoruz.”

“Kardelen” in Turkish), criticizes the education project named after the same word “Kardelenler Projesi” (“The Project of Kardelenler”) that is popularly supported nationwide and especially by the elite Turkish charities and NGOs and aimed to educate the poor girls living in the eastern and southeastern provinces of Turkey. The lyrics of the song Berfin emphasizes that the real problem in the region is indeed the Kurdish girl Berfin (Kardelen) cannot get an education in her mother tongue Kurdish, since the Project of Kardelenler only supports education in Turkish. “İşportacı” (“street vendor”) is another song of Bajar that stresses on the immigrant Kurdish population working as the unskilled labor in the metropolitan cities. Thus, the BGST intends to focus more on the everyday problems of the ordinary Kurdish people as part of their political art project.

Rojin became a little bit defensive when I asked her about her political songs. She mentioned her song, named “Si”, which is about the young girl Ceylan Önkol’s who died because of the explosion of a bomb splinter that belonged to the Turkish army. Rojin told me that she re-arranged one of Loreena McKennitt’s songs for her song “Si”. She again criticized other Kurdish artists who judged her without considering her songs of that sort. Moreover, Rojin added also that for being political, it is enough to sing in Kurdish.⁴⁹

Yet, for the MKM, too, singing in Kurdish is no more considered enough to be identified as an oppositional and political Kurdish musician, since the Turkish government itself does the same thing through a formal Kurdish TV channel, TRT6. Therefore, now the conscience of a musician is judged by the MKM in term of

⁴⁹ Interview with Rojin: “Benim şarkılarımın çoğu siyasi değil ama “Si” diye bir şarkım var: Sözleri “bugün, 13 yaşında vücudunda bomba patlayan bir kız var, şu ana kadar ağladınız, ağladınız”...şeklinde. Ben sahnede slogan atılarak bir yere gelinebileceğini sanmıyorum – dilin kendisi zaten bir şeydir. Ama yaşanmış şeyleri anlatan şeyleri... Loreena McKennitt’in şarkısında “13 yaşında savaşa gidip nasıl bombalanarak paramparça öldüğünü” yazıyorum ben o şarkıda...anlayana sivrisine saz yani...”

whether the musician has songs dedicated to the Kurdish militia or songs for the Kurdish victims of the war, songs that are banned by the Turkish state and condemned by the Turkish ultra-nationalist public opinion. Only this sort of songs is considered by the MKM and Kurdish movement as parts of the Kurdish musical culture. The lyrics of that sort of songs are mostly based on the praise of the sacrifices of the Kurdish people particularly the militia for the sake of not only the Kurdish people but also for the humanity in the name of freedom and democracy.

However, usually the merely mourning songs for a Kurdish militia or the laments for the death of the innocent Kurdish children are not appreciated by the MKM's top members or MMC's art directors responsible for the selection of the video clips. They emphasized that what is appreciated is not the mere mourning for the Kurdish martyr but the glorification of her/him if not this is an "arabesque" music lacking revolutionary power. The Kurdish movement's critique of the arabesque music together with the pop music will be explained in details in the chapter about "the Modernization Process of the Kurdish Music". However, despite the critical stance towards the arabesque music, if one considers all of the statements of the Kurdish cultural authorities, it seems that in the hierarchy of being more "oppositional" the songs dedicated to the Kurdish militia are still considered as the most political songs whereas other types of lyrics that are about the everyday problems of the Kurds are thought as alternative ways of expressing Kurdish politics without being apolitical.

Judging the Conscience of the Artist: Respect for the Ethnic Plurality

The criterion of “respect for the ethnic plurality” is manifested by most of the Kurdish singers’ statements. It is considered as the requirement of doing oppositional art and a conscientious artistic stance of the Kurdish music. At this point, I would like to introduce Roland Barthes’ concept of “listening” to the consideration of “singing in various languages” as an artistic stance in the sense that “listening speaks”, in other words singing can only be validated through listening so that it induces communication.

Most of the Kurdish singers and music bands participated to the various festivals for “ethnic plurality”. Rojin, who is no more a member of the MKM, also stated that she is highly influenced by the Armenian music and she sings in Armenian and even she can sing in other 11 languages. Rojda also proudly said:

I am not a “süryani” (Syrian) but I can sing in “süryani” to cherish the language... I was the first (Kurdish singer) who sang in Armenian while I sing in Kurdish for years...I cannot understand (Armenian or Syrian languages) but I love it...It is not important that you understand it really...emotion matters...every culture has its own language⁵⁰.

Xalide, one of the members of Dengbeji Ciwan, told what she thinks about the TEKEL movement of the workers and that she herself supports it since it is a massive act of all the people of Turkey such as “Laz”, “Çerkez” (Circassian), Kurdish and all others and, she added that TEKEL movement tells us what the situation of Turkey is. I personally participated to one of the meeting of “Barış için Sanat” (Art for Peace), where artists from various leftist and oppositional art groups such as the BGST, BEKSAV, Evrensel Sanat, the MKM participated to the meeting. This meeting was about the performances for the memorial of Hrant Dink. It was

⁵⁰ Interview with Rojin: “Süryanice söylerim hani ben Süryani değilim ama dili yaşatmak için... Ermenice ilk söyleyen ben oldum... Kürtçe söylüyom yıllardır söylüyorum... Seviyorum da yani ama anlamıyorum ama anlamak önemli değil duygu önemli... Her dilin bir kültürü var.”

discussed how each groups' stage must be scheduled. I think this can be considered the specification of collaboration between minorities and subaltern groups in Turkey. Rotinda emphasized this collaboration by claiming that Kurdish people are fighting for the liberation of the all oppressed people:

I was in the mountains, I witnessed that among the guerilla there are Turks, Armenians, Georgians, Arabs, Greeks, Germans... There is a national conscience but in the sense that when Kurdish people are suppressed, that its language is banned, that it is denied...so Kurdish people is in the foreground...however when Kurdish people get their liberty, they would not say they are Kurdish and they walked in the mountains for Kurdish people but they will support the liberation of all people.⁵¹

Rotinda mentioned that he sang in Azeri for the memorial of one of his militia friends since he was Azeri and became martyr. He added that he sang in Armenian also for the memorial of his instructor, Aram Tigran and he remembers Tigran with respect. He stated that: "I don't think that anybody within the artists who are supporting our cause can have a problem with the differences among the people...we want to sing in every language⁵²" He mentioned that he did not make the mistake of blaming the Turkish people because of the acts of the Turkish state. Rotinda identifies some Turks with nomads ("yörük" in Turkish) and Turkmens to whom he instructed for a while and he said that Turkmens do not have problems with the Kurdish people and, Turkmens, too, has suffered, suppressed and neglected by the Turkish state that did not bring electricity or water even bread to the places where the Turkmes are living. Rotinda also stated that the PKK and the Kurdish movement

⁵¹ Interview with Rotinda: "Ben dağda kaldım gerillada Türkler var, Ermeniler var, Gürcüler, Araplar var Yunanlılar var, Almanlar var.... Orda ulus bilinci şu anlamda biz Kürtler ezilen bir halk olduğu için, dili yasaklandığı için, inkar edildiği için Kürtler önde... Yani Kürtler özgürlüklerine kavuştuğunda hiçbir gerilla ben Kürdüm, Kürtler için dağa yürüdüm demeyecek. Diyecek ki, halklar için... O anlamda ben Türkiye'deki tüm toplumlara karşı sorumluyum... Ben bir kasedimde Azerice bir şarkı söyledim; çünkü bizim içimizde birçok Azeri arkadaşımız vardı..gerilla..çok sevmiştim...Ben tanıdım..şehit düşmüştü..onun sevdiği şarkıları potpori halinde bir kasede koydum yani onun hatırına Azerice okudum..Ermenice şarkı söyledim... Aram Tigran'ın hatırı için... Hocamı da saygıyla anıyorum..."

⁵² Interview with Rotinda: "Bizim tarafımızda olan hiçbir sanatçının halklarla problemi olacağını hiç sanmıyorum. Biz her dilden şarkı söylemek isteriz..."

would contradict itself if it comes to conflict with the Turkish people since there are many Turks in their movement⁵³.

Here, singing in a different language and its connotation can be explained through Barthes' term of listening. Roland Barthes defines three types of listening: He relates the first type of listening to the listening to the notion of territory which can be defined the space of security just as the space of the familiar, recognized noises forming a kind of household symphony (Barthes, 1991). He names this type of listening as "alert". I think that the long years of the ban on the Kurdish music in Turkey can be well explained as an alert about the threat of the Kurdish music against the so-called unitary culture and structure of Turkey. Joseph J. Moreno mentions that the ban of the performance of the Jewish composers such as Mendelssohn, Mahler, or Schoenberg, or even Offenbach by the Nazis, Jewish popular melodies were actually removed from the street (Moreno, 2006, p.269). Hence, Barthes thinks of the horror films, listening to the alien, expecting the irregular noise which will disturb our aural comfort. On the other hand, singing in Turkish by a Kurdish artist is also interpreted as "an alert" that there is a Turkish side in his Kurdish being. Rotinda also claimed that he would not sing in Turkish until Apo (the leader of the PKK) becomes free. I think that this statement shows the relation of music to the territorial appropriateness. He added that:

If once I can give concerts freely in the land of Kurdistan, then watch me, I will sing in Turkish with Kurdish people. But before that time comes I will not sing songs other than the ones in Kurdish...This is my

⁵³ Interview with Rotinda: "Ben Türkiye'yi Türklerle karıştırmıyorum... Ben Yörüklerle öğretmenlik yaptım, Yörük halkını Türkmenleri çok iyi tanıyorum...Onların Kürtlerle hiçbir problemi yok; çünkü o insanlar da eziliyor... elektrik su...nerdeyse ekmeğe hasretler o kadar yoksullar -onlar adına devşirme toplum dediğimiz, kültür bu Türkler dediğimiz...bu halka düşmanlıklar yapan-benim halklara karşı en ufak bir şeyim olamaz- daha doğrusu hareketin yok- daha doğrusu PKK felsefesinin yok- PKK'ye gönül veren hiçbir insanın bu halklarla en ufak bir düşmanlığı olamaz, olursa kendisiyle ters düşer zaten - çünkü bizim içimizde de Türkler var."

way to protest. And this is not a protest of the people (but the current status-quo).⁵⁴

Rotinda also emphasized that peace can be achieved only through the collaboration between the intellectual democratic people, artists and gays. Rotinda claims that this is what the PKK wants, however, he believes that for instance it is too hard to compromise with the supporters of the MHP's (Turkish ultra-nationalist political party)⁵⁵ in terms of the Kurdish question.

Rojda, the prominent singer from the MKM, released a cover song of the Ayşe Şan's song "Gelmiş Bahar" in her latest album. She explained that she did not sing in Turkish since she does not have populist concerns, and Ayşe Şan, a Kurdish singer from 1970s, had to sing this song in Turkish because of the strict censorship on the Kurdish language in 70s.: "I did not sing this song to make people who are listening to Turkish to listen to me but because my voice is really a good choice for this song and I sang it with pleasure⁵⁶".

Furthermore, the newly emerging Kurdish music magazine, entitled Dojin (<http://www.bijwen.com/etiket/dojin-ilk-kurt-muzik-dergisi/>), is blamed of being "populist" and contradicting itself since it is published in Turkish. Rotinda stated:

I do not consider it as a magazine of the Kurdish music...why are we talking in Turkish right now? Because you do not understand

⁵⁴ Interview with Rotinda: "Ben bir gün Kürdistan topraklarında özgürce konser verebilirsem inanın bana ilk konserimde yaşarsak siz şahit olun, özgürleşen bir Kürdistan halklarıyla ben Türkçe de söylerim diğer tüm dillerde de söylerim... Ama o olmadan Kürtçe'nin dışında bir dilde söylemeyeceğim, bu da bir protestodur...Halklara karşı değil yani..."

⁵⁵ Interview with Rotinda: "Kürtler aydın insanlarla sanatçılarla demokrat insanlarla lezbiyenlerle eşcinsellerle biz bu barışı getirebiliriz, ben buna inanıyorum... Birey olarak da inanıyorum, Kürt halkının da buna inandığına inanıyorum... Yol haritası verilseydi orda çok şey daha detaylı. PKK'nin de istemi budur ama yok.. Biz gideceğiz MHPyi barışa ikna edeceğiz."

⁵⁶ Interview with Rojda: "Sesim o kadar iyi gidiyordu ki, çok severek okudum... Türkçe dinleyenler beni dinlesin diye bir şeyim yok..."

Kurdish...Let's think about an English magazine of Turkish music?
Isn't it unbelievable?⁵⁷

At this point, singing in Turkish by a Kurdish musician is interpreted as a populist act and is considered as being assimilated by the foreign forces through reproducing the claims concerning the presence of a homogeneous culture in Turkey.

Roland Barthes introduces “deciphering” as the second type of listening. Barthes describes “deciphering” as the first step of being human: “I listen the way I read according to certain codes” - “it is a secret: that which, concealed in reality, can reach human consciousness only through a code, which serves simultaneously to encipher and to decipher that reality” (Barthes, 1991, pp.247-249). In this sense, the criteria for the ethnic plurality and the responsibility for singing in various foreign languages seem to embrace the recognition of all others (aliens) as ethnic subjectivities. The code for understanding is the language of “ethnic plurality”. Respecting pluralist multi-cultural concerns can be interpreted as an attitude of decoding what is “foreign” and “obscure” languages of the others in order to make it available to what is experienced: here, the ethnic identity.

In the third case, Barthes describes the third type of listening as listening to “hermeneutics”: “to listen is to adopt an attitude of decoding what is obscure, blurred, or mute, in order to make it available to consciousness the underside of meaning (what is experienced, postulated, intentionalized as hidden)” (Barthes, 1991, p.249). That is why it creates transference: “listen to me”, in other words, “touch me” and “know that I exist” that signifies “the recognition” as it operates communication so that the listener’s silence will be active just like the speech: “listening speaks” (Barthes, 1991, p.252). This reminds the evaluation of the conscience of the singer

⁵⁷ Interview with Rotinda: “Bir Kürtçe müzik dergisi olarak görmüyorum... Sizinle niye Türkçe konuşuyoruz? Çünkü siz Kürtçe bilmiyorsunuz... Düşünün İngilizce bir dergi çıkıyor size diyor ki, Türk müziği dergisi size ne kadar inandırıcı gelir?”

for singing in many languages foreign to his own. However, it is not totally linked to a hermeneutics since it identifies “others” through the manifestation of the ethnic difference: which is listening and singing for the possible communication. Therefore, this criterion enables the recognition that a totally unfamiliar-sounding foreign music may fulfill the same socio-cultural aura of the Kurdish music, the familiar one. One does not need to decode and respond what is listening according to his own schema of signifiers to give way to hermeneutics.

At this point, Xalide from the music band Dengbejî Ciwan underscored the universality of music. For her, to understand what she is saying in a Kurdish song, it is not necessary to know the Kurdish language. She gave the example of her performance in the Maçka Park during a mass demonstration; she mentioned that the police officers were dancing with her music: “I asked myself why they are looking at me, they were shaking their heads in a rocker style, I let others on the stage notice this and we laughed together⁵⁸”. In this example, Xalide, as a singer, was seen as his equivalent by the music listener. The police officers recognized their “common humanity” through listening to Xalide as a performance of the universal music, thus, the listeners turned into the equals despite their hostile position as police officers.

Moreno also relates the ban on the Jewish music in Nazi Germany to the question that the Nazis would have to accept the Jews as people and recognize their common humanity if they listened to the Jewish music: “Performing or even listening to jazz music associated with Afro-American and Jewish performers or composers was similarly forbidden” (Moreno, 2006, p.268). Moreno also tells a story of a Jewish opera singer in the Auschwitz concentration camp who sang in the barracks at night comforting those around her. One day, an SS woman supervisor

⁵⁸ Interview with dengbej Xhalide: “Ben diyorum bu polisler bana niye bu kadar bakıyorlar... Yok onlar da baktım tutmuşlar rock tarzında kafa sallamaya başladılar... Ben de sahnedeki müzisyenlere söyledim onlar da oraya bakıp gülmeye başladılar...”

approached to her and gave her the order to sing for her. The singer began to softly sing a popular romantic German song and the SS woman, covered in tears, began to beat her and this instance happened again and again every day and night. One day the opera singer could not manage to get up after the beating. She died (Moreno, 2006, p.282). Moreno argues that many ordinary cruel people can enjoy the music and still this does not break down the power of their internal defense system. However, I think that this also reflects the recognition of a common humanity by the SS woman, so that the SS officer killed the Jewish opera singer in order to eliminate the possible commonality between her and the Jewish singer. In brief, the appreciation of the Kurdish music by its others, in that case by a police officer of the Turkish state, can allow to blur the formal boundaries between them by introducing their common humanity. Therefore, the listening in the third type, which Barthes relates to the hermeutics, can be considered as a way of communication by a listener of non-interest rather than the appreciation of the Kurdish music because of ideological reasons, because of supporting the multiculturalist or democratic ideals.

Xalide also stated that the music has a collaborative affect just like she has experienced in the Barış Manço cultural center for an event entitled “the meeting of cultures”. She added that people come to see her to compliment her even if they do not understand Kurdish. Moreover, Vedat, from Kardeş Türküler and Bajar, emphasized the presence of the hybrid public spheres in Urfa, Elazığ, Diyarbakır, Kerkük or Istanbul where Kurdish and Turkish music can be heard together. He stated that if we want to live together we have to build a common language and that is why they sing in Kurdish and Turkish together. Vedat also underscored that a positive discrimination of the Kurdish songs should be an expected outcome of the severe censorship on the Kurdish music in Turkey:

I have a Kurdish world but besides that there is also a Turkish one... We are talking in Turkish with you right now, aren't we? We are listening to music together... we reflect what it is... there is nothing special to one of us... In Bajar we do positive discrimination for the Kurdish songs... they are more in our repertoire but we have another world, too... we bring all of these into reality...⁵⁹

Moreover, Rojin also emphasized that Turkish is also her language and even if the same system uses Turkish to suppress Kurdish, she said she will insist on supporting the brotherhood of the Turkish and Kurdish languages as languages of humans. "I can pronounce a Turkish word better than Turks and I can speak better Kurdish than the ones who claim to sing in Kurdish"⁶⁰ She also states that her new single album just like her bilingual previous albums, will include both Kurdish and Turkish versions of the same songs. To be sure, these latest statements, suggest a much more optimistic declarations of a sense concerning the shared territoriality if one considers music as a sign of familiar spaciality according to Barthes' definition of the first type of listening.

⁵⁹ Interview with Vedat: "Benim yani bizim hayatımız öyle zaten.. Benim Kürdi bir dünyam var ama tırnak içinde Türki bir dünyam da var... Türkçe konuşuyoruz değil mi seninle? Müzikler dinliyoruz falan... Neyse onu yansıtıyoruz aslen.. Yani bize özel yaptığımız bir şey yok. Kürtçe'ye tabii pozitif ayrımcılık yapıyoruz gene de. Repertuvarda daha çok yer alıyor ama böyle bir dünyamız da var. Onu yansıtıyoruz aslında..."

⁶⁰ Interview with Rojin: "Türkçe'nin de benim dilim olduğunu düşünüyorum her ne kadar sistem Kürtçe'yi alışıya yapmaya çalıştıysa da ben beni alışıya edenin diliyle konuşmam benim dilim insan dilidir – o yüzden ben Türkçe'yi de çok seviyorum –Türkçe'yi de bir Türk'ten daha iyi telaffuz ediyorum ama Kürtçe'yi de Kürtçe söylüyorum diyenden çok daha iyi konuşuyorum..."

CHAPTER 6

DIFFERENCES AND SUBALTERN GROUPS

WITHIN THE KURDISH POLITICAL AND CULTURAL MOVEMENT

The MKM in Turkey and other Kurdish cultural institutions of the Kurdish movement in the diaspora such as the Kurdish Academy in München, the Kurdish Institute in Köln or the RojTV in Brussels are indeed composed of members from various identities besides their Kurdish identity. Here, I want to explore the manifestation of these other identities and more importantly the display of other types of oppositional stances within the Kurdish movement that are different from the general discourse repeated by cultural agencies of the Kurdish movement. I will discuss the differences within the Kurdish movement through the perspective of the Derridian term the “politics of friendship”. In this chapter, I intend to show how the presence of the subaltern identities or claims of difference within the Kurdish political movement are perceived and handled. I will try to interpret the discourse concerning difference especially in terms of gender and ethnic identities such as Zaza identity and other differences within an oppositional political group. Even though the research design and the selection of the interviewees are not purposely conducted to explore these differences in term of identity; several argumentations that I collected addressed the issue of alternative identities for the main understanding of the Kurdish movement and its connotation in art. At the end, I want to question the possibility of manifestation for alternative ways of opposition within Kurdish cultural agencies of resistance.

To be a Woman Artist within the Kurdish Political and Cultural Movement

Women or women's rights are one of the most addressed terms in most of my interviews with both female and male artists. The people I interviewed usually the importance of Kurdish movement for the Kurdish society that it is generally considered to be patriarchal. I questioned the presence and its connotation of patriarchy during the performances of the female singers. Even though they stated the presence of female dengbejs in Kurdish culture such as the famous Ayşe Şan or Fatma İsa, they also claimed that they were exceptional forerunners. Xalide, female dengbej, pointed out that even her own aunt and grand-mother were singing as dengbej before the audience of their own "aşiret" (tribe), but only her male members of her own "aşiret" was allowed to watch her while singing. Xalide defined her own "aşiret" as special for the role of women in the family:

Women are always ahead. Men are always talking but before they talk they always consult to women. Women decide but men declare it. In fact, everything is women's task.⁶¹

When I asked whether women were singing in front of men of different "aşiret", she stated that right now, this comes close to break:

If we cannot succeed to break this rule, it would be a big defeat. The same understanding of women in the society is present but we would not allow it, we would not allow this to happen again. For example, "klam" (Kurdish name for chant) was always invented by woman but it is always sung by men. That is why most of the "klam" are from women's mouth [she means that klams have feminine traits]. These klams are first sung by women in the assembly, before the tribal leader ("ağa"), but men were to sing it in weddings while women were busy

⁶¹ Interview with dengbej Xalide: "Kadınlar öndedir...Erkekler konuşur ama bir şey olduğu zaman önce kadına sorulur. Kadınlar karar verir, erkekler bunu açıklar. Aslında her şey kadınların işidir."

with marriage organizations. But be aware that klams are women-mounted.⁶²

Xalide proudly mentioned that she arranged a male voice as a vocalist to accompany her voice in the background for one of her song in her music album “Xewn” (means “dream”) and this means the superiority of her female voice. Rojda, soloist female singer and former member of the Koma Gulen Xerzan, stated that she sang for the Kurdish women in her album “Sebramin” since the Kurdish women suffer more than anybody else. It is the Kurdish woman who is the one marries with the man that she does not know, the one that becomes the victim of her husband’s injustice and the one who sees the torture of her husband and child by the Turkish state. I asked Rojda if her songs reach to the Kurdish masses, she answered:

MKM’s goal is to transfer the “true” art to the community and to raise awareness of the society. How can we do it? In my song I tell about the story of the brides and I say that you will wake up in the morning beside a stranger so cry for it...Many women and men come to see me after my concerts and say that they do not cry because they are sad but they remember their past sufferings.⁶³

Fırat, the manager of the MKM, also mentioned about the talk of the rural Kurdish women about their sufferings after the MKM theatre shows about “the murders of the women”:

When women see the show, all the suffering they went through comes to light, they go to tell about their own sufferings after the show and they say that they even experienced more awful things...a women who

⁶² Interview with dengbej Xalide: “Bunun en büyük kırılmasını belki bugün yaşıyoruz. Geçmişte yapamadıklarımızı biz bugün yapamıyorsak çok büyük bir eksiklik olur. Aynı anlayış var. Tekerrür etmesine biz izin vermeyeceğiz tabi ki..Mesela klam kadının ağzından çıkmış ama hep erkekler söylemiş mesela...İşte klamların çoğu kadın ağızlıdır. Kadınlar önce söylemiş işte meclislerde ağa divanlarında, düğünlerde erkek söylemiş. Kadınlar düğün ile çeyiz ile ilgilenmiş. Ama dikkat edin kadın ağızlıdır klamlar...”

⁶³ Interview with Rojda: “MKM’nin amacı da şu..doğru bir sanatı halka ulaştırmak ve insanları toplumu bilinçlendirmek..bunu kim yapacak? MKM’nin sanatçıları...bunu yaparken nasıl yapıyoruz..bunları işlerken topluma şunu söylüyoruz –parçam mesela gelinleri anlatıyor- gidiyorsun-yarın sabah kalkacaksın- kendine yabancı uyanacaksın- çünkü bilmiyorsun nereye gideceğini- öyleyse bu haline ağla-bu parçada bu anlatılıyor..”garip “ parçası göçü anlatır..erkek de buna ağlıyor ama en çok kadın..kadın gelmiştir bana pek çok her konserimde demiştir “ben bu parçayı duyduğumda her defa ağlıyorum” ama mutsuz olmuyorum ağlarken- yaşadıklarım aklıma geliyor.”

was raped does not tell this to anybody, but she comes to tell about it to our friends.⁶⁴

In this context, Kurdish artists criticize the societal injustice towards women by screening it in the mimetic way of women's suffering and allows the disclosure of the past injuries which can end up in the societal consciousness for women's rights.

Female interviewees expressed that the way of seeing the women is changed in the sense that women are respected because they are fighting for the Kurdish movement side by side with the men⁶⁵. Rojda presented herself as an example of woman who has to fight to sing and she achieved her goal. However, she also mentioned some of her performances in the weddings that she was appreciated in the stage by men while female guests of the wedding were kept in a separate room which can be considered a sign of ongoing gender segregation of the patriarchal system. Furthermore, Rojda told about Koma Asmin, a project of the MKM, the musical band composed of 11 female musicians from different music bands, which dissolved in 2002 after 4 years of performance. Rojda and Meral, right now soloist singers, were the members. They both mentioned that Koma Asmin created a sense of legend and they were very popular. However, Meral also mentioned the scarce number of women in the audience or women's segregation in the back seats:

I was playing piano on the stage, I look at the audience...I see that there are no women, women are seated in the back seats...we manage to place them in the foreground. Why are our sisters and our mothers in the back? Why are the men sitting in the front? Why the entire hall is filled up by men? I am not hostile to men but I am known as I am because I stand against such practices...They do what they can do to not

⁶⁴ Interview with Fırat: "Kadınlar izlerken geçmişindeki acıların tümü su üstüne çıkıyor ve biz oyunlardan sonra kadınlar gelip bize yaşam hikayelerini anlatmaya başlıyor- aslında bu anlattıklarınızın daha beterini yaşadık yani tecavüze uğrayan kadın hiç kimseye söylememiş bizim arkadaşlara söylüyor."

⁶⁵ Interview with Meral: "Kadına bakış acısı değişiyor..neden..kadın kendini mücadeleye verdi..özgürlüğü için savaştı..ben de varım bu mücadelede, ben de bu acıyı yaşıyorum çözüm için de varım dedikçe kadın göründü- insanlar buna saygı duydu.."

understand this, you can not change this with the argumentation that ‘this has been always like this, this has to be like this as before’.⁶⁶

She blamed such kind of an audience since they respect her on the stage while they promote the same old patriarchal rules for the female members of their family. Yet, Meral also stated the progress in women’s position in the society as she told about the Women’s Days on March 8 when fields of demonstration are crowded by female participants: “Right now, at least, women are conscious about their own presence and that there are two types of sexuality...At least, I think that they are much more conscious in terms of this struggle⁶⁷” She emphasized that all the progress that they go through is not sufficient, yet it is joyful for all women thanks to the Kurdish movement.

Fırat, the manager of the artists in the MKM, expressed that in all the performances to which their female artists participate, the inviters of them know what they prefer politically since they are conscious about the MKM’s politics of women and its support for women’s rights. Thus, women musicians are invited usually to the political activities that demand artistic performances. Yet, he announced that in the past, the most invited musical bands for performances have female members and Koma Asmin was popular not only because it was a good band but also because the audience think that 11 women singing are much more spectacular: “This stemmed from the pop culture that we already talked about, they

⁶⁶ Interview with Meral: “Ben sahnede piyano çalışıyorum..bakıyorum halka bakıyorum...yani bayanlar çok az..bayanlar en arkada oturuyor..bayanları öne alıyoruz..yani çalışma biraz da şey olsun..bizim annelerimiz kızkardeşlerimiz niye arkada olsun..niye sen hemen öne oturuyorsun...niye tüm salonu erkek kaplıyor.. erkek düşmanı da değilim...bu bir anlamda bu sorunları dile getirdiğimiz için erkek düşmanı olarak biliniyoruz zaman zaman...böyle komik şeyler de yaşadım..yani insan..eminim ki birçok şey anlaşılıyor..anlaşıldığımızın da farkındayım..bunları dile getirip sunduğumuzda..ama hiçbir şekilde anlamamak için ellerinden geleni yapıyorlar...böyle olmak zorunda gibi yaklaşımlar bunu değiştiremezsiniz...”

⁶⁷ Interview with Meral: “8 mart yaklaşıyor mesela biz açık alanlarda olacak kadın katılımlarımızda kadına yüklenmiş çok fazla şeyin olmasının yerini bulduğunu düşünüyorum en azından kadın kendinin farkında...niye yapması gerektiğinin..bu hayatta iki cins olduğunun..en azından bunun savaşını vermeyi daha çok algıladığını düşünüyorum yani o katılımlardan biraz daha...”

wanted women on display when they ask us if there were any female member in the music band before calling them”⁶⁸. Fırat claimed that there are not such problems right now because all the female members of the music bands became soloist singers such as Rojda, Meral or Nurcan. Therefore, there is no need to question if there is a female member and besides this people know right now the sense of this politically incorrect manner of the question mentioned above, because they are sensible to this kind of issues: “not only the MKM but all the agencies are sensible about women, so they do not ask anymore if there is a female member in the music band...this kind of consciousness is right now present.”⁶⁹ Moreover, when I asked the regulations of costume in the performance, he states that there is no such a “talibanvari” (dictated according to religion) application for female artists but female artists know that they should not wear a night dress for political activities such as the festival of Mahmur or sometimes they want to wear the same color for the performance.

I had the chance to participate the MKM concert in the Bostancı Performance Center (Bostancı Gösteri Merkezi) held on 28th February 2010, there, I observed that many female singers were dressed in the same fashion those of popular artists. Even the MKM group of modern dance performed a show of a couple dancing with tight and modern costumes far from conservatives clothing. One can consider that there was a modern display of the gender dialogue and Kurdish women to show the right way of conveying the women issues to the audience.

As this above mentioned example shows, it is crucial to emphasize that the Kurdish movement is regarded as the agent of enlightenment of the Kurdish people

⁶⁸ Interview with Fırat: “Çünkü az önce bahsettiğimiz pop kültürünün yarattığı bir şey sahnede kadını vitrin olarak görmek istiyor yani grupta kadın var mı?”

⁶⁹ Interview with Fırat: “Bize de, kadın konusunda hassassız...tek MKM değil tüm kurumlar hassas bunlar arayıp kadın var mı diye sormuyor çünkü doğru bir şey sormayacağını biliyor...insanlarda da o bilinç gelişmiş hani...”

on the women's position in the society. Yet, the sensibility for women and women rights seem indirect in the sense that Kurdish women are firstly respected and appreciated for their position, support and sufferings for the Kurdish political movement. The appreciated projection of the female militia's presence, that Rotinda calls "flowers of the mountains and of crying Kurdish mothers" are evaluated in the realm of the nationalist approach.

It is important to note that Rojin who is a Kurdish singer and former participant of the TRT6 and therefore is disfavored by the members of the Kurdish movement. However she was supported by the DTP (former pro-Kurdish party) when she went to the court to sue the journalist Serdar Turgut from the Hurriyet newspaper, who insulted Rojin in his article. The reason why Rojin accuses Serdar Turgut is that in his article Turgut declared in an ironic way that he wishes to be a terrorist and kidnap Rojin and bring her to the mountains to make her his sex slave. The DTP supported Rojin in the sense that Turgut's statement is an attack to all Kurdish women who supports the Kurdish resistance and Turgut misrepresented the position of the Kurdish women in the Kurdish struggle (ANF News Agency, 28 October 2009). Actually, this statement supports Rojin's court case as it is considered to be a general attack to the Kurdish militia in terms of morality. On the other hand, most of my interviewees consider these developments as the break of the very patriarchal system and as the first steps of the re-positioning of the women in the Kurdish society.

To be a Gay Artist within the Kurdish Political and Cultural Movement

I conducted also other interviews with the Kurdish artists from other subaltern identities. Rotinda, the art director of the Roj TV and the MMC in Brussels is famous

for his songs dedicated to the Kurdish militia. He claimed that he visits frequently the camps of the Kurdish militia and he saw Abdullah Öcalan personally twice. I asked Rotinda how his gay identity is regarded within the Kurdish political movement and how he relates these two distinct identities of him:

I can say it with my all my sincerity, the movement of the PKK is a movement of humanity...the day that I started to have sympathy for it, I was present in every place and every level as an artist...I can say it clearly...there is no way out...every time I was well respected...Many people told to me: ‘You are one of most beautiful colors in us’... I know that they refer to my identity...but I never display my stance or my “color” openly to people...I am among my people...I live with them...I do not have such a luxury and it cannot be... in this sense, I am not so different...I am with them in the concerts and in the protests...for the Newroz...I am with them in the mountains...I am with them on TV. I am with them in my task...Why should they find me strange...Nobody excludes me...since it is a movement of humanity...⁷⁰

He also expressed that he is grateful for being gay he can see much further as a gay than a heterosexual and his gay identity has not created difficulties for him. To be sure, Rotinda is a well-known and respectable artist in the Kurdish movement. However, as he announced, his gay identity is not openly displayed and he is not considered different than other Kurdish subjects due to his position and support in the Kurdish movement. Here, one can assume just like in the case of women, the importance of being a member of the Kurdish resistance develops gender sensibilities for the Kurdish audience.

⁷⁰ Interview with Rotinda: “Bunu içten inanarak şu anda tüm samimiyetimle söyleyim, PKK hareketi gerçekten insani bir hareket ona sempati duyduğumdan beri her türlü alanlarında bulundum bir sanatçı olarak, her türlü mevkide bir sanatçı olarak..açık söyleyim..başka bir boyutu yok..her zaman saygıyla karşılandım...birçok kişiden sen bizim için en güzel renklerden birisin diye böyle kimliğime dem vurularak da söylendiğini biliyorum..ama ben hiçbir zaman duruşumu kimliğimi a da rengimi insanların gözüne de sokmam- halkımın içindeyim- halk ile beraber yaşıyorum benim öyle bir lüksüm yok çok da olmaz da...ben o anlamda zaten de çok farklı değilim..yürüyüşlerde konserlerde onlarlayım- Newroz’da onlarlayım..dağda onlarlayım..televizyonda onlarlayım...işimde onlarlayım..hani niye beni yadırgasınlar ki..hiçbir insan da dışlamaz yani...çünkü sonuçta insanlık hareketi..”

To be a Zaza Artist within the Kurdish Political and Cultural Movement

MKM's concert in the Bostancı Performance Center (Bostancı Gösteri Merkezi/ 28 February 2010) was presented by three announcers of different languages: one for the "Kurmanci" (the largest spoken), the "Zazaki" and the "Turkish". This display of three distinct languages for Kurdish audience is to respect the differences of mother tongues of people. Mehmet Akbaş, right now living in Köln, is a former soloist of "Venge Sodiri", the "Zaza" music band of the MKM. Akbaş mentioned that Venge Sodiri became a group of projects; it accomplished several projects with groups of dance or "semah" (Alevite religious dance) and they were even invited to one of Mercan Dede's (famous performer of "sufi" music) performance. Akbaş claimed that when he was in Turkey, he had the intention to transform "Venge Sodiri" to a project of Zaza music in the MKM. I asked the reason why he left Turkey:

I had to leave the MKM in 2002 and I came here...I had the problem of military service and the musical opportunities were not sufficient- we were doing Zaza music. Our institutions have several insufficiencies for this...you are left alone...you cannot be strong enough...but if you can in fact, you can do something addressing other audiences.⁷¹

Akbaş defines his music as universal and his oppositional stance as different since he does not use directly political arguments in his songs. The very usage of the south "Zaza" language is sufficient to be oppositional, because even most of the Kurdish people do not know it perfectly. He claimed that he is from Diyarbakır and all the Zazas of the south have a different musical stand than the Zazas of the north from the Dersim region: "I sing persistently in my language even Kurdish people cannot understand it well...It is a disadvantage for me to not to be an "Alevite" and I am not

⁷¹ Interview with Mehmet Akbaş: "2002 sonunda ben ayrılmak zorunda kaldım buraya geldim- askerlik problemim vardı, müzikal koşullarımızın yeterli olmaması ile ilgiliydi biz Zaza müziği yapıyorduk ve bu konuda bizim kurumlarımızın da biraz eksikliği vardı o kadar eksikliğin için yalnız kalıyorsun bir şekilde senin de eksikliğin oluyor fazla güçlü olamıyorsun aslen biraz güçlü olup sıyrılсан belki dışarıya yönelik bir şeyler yapabilirsin.."

from Dersim...because Dersim's music is promoted outside and Dersim music already formed a popular culture⁷²” He stated that the way of “Kurmanci” tradition overweighs all others in Kurdish music and all other musics are categorized in comparison to it. Akbaş defines himself alternative since he persists to sing in south Zaza accent despite the disadvantage of it to earn some money through making music. He also added that for many organizations directed by several Kurdish cultural agencies, the same genre of music is over and over displayed and only the music albums of this kind of popular music are supported:

Many festivals and events [organized by Kurdish institutions] are so big that even people who have a state or Europeans cannot organize...but while they organize such things, they have to think larger...it has to address Kurdish people but also it has to present Kurdish people to the world⁷³.

From this perspective, Akbaş is deprived of the same opportunities of a popular performer of “Kurmanci” music has who manifests political concerns of the Kurdish movement directly through his music. Akbaş is both neglected because of representing another type of opposition within the Kurdish movement and because of not singing in a popular language. However, it is crucial to note that “Venge Sodiri” worked as a project of the MKM for a period and it participated to several concerts in the region such as in Batman, in Diyarbakır and in Dersim. He stated that the Kurdish audience always thanked to the mayors for bringing to the festivals such a musician that he can call a musician. He defined this as a sign of the Kurdish people's wish for “normalization”:

⁷² Interview with Mehmet Akbaş: “Ben ısrarla kendi dilimle şarkı söylüyorum Kürtler bile çoğu zaman o dili çok iyi anlamıyor- alevi olmayışım benim için bir dezavantaj- Dersimli olmayışım benim için bir dezavantaj...çünkü Dersim müziği dışarı çıkarıldı ve bir kültür oluşturuldu.”

⁷³ Interview with Mehmet Akbaş: “Çok büyük organizasyonlar yapılıyor çok güzel organizasyonlar çok ciddi paralar harcanıyor yani baktığımızda Avrupalıların bile çoğu zaman devlet sahibi insanların bile organize edemeyeceği, katılımı yapamayacağı organizasyonlar yapılıyor- ama bu organizasyonları yaparken biraz daha geniş düşünölmeli- yıllardır bir stil tutturulmuş aynı şekilde gidiliyor biraz daha hani Avrupalının ortasındaız ona göre bu çağa göre bu zemine göre- peki Kürt halkına hitap etsin ama Kürt halkını da dışarıya duyuracak bir şeyler olmalı.”

You are not so sympathetic when you fight, nobody accepts the war even if your war is reasonable or not...no need to say...in art, there is a localization as issue...in fact, Kurdish people want to be normalized and when they see their artists under normal conditions, they advocate them in the sense that ‘we also have an artist of opera or pop...we also have artists who just stand like artist’...You address such feelings of people with your image and with your choice of repertoire and way of singing...these effect people.⁷⁴

I asked if he is criticized of being alienated of his essence or of not composing political songs. He mentioned that in 2003, their company wanted to make his album and he accepted this if they cover the cost of all production. He agreed with the first manager of production but then the manager changed and the new one does not know what he is doing and wanted to place him in the same schema of traditional artists:

Do not sing only in “Zaza”, sing also in “Kurmanci”, you have to sing songs telling the Kurdish movement- they want to place me in the same old schema of many years...so I constantly postponed this, I did not want to do the same thing only with the small difference of soloist change...I need to sing what I desire, my mother tongue is Zaza, I need to sing in Zaza, Zaza language has many problems.⁷⁵

He affirmed that right now, there is no such critique but he is deprived of certain opportunities. He does not think that music’s task is the distribution of political messages. Music as a political vessel can only satisfy popular internal tendency and cannot form an international Kurdish music. This critique of the political Kurdish music and its connotation to internationality will be examined in details in the chapter about “Internationality”. However, it is crucial here to note that the

⁷⁴ Interview with Mehmet Akbaş: “Savaşarak zaten antipatik görünüyorsun savaşı kimse kabul etmiyor ama haklı bir savaş mı haksız mı o da çok belli zaten- bu konuda bir şey söylemeye gerek yok- sanatta da marjinalleşme bir lokalize durumumuz söz konusu- Kürtler de aslında normalleşmek istiyor aslında ve kendi sanatçılarının o normlarda gördüğünde buna sahip çıkıyor hani bizim de opera söyleyen sanatçımız var pop söyleyen, sahnede sanatçı gibi duran sanatçılarımız var halkın biraz o duygusuna da hitap ediyorsun gerek görselliğinle duruşunla seçtiğin repertuarlardır şarkı söyleme biçimindir bunlar etkili halkın içinde.”

⁷⁵ Interview with Mehmet Akbaş: “Sadece Zazaca söyleme Kurmanci de söyle, mücadeleyi anlatan şarkılar da söylemelisin bildiğimiz yıllardır süregelen şablonlar vardır o şablonların içine yerleştirmeye çalıştılar beni...ben de sürekli bunu erteledim yani solist farkıyla herkesle aynı şeyi yapmak istemedim- ben kendi istediğim şarkıları okumalıyım yani Zazaca ise Zazaca okumalıyım benim anadilim ve Zazacanın çok ciddi sorunları var...”

segregation of Kurdish music such as political versus non-political ends up in favor of political one in comparison to non-political.

Serdar, another Kurdish musician living in Germany, told about the trend of Kurdish music of slogans and he insisted the lack for sincerity for some of them. These “insincere” performers of music of slogan sing for the popularity and for the financial concerns but they are insincere because they do not know Kurdish culture and its tradition of art and they exclude their family from the Kurdish issue. He supported that everyone has to sing from heart and he really sing for Kurdish movement, it has to be so: “For example, when a child of “korucu” family sings for the President (he means Abdullah Öcalan), we should not applaud him.”⁷⁶ Serdar mentioned that he left Turkey for Germany when he was 13 years old after the murder of his father who was a member of the PKK. He stated that he has grown within the Kurdish militia and this is more valuable than only visiting them: “Visiting them is a good thing, but I am not a beginner in these issues”⁷⁷

To be a Different Kurdish Voice alongside the Kurdish Political and Cultural Movement

Moreover, there are other famous musicians that experienced the disrespect of the Kurdish movement for their different stance of opposition. Şiwan Perwer, worldwide known Kurdish musician, and its position have shifted several times in the discourse of the Kurdish movement. Serdar mentioned that he was with Perwer for two concerts, in the first one, the audience was absent, there were only a few people for

⁷⁶ Interview with Serdar: “Şunu demek istiyorum yarın evvelsi gün bir korucu çocuğu çıkıp başkanın üzerine şarkı okuduğu zaman biz onu alkışlamayalım biliyor musun?”

⁷⁷ Interview with Serdar: “Gidip görmek güzeldir ama acemisi değilim.”

listening to him since the Kurdish movement did not support him; but in the second one, Kurdish people came and the concert hall filled up with the audience since Kurdish movement declared that there it was no longer forbidden to listen to Şiwan Perwer. Serdar expressed that Perwer was disfavored because Perwer wanted to join the political sphere and to be a politician, in other words he wished to do politics within the Kurdish people:

A person as intelligent as Şiwan should not do politics between different Kurdish groups. He is already doing politics anyway outside, in France, in Italy, in the UK... He already represents Kurdish people, people regard him as a Kurdish musician...if he wants to do politics, he has to be politician- he should not behave as if he is representing other people, everyone got aware of this just like Şiwan...who pays the price for the emancipation of this people? If you stood against the one who pays more for it, even though the movement does not support this, its people and its background stand against you.⁷⁸

Serdar argued that Şiwan Perwer had made some mistakes but now he is more intelligent and he wants only a musical Şiwan not a political one. For him, Şiwan Perwer has the national consciousness but he does not need to use it against their own people but to for the recognition of the Kurdish rights by the people of the world.

According to this statement, there is the reflection for legitimizing a single type of opposition or the signifier for Kurdish political music in the sense that Perwer criticized Kurdish movement because of some of its actions. This is considered an attack to his own body since the Kurdish movement sacrificed so much for the Kurdish emancipation and Şiwan Perwer is one of the people who also experienced the injustice of the Turkish hegemonic state. Here, there is an understanding of

⁷⁸ Interview with Serdar: “Şiwan gibi akıllı bir insanın asla Kürtler arası politika yapmaması gerekiyor- dışarıda yapıyor zaten, Fransa’da, İtalya’da, İngiltere’de...Kürtleri temsil ediyor, insanlar onu bir kürt sanatçısı olarak görüyorlar...yapacaksa politika, politikacı olmalı, onun bunun elçisi gibi davranmamalı ve herkes de bunu fark etti- Şiwan da fark etti...bu halkın kurtuluşu için kim çok bedel veriyor? Senden çok bedel veren harekete karşı bedel koyarsan o hareket bir şey yapmasa bile onun altyapısı sana karşı koyar...”

obligation for complete loyalty in terms of not criticizing the Kurdish movement from within the movement as the requirement of complete consensus of all the Kurdish subjects to be able to stand with full potential and to resist against the Turkish state other groups who deny the presence of the Kurdish people. This understanding constitutes actually a new body of hegemony exercised upon the Kurdish people as long as it limits the critiques against the movement and disregards the free expression. Actually these limitations are not performed directly, but it manages by activation of disfavoring and excluding certain artists in the festivals or performances or by not offering certain artistic opportunities.

Aynur, another worldwide known Kurdish singer who is not a member of the MKM, mentioned the cancellation of her concert in Diyarbakır organized for the celebration of the 8th March, the Women's day. This concert was organized by the MKM, Aynur was invited and she accepted to come. But as she told me the last day before the concert the MKM announced that Aynur's concert was cancelled without giving any reason. Aynur stated the reason was political since she does not compose songs with political messages whereas Firat, the manager of artists in MKM, told me that the cancellation of Aynur's concert stems from financial problems. The possibility of opposition by alternative musical stance seems to be disfavored if one also consider Rojin's example concerning the TV program named "competition of the chorus" broadcast in June 2009 at ShowTV (a popular Turkish TV channel). A primary school would be built in the finalist chorus' city of birth. Members of the chorus of Mardin that Rojin instructed were rejected by the mayor of Mardin Kızıltepe when they came to ask for support for the competition: "Go and ask the help of the TRT6!"⁷⁹ Rojin stated that her participation to this TV program was a tool

⁷⁹ Interview with Rojin: "Kızıltepe belediye başkanı öyle dedi: "gidin size TRT6 yardım etsin"

to show how Kurdish music was beautiful and this would be a real change in Turkey. At the final of the competition, the chorus of Mardin that Rojin instructs failed because of the SMS voting of the Turkish nationalists for the competitor chorus of Malatya. From this perspective, there are some alternative oppositional movements within the Kurdish movement but disfavored both by Kurdish and Turkish sides. Besides this, these tendencies are condemned of being apolitical just like in the case of Aynur or Perwer while Rojin is defined as a collaborator of the Turkish hegemony since she appeared on TRT6.

Considering all the above mentioned statements concerning difference or subaltern identities within the Kurdish political and cultural movement, one can argue that the display of particular representations of differences in the musical stance is favored due to the level of the engagement of the artist for the cause of the Kurdish movement. Several gender liberties or the promotion of the equality of gender or the subaltern ethnicities are supported and welcomed but these modern free and equal treatment of them are promoted through the schema of national imaginary. The problems concerning the gender or ethnic equality can only be presented through their relation and contribution to the Kurdish political movement. This indirect way of support of equality of all differences by the Kurdish cultural agents can be interpreted as a mechanism to secure also the support of the patriarchal Kurds and other less tolerant segments of the Kurdish society on the basis of the national imaginary concerning the total consensus of the Kurdish people regardless of their differences. In this context, the friendship of all Kurdish subjects from different origins is intended to be achieved through the membership to the same Kurdish political project. This kind of friendship implements the amour-propre (love-hate relations) and not the Derridian understanding of friendship that is defined beyond

the economy of interests and reciprocity. Rather, this mimetic friendship of the Kurds reproduce sthe Aristotelian definition of a friend as another self, as one soul in two bodies (Confessions, IV,6) and does not provoke the ideal democracy based on Derrida's understanding of friendship where the scale of brotherhood is unlimited, a more open ended hospitable democracy that has no basis for domination such as the national identity, borders or citizenship. On the other hand, this Aristotalian understanding of friendship promoted by the Kurdish cultural agents is defined as a means for more open display of friendship to come within Kurdish subjects of different traits.

Yet, there are other traits of difference which are kept at the borders of the current Kurdish national imaginary. Representing alternative ways of opposition as artistic stance within the Kurdish movement rather than the total agreement with the politics of the Kurdish resistance can end up in being disfavored but not yet banned. This politics of disfavor is legitimized in the sense that the image of total consensus of Kurdish subjects about the themes of Kurdish resistance secures the Kurdish emancipation from outside critiques or threats and it also reveals some sense of requirement for all the suffering and sacrifice that the Kurdish movement experienced.

However, some of my interviewees also expressed that right now, this is time to raise the particular demands for the recognition of diversities within the Kurds since not the Kurdish movement but recently the presence of the Kurdish people and culture are recognized in some sense and the Kurdish movement has transformed in the meantime. This means that from now on, the emergency call of the Kurdish movement for the immediate consensus against the enemies cannot be mobilized so easily. Here, the disfavor of alternative politics and its musical stance for the sake of

the immediate consensus of all the Kurds against the enemies calls for a conditional hospitality and does not include an open-ended process for every member of the Kurdish movement. Derrida disclaims the generalization of the model of natural brother, the connaturality of the “same” that he names “fraternization” (Derrida 1997, p.202). He also questions the possibility of friendship without presence, without resemblance, without affinity, without analogy in short the possibility of an aneconomic friendship (Derrida 1997, pp.154-155). In this perspective, alternative oppositional stance of an artist or an ordinary Kurd or an active member of the Kurdish movement has to be considered not as a companion of the self-affirmation of the Kurdish movement but as one who solicits it by its alterity to promote an ideal democracy.

CHAPTER 7

MODERN VERSUS TRADITIONAL KURDISH MUSIC

The Process of the Modernization of the Kurdish Music

The historical development of the Kurdish music is influenced by the Kurdish cultural agencies, by autonomous artists and also by the world trends. Right now, the Kurdish music is not anymore limited to the old Kurdish traditional music of dengbej. In this chapter I want to explore the development of the Kurdish music, how new popular music trends are combined to it and what the visualization of dengbej music means for the Kurdish cultural agencies. In addition to this I would like to compare it to the Turkish modernization of music in the first years of the republic. I think that this analysis would help to understand “what Kurdish music must be” in the understanding of Kurdish artists and cultural agencies of Kurdish movement and would help to recognize the building strategies of the Kurdish nation.

Seyitxan, the art co-director of RojTV and MMC mentioned that between the years of 1980 and 1995, the Kurdish folkloric music stood in the forefront. But, he also emphasized that they took the mission of developing the performance of Kurdish music according to scientific methods: “This is the main work...the Kurdish resistance gave us the strength for it...we worked on folkloric motives to form them in the context of modern scientific ways⁸⁰”. He explained this modern formation of Kurdish music is the reason why right now, there are many forms of Kurdish music in pop, rock and likewise, while Kurdish folkloric music is the head of them, which does not alienated from its essence or form Kurdish people’s reality despite the

⁸⁰ Interview with Seyitxan: “Temel çalışma bu aslında- mücadelenin de verdiği bir güç var, bu halk motiflerini biraz daha modern bilimsel şekillendirmeye çalıştık.”

western influence and the technologic development of communication tools on the youth and despite these conditioned new demands from music. Seyitxan told that in Europe, at the Academy and at the MKM in Turkey, many musical bands appeared. However, he also claimed that in 2000s, a decadence in Kurdish music's development occurred that he defined as the imitation of Ciwan Haco's style by many young artists without creating anything extra for it even though Ciwan Haco (famous for his hybrid compositions of Kurdish music with western music styles) is composing a music that is not totally alienated to Kurdish sound. On the other hand, Fırat, the manager of the MKM's artists also criticized the exact imitation of a traditional Kurdish song already vocalized and brought to light by a Kurdish celebrity or simple imitation. Fırat expressed that Agire Jıyan's last album, De Were (2006), whose one of the songs, Mişko, is actually a very well-known song of Ciwan Haco for children and Agire Jıyan did not add something of his own to this song in other words "they did not produce⁸¹". In Seyitxan's view, this stems from the persistent struggle for the Kurdish identity since right now the Kurdish history of 2000 or 3000 years is restrained; therefore, Kurdish artists cannot develop these Kurdish sources to form their own color of sound:

It's dangerous that these kinds of styles emerge in the age of restrictions and lack of sources. There is a little meaning in the art of an individual alienated from his own sources...if one practices consciously according to his own reality is different...If artist creates by recognizing it, by applying scientific methods, it is not only for pleasure of hearing this music but also for social benefit, collaboration and development with enlightenment of the audience, it has a meaning- it is beautiful.⁸²

⁸¹ Interview with Fırat: "Mişko" diye bir çocuk şarkısı da vardı, Cıvanın çok bilindik bir şarkısı vardı, Agire Jıyanın kendisine ait bir şeyi yoktu onun eleştiri vardı- üretmemişlerdi."

⁸² Interview with Seyitxan: "Tehlikelidir- imkanları dar bu yasakların içinde bu tarzların çıkması tehlikelidir- toplumda kendi asıl kaynaklarından kopmuş bir bireyin yaptığı sanatın fazla bir anlamı olmaz, ayakları havada kalır belki sadece kendi diliyle bunları seslendirebilir. Bilerek yaptığın zaman, tanıyarak yaptığın zaman, bilimsel çalışmaya tabi tuttuğun zaman...izleyicinin, dinleyicinin- kulaktan dolma hitap etmesinden bahsetmiyorum- yara sağlayacak, kaynaşmaya, gelişmeye, dönüştürmeye, ufkunu açabilecekse ama kendi kökleri üzerinde- bu anlamlıdır, bu güzeldir."

Actually here, Seyitxan stress about the enlightenment idea of modernism and progress for national spirit that can be spread by music while Firat emphasized the term of originality where the repetition does not count for creation. This relates to the traditional ideal of originality and uniqueness as well as the manifestation of difference that has long enslaved the western pluralist ideal of art while rap music contests against it: rap artists always borrow each other's and classical works. Consequently, rap emerges as a postmodern art undermining that the borrowing and creation are exclusive (Shusterman, 1993, p.202). One can consider that the music of black suburban people, the rap, is oppositional not only for its lyrics but its mode of articulating (talking music) which is different from hegemonic character of capitalist music market. However, rap performers also request for recognition against the cultural cliché that rap is not art: rap costs nothing, no effort, no knowledge but cheap talk. However, even the rappers are struggling for aesthetic legitimacy and controversially they claim to be talented and strong and fearless enough to act and to create and in this sense they constitute themselves original with their new format. Consequently, they recognize the term of originality and difference as multicultural ideal of world's culture demands. Seyitxan insisted that the Kurdish youth perform rock or hip-hop music with consciousness and not according to the idleness of western capitalism or modernity in the sense that they differ in their reflection of scientific methods to interpret their Kurdish reality. I think that this idea of cultural policy demands the national essence as a required ingredient and goes hand in hand with those of Turkish in the national building process. In his essay "the Rise of a Spontaneous Synthesis: the Historical Background of Turkish Popular Music", Orhan Tekelioğlu articulates the peculiar role of state to cultural policies in the process of nationalization and this cultural policies are defined as East-West or West-

East synthesis, an expression taken up in particular by Ziya Gökalp who considerably influenced Mustafa Kemal's views during the founding years of the Republic (Tekelioğlu, 1998). Ziya Gökalp pointed out that the West is the future of "our new civilization" but while there was an orientation in this direction, the origin of the synthesis is assigned as "the traditional culture of the Turkish folk". In this context, the West was regarded as the domain of modernity and model while the East stands for backwardness itself even "in 1934, a ban was placed on the radio broadcasting of Turkish music, even though there is uncertainty as to whether this meant all such music or only that was Ottoman in origin" (Kocabaşoğlu, 1980) in order to teach the people to enjoy polyphony, the examples of Western music. Gökalp divided music in three classes as Eastern, Western and Turkish folk music: "which of these, one wonders, is truly our national music? We have seen that Eastern music is not only ill, it is also non-national. Folk music is that of our national culture, and Western music is that of our new civilization, so that neither of these is foreign to us. Thus, our national music will be born from the fusion of our Folk music and Western music. Folk music has given us numerous melodies, which, we collect and harmonize in the Western manner, will yield a music that is both national and European... This, then, is in broad outline the programme for Turkism in the field of music. The rest is up to the lovers and creators of music in our nation" (Gökalp, 1990). It is clear that Mustafa Kemal borrowed Ziya Gökalp's statement of music and stated this in the parliament's 1934 sessions: "the music which they are trying to get people listen to today is not our music, so it can hardly fill the bill. We must not lose sight of this fact. What is required is to collect national expression that conveys fine thoughts and feelings, and without delay to put it to music following the most modern rules. Only thus can Turkish national music can rise to take its place among the music of the

world” (Oransay, 1985). Tekelioğlu stated that an actually cultural policy of synthesis reshaping music reflects in fact the history of “Occidentalism”.

Especially for attracting Kurdish youth who widely uses technologies of communication, I think that the Kurdish cultural policy of synthesis supports the tendency of “globalization” and the task of injecting Kurdish folk music in the global trends of music so that a national Kurdish music, that can display its ethnic difference, emerges instead of being marginalized. For some Kurdish traditionalist audience, this synthesis can be considered as foreign. Ali, the soloist of Agire Jiyan, underscored the presence of a fear of the Kurdish audience about modern music and Ali stated that an artist has to move with his society and he is firstly a Kurdish artist before being a world’s artist: “firstly, you have to take your people with me, if they do not admit it, you have to decrease your level to their level so that you can rise up together...I think that the time would solve this...today they accept hip-hop music while they did not accept it before⁸³”. He told that there is some kind of misgiving for everything Western in the Kurdish culture but yet this feeling diminishes with the use of good examples of this new sound.

However, unlike Ali, Vedat, the soloist of Bajar, Kurdish rock music band of the BGSST, described Kurdish people as a population who wants to be urbanized and modern actually in the sense that they were always despised of being villager and they want to get rid of this image. He also declared that there are artists such as Ciwan Haco, well-known Kurdish singer famous for modern composing or Koma Wetan, the first Kurdish rock group very competent of modern sound while it is normal for some older generations of the Kurds to dislike it. I mentioned Vedat that I made some of my Turkish nationalist friends to listen Bajar’s music CD and that they

⁸³ Interview with Ali: “En başta kendi halkımı da kendimle götürmek zorundayım kabullenmiyorsa onların seviyesine ineceksin ki tekrar birlikte yükselelim- zamanla olabilecek diye düşünüyorum- bugün hip-hopu kabuleniyorlar yoksa kabullenmiyorlardı.”

became surprised when I said this is in Kurdish. Vedat laughed at my story and then interpreted this as an example of the popular image of a typical Kurd in Turkey:

A little bit backward, having too many children, sounding strange voices like “aaaaahhh”, speaking Turkish poorly, dark-colored, big and hairy...so that when they listen the sound of drum and zurna (a reed instrument), they dislike it- this is the caricature of Kurdishness which is kept by both two camps as “Muro”, character of Kurtlar Vadisi [a popular TV series], both bad but cute in the same time.⁸⁴

In his view, this image of the Kurd appear as someone different from us or the modern individual facilitated the hierarchical political and social system of Turkey while in fact there are many styles of Kurdish musical sound. On the other hand, Tara Jaff, a famous Kurdish singer of the Kurdish music from Iraq, was one of the invited singers in the MKM’s concert in Bostancı Performance Center. She performed well-repudiated ethnic music with her harp. I heard the audience’s critique about her playing: “this woman staged long enough why did they take her for so long?” I asked Firat, the manager of artists in the MKM, after telling this incidence, if he thinks that Tara Jaff is admired by the Kurdish audience with her foreign musical instrument in Turkey. He stated that for only the last 10 years there is a division in Kurdish music whereas formerly all of the Kurdish music styles could have been collected in one single album. However, right now, every artist has created somehow his own style such as Serhato or Azat, the Kurdish artists of hip-hop music:

When we were about to bring Tara Jaff for the concert, there were some friends stressing if she can attract the audience-but if we think “art” in the context of demand and supply, art becomes commerce. If we present Tara Jaff for a while, it can affect the audience. When Koma Wetan first publishes its album, everyone made jokes about it- nobody listened to it,

⁸⁴ Interview with Vedat: “Yani daha ulusalcıların çerçevesinde baktığınız zaman ya da biraz da antipati ile bakabilen yani..Bu politik ortamdan dolayı zaman zaman çok farklı şekillere bürünebiliyor. Geri kalmış çok çocuk yapan..”aaahhabah” gibi tuhaf sesler çıkaran, Türkçeyi kötü konuşan, esmer,büyük, kıllı...birçok böyle şey yapabilirsiniz- Kurtlar Vadisindeki Muro karakteri gibi, kötü ama sevimli...”

the group fell apart but however right now people doing rock music are modeling them⁸⁵.

Fırat concluded that if an artist thinks how he is perceived by his audience, he can fly a sortie otherwise he would be soon forgotten by the same audience. Therefore, an artist has to perform without stressing about his fame. Consequently, it can be said that the top agencies of Kurdish cultural agents took the mission of introducing new art examples of the Western-Kurdish synthesis which is worldly appreciated but still found strange by the Kurdish audience in Turkey. Fırat talked about MKM's forthcoming project of concert (Demawaz) in "Yedi Kule Zindanları" on 26th of June 2010: "we planned to open up the stage with "dengbej", we'll continue with "laz" music (folkloric music of ethnic minority settled in northern-Turkey), and then hip-hop music and finally we think about a world-wide name like Ciwan Haco". Later on the program of the concert changed but the concept remains the same: Serhado (Kurdish Hip-hop artist), Koma Wetan (the first Kurdish rock music band), Amel Mathlouthi (Tunisian songwriter, composer, guitarist, singer and supporter of the Palastinian people), the MKM group of dance and the MKM group of folklore, Servet Kocakaya (Kurdish singer from Bingöl), dengdêj Seyidzanê Boyaxçi and also the MKM group of art (music bands and soloists): Koma Çiya, Koma Gulen Xerzan, Koma Afat, Agire Jiyan, Meral Tekçi, Nurcan Değirmenci. Fırat explained the reason why many styles of music take place in the concert: "because Istanbul presents a lot of diversity in just like the diversity in terms of ethnicities...so thinking a concert only addressed only to Kurdish taste can be marginal that's why we try to

⁸⁵ Interview with Fırat: "Biz bir Tara Jaffı getirirken yani bir kaygı taşıyan arkadaşlar vardı izleyiciyi çeker mi kitle çeker mi tartıştık burada- ama sanatı arz talep biçiminde sunarsan aslında biraz ticarete dönüyor. Tara Jaffı sunarsak uzun yıllarda aslında etkileyebiliyor ilk Koma Wetan ilk albümünü çıkardığımızda herkes güldü, kimse dinlemedi...Grup dağıldı ama kürt rock grubunda Koma Wetan'dan sonra çıkan bir grup yok ya da insanlar rock müzik yaparken ölçü koma Wetan, ya da ilk o belirliyor..."

manage to find artists of different ethnicities⁸⁶. I also noticed, in the MKM's concert in Bostancı Performance Center that there is a some kind of listing of staging beginning with "dengbej" music and folklore, much more traditional traits of Kurdish art then continuing with the modern dance and the rock music, western-styled Kurdish terms. Fırat mentioned the tradition of dengbej music as the essence of Kurdish culture and he indicated the body of "genç dengbej" in the MKM to support its survival and also they always give place to dengbej music in their performances. However, he pointed out that right now dengbej music has a meaning in symbolic sense that fortifies the feeling of belonging: "Last month, there was a program in Australia, on the other side of the world, they say that your artists made us feel we also exist in the world- dengbej music is symbolic in the sense that we will always give place in our programs⁸⁷. Considering the regular schema of programs, one can clearly assume the message underlying them for the audience is the concord of Kurdish and Western traits of music and none of them is specially privileged but their togetherness is supported.

What are the qualities of an ideal Kurdish music and this togetherness? What is the ideal proportion of Kurdish versus western traits in this synthesis of music in the process of modernization? Rojin, an autonomous Kurdish soloist singer, also, stated that her music is defined by one of musicologist as ethno-pop and ethno-rock that coincides with new and old in a neoclassical way. She pointed out that no music can find a place in a world if it ignores Western instruments or recent tendencies in the world music:

⁸⁶ Interview with Fırat: "Çünkü İstanbul çok fazla çeşitlilik var hem etnik anlamda-hem sadece Kürtlere hitap edecek bir organizasyon düşünmek marjinal kalır o yüzden farklı etnik kimlikten sanatçılar katmaya çalışıyoruz mümkün olduğunca...

⁸⁷ Interview with Fırat: "Geçen ay avusturalyada bir program vardı, dünyanın öbür yanı..diyorlar sizden gelen sanatçılardan sonra gerçekten biz bu dünyada olduğumuzu hissettik yani bizim için dengebejlilik gerçekten semboliktir sembolik derken her zaman kendi etkinliklerimizde yer vereceğimiz bir anlamı var...

If you look at globally famous Indian music, the music is authentic but yet modernized through dealing with its understructure, it can meet with the world. I do not think that a dengbej music can be listened by an American or I do not think that it can be listened by a listener of the world music- it is not because I think dengbej music is strange, it has its own beauty in itself- however, if one integrates it without corrupting it, without alienating but enclosing it, it can happen...⁸⁸

The members of Koma Asian, the rock music band of the MKM, claimed the requirement of working on the Western music and listening to it is to preserve one's original style. They expressed that originality is a must when one imitates the Western music a little: "If you like that, you can form your own style...but if you insist in articulating their beauty, you will form a couple where they are original and you are the simple copy⁸⁹". Mehmet Akbaş also agreed on this in the sense that he stated that one given Kurdish artist can circulate in worldwide if he can articulate his musical differences to the western world. However Fırat is against the exact imitation or translation of the Western art since he portrays it as an elitist behavior: "I remember that theatre unit played, for a time ago, translated plays from world's literature but we noticed that people (the audience) started not to find themselves in the play⁹⁰". Fırat concluded that it could have been ended up in the loss of audience's sense of belonging to the MKM. He mentioned of a play that the MKM's staff wrote

⁸⁸ Interview with Rojin: "Batı enstrümanlarından veya dünyadan çok ayrı şeyleri olan hiçbir müzik kendine biryer bulamaz...yapılan tutan Hint şarkılarına bakarsak alınlarına otantik yaparak o şarkıyı modernize edip altyapısını zenginleştirirseniz o zaman dünya ile buluşur..sadece özümüze dönerek..ben bir dengbej şarkısını bir Amerikalının veya dünyada herkesin dinleyebileceğini zannetmiyorum..bu dengbejleri farklı gördüğüm anlamında değil onun da çok güzelliği var ama kaynaşmak entegre olmak müziğini bozmamak tabi ki kendinden uzaklaşarak değil yakınlaşarak olur.."

⁸⁹ Interview with Koma Asian: "Sürekli yabancı müzik dinleyip yabancı müzikler üzerinden çalışmak gerekiyor aslında. Sadece Kürtçe rock ya da Türkçe rock dinleyip onun üzerinden birşeyler yapmak değil de daha ilerisine de gidebilmek. Esinlenmek için daha çok dinlemek ve onları taklit etmek gerekiyor birazcık. O zaman kendi tarzını o zaman yaratırsın daha sonrasında- Oyle yaptığın surece zaten kendi tarzın zamanla ortaya çıkar. Ama sen sürekli onu dinlerken "of çok güzel" dersin zamanla iki grup olur bir sen bir o. Ama orijinali o, sen onun golgesinden giden grup olursun. "

⁹⁰ Interview with Fırat: "Mesela şunu deyim tiyatrodaki birkaç yıl önce bizim arkadaşlar çeviri oyunu oynadı sürekli çeviriydi... dünya edebiyatından oynamaya başladılar ve saire ve fark ettik ki insanlar kendini bulmamaya başlıyor-"

about women's murders, "Şiret", where the true and sincere critiques were presented, which became very popular with the audience's feelings of empathy: "it is just like a painter died in Europe and it counts for a sensational event while in the Middle East, 5000 of people died and it ends up of being spot news- it is while European problems become local for our audience...Mozart's art is beautiful and great but when you listen to Koma Amed is another feeling accompanies you, you can like both of them but the latter is much more close to you". Therefore, Fırat defined Kawa's play of modern dance both a traditional myth while it is modern that is the play I saw in Bostancı Performance Center.

Actually here, there are different yet connected logics for displaying the Kurdish "essence" found in the traditional Kurdish sound: the first one stresses the essential nature of the Kurdish music and the second one emphasizes on the demands for the recognition of the Kurdish music as part of the global music immediately. There is an ethnic trend in the world music that one singer has to emphasize his ethnic difference to circulate his music. The first one admits the existence of some "essence" or nationality in Kurdish identity reflected in the music. In this perspective, in fact, the multicultural understanding of international system and the natural ties of nationhood and nation-states are justified in the sense that the national music has to reflect its character of difference, its distinguishable cultural traits where an ethnicity can claim its body and get a seat in the international arena. It verbalizes the criteria of belonging, the limits of brotherhood between Kurdish people while it fortifies it so that a Kurdish sound has to vocalize the familial sound system of a Kurdish listener used to. However, as Fırat pointed out, this also allows the audience to build a mimetic empathy and facilitates intersubjective relationship with the art. In the case of a critique of patriarchal rules in a play or in art, victims of

traditional patriarchal system in the eastern audience can be allowed to voice their memory and get the recognition of their suffering in the society whereas the portrait of the Western world's experience for the patriarchy does not picture their suffering because Kurdish women have witnessed more severe suffering than a Western women. Actually, every piece of art based on more or less on mimesis and audience's identification with protagonists or theme of art can end up in its appreciation with self-analyze. However here, aesthetic judgment resides on some subjective interests. The second approach is also related to the international multicultural system based on cultural differences favoring the harmony of ethnical differences while it kept only the same differences and the issues of struggle and togetherness for ethnic political claim which means also the limits of international brotherhood to ethnic identity (emphasis on Derrida's friendship mentioned in the introduction and "quest for sincerity" chapter).

On the other hand, there are other interviewees defining this policy of synthesis as a natural outcome of globalization and the change in Kurdish people's way of life. Aynur did not define her music as a Western-Eastern synthesis but still an authentic music even though several Western instruments and traits are combined to her music. One can argue that right now these Western trends music are universal and these Western trends affected her own being therefore they are not borrowed but yet the natural constituent of her own music. Aynur says that: "this is the accommodation of daily life...I cannot live the traditionalism of 30 years behind since I am not living now the time of 30 years ago"⁹¹. Koma Asian also reflected the same argument that "rock music" as an international sound for its common gesture of all resistances against suppression that is why rock music is appropriate to Kurdish

⁹¹ Interview with Aynur: "Bu döneme de uyum sağlamak oluyor zaten ben 30 sene önceki gelenekselliği yaşayamam... zaten 30 yıl öncesinde değilim..."

movement and its art. Vedat from the BGST also related his sound to the conditions of today's Kurdish populations and he claimed that "dengbej" music associates with village living on the mountains while Kurdish people is right now also urbanized: "Kurdish people is right now urbanized, they do not have a village anymore since their villages are deserted...we can say that Kurds are one of the most populated people living in the cities. Mersin, Adana, Diyarbakır...To help telling the musical position of this new way of life what can we do while lives are changing?⁹²". Vedat told about the immigrants from the Kurdish villages deserted in the cities, their children right now grown up and working in unskilled labor. Vedat expressed that he wants to mention them in his music. He defined the traditional Kurdish music as "nostalgic" in the sense that the Kurdish culture is also evolved since the Kurdish populations do not live actually in ghettos to preserve their culture. That is why one has to find other and alternative sounds and languages for expression. Vedat stated that there are some actual musical works in Kurdish modeling modern musical styles while insisting pastoral content: "in this case, there are no organic ties between the sound and lyrics, which is still nostalgic in lyrics or in the sound⁹³". He concluded that one has to integrate this traditionalism to the actual life; at this point Vedat referred to his other music band "Kardeş Türküler" as the ideal model of this.

On the other hand, there are some limits and some styles of music which are not included in the process of Kurdish modernization of music. Serdar, member of TEV-ÇAND in Köln, pointed out that no one has the right to distort dengbej music

⁹² Interview with Vedat: "Kürtler artık şehirli halk zaten..Köyleri falan kalmadı, boşaltırdı..Nüfus olarak en çok şehirlerde yaşayan halklardan biri diyebiliriz Kürtlere... Mersin, Adana Diyarbakır falan..bunlar... Şehirler çok büyüdü. İlçeler şehirlere dönüştü..Kızıltepe şuan 150bin var şehir oldu. Köyler çok kalmadı.İşte bu yeni hayatın müzikal durumuna yardımcı olmak için..Neler yapılabilir çünkü hayatlar değişiyor."

⁹³ Interview with Vedat: "Sound denemeleri yapıyor ama şarkı sözlerine bakıyorsunuz yine pastoral hayattan söz ediliyor. Sözlerle müzik arasında bu sefer bir organik ilişki olamayabiliyor. Böyle problemlerden dolayı... nostaljik durum hem müzikal olabiliyor hem sözlerde olabiliyor..."

for the sake of modernity; dengbej music is the essence of Kurdish music assisting the preservation of Kurdish history (he reflects here the lack of written Kurdish history) while Kurdish hip-hop or fantasy music can flourish, but the distortion practiced by these styles must not be in excess. He mentioned that the famous Kurdish tradition of listening music existed for dengbej music is right now broke out: “we used to listen dengbej music for 3 nights and days, you know Serhat (a region of Kurdish geography) culture, do you right now can listen to music for just so long?⁹⁴” He expressed that the quest for popularity can end up in degradation of the Kurdish music, however, thanks to the Kurdish movement, Kurdish people got conscious of their own national values. For Serdar, some types of music known for their popularity can corrupt the dengbej music and the popular music has already damaged the tradition of listening for Kurdish audience. Adorno connected the habit of listening to live music to setting aside the routines of the consumer society and putting real values instead of the pursuit of fetish and fleeting desires (Scruton, 2010, p.43). This is the regression of the activity of listening.

Firat, the manager of MKM’s artists, also mentioned the tradition of “potpourri” for Kurdish albums which composed of a poor or medium arrangement of well-known “halay” music (folkloric music of dance). Firat said that this sort of music is prepared only for financial concerns to attract the Kurdish audience who like “halay” music. However, Vedat from the BGST interpreted the means of “halay” music for Kurdish audience as a way to express itself in the sense of a political uprising. However, Serdar and Firat emphasized that the people within the music’s earshot “don’t even have to listen to it”, and yet “halay” does something, music and people are caught and bound together, it keeps the listeners together and “perhaps

⁹⁴ Interview with Serdar: “Üç gün üç gece bizde dengbejler dinleniyor sen Serhat kültürünü biliyorsun... Sen üç gün üç gece bir sanatçıyı dinleyebiliyor musun burada?”

momentarily happy” (Adorno, 2002, p.507) and ends up the discharge of a Kurdish listener’s revolutionary potentiality. Actually, Adorno also argued that the music in cafés maintain a presence of nothingness as that accompanies to the conversation. Thus, his critique converges with the critique of Kurdish “potpourri” type of “halay” music, which Adorno could define as an acoustic ruin inducing nostalgia and melancholy. That is why this sort of potpourri and halay music is a minimal threat to the status-quo. This sort of music does not introduce anything new or critical to its listener. For Adorno what is repeated is the same-old order that does not require a conscious thought.

The Critique of the Pop Music

Fırat, the manager of artists, mentioned that only the pop music and arabesque music were not accepted in the activities of the MKM since they think that these kinds of music can corrupt the audience and the art itself. Fırat condemned these musical styles since they are popular and yet tools of state’s cultural hegemony because they glorify the feeling of nonsense and fatalism. In his view, pop music distracts his listener in the sense that the actual world’s reality escapes while it offers another and distorted world which the state’s cultural hegemony dictates: “I remember listening Yonca Evcimik on my way home and then at home news were announced about the unsolved (“*faili meçhul*”) murders- this means that what pop music suggests is very different than the real world⁹⁵”.

Roger Scruton, in his essay entitled “Music and Morality”, claims that the essence of pop is not a form or structure but it is the rhythm and rhythm is something

⁹⁵ Interview with Fırat: “Yonca Evcimik’i ben dinledikten sonra okuldan çıkıp eve gidene kadar faili meçhul cinayetleri izliyordum yani yaşadığın dünya başka ama sana pop ile birlikte vermek istedikleri kültür, dünya bambaşka...”

to which you move, not something to which you listen to (Scruton 2010, p.44). In this case pop music attempts “to involve no control of the body, no attempt to dance with another person but at best only the attempt to dance at him or her”: People move consciously with others this is the difference of “with” and “at” in the sense that the rhythm overrides your freedom and it is hard to move in a way that suggests a personal relation to a partner: in this case, dance is not something that you do but something that happen to you- a pulse on which you are suspended (Scruton 2010, p.45). Scruton’s remark explains the nothingness and nonsense found in pop music in Fırat’s argument. Fırat also criticizes the temporality of the pop music and the pop artist:

It was in my middle school years I remember, you think of “aboneyim abone” song [a very popular pop song of Yonca Evcimik in early 1990s], they have no value but they occupy your mind without your consent- pop with arabesque music impose the nonsense- they have no rich background or production but also there is no pop artist that can be remembered after 100 years- no one will remember Shakira when her hip will be distorted when she aged...but Victor Jara [Vıctor Lidio Jara Martınez, singer from Chile, murdered by the military junta in 1973, famous for his political songs] will be remembered....he was the one whose fingers playing the guitar were cut by the dictator and then these fingers were hung in the middle of the stadium, he is unforgettable.⁹⁶

Fırat claimed that the nonsense and the nothingness that are compassed in pop music intend to corrupt the Kurdish folkloric culture. He says that this musical style can satisfy some temporary needs while Kurdish identity does not require this but searches for a cultural, traditional and long lasting art that is much more related to Kurdishness. He gave the example of “Adare”, song of Agire Jiyan, popular for 15

⁹⁶ Interview with Fırat: “Arabesk ile beraber kadercilik pop ile beraber bir hiçlik seni alıyor..pop dinlerken bir hiçliğı yaşıyorsun...müzikal olarak bir değeri yok ne çok zengin bir altyapısı var ne çok zengin bir prodüksiyonu var ama 100 yıl sonra hatırlanacak bir popçu yok- bir Shakira yaşlanıp kalçaları pörsüdükten sonra kimse Shakira’yı hatırlamayacak...gerçekten öyle ama Victor Jara’yı herkes hatırlayacak..gitar çalıyor diye parmaklarını diktatörün kesip stadyumda astığı bir insandır mesela o hiçbir zaman unutulmayacak...”

years and was sung with all the audience together in concerts as that reflects the major style of the MKM.

Scruton, too, stresses on the short life of the pop music he stated pop favoring rhythm divorced from melodic organization loss its possibility of being memorized while traditional popular songs and their lyrics based on melody are possible to be memorized. Such songs allow the listeners to join in the singing and that provides an awareness about music's social meaning (Scruton 2010, p.45). This idea coincides with Firat's reason of disfavoring Shakira's songs for lasting short since they are difficult to memorize with a rhythm that dominates the song. Actually, it is more than that, since pop lyrics are just accessory to the rhythm in the sense that they are not the major motive of pop music. It is the rhythm that dictates the lyrics. Consequently, the lyrics can mean anything but a break to the world, a break to the other signifiers so that listeners can re-join the system after listening it without complaints.

The Critique of the Arabesque Music

Seyitxan and Rotinda are members of the leading group who are responsible for the selection of the video clips for the MMC. Rotinda mentioned that MMC has some standards just like all the other TV channels have: These standards are based on the musical, political and social stance of the artist. He stated that he approves a music clip if there is not a lack of harmony just like that if the music is folkloric, its original sound must be kept in an appropriate way. He also told that the clip must not hurt people's feelings or attempt blackmailing emotionally which they usually identify with "arabesque" music:

In Turkey, there are various kinds of arabesque music... revolutionary, Alevi arabesque and so on...for example, they make-up a song about revolutionary people- they change its melody, its rhythm, its lyrics...this make-up song is sung in “meyhane”(Turkish pub), and people get drunk with it... how can it be revolutionary right now?⁹⁷

He then told that “arabesque” is not a politically correct naming and that “real arabesque music is valuable of being the first alternative music playing other than Islamic music in Arabia”. He claimed that “corrupted”, “degenerated” or “variegated” (ebruli) are better synonyms for this kind of music. This statement reminds one the significant account on censoring music found in Plato’s “Republic” where Plato describes the musical modes he would eliminate from the training of rulers of his ideal state. Socrates states: “But drunkenness, softness or idleness are also qualities most unsuitable in a Guardian...What then are the relaxing modes and the ones we use for drinking songs...the Ionian and certain Lydian modes...commonly described as languid...be of any use for training soldiers?. None at all” (Plato, 1987, pp.99-100).

For the Kurdish cultural authorities, too, this music developed in the outskirts of big cities and the arabesque music has also affected Kurdish music and its performers:

PKK’s structure is against it...it is not appropriated...because you cannot exploit people’s emotions...what is emotion? He does not know but it tells it so sadly...it is not like it...guerilla of the mountains knows that someday he can be a martyr...but he does not ask why I am dead, damn it, where is my youth... if you reflect it like that, it becomes arabesque.. so that music expresses something wrong undeservedly that is why I am against it.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Interview with Rotinda: “Evet arabesk türkiyede o kadar renklendi ki...devrimci arabesk, alevi arabeski..değişleri arabesk yaptılar..devrimci şarkıları arabesk yaptılar..Örneğin..devrimcilerin üzerine yapılmış bir şarkı meyhane de söyleniyor ve kafa bulunuyor bunun neresi devrimci? Sadece sözlerde kalıyor değil mi..ritim ayrı..sözler ayrı ..melodi ayrı...şimdi arabesk kelime olarak..aslen buna ebruli demek daha doğru olur veya dejenere...yozluk demek lazım.”

⁹⁸ Interview with Rotinda: “Bildiğim kadarıyla PKK’nin tüm yapısı da buna çok karşı..benimsenmiyor..çünkü insanların duygusuyla oynayamazsın..duygu nasıldır? Hiç inanmadığın halde bilmiyor tanımıyor ama öyle bir acıklı anlatıyor..öyle değil..dağa çıkan her gerilla bunu çok iyi bilerek gidiyor bir gün ben şehit düşeceğim ama şehit düşerken ben niye şehit düştüm kahrolsun nerde

Seyitxan told that the protest music (“*özgün müzik*”), of which Ahmet Kaya was the founder, was designated to create an alternative to arabesque music since the latter lacks the essence (“*özl  olmayan*”), pushes the subaltern, oppressed and poor people to idleness. Seyitxan identifies protest music: “What does it says? Wake up! Have concerns! Stand on your own feet!⁹⁹”. He defined the music as something that provokes the fusion, the development, transformation or the enlightenment and he stated that “folkloric music” presents the most revolutionary style of music which enables the requirement of guiding people. It seems clear that the critique is directed not to the arabesque music itself but instead to the connotations and effects associated with it. The arabesque music is condemned of making people think “to be happy with ones own pain and not to revolt against it”: for the Kurdish people, this means not to join the Kurdish revolutionary forces. Fırat, the manager of the artists in the MKM, claims that the rise of the arabesque music coincides with Abdullah Öcalan’s capture by the Turkish state as well as with the dissolution of the famous Kurdish band Koma Berxwedan composed of 30 musicians that Fırat glorifies as one of the prominent supporters of the Kurdish resistance: According to Fırat, by becoming a soloist, the former members of the Koma Berxwedan lost their way. He adds that even for a certain time, arabesque music is frequently seen on the MMC TV Channel and it is supported. However, right now arabesque is not so much appreciated. He describes the history of the arabesque music in Turkey as the following: “this was the culture of dark skinned İbrahim Tatlıses with his golden necklace, a culture of encouragement where girls of little villages escape from their

benim gençliğim demez sen böyle şekilde yansıttığın zaman o şarkı arabesk olur.. o şarkı haksız yere haksız bir şeyi ifade etmiş olur o anlamda karşıyım.”

⁹⁹ Interview with Seyitxan: “İşsiz, güçsüz, yoksul...duygusunu körükleyen bir şey, bir hava- derken etkileniyor da bundan o işsizlik ve yoksulluk içinde- protest de buna alternatif...burada ne diyor? Uyan, amaçlı ol, ayaklarının üstünde ol, acıyla mutlu olma, kesinlikle...”s

native homeland with their bundles...this is the culture of the coup d'etat, the culture of the promotion to fill up empty streets while millions of people are in jail.¹⁰⁰” This critique of arabesque music is actually coincides with that of the Turkish cultural elite’s perspective in the late 1960s. Even the term “arabesque” (Arab-like, not original) itself, was invented and introduced by the Republican elitist point of view to imply the symptoms of shortsightedness (Tekelioğlu, 1998). Arabesque music is largely condemned by the cultural elite in Turkey as the failure of the East-West synthesis of the state’s cultural policies which is Turkish state’s social project. Even though the Arabesque Project included the instruments and composing influence of Western music, according to Tekelioğlu, just like the electo-saz or quasi-phony character of music this feature was not part of the intention of creating a sort of civilized version of Turkish music. Martin Strokes describes arabesque context as a presentation of the disappointment and problems of particularly the immigrants and people from the south-east of Turkey mostly living in “*gecekondu*” (shantytowns) areas of the metropolitan cities even though the people of all socio-cultural dimensions listen to it. The arabesque music encourages the presentation of emotions which are banned by the official state discourse (Strokes, 1998).

However, according to the Kurdish critique of arabesque music, the Turkish state and its power apparatus are considered as the agents of the introduction and promotion of the arabesque music to pacify Kurdish revolutionary senses and to orientate Kurdish youth to nonsense by introducing some selected Kurdish arabesque musicians as well-known and successful figures in the Turkish media:

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Fırat: “Arabeskin türkiyedeki geçmişi aslında şeydir- esmer renkli İbrahim Tatlıses’in boynunda kolyesiyle gençlerin özendirildiği bir kültürdür yine genç kızların köyden kaçıp bohçasıyla ünlü olma kültürüdür- arabeski o anlamda bir kültür olarak değerlendiriyoruz...Türkiye’de ise darbenin geliştirdiği bir kültürdür...yani milyonlarca insanın tutuklanıp, sokakları doldurmak için darbenin geliştirdiği bir kültürdür...”

For many years, we watched people cut themselves with razor in Müslüm Gürses' concerts...This generation was a generation of monkeys...Müslüm Gürses, Küçük Emrah, Küçük Ceylan...they are chosen always from within the Kurdish people...They are chosen, become some sort of brand, presented as the model for the masses...they are all arabesque...It (the system) chose Emrah from Diyarbakır, Ceylan from Diyarbakır, Tatlıses from Urfa, Müslüm Gürses from Urfa...that is why arabesque music was a political gesture for us...if we are resistance, we have to stand against the arabesque music. We watched them cutting themselves with razor, this is all common in our childhood...There is no one in his past that does not have İbrahim Tatlıses or Ferdi Tayfur because there was nobody else. All the music cassettes of Şiwan Perwer were banned but İzzet Altınmeşe was enjoying singing the same songs in Turkish on TRT all along the day that is why we consider arabesque music as a source of the popular indifference and fatalistic culture...After listening to pop music [which he identifies just like the arabesque music in the interview] , it is impossible to carry on some societal concerns...you dream of something that you would never possess and you became governed by this...Turgut Özal used to walk hand in hand with Semra Özal with his short pants in Ankara's streets...this was a model that we would never achieve and yet we all try hard...arabesque is something like this¹⁰¹

In this perspective, one can assume that the condemnation of arabesque music is largely because of its content that is not compatible with the modernist term of development (identified with the rational paradigm of Western culture) for both Turkish and Kurdish elites while it encourages the fatalistic thought of world understanding incompatible with rational-thought and the promise of enlightenment

¹⁰¹ Interview with Fırat: "Biz yıllarca Müslüm Gürses'in konserlerinde kendini jiletleyen insanları izledik aslında... maymunlaştırılmış bir kuşaktı o...M.Gürses, K.Emrah, K.Ceylan...mesela hepsi de Kürtlerin içerisinde çıkmış...çıkarılmış, markaya dönüştürülmüş ve örnek haline getirilmiş kitleler için...mesela hepsinin ortağı arabesk...Emrah'ı Diyarbakır'dan çıkarıyor, Ceylan'ı Diyarbakır'dan...İbrahim Tatlıses'i Urfa'dan çıkarıyor, M.Gürses'i Urfa'dan...bu yüzden sistemin politik bir yaklaşımı idi arabesk bizim için de politik kimliğimiz gereği muhalif duruyorsak sistemin karşısında müzik olarak da arabeskin karşısında durmak gerektiğine inanıyorum- kendini jiletleyen insanları yıllarca izledik, hepimizin çocukluğunda var...kürt olup geçmişinde İbrahim Tatlıses olmayan ya da Ferdi Tayfur olmayan çok azdır çünkü başka kimse yoktu...Şiwan Perwer kasetleri toprak altında saklanırdı ama onun karşısında Şiwan'ın şarkılarını Türkçeleştirmiş İzzet Altınmeşe TRTde gün boyu program yapardı o yüzden biz arabeski değerlendirirken biraz o kültür olarak...kaderci bir kültür popülist ve boşveren bir kültür...pop dinledikten sonra toplumsal bir kaygı taşımak pek mümkün değil...bilmediğin ulaşamayacağın ama hayalini kurmaktan da kendini alamadığın bir yaşam modellerine kaptırıyorsun kendini...Turgut Özal da şort giyer eşinin elini tutar ama Ankara sokaklarında gezerdi aslında kültür olarak hiçbir zaman ulaşamayacağımız bir modeldi...ama hep özendiğimiz bir modeldi...arabesk de onun gibi bir şey..."

for progress. But, in the Kurdish case, the arabesque music is seen as an imposition of the Turkish state.

CHAPTER 8

INTERNATIONALITY: THE WESTERN AND EASTERN PARADIGMS

The Kurdish Musicians in the Diaspora

There are a substantial number of Kurdish artists immigrated to Europe especially to Belgium and to Germany. The Academy in München, the Kurdish Institute and TEV-ÇAND (Mesopotamia Democratic Movement of Culture/ Tevgera Demokratîk ya Çand û Huner ê Mezopotamya) in Köln and the RojTV with the MMC (Kurdish music channel) in Brussels are the major cultural institutions of the members of the Kurdish political movement living in Europe. All of them are closely connected to the MKM. Their artists or chief members usually have a MKM background. Some of them had to leave Turkey to escape from legal punishment or to get away from the requirement of military service while others are from the second generation of the immigrant. While I was conducting interviews with them, I questioned primarily the general theme that I got from my interviews in the MKM about the Kurdish artists in the diaspora. In the MKM it was told that these are the people who have to live away from their land and their own people and this is a great loss in terms of their commitment to art. Only as an exception, as Koma Asian, the rock band from the MKM, expressed that they want to be where they can freely display their own music whether in Turkey or abroad while they claimed living abroad can change their music and if they become popular this is something to worry for their musical quality: “You can always produce better at ground zero but here you are not permitted to display ourselves¹⁰².” From this perspective, I tried to understand the

¹⁰² Interview with Koma Asian. “Bence sıfır noktasında her zaman daha iyi üretim yaparsın. Ama sıfır noktasında da şöyle bir sorun var. Üretmene izin vermiyorlar.”

opportunities and difficulties of performing music for a Kurdish artist living in diaspora and how these questions are seen from Europe.

Rotinda, one of the art directors of the MMC in Brussels, cannot visit Turkey since he is sentenced to legal punishment. He defined Belgium as his second country since he is respected and loved there and people treat him according to the standards of human rights:

When we say that we are Kurdish, nobody disregards us here, they respect me- I am a worker of a TV channel here... especially the Flemish part is fairly respecting us, we are also respecting them- because they can see us, they can see who is the real terrorist...we did not do anything to offend them...on the contrary, what we are doing are humane things - we are giving concert all over the Europe...I am not provoking anybody for crime in my songs...instead I promote brotherhood and peace but Turkey's mentality could not reach this perspective.¹⁰³

I asked the recent attack of the Belgian police on 4 of March 2010 to RojTV in his studios at Denderleeuw and his comments about it. He explained me that the Belgian police attack was imposed by the Turkish state and by its international power network in the NATO:

This can clearly be seen from Belgian police officers, they did not know why they were here...they could not find anything, what can be stored in a TV Channel? There are images, reportages, news, songs...our computers with stuff were taken away and the arrested members were released quickly...this means that it was a political show!¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Interview with Rotinda: "Biz burada Kürt'üz dediğimiz zaman horlanmıyoruz...bize saygı gösteriyorlar televizyon var işte ben televizyonda resmi çalışırım özellikle flaman bölgesi gerçekten bize karşı oldukça saygılı-biz de onlara karşı saygılıyız..çünkü görüyorlar..teröristin kim olduğunu görüyorlar..biz burada herhangi bir toplumu rencide edecek, topluma zarar verecek, incitecek bir şey yapmıyoruz - tam tersine insani şeyler yapıyoruz- Avrupa'nın her yerinde konserler yapıyoruz ve insanlar geliyor Avrupalı da geliyor- kimseyi suça itmiyorum şarkılarımda..tam tersine kardeşliği barışı..ama Türkiye'nin mantığı ne yazık ki buna ulaşamamış..."

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Rotinda: "Uluslararası güçler biliyorsunuz NATO bu işin içinde var...basınç yaptılar Belçika hükümetine..o gün bizzat ben buradaydım zaten..çalışanıym..gelen polislerin yüz ifadesinden belli ki niye buraya geldiklerini bilmiyorlar onlar da..ve aradıkları hiçbir şeyi bulamadılar...televizyonda ne olur ki...ne olabilir?...görüntü olabilir, röportajlardır, haberdır, şarkıdır..yani..zaten bizden kimse gözaltına alınmamıştı sadece eşyalarımız işte bilgisayarlarımız alınmıştı..diğer alınan kimseler de serbest bırakıldı..bu da gösteriyor ki bir siyasi şov..."

He added that all the reportages of local habitants of Denderlleuw affirmed that they do not have any problems with Kurds and they love Kurds and in fact they have problems with Turks. Rotinda also expressed that he does not say it for revaluating Kurds but Kurdish people have really been peaceful and for 15 years of RojTV's history, nothing like this happened something like this before.

Furthermore, Rotinda claimed that he is never totally exiled from his country, he visits approximately in every 2 years the mountains and he travels with the Kurdish militia all over the country: "I breath the air of my country, perhaps it can be seen an exaggeration but I cannot live without it...I love mountains, I love my country...I am not away from it...I live here but I can not define myself yet European yet."¹⁰⁵ Rotinda mentioned that if a Kurdish artist is alienated mentally from his country, he composes songs estranged from people's reality but for many of them this is not the case since they are with Kurdish people even though they cannot go their country. Seyitxan, one of the founders of Koma Bexwedan in 1982 in Europe and co- art director of the MMC, defined the Kurdish movement as the source of reconciliation for Kurdish Diaspora and as the means of inspiration for their art.

Kawa, immigrated to France 15 years ago to escape legal punishments in Turkey. We met with him in Köln. He stated that he frequently came to München and Köln since the Academy and Kurdish institute are there. He claimed his presence in Europe is a price he is charged because of being a member of the Kurdish movement: "I live in Europe, this is the price...I have been crying and singing for 23 years...I

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Rotinda: "Ülkemin havasını solurum..ülkemin havasını almadan belki biraz abartı da olacak ama yaşayamam..seviyorum..dağları seviyorum.ülkemi seviyorum...ülkemden uzak değilim..avrupalı diyemem kendime doğru burada yaşıyorum bir ayağım burada ama gidiyorum."

work at night and day for not contradicting it [Kurdish movement]¹⁰⁶” He defined his immigration as an obligation and expressed that if an artist lives away from a child deprived of food and water in his geography or a child under a hail of bullets or from his people living hard conditions, this artist’s art became distasteful: “I have been here, in Europe for 15 years but my heart has never left my country, I am not integrated to this place- I am the same Kawa, the son of my father’s house, I perhaps styled my whiskers but this is an artistic image¹⁰⁷” Kawa also mentioned that the MKM has much for favorable opportunities for expressing the emotions of the same people pursuing their freedom since there are detrimental effects of living in Europe which spreads egoism and insensibility. He compared living in his homeland and in Europe and told that even Kurdish people living in their homeland under such hard conditions have a much more joyful life than Europeans since Kurdish people in their homelands keep hope with them:

To be honest, I could not taste anymore of anything...They enjoy there (in the homelands) the taste of familial visits, having meals together...Our people become happy when they can buy a new pair of pants for “bayram” (religious fests)...Here, nothing is important for them (Europeans)- there is indifference...in reality, all about of human rights, modernism or contemporary world is a lie, they give us hell without noticing it, people become indifferent¹⁰⁸

He defined that the MKM is fortunate that its artists can benefit from being closer to their people since they can easily get the required motivation and energy for their art.

He mentioned one of his listeners newly arrived in Europe crying in his concert and

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Kawa: “Kaç senedir ben Avrupada yaşıyorum bu bir bedeldir, 23 senedir bağırıp çağırıyorum az değildir... ters düşmemek için de gecemi gündüzüme katıyorum...”

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Kawa: “15 senedir Avrupadayım, yüreğimi hiçbir zaman ordan ayrı koymadım, buraya entegre” ... olmadım- şu an Kawa neyse babasının evinde de buydu..belki favorilerimizi incelttik o da sanatın imajı gereği...

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Kawa: “Ben artık hiçbirşeyden tat almıyorum açık söyleyim mesela- insanlar orda içmeden, yemeden, ziyaretlerden tat alıyorlar. Aile sohbetlerinden keyif alıyorlar. İnsanlarımız bayram zamanı bir pantolon gömlek alırlar ne kadar sevinirler burada hiçbirşey umurda değildir....duygusuzluk vardır..aslında insan hakları, modernizm, çağdaşlık deniliyor musun hocam bu? Yalan..burda çaktırmadan anasını ağlatıyorlar, insanlar duygusuzlaştırıldı.”

then the same very person sitting crossing legs (Kawa describes this as an improper/rude behavior for Kurdish listeners) in front of him after 4 years of living in Europe. Kawa has a music clip of his song “Naze” a song about the difficulty of finding his love in the streets of the European cities full of indifferent people. Kawa also added that he published 5 albums in 10 years for creating a sphere of communication with his homeland and its own people.

Yet, Mehmet Akbaş, former soloist of the Zaza music band “Venge Sodiri”, defined his homeland as the whole world and said that all of the boundaries such as the boundaries of Germany or Turkey are arbitrary. However, there are also some qualifications gained from his ancestors and that is to form his music: “If you do not adapt the electronic music to the Kurdish music and interested only in the electronic music, no one needs you- there are already some good performers of electronic music- yet, if you use your own arguments in this arena, you can have a musical identity here¹⁰⁹”. Akbaş affirmed that he misses his people but he also stated that thanks to technology the world enters into one’s house, he has not a problem as such. He also declared that the homesickness can also bring advantage to one’s musical stance. Furthermore, he added that the musical revolution itself had realized in Europe from Mozart to nowadays and in fact, there is some kind of musical deadlock in Turkey right now due to the lack of hybrid projects both mid-ethnic and electronic whereas in Europe there are enough opportunities to get known in the world.

Still, Roni and Serdar, two Kurdish singers in Köln, stated that Koma Berxwedan, founded in Europe in 1982, and its songs are always listened and it was the Kurdish diaspora artists who used to perform the duty of publicizing the Kurdish culture while rigorous politics of ban and censorship reigns in Turkey:

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Mehmet Akbaş: “Elektronik müzik kürt müziğine yedirmedeğin zaman zaten bunun çok iyi icracıları var sana luzumu yok o arenanın ona kendi kimliğini argumanlarının kullandığın zaman bir müzikal kimliğe sahip oluyorsun.”

Maybe Europe has accomplished its mission but Europe (the Kurdish Diaspora in Europe) committed many sacrifices. Every weekend, we were up...only for two years the atmosphere calmed down...I was in Belgium just last weekend (for protesting against the attack of the Belgian police to the RojTV)...artists from the Diaspora composed many beautiful songs to hang together with the people and they could manage to be the source of this struggle...We got used to it...People say that Europe is far far away...Yet, those who are living in Europe are always mobile¹¹⁰

On the other hand, Roni and Serdar also mentioned the detrimental effects of the European culture on the Kurdish youth in diaspora:

The youth want to emulate bad examples...money, women, power, gun...luxurious life...in a short time...this is a kind of brain wash...European system prepared this for not only Kurdish or Turkish youth but for all foreign youth...the oriental youth became the victim of this system or got up in the system which is very difficult...¹¹¹

They gave the example of Xatar, a Kurdish artist of hip hop music who took the stage with Şiwan Perver once, yet who later on became the suspect of a robbery of 1.8 million euro and that some members of the Kurdish youth admires him. They claimed that there can be no support for criminalization and corruption in the Kurdish culture and the Kurdish artists have to promote and make conscious the youth by reminding them their own traditions. Roni also mentioned the wise tradition of listening in the Kurdish culture whereas right now, only songs of “halay” are appreciated. He interpreted this as an outcome of the European culture revaluating the culture of entertainment, and he stated the cure for this as creation of the hybrid music that is modern but also Kurdish in order to bring together the youth.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Roni and Serdar: “Halen Koma Berxwedan’ın parçaları geçiyor- yıllarca ülkede yapamadığımızı, Avrupa belki görevini tamamladı ama Avrupa çok büyük fedakarlıklar yaptı- biz her haftasonu biz hep ayaktaydık- son iki yılda yumuşadı ortam- ben yine Belçika’ya gidip geldim yine gitcez şimdi- bu halk her türlü fedakarlıkta bulundu bu halk boğazından kesip aktardı- Avrupadaki sanatçılar çok fedakarlık yaptılar güzel parçalarla insanları bir arada tuttular bu mücadelenin... Alışmışız, Avrupadakiler uzak uzak uzak...Avrupadakiler mobildir”

¹¹¹ Interview with Roni and Serdar: “Ama Avrupa sistemine de buna zemin veriyor Gençlik buna özeniyor burada...para kadın güç silah...lüks hayat...kısa zamanda...bunların gençlerin beyini yıkaması... Avrupa’nın yabancı gençliği, tek türk ve kürd gençliği değil- doğu insanların sistemin kölesi olmak zorunda olması, ya sistemin kölesi olacak ya da ya da kendi imkanlarıyla okuyup zorlayacak ama oda çok zor zaten...”

To be sure, the above mentioned statements of Kurdish diaspora artists underscored that there is some kind of critique of the assimilation to the culture of European capitalism and its detrimental effects. On the one hand the Kurdish diaspora musicians claim that the idea of individualism challenges Kurdish Diaspora's unity. On the other hand, they appreciate Europe's support of multiculturalism and the freedom of expression in Europe which helps them to publicize and promote the Kurdish movement through Kurdish art.

Besides this, Kurdish diaspora artists seem to take the mission of uniting the Kurdish population in Europe while some of them search for ways to merge with universal popular movements of art to reach to much larger audiences and underscored the benefits of being located in Europe for networking. However, for the majority of the Kurdish musicians in Europe, "homesickness" also appears as the sign of integrity with the refusal of the logic of capitalist market and the marker of loyalty to the Kurdish audience in the homeland.

The Question Concerning the Possibility of the Universal Recognition of the Kurdish Music

According to Kant "the beautiful is what, without a concept, is liked universally" (Kant, 1987, p.55) so that it cannot bring any harm from subjectivity in other words it is free from particular interests: This argument of Kant is about what art claims to embody: the beauty. Kant states that whereas many things are charming and agreeable to someone, no one searches for collective agreement on it: "It is agreeable to me, it is a question of taste." However, in the case of "beautiful", someone requires the same admiration from others: he then judges not just for

himself but for everyone. So that when Kawa, the Kurdish singer that I met in Köln, joyfully and yet proudly told me that maybe this year Norway can be represented by a Kurdish singer in Eurovision, or Roni mentioned that his Italian colleague recorded his song of dengbej tradition. I think that this Kantian idea of universal beauty can explain here the desire of the Kurdish artists to make their works recognized as part of the universal music. Furthermore, the claim of universality for beautiful also constitutes why art is used as a legitimate tool for political resistance and as a means to challenge the existing system: art's message is just like beautiful, one's other has to recognize himself since his representation in the art appeals to beauty that is cognitively shared by all and so that art that embodies the beautiful cannot be an ideological tool but a fact. In this sense, it can be said that Kurdish music and art seek to be recognized as "beautiful" worldwide, so that the Kurdish movement become a universally legitimate movement.

Throughout the research, I questioned Kantian concept of beautiful and its use for communication for oppositional art. The term of "internationality" and its connotation for Kurdish music can be interpreted as related to the question concerning the recognition of the Kurdish culture throughout the world. The old saying that "music is a universal language" seems to tell the attempt of the Kurdish music to have international recognition and admiration. Seyitxan, the art co-director of the RojTV and MMC and former member of Koma Berxwedan, interpreted artists' mission just like that of the diplomats in the sense that art is charged to expand societies beyond their own borders. He also claimed that artists have also the mission of bringing Kurdish agenda about freedom to the international arena and they attempt to do it by participating to various international festivals. Consequently, Kurdish music can become a means to make the Kurdish political movement known

and supported throughout the world. Rotinda, the art co-director of the RojTV and MMC, counted Şiwan Perwer and dengbej Şakiro or artists from Radio Erivan as international figures of the Kurdish music, even through these musicians are not well-known in Turkey because of the strict censorship on the Kurdish culture. Ali, the soloist of the Agire Jiyan, expressed her wish to see one day the participation of a Kurdish music band to the Eurovision music competition: “Why cannot a Kurdish music band or singer participate to Eurovision? Cannot we compose a song of Eurovision? I am asking myself, we can...What I know is that they will win thanks to the sms voting...”¹¹²,

Almost all of my interviewees declared their desire for international recognition of their art to introduce the Kurdish question to the world. Furthermore, they also declared some of the universalized Kurdish themes. Rotinda stated that in Spain, there is the “flamenco” music school and he claimed that the name “flamenco” is indeed derives from the name of a Kurdish musician who came to Spain centuries ago. Rotinda also argued that many European intelligentsia and artists are inspired from Kurdish music when they visited to explore Kurdish art many years ago: “There are many European musicians come to visit for exploring Kurdish music”¹¹³. Roni and Serdar, two Kurdish singers, mentioned that it was the Kurda who firstly used frets on the guitar even though the guitar is not a customary Kurdish instrument. Sidar, musician of dengbej tradition, enjoyed performing Gladiator movie’s (2000) Oscar nominated soundtrack with his authentic instrument and stated that dengbej music influenced pop, jazz and all kinds of music all around the world. Kawa

¹¹² Interview with Ali: “Mesela Eurovision şarkı yarışması olsaydı, bir Kürt grubu veya sanatçısı katılsaydı neden olmasın niye Kürtler kendini ifade edemesin...Kürtler olarak Eurovision şarkısı yapamaz mıyız? Kendime de soruyorum, yapabiliriz...benim bildiğim sms ile kazanıyorlar...”

¹¹³ Interview with Rotinda: “Birçok Avrupalı sanatçı vardır yüzyıllarca önce gelip Kürdistan müziğini araştırmışlar – birçok ilham almışlar- çok şeyini taşımışlar- işte ispanyada biliyorsunuz, bir Kürt müzisyeninin adıyla okul var, Flamenko...”

expressed the respect of the European audience to Dengbej Şakiro and to his strong voice. These examples of national proud cannot be explained only through as the outcome of a feeling about national superiority but also as a wish to achieve international recognition that promises new ways for universal communication.

Yet, many performers of the Kurdish music expressed the difficulties for being universally recognized. Seyitxan said that the Kurdish people and artists are deprived of opportunities of meeting with the world since they are not free yet:

Even though we are all over the countries in Europe, our identity is our first priority...Why? We are still in the position of dependency. We are not free...This stops us.¹¹⁴” Seyitxan also mentioned Turkish state’s intervention in several organization that they joined: “we have joined many festivals in Belgium, in Australia, in Russia...even we faced many famous and prominent artists of Turkey such as Sezen Aksu... in Hamburg, there was an international festival, I remember Sezen Aksu could not join it because of the pressure of the Turkish state...things like that happened several time¹¹⁵.”

Ali from Agire Jiyar also mentioned the problems concerning the free expression of their music. Rotinda agreed with these statements and argued that when Kurdish artists can get rid of restrictions, Kurdish art will be universal. He gave the example of Tarkan and explained that if Tarkan’s country, Turkey, was not a free country and did not support him, Tarkan would never be listened by Europe. He added that even Kurdish artists cannot perform for some festivals because of the restrictions. Rojda also emphasized the deficiencies of production in the Kurdish institutes or in the KOM Music (production firm). She added that the artist herself pays for the production of her song and her music clip whereas on the other hand there are global production companies and managers that can support universally recognized artists.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Seyitxan: “Tüm Avrupa ülkelerinde olmamıza rağmen kendi kimliğimiz önceliklidir. Neden önceliklidir? Henüz bir sömürgecilik statüsündedir- özgür değildir. Bu bizi frenliyor.”

¹¹⁵ Interview with Seyitxan: “Belçika, Avusturya, Rusya’ya taşındık...zaman zaman belli platformlarda Türkiye’deki seçkin sanatçılarla müzik adına karşılaştık- Sezen Aksudan tutun başka çevreler...Hamburg’da uluslar arası müzik festivali düzenlenmişti kendim katılmıştım o zaman ama Sezen Aksu devletin müdahalesi sonucu katılmadı. Böyle şeyler de çıktı.”

She stated that she receives the fan mails from all over the world thanks to the internet, but she is deprived of facilities of production. In her view, Kurdish diaspora artists can have many more opportunities since they can learn the way about the artist environment there. She also suggested that if she becomes a worldwide artist just like Şiwan Perver, she will perform a duet with Sting (actually Perwer has already performed a duet with Sting). She also expressed that she wishes to perform a duet with Shakira or Rhianna since this performance with worldwide artists can present Kurdish art to the world:

Rhianna would sing in English, I would sing in Kurdish- Beyoncé would sing in Kurdish, I would sing in English- it would be beautiful, it would be beautiful to make all cultures live together ...for this, mind and economics must be strong...we, Kurdish artists cannot appear on TV channels in Turkey, we cannot distribute our music clips...if we can perform such duets, we can be seen somewhere, in Europe...¹¹⁶

Actually here, there are two kinds of restrictions that the Kurdish musicians are encountered. The first one is the perception of the Kurdish movement as an illegitimate organization and the denial of the Kurdish question and Kurdish presence by several countries in the world. Yet, actually these restrictions can be outlawed if one considers Kurdish music in terms of the Kantian concept of beautiful. A political yet a beautiful Kurdish music of the Kurdish movement can be appreciated even by a Turkish nationalist or by a critic of the Kurdish movement since it refers to some shared humanity. However for this, Kurdish music must be distributed, heard, recognized and appreciated worldwide. The second restriction that the Kurdish musicians usually encounter is the primacy of the problems of the Kurdish people as a theme in the Kurdish music. For instance, in my interview Seyitxan felt the need to

¹¹⁶ Interview with Rojda: “Rhianna ve ben..o İngilizce ben Kürtçe söyleyim..Beyonce söylece Kürtçe ben İngilizce...ne güzel olurdu, tüm kültürleri bir arada yaşatmak..ne kadar güzel..bunlar için aklının sağlam olması, ekonominin iyi olması lazım, her şeye bağlı...biz kürt sanatçılar kendi televizyonumuza çıkamıyoruz..türkiyede olan televizyona çıkamıyoruz, kliplerimizi yayınlamıyoruz- böyle olunca- televizyonlara çıksam avrupada da izleniyor bir yerden görülecek.”

emphasize his dedication to translate the particular problems of the Kurdish people deprived of freedom through his music. On the other hand, Kawa criticized this policy in the sense that right now the Kurdish art can pass a new level and stated that even in the last conference of art and culture; there was not a clause of final decisions such as “from now on, we start to present Kurdish music worldwide”: You (as a Kurd) are already persuaded but our audience is limited only to the Kurdish people...¹¹⁷” He stated that for instance his former music band Koma Berxwedan has fulfilled its duty, and today it is not sufficient to compose music just for the Kurdish people. In his view, the persuasion of the Kurdish people is already achieved while right now, one has to support financially and spiritually the universalization of the Kurdish art. Besides this, this universalization cannot only be achieved with the support if one refers to Kantian idea that the beautiful is universal and it is liked without any conceptual deliberation by every one. Mehmet Akbaş also emphasized that the localization or the marginalization of Kurdish art is the issue. In this perspective, the priority of Kurdish art for the enlightenment of Kurdish people to mobilize them for the Kurdish movement which normally operates the inclusion of the political messages into the music can weaken the spread of Kurdish music to the world and ends up in its marginalization. This is so because the concepts of political messages can only be the priority for some performers of Kurdish art to be politically supported whereas this requirement cannot be sufficient to be liked universally. However, Akbaş also claimed that he wants to sing Koma Amed’s both beautiful and political songs in English one day to notice the Kurdish art. For Aynur Doğan, the marginalization of Kurdish music can stem from the insincere attitude for the inclusion of the political messages in the music which she defined as an injustice to

¹¹⁷ Interview with Kawa: “Sen ikna oluyorsun ama Kürtlere yöneliktir. Bir madde konulmadı, keşke “bundan sonra Kürt müziğini uluslararası bir tanıtım sürecini başlatırız” denseydi...”

music: “There is no need for messengers, music itself is powerful, it can reach everywhere without inquiry-if you do music for art...if you add politics in music, it becomes something else¹¹⁸” In fact, Kant was dealing to secure the independence of the domains of cognition and moral worth from aesthetic interference, in other words, for Kant “aesthetic judgment is without concept, without interest, without pleasure; its objects purposeful but without purpose” (Bernstein, 1993, p.7) and that is why beautiful is a subject of inter-subjective agreement and shared judgment for emphatic and autonomous political thinking. In this perspective, the interest for political content itself alone can end up with being a subjective taste and escape from the possibility of being universally admired. However, if one needs to make numerous political songs to be beautiful and considered universally, perhaps, one has to explore the Kantian clause of “its objects purposeful without purpose” in other words; a political Kurdish song has to be firstly admired without interests or without thinking of its political context that one can be pro or contra. It has to embody purpose without purpose which is enigmatic because purpose has itself become purposeless. For Adorno, this purposelessness of art is a form resisting the exchange therefore, the autonomy of art is the plus, the surplus, the excess, the non-identical which allows identity thinking to continue unharassed (Bernstein, 1993, p.211). Here, Kantian aesthetic judgment contains a moment of community of non-identity in its appreciation of beauty different from Derrida’s ideal politics of friendship talks about: an asymmetry/non-identity between friends within reciprocal and symmetrical structure of friendship because Derrida’s friendship welcomes the Other while Kant’s aesthetic judgment finds some commonality in the Other. Therefore, Kurdish political songs can be admired and considered as beautiful by Turkish nationalists or

¹¹⁸ Interview with Aynur Doğan: “Gerek yok...Zaten müzik kendi başına güçlüdür- güçlüyse hiçbir sorgulamaya maruz kalmadan giden, en yıkılmaz kaleleri yıkar geçer..eğer sanat adına, müzik adına güçlüyse ama politika eklediğin zaman o anlamını yitiriyor...müzik başka bir şey oluyor...”

other people if it embodies this purposelessness without purpose and forms a moment of non-identity. In this sense, the song of “Hasta Siempre” of Carlos Pueblo, devoted to Che Guevara, became a universally admired song not because of being devoted to Che and its political messages, but because it reaches to a moment of non-identity so that one considers “Hasta Siempre” beautiful without thinking on the political context of the lyrics. Adorno’s perception of the musical avant-garde’s socially critical utopianism can also complemented to the moment of non-identity that Kant suggests for the appreciation of the beautiful: “New music keeps reopening the wound, instead of affirming the world as it exists...Above all, then, the goal of new music must be the complete liberation of the human subject” (Adorno, 1999). Actually, here, Adorno defines “new music”, “the music of resistance” that refers to a lack which invites critique, which is the precondition for social change: “That art stands as a reminder of what does not exist, prompts rage” (Adorno, 1997). I think that Kantian judgment of beautiful in its non-identical character addresses the critique of pre-established world of identities and subjectivities as Adorno informs. When I was among the audience for Aynur Doğan’s (not a member of the MKM, she is an independent well-known Kurdish artist) concert in the IKSÜ on May 7, 2010, somebody from the crowd expressed with a joy: “A Chinese, an American, a French, all of them can love this music!” The audience was well-international while Kurdish audience is dancing halay with authentic Kurdish handkerchief. I asked Aynur the reason why her songs are universally well-known and admired by some elite audience. She replied:

Music is emotion- it takes its internal dynamic from emotion- if you can reach this, the language becomes useless, not the word –human can give himself to it perhaps it is classical but music is universal...I participate to many festivals, various kinds of music are playing- if music is strong, it is not important which race’s or identity’s music it is, you give

yourself to the music, I think that this is what my tendency in music is¹¹⁹.

Aynur stated that a singer is sincere if she believes in what her music declares so that the audience shares her music and the world that her music creates. In Adorno's essay "Music, Language and Composition", he argues that musical sounds "say something, often something humane" (Adorno, 2002, p.114) because unlike language music has no concepts and is not constituted by a referential sign system but like language it has a structure both meaningful and coherent. Therefore, music is enigmatic and its audience understands that. Music's enigmatic character resists to its instrumental utilization because it is deprived of all sign systems of identity. Aynur declared that she sings because she loves to sing and for her, singing is some kind of prayer or cult and a state of trance when she forgets her actual situation or condition. In her perspective of music that she wants to perform, she targeted the shared humanity and that seems the reason why her music is universally admired.

What are the other arguments about the reasons to be considered as beautiful?

Aynur expressed that the first reason why Kurdish music is only limitedly universalized is that there is not musical competition but personal rivalry among the Kurdish artists as a result of their differentiations in terms of their political views:

People are fighting each other, however, for me if someone does something good I think this is a contribution to me. So then why it is only one musician (who is universally known – she means herself), we speak of great people, if there are only one there is a problem- everyone spoke of my scene (in Fatih Akın's movie "Crossing the Bridge" in Cannes, from De Niro to Scorsese, they admired that. Yet some other people said to me that I only screamed with a saz (musical instrument) with my hand in a hamam- if a musician considers this scene like that there is a problem- There are numerous reasons of my screaming- there

¹¹⁹ Interview with Aynur: "Müzik duygu olduğu için, iç dinamiğini alıyor oradan, gerçekten anlamda o duygu dünyasına vardığın zaman dil işlevsiz kalıyor- kelime değil insan müziğe kendini aktarıyor belki klasik ama müziğin evrenselliğine gidiyor bu...dünyaya baktığın zaman birçok festivallere katılıyorum dünyanın birçok yerinden farklı müzikler oluyor eğer müzik güçlüyse hangi ırk kimliğin müziği olduğuna bakmıyor kendini müziğe bırakıyor ben de sanırım benim müziğe yaklaşımım da bu..."

are also many people screaming too- prejudices and egoism in human beings is a danger for the music.¹²⁰

Aynur mentioned that if someone does something beautiful, she becomes alone- it takes time to be understood while she thinks someone doing beautiful can always develops her and she always becomes excited when it happens: “I am the person who frequently goes abroad, to sing in Kurdish but the fact that I am the only one worries me¹²¹. She expressed that they have to be in peace with each other to overcome this. In this frame, one can assume that the friendship of Kurdish artists is limited to the ones who share the same political views.

In addition to this, most of the interviewees mentioned the requirement of creating synthesis to be universally admired. For instance, the use of Western instruments and the combination of them with Kurdish traditional music are convenient universal trends according to Kawa. Mehmet Akbaş stated that only hybrid music can be popular or can be universally admired and there is no more such as a pure jazz, a pure classic music and the hybrid music is how one can manage to be heard universally. Roni mentioned one of his participations to a festival: “I have written ‘Roni in rock style’ for my name in the list of music bands so that Germans come to see me in my performance”. He also told that he observed some people in his audience both German and Kurdish dancing halay during his Reggie style singing. In his view, not only for reaching the world but also to the Kurdish youth, a Kurdish artist has to use system’s tools: “Like it or not, a young man listens to Eminem, but if you can give it (the synthesis) to him, then he would not need Eminem or Bob Marley-he would listen to your art, he can create other figures- I do

¹²⁰ Interview with Aynur: “Cannes’da, o sahneyi Scorsese’den De Niroya kadar, atıyorum, herkes o sahneyi konuştu...Niye? Bir şey yok, saz çalışıyor söylüyorum, hamamda bir bağırдын diyorlar, müzisyenler öyle yaklaşınca bir terslik var. Bağırmanın da sebepleri vardır...bağırın çok insan da var...İnsandaki önyargı ve egoizmdir müziğe çok büyük bir tehlike...”

¹²¹ Interview with Aynur: “Benim yurtdışına en çok giden, Kürtçe söyleyen...en çok giden benim doğru ama bu beni rahatsız da ediyor..”

not say the originality (of Kurdish music) will vanish but one has to reform it¹²²,”

Serdar, Kurdish singer and member of TEV-ÇAND in Köln and Roni claimed that if one can integrate Azat or Eko, worldly-known singers from Kurdish origin, to the Kurdish movement and if they learn “the Kurdish reality”, they can compose songs that touch on the questions concerning the Kurdish culture or some Kurdish singers with Western voice can sing Kurdish melodies. For them, such projects should be supported by the Kurdish cultural agencies of the Kurdish movement. Thus, there is a common claim among the Kurdish artists about the need of “the synthesis of the Western and Eastern” music to attract foreign worlds with the Kurdish art. Besides this, “performing duets with international figures” also considered as a way to be heard and recognized universally. I collected several names that my interviewees expressed their choice for duets. Peter Gabriel and Sting, known for their western-eastern hybrid music, are mostly their first choices. Duets are mostly favored.

Mehmet Akbaş said that he would like to make a duet with some famous singers from Iran. He also claimed that he has already established several connections with international figures and his music is also appreciated by them:

For them only music is important- they share their voice with you, this means that your work is serious...if your song is good, if it reaches the appropriate standards, they answer you, this gave me strength –it means that I reached the level of the universal norms.¹²³

Some of them, Agire Jiyar or Seyitxan, declared that the artists that they want to perform a duet have to experience the same kinds of political or social struggle so that they can really form a sense of togetherness in the sense that they can understand

¹²² Interview with Roni: “Sen istesen de istemesen de bir genç bir Eminem’i dinliyor bir şekilde ona bunu verirsın Bob Marley’e Eminem’e ihtiyaç duymaz, senin yaptığın eseri dinler, farklı ürünler figürler de koyar- orijinalliği kalsın demiyorum değişsin ama.”

¹²³ Interview with Mehmet Akbaş: “Onlar için müzik önemli olan- kendi sesinin bana emanet etmesi ne kadar ciddi bir albüm olduğunun göstergesi aynı zamanda- gönderdiğin şarkı iyiyse o standartları tutturduysa sana cevap veriyor bu bana çok büyük bir güç verdi ne kadar evrensel normlara ulaştığının bir göstergesi.”

each other. In this sense, for example Serdar said that he appreciates Natalie Cordone's successful interpretation of the famous song "Hasta Siempre" devoted to "Che Guevara". Rotinda mentioned the name of Steve Wonder, Anita Franklin and U2 as his candidates to perform a duet. Roni stated that he wishes to share the stage with Andrea Borcelli since he thinks that Kurdish dengbej tradition and Italian opera can be genuinely articulated together. Rojda mentioned her appreciation of Shakira's and Rhianna's sound and she reflected that her duet with them can assist to free the Kurdish art from restrictions and to make it known internationally.

There is another persistently repeated argument about the fact that the current music trend in the world favors ethnic music, thus, the Kurdish music has the essential quality to be admired universally. Rojda affirms this fact: "Great minds of the entire world are interested in ethnic music because the emotion and the harmony of the ethnic music attract them- what can we do for this? We have to engage our investments according to this¹²⁴," Seyitxan also agreed that especially the Western world destroyed their own authentic essence and that is why in every festival that he participated he was the first one who attracts audience even though he only had a saz, an authentic music instrument, in his hands while Western music has many different and competent musical instruments. Vedat, the soloist of Bajar (Kurdish rock band from the BGST) mentioned their participation to joint concerts in Switzerland other than Newroz concerts in Europe:

Swiss people were also there, they already listen to the Middle-East music...the music we play can attract them if one considers its color of sound and its instruments...Europeans already listen to the Middle East music, their ears are transparent, like elastic...For universalization, this

¹²⁴ Interview with Rojda: "Bütün dünyadaki en büyük beyinler etnik müzik ile ilgileniyor, etnik müziğe döndüler...çünkü etnik müzikteki duygu ve armoni onları çok cezpt ediyor...bu konuda biz ne yapabiliriz..Yaratımlarımızı doğru bir temelde öğütmeliyiz..."

kind of festivals must be numerous and Kurdish people has to find a place in this circulation.¹²⁵

Vedat expressed that Aynur, Şiwan Perver or Kardeş Türküler (the main music group of the BGST) can have many opportunities to display in this circulation. However, he stated that Bajar, being a new music band, prefers alternative festivals such as anti-globalization or anarchist organizations that he defined much more oppositional because the ethnic trend of the world is also orientalist in some sense: “For example, you do rock music, so they say ‘don’t do it, do your music’, they want to see you as traditional that I call it the obsession of orientalism”. Vedat declared also that this is normal also in the sense that the Westerners are attracted by “the difference”. However, this also can disfavor Bajar’s rock sound. Consequently, Vedat stated that Bajar wants to reach an audience of a different world such as an anti-globalist and anarchist one.

A more critical stance stated by Haynes (2005) is that world music events as a fantasy of difference and global harmony, based on stereotypical ideas of difference that world music consumers are comfortable with. Thought this argument, the signification of Kurdish music, in the Western discourse becomes the revelation of cultural signifiers, such as language which is different than the Turkish language or stereotypical oriental images of non-Western people. This is because Kurdish resistance can only be legitimately valorized or have a seat in the international public sphere if it reflects its difference in the sense of national culture. Ethnic and racial difference are therefore constituted through a discursive system based on fixed binary categories such as ‘the West and the rest’ as in the case of ethnic music’s popular consumption based on the desire to discover the other of the West/the

¹²⁵ Interview with Vedat: “Bir sürü İsviçreli de gelmişlerdi. Sound olarak zaten onları biraz çekebilecek bir sound baktığınızda..Enstrümanlar falan..Avrupalılar falan da artık Ortadoğu müziği zaten dinliyorlar. Kulaklar transparen böyle yaylı falan..Şöyle bir şey var bu uluslararasılaşma da”

authentic. Taylor defines the 'authentic' world music through its difference of a sense of 'emotionality' or 'feeling' somehow absent in Western music, and appeals to an unchanging temporally fixed past (Taylor, 1997). In the international cultural sphere, this can be the reason why Kurdish music can be glorified.

Groys (2008) supports the very idea that the discourse of diversity and difference presupposes a certain aesthetic preference which is not totally democratic as in fact it tends to reject everything universal, uniform, repetitive. This interpretation of the world art reminds Aijaz Ahmad's (1987) well-known criticism of Jameson's essay on the Third world literature in which Frederic Jameson claims that the non-Western literature lacks a public-private split that the Western literature has. Moreover, Jameson argues that all the Third world texts of literature can be read as "national allegories" where the nation and art coincide. For Jameson, the Third world's literature "even the ones which are apparently private and created by a properly libidinal dynamic necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory; the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public Third world culture and society" (Jameson, 1986, p.65). Thus Jameson claims that the Third World literature in order to exist and manifested in the world cultural arena requires a claim for difference from the Western culture. Jameson suggests that the Third World is similar to a pre- or non-capitalist level of development where "a unity between private and public space" is still present unlike the capitalist societies that has the radical split "between the private and the public". However, Ahmad criticized Jameson's approach and argues that Jameson's approach can be considered as a theoretical orientalism and an appropriation of "Otherness" with the aim of classifying and legitimizing again the discrimination of the Eastern world. In this case, the East must satisfy the Western

expectations about its otherness and should confirm and reproduce the West by artificially simulating its cultural identity: In Ahmad's view, Jameson neglects social factors within the Third World society and defines societies merely through intra-national contexts.

Here, one must also state that the idea of multicultural art view contrasts the old radical political and aesthetic projects or utopias which admire uniformity such as the Soviet art and not the "diversity" and the "display of difference" (Groys, 2008). In the sense the former utopias and aesthetic projects manifest the degree zero of diversity where the multiculturalist kind of art revolution demands a complete break with the past's denial of diversity for the sake of a common ideal. However, Groys also claims that the multicultural trend of art stresses on the display of ethnic difference, and in this sense it is ethno-nationalist. Therefore, the Kurdish music valorized for its ethnical content is not actually mark a lack in the system but fortifies the status-quo of the existent multicultural world order based on ethnic or cultural classification of people that ignores alternative political demands and contexts.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE KURDISH CULTURE: FROM RECOGNITION TO REPRESENTATION

This research discussed and analyzed the debates on the political effects of the Kurdish music and Kurdish cultural institutions on the perception of and approach to the Kurdish question in Turkey while it tried to describe the formation of the Kurdish identity through the performances of art and music. I tried to answer questions concerning the transformative and revolutionary potential of the Kurdish music and its role in the production of the Kurdish national imaginary as well as the effects of the liberalization of the political sphere in Turkey on the reconsideration of the role of the Kurdish music and art in the political struggle of the Kurds to live in Turkey equally together with the Turks. To find answers to my research questions I interpreted statements of various Kurdish musicians with whom I conducted interviews. My interviewees include autonomous Kurdish musicians, Kurdish artists living in Europe in diaspora and Kurdish artists who are members of the MKM (Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi / Mesopotamia Cultural Center) -the major cultural institution of the Kurdish political movement. Through my interviews and research I tried to understand the current situation of the Kurdish political and cultural movement and its reaction to the liberal reconciliatory politics of the “Democratic Opening” introduced by the current AKP government in Turkey. I claimed that today the new struggle of the Kurdish movement against the Turkish government is no more for the recognition of the presence of the Kurds in Turkey which is at a certain

level acknowledged but for the representation of the Kurdish question, the Kurdish identity and the Kurdish culture in Turkey and all over the world.

Before the introduction of the AKP's liberal policies in the course of Turkey's integration of European Union; the official discourse of the Turkish state absolutely denies the presence of the Kurdish identity in Turkey and reduces the question merely to a problem of "terrorism". Yet through the introduction of the "Democratic Opening Policies" the AKP government started to recognize the cultural dimension of the Kurdish problem and intended to solve the Kurdish question through the recognition of the cultural rights of the Kurds. Through the Democratic Opening Policies the AKP government promises that the right to give children Kurdish names, to name streets and places in Kurdish and to do academic research on the Kurdish language and literature will be guaranteed. Finally, in 2009 the formation of the TRT6, the first official TV channel in Turkey that broadcast in Kurdish, marks a significant transformation in the Turkish state's approach to the Kurdish question, since it seems now that the presence of the Kurdish cultural difference is recognized and managed by a government for the first time in the history of Turkey.

However, the Kurdish movement together with its cultural institutions do not welcome the Democratic Opening Policies by claiming that the AKP government misrepresents the Kurdish problem, reduces it to a problem of cultural minority whereas the Kurdish question is a political question that asks for a constitutional transformation to satisfy the demands of the Kurds concerning political autonomy and self government as well as official education in the Kurdish language. In my interviews that I conducted with the artists and other members of the Kurdish cultural institutions they express these critiques through describing the new approach of the AKP to the Kurdish question as an "insincere" move. Many Kurdish musicians

together with all the artists from the MKM declared that the official Kurdish TV channel and the governments's approach to the Kurdish question reflect a "distorted" version of the Kurdish culture. Thus, I analyzed such statements of the Kurdish oppositional musicians, artists and cultural agents and tried to understand how to they define the "true" and "ideal" Kurdish culture, which they think is misrepresented by the AKP government.

Thus, I found out three main topics that repeatedly put on the agenda while I discuss with my interviewees the new role of the Kurdish oppositional music in terms of the representation of the Kurdish identity and culture as well as the new stage of the Kurdish resistance: The first one was "a quest for sincerity". Kurdish art was started to be categorized as pro-state and therefore insincere Kurdish art versus as oppositional, sincere and conscientious Kurdish art. The second debate was on the modernization process of the Kurdish art. Here, the discussion was about how much "traditional" and "essential" styles of the Kurdish music should be preserved and to what extent the modern styles and trends should be appropriated by the Kurdish music. And the third popular debate was about how to make the Kurdish music universally admired and about how to satisfy the criteria for the internationalization of the Kurdish music.

In the first debate on the role of the Kurdish oppositional music, the Kurdish artists from the Kurdish movement regard themselves as the "true" representatives of the Kurdish culture since they argue that they know and are sensitive about the sufferings of the Kurdish people, they are conscientious artists and they sacrifice themselves for the Kurdish resistance. They said that they were struggling for the rights of the Kurds since the conflict in the Eastern and Southeastern region of Turkey has started whereas the AKP government policies and its "artificially

created” Kurdish culture do not recognize these past sufferings and sacrifices. Therefore, for the artists and musicians, who are supporters of the Kurdish movement, merely singing in Kurdish is no more enough to be considered as “oppositional”; only the Kurdish music that refers to the Kurdish political demands, Kurds’ sufferings and sacrifices can be considered as the conscience art and the “true” representative of the Kurdish “reality” and people. Here, the quest for sincerity becomes the primary concern of the MKM in terms of the Democratic Opening. Thus, for the Kurdish artists any attempt for democratization, if it is “sincere”, it should also respect and include all the music, culture and political demands developed by the Kurdish political movement to this process of democratization. In the study I related this demand to Derrida’s search of ideal politics of friendship as a model of democracy which includes to the sphere of the friend also the Other and escapes from the limited axioms of friendship based on the sameness. That is to say, according to the artists and musicians from the MKM demands of the Kurdish political movement must be seriously taken into consideration and has to be respected in order to reach a genuine reconciliation between the Turkish government and the Kurdish people to form an ideal model of democracy. Furthermore, some problems and discontents stated by the subaltern groups within the Kurdish cultural institutions also question the possibility of the same ideal democratic design in the Kurdish resistance.

In terms of the modernization process of the Kurdish music, the instructive mission of the Kurdish cultural agents is underscored repeatedly. The Kurdish artists are defined as the agents who will teach the Kurdish audience the modern trends of art and to combine the traditional Kurdish music with the modern sound. This desire for a synthesis of the modern and traditional Kurdish music which is promoted by the

Kurdish cultural authorities has many similarities to the process of development and progress in terms of the modernization of the Turkish music. The musical synthesis by the Kurdish oppositional art is also supported to attract and re-mobilize the Kurdish youth, who is influenced by the globalization through the spread of technological tools of communication. However, still there is a tension in terms of the preservation of the “essence” and “authenticity” of the traditional Kurdish music such as the dengbej tradition to protect and claim Kurdishness and the opening to the world musical trends through the transformation and modernization of the Kurdish music to be recognized and admired internationally. On the other hand, there is a consensus among many Kurdish artists in terms of the exclusion of the pop music and arabesque music to both “purify” and “modernize” the Kurdish music. Pop music and arabesque music are condemned because for the Kurdish artists such music lacks social and political concerns, passify the potentially revolutionary Kurdish youth and corrupt the “essence” of the Kurdish culture. However, despite such critiques the recent proliferation of the pop and arabesque performances reflect Adorno’s concern about the decline in the listening culture and the weakening of the music that can call for an alternative society to break the current status-quo. On the other hand, some other Kurdish cultural groups such as the BGST thinks that the display of the Kurdish music in popular public spheres can have positive effects and create a shared symphony towards the Kurdish culture.

In the terms of the search for the international admiration of the Kurdish music, many ideas are expressed where the main problem seems about the inclusion and exclusion of political messages to the Kurdish music. The questions are mostly about whether being too much political can affect the universal recognition and admiration of the Kurdish songs. Here, I borrowed Kant’s understanding of aesthetic

judgment of the “beautiful” as the criteria of universal recognition and admiration. For Kand the beautiful is something that is admired without any conceptual deliberation. This criterion marks the purposelessness of the purpose of art. This means that even though the inclusion of the political interests and messages to the songs would not make the music “not-beautiful”, the Kurdish song’s beauty cannot be derived from its political messages but only from the moment of non-identity which can escape from the present political and social categories. The necessity to change the Kurdish cultural policy in terms of the sound and lyrics so that the Kurdish music can be known and admired by the international audience rather than only by the Kurdish audience was one of the major concerns of my interviewees. The Kurdish musicians and artists think that only through the international recognition and admiration of the Kurdish art, music and culture, one can attract the attention of the international public opinion to the Kurdish question. On the other hand, the already formed desire of the world music audience to consume the ethnic music was also introduced as a problem since the introduction of the Kurdish music to the international arena as “one of the ethnic musics/tastes” has the danger to reproduce the multi-culturalist system in which political problems of diverse groups and ethnicities are reduced to a problem of cultural difference and cultural recognition just like the recent approach of the AKP government to the Kurdish question. Thus, there is a paradox here since the Kurdish music that seeks to bring the international agenda the question of the Kurds through presenting its culture as an ethnic taste (as a difference within the multicultural ideology) cannot propose an oppositional political alternative to the world system.

Considering all the above mentioned debates on the Kurdish music, throughout the research I tried to analyze how the criteria and definition of being and claiming

an oppositional Kurdish artist has changed in time according to the transformation of the political sphere in Turkey and in the world. At this point, I also tried to describe the formation of the Kurdish national imaginary through the art. Even though the research design lacks the comparative perspective on the manifestation of the art by different oppositional movements throughout the world, it offers a rich ground to understand the claims and self-manifestations of the Kurdish oppositional music as well as the ways in which the Kurdish political identity is formed through the works of art.

Nowadays, it seems that the new struggle in the Kurdish question will be between the multiculturalist liberal understanding of the AKP government and the Kurdish political and cultural movement in terms of the definition and representation of the Kurdish culture, Kurdish identity and Kurdish people in Turkey. However, considering the statements of the Kurdish artists and musicians in this research it is clear that a significant group of the Kurds will never be satisfied with the recognition of their cultural rights and thus, they will continue to struggle for achieving a constitutional reform that will guarantee the freedom and autonomy of the Kurdish culture in Turkey.

APPENDIXES

A. LIST OF THE INTERVIEWS:

MKM's Artists and Staff Members:

1. Agire Jiyen (Fire of Life):

Date: 25 February 2010

Duration: 113 min

Place: MKM, Beyoğlu

Interviewee: Ali Geçimli

Agira Jiyen was founded by the three musicians, Nail Yurtsever-Ali Geçimli-Şener Yıldız, from Bingöl in 1990. They joined to the MKM in 1992. Their albums are Adarê (1996), Bêhna Adarê (1998), Hêlîn (1999), Harbiye Konseri (2002), De were (2006). Ali became a member of the MKM when he was seventeen. In his interview, he mentioned that he was arrested and then tortured in the Beyoğlu police office because of his participation to a strike in the same age. Agira Jiyen's most famous song is "Helin" which is sung by all the audiences in all of their concerts.

2. Rojda:

Date: 14 February 2010

Duration: 100 min.

Place: MKM, Beyoğlu

Interviewee: Rojda

In 1991 Rojda started to sing firstly in Koma Gulên Xerzan, a music band in which her brother played. This band joined MKM after 1993. In 1994 as a band they finished their first album Ji Bîn Nabin (Unforgetables). Their second album is Sonda Me (Our Oath). One of a song in this record "Helimcan" marks a turning point in Rojda's career. This song made her voice popular. In 1997 she was one of the constituents of a band composed of 11 women called Koma Asmîn. She worked in this band for a while, yet she could not handle to participate to two bands at the same time, thus, she quitted from Koma Asmîn. The third album of Koma Gulên Xerzan was Rûkena Min (My Cheerful Face) released in 2005. The video clips of the two songs "Memet Kanî" and "Elo Dino" were the candidates for the best video clip in video clip competition in Zaxo. In 2006 she resigned from Koma Gulên Xerzan and started to work for her own album. Now she is continuing her music life as a soloist. She refused the Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan's invitation to the "Artist Meeting" after her arrest two days before the meeting.

3. Meral Tekçi:

Date: 7 February 2010

Duration: 58 min.

Place: MKM, Beyoğlu

She was solo-vocalist and pianist in Koma Çiya until 2002 while she was performing in Koma Asmin consisting of 11 female soloists in the years 1998-2002. She worked in the project of “Şahiva Stranan” which consists of re-cycling some Kurdish songs translated in Turkish. She performed vocal in Agire Jiyan in the years of 2004-2006. She is sentenced to punishment because of her performance in her new music band, Koma Aheng. She works for her soloist album.

4. Koma Asian:

Date: 7 February 2010

Duration: 62 min.

Place: MKM, Beyoğlu

Interviewees: Dilan and Erman

This is a very new Kurdish rock group recently admitted to the MKM. It is the only rock band in the MKM. Dilan is from Bitlis and immigrated to Istanbul 7 years ago and Erman is born in Iraq and immigrated to Istanbul 13 years ago.

5. Koma Çiya:

Date: 10 January 2010

Duration: 50 min.

Place: MKM, Beyoğlu

Interviewee: Genim

Koma Çiya joined the MKM in 1991. Delil Dilanor (1998), Venamire (1999), Xeli(2004) are three of its albums. Genim also stages as the announcer of many performances.

6. Xalide:

Date: 5 February 2010

Duration: 48 min.

Place: MKM, Beyoğlu

Xalide is a female dengbej and joined the MKM in 2000 with a chorus project. Right now, she performs in the MKM's project of Koma Ciwan. Dengbej Xalide had an album called Xewn(Dream) in 2000. However, she also gave me another album, that she participated in before her membership to the MKM, with dengbej Mehmet and Emin, named “Qerina Çiyaye Sipane”(screams of mountain Süphan) from Çağdaş Music.

7. Mehmet:

Date: 7 February 2010

Duration: 80 min.

Place: MKM, Beyoğlu

Dengbej Mehmet joined the MKM in 2000 for a chorus project. Right now, he performs in the MKM's project of Koma Ciwan. He also works in manufacturing.

8. Sidar:

Date: 5 February 2010

Duration: 53 min.

Place: MKM, Beyoğlu

Sidar is a musician of dengbej music. He joined the MKM with his sister Xalide.

9. Yusuf:

Date: 5 February 2010

Duration: 53 min.

Place: MKM, Beyoğlu

Yusuf performs in the MKM's project of Koma Ciwan.

10. Fırat:

Date: 7 May 2010

Duration: 79 min.

Place: MKM, Beyoğlu

Fırat has been the manager of artists in the MKM for 4 years. He organizes all kinds of performances that the MKM participates in. He also presents in the jury of application. He first joined the Kurdish movement and he mentioned that he realized how art is important for politics after his participation to the MKM's staff.

Kurdish Artists from Diaspora (connected to the MKM)

1. Rotinda Yetkiner

Date: 31 March 2010

Duration: 58 min.

Place: Brussels, Belgium

He is one of the founders of the MKM. Right now, he is the art director of MMC and RojTV in Brussels. He is known for his regular visits to guerilla camps and homosexual identity. He immigrated to Belgium to escape legal punishment. His albums are Çar stêrk (1991), Kedkar (1996), Sîser (1996), Naygotin (2001), Li te geriyam (2003), Jan-ar (2006)

2. Seyitxan:

Date: 26 March 2010

Duration: 75 min.

Place: Koln, Kurdish Institute, Germany

He became one of the founders of Koma Berxwedan (Resistance), the musical band of Kurdish folk, very popular for his political songs of early age, when he immigrated in Germany in 1978. He firstly sympathized in leftist movement then he “had conscious of Kurdish movement”. Several albums of Koma Berxwedan are Berxwedan Jiyane, Daye (1983), Bingöl Sewiti (1984), Botan (1987), Newroz (1989), Ey Ferat (1992), Name Mi Mezopotamya (1995)

3. Kawa

Date: 26 March 2010

Duration: 116 min.

Place: Koln, Germany

He immigrated to France to escape from legal punishments in Turkey. He first became a member of Koma Berxwedan, after the split of band; he started to perform as soloist. Ava Evînê (2001), Taya Dila (2001), Ez û Tu (2006), Şeng(2008) are his albums. Kawa’s music is considered as arabesque for many views from the MKM.

4. Mehmet Akbaş

Date: 26 March 2010

Duration: 68 min.

Place: Koln, Koln Central Train Station, Germany

He joined Venge Sodiri, musical band of zaza music of the MKM, in 2000. He performed in its album of Wayir(2001). Then, he immigrated to Germany. His project of Mesopotamia sounds performed in concerts got many good critics. Right now, he is working on for his first soloist album in Koln.

5. Roni

Date: 26 March 2010

Duration: 115 min.

Place: Koln, Germany

He is from Erzurum. He immigrated to Germany 15 years ago. He has an album named “Were em dinbibin” in 2009.

6. Serdar

Date: 26 March 2010

Duration: 115 min.

Place: Koln, Germany

He immigrated to Germany at 13 years old, after the murder of his guerilla father and elder brother. He performs in the chorus of TEV-ÇAND (Democratic Cultural Movement of Mesopotamia).

Other Kurdish Musicians

1. Aynur

Date: 24 May 2010

Duration: 70 min.

Place: Sony Music, Beyoğlu

She is a Kurdish singer from Tunceli (Dersim). Her first album was Seyir (2002) in Turkish. With her album of “Keçe Kurdan”(2004) composed of Kurdish and Turkish folk songs with new arrangements has received big attention in Turkey and worldwide. This album is removed from the shelves by court order in the pretext that it encourages women to go to mountains and become guerilla that she interpreted the outcome of being famous for Kurdish songs. Her singing in Yavuz Tugul’s film of “Gönül Yarası” and Fatih Akın’s movie of “Crossing the Bridge” are also famous. She also performed Kardeş Türküler’s album of “Bahar”(2005). Her recent albums are Nupel(2005) and Rewend(2010).

2. Rojin

Date: 15 April 2010

Duration: 58 min.

Place: Bilgi University, Eyüp

Her first album, “Ya hep ya hiç”, mostly in Turkish appeared in 2000. Her second album, Si, Kurdish and Turkish, emerged from Sony Music in 2003. She was arrested in 2005 for singing a Kurdish song. Her third album, “Jan” (2005) consists of 9 Kurdish songs, 6 Turkish songs where she interpreted one of Loreena McKennit’s song, “Tango To Evoro” in Kurdish. She got the prize Kelebek for the best folk music artist in 2005, which is the first for performer of Kurdish music. She mentioned teaching theatre in the MKM before her music career. Her TV program, Rojiname, in TRT6 got many disfavored critics from the supporters of Kurdish movement. She resigned from TRT6 in the reason of severe censorship of the administration.

3. Bajar and Kardeş Türküler

Date: 16 March 2010

Duration: 75 min.

Place: BGST, Beyoğlu

Interviewee: Vedat Yıldırım

Vedat is the soloist of Bajar (Kurdish rock band) and Kardeş Türküler(band of multicultural ethnic folk music). These two music band are the projects of BGST(Boğaziçi Group of Art and Performance). Bajar’s first album appeared in 2009 with the name of “Nezbe”(“Come near”) where the band expressed the move and the problems of Kurdish landscape to city.

List of the Events Joined and Recorded

- Rojda's press conference
Date: 7 February 2010
Duration: 23 min.
Place: MKM, Beyoğlu
- MKM's concert in Bostancı Performance Center
Date: 24 February 2010
Duration: -
Place: Bostancı
- MKM's concert in Yedikule Zindanları
Date: 26 June 2010
Duration: -
Place: Yedi Kule Zindanları, Zeytinburnu
- Agire Jiyan's concert in Boğaziçi University
Date: 19 April 2010
Duration: -
Place: Boğaziçi University, Etiler
- Bajar's concert
Date: 20 April 2010
Duration: -
Place: Shaft, Kadıköy
- Aynur's concert
Date: 7 May 2010
Duration: -
Place: IKSİV, Beyoğlu

B. LIST OF CRITICAL DISCURSIVE TERMS

- Sincere/ Insincerity: “Samimi”/ “Samimiyetsizlik”-

The term of “insincerity” is used to describe the popular embracement of Kurdish identity and the recognition of Kurdish cultural traits while this attitude escapes the recognition of Kurdish resistance and its claims of Kurdish representation as well as it misses the reality of 30 years of armed clash and Kurdish suffering. AKP’s democratic opening policy and its supporters are insincere according to the members of the Kurdish movement who use this term.

- Conscience: “Vicdan”

This term marks the quality of considering and respecting the Kurdish suffering through the years of suppression before the recognition of Kurdish identity by the AKP’s liberal policy of Democratic Opening.

- Where are you from? :”Nerelisin?”

This question is generally asked for searching mostly some common or close paternal homeland and if this is confirmed it permits the speakers to enjoy their shared past experiences. If not, it means some sense that the participants of the conversation can have some difficulty of sharing experiences since they are outsider to each other’s content of speech.

- Respect for Ethnic Plurality: This term is mostly used for “Halkların Kardeşliği” (the Brootherhood of the People) where it reflects the common interests of ethnic identities and their demands of universal recognition.

- Internationality: The term of internationality is used to define the quality of a piece of art or artist to be known and admired universally by the audiences of different groups and ethnicities.

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