KURDISH TRIBES

AND THE QUESTION OF ASSIMILATION IN TURKEY

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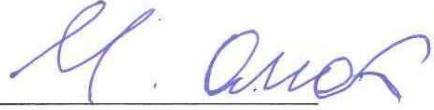Political Science and International Relations

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ABSTRACT

Kurdish Tribes and the Question of Assimilation in Turkey

After modern Turkey was founded, state elite initiated a comprehensive nation-building project and assimilation of Kurds has been a fundamental of part that project. From forced resettlement to compulsory Turkish education, various Turkification policies were put into force. However, it is hard to say that the Turkish state has achieved goal of Turkification in most of Kurdish geographies today. It has become a substantial question what enabled the Kurds to resist assimilation throughout 20th century in the face of ever-growing state repression. I accept that the repression has been the main reason behind the development of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey. However, based on a hypothesis-generating case study that I conducted on several tribal and non-tribal Kurdish groups, I argue that the so-called state repression entered into a dialectical relation with the local socio-political power blocks, Kurdish tribes, which decelerated assimilation of the Kurds to a certain degree. Marginalized and ill-treated Kurds were forced to gather around tribes and continue to live within boundaries of these sociologically powerful communities. I also claim that the Kurdish tribes in themselves have a potential to slow down cultural assimilation to a certain degree. They take consent of their members, generate their loyalty and they could become divergent sources of political authority as distributor of scarce economic resources particularly when the state showed infrastructural, economic and administrative incapacity.

ÖZET

Türkiye'de Kürt Aşiretleri ve Asimilasyon Sorunu

Modern Türkiye Cumhuriyet'i kurulduktan sonra, kapsamlı bir ulus inşa süreci başlamıştır. En geniş etnik azınlık olarak Kürtlerin asimilasyonu bu projenin temel parçalarından biriydi. Türkçe eğitimden zorunlu göçe birçok asimilasyon politikasının uygulamaya konmasına rağmen gelinen noktada Türkleştirme çabalarının Kürdistan'ın önemli bir kısmında başarısız olduğu görülmekte. Buna paralel olarak Kürtlerin yaklaşık yüz senedir nasıl olup da Türkleşmedikleri ya da Türkleşmeye direndikleri önemli bir soru olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Bu tezde, devlet baskısının Türkiye'de Kürt milliyetçiliğin gelişmesinde önemli bir rolü olduğunu ve hatta en önemli sebebi olduğunu kabul etmekle beraber, gerçekleştirmiş olduğum saha çalışmasına dayanarak, aşiretler gibi yerel toplumsal örgütlenmelerin de asimilasyonu belli oranda engellediğini ileri sürmekteyim. Temelde hipotez geliştirmeye yönelik olan bu çalışmada, ikisi aşiret örgütlenmesine sahip toplam dört Kürt köyü inceledim. Bu köylerden aşiret etrafında şekillenen ve birisi devlet şiddeti ile karşı karşıya kalmış, diğeri kalmamış olan iki köy asimilasyona direnmiş ve bugüne kadar dillerini, kimliklerini, geleneklerini muhafaza etmiş köylerdi. Buna karşın asimilasyona uğrayan diğer iki Kürt köyünün aşiretleri yoktu veya zaman içinde kaybolmuştu. Baskı görmüş olan Kürt köyünde bu baskının dışlanan ve şiddet gören Kürtlerin aşiretlerin etrafında kenetlenmelerine yol açtığını ve sosyolojik olarak güçlü yapılanmalar olan aşiretlerin de Kürtlerin Türkleşmesini belli oranda engellediğini gördüm. Sonuç olarak tezde, demokratik modern değerlere ters düşen hiyerarşik yapılarına karşın aşiretlerin devlet şiddeti olmadan da güçlü bir toplumsal kimlik yarattığı, üyelerinin gözünde meşruiyet sağladığı ve asimilasyonu belli bir oranda engellediği görülmüştür.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Assimilation of Kurdish minority in Turkey has been an uneasy process for both the Kurds and the state. The state elite hoped that the Kurdish subject will get rid of his cultural traits in the long run if necessary policies are pursued. Accordingly, comprehensive assimilation policies including ban on Kurdish language, Turkish formal education, re-population and increasing military control were put into practice in the Kurdish areas. Not being pleased with policies of the modern Turkey, the Kurds took arms firstly under the leadership of a religious dignitary, Sheikh Said, who was hanged after the insurgency was controlled (Barkey, 2000, p.91). Not long after, the so-called Ararat Revolt between 1926-1930 and Dersim Revolt in 1937 broke out.

Tightened state control during the early republican period brought more confrontations with the Kurds who hardly had an ethnic consciousness. The state elite in Ankara was sending circulars to the local administrative authorities that Turkification process should be accelerated in the Kurdish areas, and if needed, violence can be used as a tool (Van Bruinessen, 1994a, p.9).When the Kurds responded to first wave of repression, a second wave of repression came afterwards that turned into a vicious cycle in time: repression-resistance-repression. The state has spent a substantial amount of its scare resources to contain the Kurdish subject whose resistance potential was seemingly underestimated. After almost one century, the state has hardly achieved goal of assimilation while facing with a popular armed Kurdish insurgency, the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), which took offensive against the state at early 1980s.

Many argued it was completely repression and violent intrusion of the state into daily lives that forced the Kurds to stand out against assimilation policies and develop an ethnic identity in time (McDowall,2003, p.184; Yavuz,2001, p.1; Van Bruinessen,1992, p.7). Not properly examining how repressive state apparatus intervened with the local dynamics of the Kurdish society, role of the Kurdish tribes in decelerating assimilation are mostly neglected.

In my thesis, I argue that assimilation of the Kurdish subject was delayed to a certain degree thanks to dialectical relations between state repression and Kurdish tribes as ill-treated and marginalized Kurds were forced to gather around tribes and continue to live within boundaries of these sociologically powerful communities. Based on the hypothesis generating case study I conducted on several tribal and non-tribal Kurdish communities in eastern Turkey, I also claim that Kurdish tribes in themselves have a potential to slow down cultural assimilation to a certain degree. They take consent of their members, generate their loyalty and they could become divergent sources of political authority as distributor of scarce economic resources particularly when the state showed infrastructural, economic and administrative incapacity.

From indirect rule to centralization tribes and modern Turkey
The Kurds were long ruled through mediation of the local elite under the Ottoman rule. They were living at the periphery of the empire in an area surrounded by impassable mountains, which, made it a plausible strategy for the Ottoman elite to grant a certain level of autonomy to them. Considering limited applicability of direct control in the region, the empire ruled the area with an indirect control for centuries (Van Bruinessen, 1992a, p.62). However, modern Turkey did not prefer to use

mediation of the local elite such as tribe leaders and sheiks. Instead, it decided to impose direct control on the Kurds, but it was aware of the covert power the tribes and sheiks had in the Kurdish society. Not only in Turkey, but also in other middle eastern countries, tribes have been strong impediments to the efforts of the modern state while attempting to centralize society and expand the state domination. Kurds, Berbers and Bedouins largely organized around the tribal networks were real impediments to the modern nation building practices in the Middle East (Tilly,1990).

Imposing direct control on the Kurds and challenging authority of the tribe leaders, *aghas*, in the region was an uneasy process. The state intended to wipe out these divergent political authorities from the region. The main problem in the eyes of state elite was:

> That political loyalty [the Kurds] was to the tribe; that they would not perform military service; that they were not so enthusiastic in paying taxes to the central power; that they were ignorant. These were the 'facts' perceived by Turkish nationalism when it looked at the Kurds and the territory inhabited by them. (Yeğen 2007, p.123)

Tribes and assimilation: divergent political authorities

For the Turkish state elite, tribalism and religious fanaticism were institutions of backwardness and primitivity, and it was essential to shifty loyalty of the Kurds from the tribes and sheiks to the state (Belge,2011, p.100). It was expected that if the state could respond to material, educational, judicial, infrastructural and administrative needs of the Kurds, particularly the role played by the tribes will decrease day by day and the Kurds will be civilized (İlyas, 2014, p.332). More importantly, tribalism and religious fanaticism were crucial obstacles in front of assimilation of the Kurds, and for Turkification project to be successful, these institutions should be wiped out from Kurdish society.

However, there were two significant problems that the state had to solve. If it wanted to weaken authority of the tribes and Turkify the Kurds, firstly it had to have political, economic, administrative, infrastructural and even judicial capacity to do so. Because tribes are not only cultural creations but also political entities having certain level of economic power. In Kurdish society, they had long been de-facto distributor of scarce economic resources and societal justice (Van Bruinessen, 1992a, p.62).

Theoretically, if the agha continues to own all lands and peasants still work for him in his lands, he would still have the power to keep peasants under his control and influence. In this case, the state must make a land reform. If the sheiks continue to solve the blood feuds rather than courts, they will be defacto courts. If the state wants to eradicate these primitive authorities, it must fulfill the societal tasks performed by them. These political authorities are reflections of certain needs in society that should be met by the state if it wants to replace them. Dialectical nature of the relation between tribe and state should be kept in mind that one can expand at the expense of the other if they both have the claim to respond such needs in society. All in all, as they were forced by the economic, political and societal conditions to live in that closed and sociologically powerful community, assimilation of the Kurds was delayed.

Secondly, these political authorities have consent of their subjects that their rule is legitimate in their eyes (Beck, 1990, p.195). Regardless of being a state, kingdom or tribe, no political authority can solely rise on sheer force. It needs to legitimize its rule in the eyes of its subjects. That was essential for the state to succeed in its nation-building project because it was also trying to take consent of the Kurds. As sharing of authority or consent was not an option for the Turkish nation-

state, a violent nation-building process was launched though violence was not necessarily directed toward the tribes. Repression of Kurdish culture and use of violence strengthened rule of tribes in Kurdish society as the repressed subject gathered around these divergent authorities. Marginalized and ill-treated Kurds continued to live under authority of the tribe which expanded its area of influence at the expense of the state particularly in times of political turmoil.

Tribes already had a certain political power in Kurdish society up until 1920s and they were fulfilling a political power vacuum intentionally created by the Ottoman Empire through indirect rule. It was not a coincidence that the tribes were determining actors in the Sheikh Said Revolt during early republican era though they were united under a religious dignitary (İlyas,2015). Once the state decided to fulfill that power vacuum through centralization attempts and pursued its Turkification agenda, the tribes positioned themselves better in Kurdish society. They are dynamic socio-political entities responsive to changes in their surrounding environment. Accordingly, confrontational relations with the republican government coupled with the coercive assimilation policies strengthened them to a certain extent.

Organization of study

The current thesis will be based on a field work that I conducted in several tribal and non-tribal Kurdish villages in Eastern province of Erzurum. I designed a selected not necessarily representative sample that my aim was to develop new hypothesis about Kurdish assimilation question in Turkey. Together with tribal and non-tribal villages, a tribal village with a history of repression was also included in the research. I conducted in-depth interviews with the locals living in the selected villages and semi-structured interview technique was used during the interviews.

In the first chapter, I will go through literature on Kurdish assimilation in Turkey. I will point out how dominant outlook in the literature mainly focuses on issue of repression while neglecting how repressive state apparatus intervened with local dynamics of the Kurdish society. The following chapter will be about tribe, nation-making and state in which I will be examining relations between state and tribes from a dialectical perspective. Besides, I will be showing how tribe takes consent of its members and generate their loyalty as a divergent political authority in this part. Methodology of the thesis will be given in the third chapter where I also will give space to operationalization of the concepts used in the thesis such as systematic state repression, cultural Kurdish identity and political identity. The last chapter will be about the field and I will build up my findings to develop my hypotheses. In these chapters, I will mainly talk about examined tribal and non-tribal Kurds, cultural assimilation, repression, state's social assistances, political choice, relations between examined tribe and state and politicization of the locals. I will complete my thesis with conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE OVER ASSIMILATION QUESTION

The question why most of the Kurds have long resisted to assimilate in spite of coercive nation-building project is mostly answered in the literature by giving reference to assimilation-resistance-assimilation cycle. That is largely used to explain the complex relation between the Turkish state and its Kurdish subject. It is a vicious cycle in the sense that firstly the state attempts to assimilate ethnic groups forcefully as a part of its nation-building project, which in turn, faces with resistance of the ethnic group to assimilation practices. Having faced the resistance, the state intensifies its coercive practices which again leads the suppressed subject to show more resistance (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2008; Barkey, 2000; Gunter, 1998).

To put it in other words, the resistance of the Kurdish subject to the assimilation is considered to be product of extensive state repression and coercive nation-building project in the long run (Van Bruinessen, 1994). In general, it is argued that such strict homogenizing attempts on the part of the nation states composed of different cultural communities are very prone to give birth to ethnic insurgency which would lead the suppressed subject to develop certain sense of ethnic consciousness. The violent interaction between the parties might further motivate the suppressed group to preserve its ethnic identity which would not be much of pushing factor otherwise.

2.1 Assimilation-resistance-assimilation cycle

Stating that the suppression of sub-ethnic cultures by centralized nation states has been a recurring phenomenon throughout the 20th century, Coakley (1992) argues

that ethnic insurgencies mostly break out as the ethnic minority living in the periphery is suppressed by the dominant ethnic group occupying the center (p.344). Entessar (1992) makes a similar observation about the nature of ethnic insurgency in the Middle East during the modern times by saying that "the response of the ethnic periphery is normally volatile in cases where the political center is heavily controlled by the dominant cultural entity in the society (p.159)." Turner (1998), in a similar vein, says:

> Imperial regimes have everywhere crumbled, giving way to successor states that are frequently despotic and sometimes scarcely viable. The sanctity of existing boundaries, whatever they may be, is defended against nationalist or sub-nationalist threats to them by no one more strenuously than the rulers of those nations. (p.379)

Particularly referring to the Kurds, McDowall (2003) states that having faced strong homogenization policies imposed on them by the newly emerging nation states, sub-ethnic cultural groups mostly occupying periphery have shown significant resistance while their identity has been politicized in time (p.184). Regarding the Kurdish question in Turkey, Gunter (1997) says that from the beginning the official ideology of the modern Turkish republic denied existence of a separate Kurdish identity and perceived it as a threat (p.43). All in all, such scholars share the idea that divergent cultural groups living within the boundaries of the newly established modern nation states in the Middle East have become cognizant of their ethnic identity and resisted assimilation as they have been exposed to discriminatory, coercive and centralized nation-building policies.

According to the repression- assimilation-repression model, the state has attempted to eliminate a separate Kurdish identity and in turn faced a significant local resistance which has grown in proportion to violence. Pointing out the ideological impediments at the level of state, Van Bruinessen (1992) states it was

unthinkable for the state elite to accept a separate ethnic Kurdish community within its own culture. Being strongly committed to the Kemalist dogma that the people of Turkey composed of a homogeneous nation, they had zero tolerance for ethnic claims on the part of the Kurds. For him, the bloody suppression of the Kurdish revolts and violent treatment of locals are primary causes of the Kurdish resistance to assimilation (p.65). Regarding the suppression of Dersim rebellion, he says;

> In practice, however, the thrust of the government effort, including the operations in Dersim, was not so much directed against "feudalism" and backwardness as against Kurdish ethnic identity. The brutal Dersim campaign was but the culmination of a series of measures taken in order to forcibly assimilate the Kurds, as I shall presently show. (Van Bruinessen, 1994b, p.7)

Pulton (1996), in a similar vein, attempts to explain the Kurdish question by giving reference to "repression of all expression of Kurdish national consciousness" (p.317) though it is disputable to say that the Kurds have had national consciousness during 1920s. Rather, it has been developed in time firstly among the national elite which has been trying to disseminate it among the ordinary Kurds most of whom do not have a national consciousness yet. It would be more plausible to argue that the ordinary Kurds have reflexively tried to preserve their cultural identity as they had faced violence and coercion. However, as I will argue in detail below, exposition to coercion and violence is not adequately able to explain resistance of the ordinary Kurds toward assimilation.

Similar toPulton (1996), Yavuz (2001), states that "the state's policies are the determinant factors in the evolution and modulation of the Kurdish ethno-nationalism" (p.1). He goes on to say that;

> The major reason for the politicization of Kurdish cultural identity is the shift from multi-ethnic, multi-cultural realities of the Ottoman empire to the nation-state model. The new order of forced homogenizing of Turkish nationalism has been the major source of conflict in Turkey (p.1).

Giving a detailed account of the state's coercive assimilation policies and comprehensive nation-building practices in the Northern Kurdistan especially during the early republican era and after the 1980 coup date, Zeydanlıoğlu (2008) states that the white man saw it as his initial burden to civilize the Kurdish subject while othering it. In spite of its all efforts, it deemed to be unsuccessful largely because of its brutal and violent orientalism that it imposed on the Kurds.

> One can clearly talk about an increasing Kemalist trauma deriving from the failure in successfully assimilating *all* Kurds. The Kurdish ethnic identity claim and the rise of Kurdish nationalism, energised by oppressive and brutal state policies and strengthened by the global transformations of the post-Cold War world, constitute a traumatic reminder that Turkey has not successfully achieved the making of a homogenous nation-state of Turkish speakers" (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2008, p.1)

Like Bruinessen (1992), Gunter (1988), Yavuz (2001) and Pulton (1996), Zeydanlıoğlu (2012) also attributes the failure of the Turkish state in assimilating *all* Kurds to its coercive nation-building practices including forced resettlement, banning of Kurdish names, evacuation of the villages, bloody suppression of several Kurdish insurgencies, exposition to torture for speaking Kurdish, imprisonment for cultural assertions, murder, etc. For him, such policies led the Kurds to develop a certain ethnic consciousness in a reactionary manner, which turned into a violent national struggle in time under the leadership of the PKK (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2009).

2.2 Undermining local authorities

Making a more elaborate analysis, Aslan (2015) says that the violent intrusion of the state into the private lives of the Kurds, in the form of banning their names and music, changing their clothes and outlawing their language, was the reason behind the confrontation between the Kurds and the Turkish state.

I argue that complex interaction at the ground level, where states demanded changes in everyday behavior, such as how to dress, what language to speak, what names to give children and more mundane practices, account for the emerging state minority relations, particularly, the possibility of violent confrontation between the ethnic groups and the state (Aslan, 2015, p.3).

For her, the violent tension between the Kurds and the state is the result of a comprehensive nation-building project which has hardly succeeded yet. While imposing its direct rule on the Kurdish provinces, the Turkish state has faced significant challenges as it has started to undermine power of the traditional local authorities such sheikhs, tribal leaders and landlords in the region. As the local elite, who used to enjoy a certain level of autonomy from the center previously under the rule of the Ottomans, felt that their authority was put into question by the central government, they began to oppose the centralization and homogenization attempts (p.4). Hence, for her, the Kurdish region, characterized by impassable mountains, has turned into areas of dissidence in response to the state's comprehensive nation-building project intruded into the private lives of the ordinary Kurdish people beyond the acceptable level in a violent manner (Aslan, 2015, p.10-11).

2.3 A new dialectical model on assimilation question

Aslan accepts local sources of authorities were deeply undermined by homogenization efforts, but she puts her primary emphasis on the violent intrusion of the state into daily lives. Also, her treatment of tribal solidarities is deprived of a deep sociological perspective. Tribe can turn into a source of resistance not only because its leaders' authority and power undermined by the central government's attempts but also it provides its members a certain group identity, a common place to socialize within their brethren, economic welfare and physical protection. Criticizing such pure structural attitude toward analyzing the tribes in the Middle East, Tapper

(1991) states that such treatment does only focus on the issues of "taxation, military contingents, disturbances and measures taken to quell them." Mostly not dealing with "basic social and economic organization of tribal communities" in detail, "they mention individual tribes only when prominent in supporting or opposing government, when involved in inter-tribal disorders or when transported from one region to another" (p.56).

I accept that the repression has been the main reason behind the development of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey. However, based on a hypothesis-generating case study that I conducted on several tribal and non-tribal Kurdish groups, I argue that the so-called state repression entered into a dialectical relation with the local socio-political power blocks, Kurdish tribes, which decelerated assimilation of the Kurds to a certain degree. Marginalized and ill-treated Kurds were forced to gather around tribes and continue to live within boundaries of these sociologically powerful communities. In this anthropological study of a political question, I also claim that the Kurdish tribes in themselves have a potential to slow down cultural assimilation to a certain degree. They take consent of their members, generate their loyalty and they could become divergent sources of political authority as distributor of scarce economic resources particularly when the state showed infrastructural, economic and administrative incapacity. In the following chapter, I will demonstrate in detail how tribe and nation-making intertwined both in Turkey and Middle East. I will also examine how state's incapacity and repression affect tribal capacities. Hence, a dialectical model is proposed.

CHAPTER3

TRIBES, NATION-BUILDING AND ASSIMILATION

3.1-What is tribe?

The term tribe has been used by especially historians and anthropologists in order to "describe many kinds of groups or social formations," which makes it virtually impossible to reach a single, "all-encompassing definition". Not only the various ways it has been used by the scholars but the way it has been misused complicates the definition problem. In order to not fall into that trap, it is better to make a broader and flexible definition which would "examine tribes at their different levels of organization" (Khoury & Kostiner, 1990, p.5).

Tapper (1983), in his work over the relationship between the tribes and nation-building, defines the term as following; "Tribe may be used loosely of a localised group in which kinship is the dominant idiom of organization, and whose members consider themselves culturally distinct in terms of customs, dialect or language or origin" (p.6).

However, the kinship ties do not need necessarily to be real/genealogical since members may also organize around putative kinships (Van Bruinessen, 1992a, p.51). "At the higher levels of incorporation, clans and tribes often maintain relationship of a more political origin (Barfield, 1990, p.156)." Tapper (1983) goes on to say that tribes are mostly politically unified, which, however, does not need to make it necessary that they should be under the rule of a central ruler. "Such tribes also form parts of larger, usually, regional, political structures of similar kinds" (p.6). Hence, the tribes should not all the time be conceived as large political organizations with a tight hierarchical structure led by a central ruler though they might be in some

cases. They are better to be conceived as all size of politically and culturally unified groups organized around family lineages and real or putative kinships with a certain sense of distinctiveness and unique internal structure (Van Bruinessen, 1992a, p.51).

For the Turkey's Kurds, it is better to have a loose and sociological definition of the tribe since it is not possible to draw clear-cut boundaries of each tribe both geographically and demographically. While speaking of the characteristics of the tribal groups in the Middle East, Barfield (1990) states "relationship among [tribal] people and groups in such systems were mapped through social space rather than geographic territory" (p.156). In a similar vein, in her work over the tribes of the southeastern Hakkari province of Turkey, Heckman (2002) underlines the fact that how it is almost impossible to detect where a tribe ends and the other begins both in terms of territory and human capital (p.138).

A similar observation comes from Beck (1990), who gives a tacit reference to Benedict Anderson's work called "imagined communities," saying that "a tribe is an idea, a cultural construct involving set of principles that vary with circumstances" (p.187). His observation of the tribe is more of sociological one which puts emphasis on production and reproduction of cultural values and symbols within the community through common socialization and collective rituals. Beck (1990) further elaborates this point by saying;

> It is often more appropriate to speak of tribal or tribally organized society than of tribe, for the drawing boundaries around a single group may often be difficult. Many Kurds, for example, were tribally organized and held tribal identities, but we cannot speak of the Kurds as a tribe or even a group of tribes. (p.189)

Accordingly, I have decided to use the original English term "tribe" for the Turkish word "*Aşiret*," which will be used to refer to all sizes of the social Kurdish

communities hierarchically organized around a common real or putative lineage with a sense of distinctiveness and *sui generis* internal structure.

3.2 Tribes: challenges to modern states

Tribes, as sources of divergent political authorities, posed significant challenges to the modern nation states in their effort to create a homogeneous nation through eliminating ethnic or cultural differences. In their attempts to modernize and homogenize their citizens, the modern states in the Middle East had to long deal with the problems stemming from societal organization of the remote areas where mostly a distinct community with a distinct language and culture lived. These areas, which were mostly far away from the center, have become areas of dissidence. Characterized by the strict social hierarchy and political domination of the local elites such as tribal chiefs, landowners and religious authorities, such areas have long been source of trouble for the nation states. Among them, the tribes were the most salient political and sociological entities posing threat to the legitimacy of the state (Aslan, 2015, p.2-4).

Making an elaborate observation of the point, Tilly says that such local elites have been strong impediments to the efforts of the modern state while attempting to centralize society and expand the state domination. This is largely because the modern states are the successor of empires which were characterized by indirect rule over society (Tilly, 1990).As Tibbi (1990) states:

> It is obvious that an implementation of the concept of nation-state in a heterogeneous tribal society contributes to a greater intensification of the dichotomy of the state and tribes than does the imposition of a traditional state. A nation state requires more than the submission of tribes to a central authority; it also requires national integration. (p.132)

The empires mostly used to need the mediation of the local elite in order to govern society, recruit fighters and extract taxes especially as far as the regions far away from the center were concerned considering the high cost of controlling such marginal places and people. A higher degree of cultural and political autonomy" were granted to the tribal groups of the Middle East such as Kurds, Berbers and Bedouins by the dynasty of Ottomans and Safavis again considering that they would rarely revolt against the center except periods of anarchy resulting from decay at the center. (Barfield, 1990, p.158)

Following the collapse of the empires, nation states faced the challenge that they must govern the periphery without mediation of the local elite while modern communication technologies were not developed yet. Initially, they imposed an indirect rule over the periphery and had to use the local elites, mostly tribal chiefs in the Middle East as intermediaries in order to govern such areas (Hechter, 2000). However, it was a vital problem for the modern nation state because it was built upon strong centralization and direct rule over the society. As the modern communication technologies advanced, their control over the periphery increased, which paved the way to outbreak of frictions between the states and the periphery which used to enjoy a certain level of autonomy previously (Wimmer, 2008).

Among the local elite whose autonomy was seriously threatened by the increasing centralization attempts were the tribal leaders whose control over their communities were undermined by such efforts of the nation state. "I emphasized autonomy, at least a certain degree of it, as a major trait of tribe. This helps explain why tribes stand in opposition to the state as a central monopolizer of power and why they resist it" (Tibi, 1990, p.140). Having been exposed the modern nation-making practices, the tribes might not dissolve easily. Rather, they can become significant impediments to the ideals of the state elite who aspire to centralize the administration, homogenize population, impose a universal law and extract taxes. "Any state structure, being centralized monopoly of power, runs counter to all kinds

of segmentary tribal organization in so far as distinctiveness and certain degree of autonomy are basic features of any tribe" (Tibi, 1990, p.130).

Tibi (1990) mainly claims that the actual reason behind the friction between the nation states and the tribes in the middle east was the undermining of the tribal authority in the remote regions. Previously being able to exercise their rule over society without going into any trouble with the empires characterized by a loose governing structure, the tribal leaders felt that they were losing their control over their society.

In a similar vein, the Turkish state has spent much effort to break down the local sources of allegiances in the Kurdistan geography in order to shift political loyalty from the tribal chiefs to the state (Aslan, 2011, p.79). In doing so, not a few policies were put into practice from forced resettlement to re-population of the Kurdish dominated areas (Belge, 2011, p.99). As Yeğen (2007) well states it:

> That their political loyalty was to the tribe; that they would not perform military service; that they were not so enthusiastic in paying taxes to the central power; that they were ignorant. These were the 'facts' perceived by Turkish nationalism when it looked at the Kurds and the territory inhabited by them. (p.123)

However, although such explanation about the tribal resistance toward comprehensive nation-building projects in the middle east is partly helpful for accounting for the assimilation question in Turkey, it is not enough. More importantly, what is also needed is a sociological approach that emphasizes the potential of the tribal solidarities as provider of legitimate political authority, group identity and physical/cultural/social shelter. In the following pages of his article, Tibi (1990) himself underlines this point repeatedly (p.141). Complementary to the top-down structural perspective which mostly questions conflictual and interest-based interactions between the tribal leaders and national authorities in changing

circumstances; a bottom up outlook which stresses the importance of production and consolidation of group solidarities through such symbolic cultural constructions particularly in the face of an external and physical threat is *also* essential in making sense of the assimilation question in Turkey.

In addition to that, strengthening of the local tribal order in Kurdish geographies is not merely result of the state's effort to undermine authority of tribal leaders but it is also an outcome of absence of an encompassing state in economic, administrative and judicial realm. Living in a problematic geography, I argue that incapability of the state created a power vacuum in the socio-political order in the Kurdish geographies. When these people fought, they went to the tribe, when they need job and security, they sought help of the *agha*, when they felt discriminated, they saw their tribal identity as a way of relating themselves to the world, etc. Hence, the relation between the tribal men and tribe is extremely important to make sense of the issue in hand, which lacks in the current literature focusing rather merely on interest-based relation between Kurdish tribes and the state.

3.3 Tribes as powerful sociological and political entities

Beck (1990), in his analysis of the Kurdish, Turkmen, Baluch and Qashqai tribes of Iran, makes such a sociological analysis with an emphasis on the role played by the tribes during the Persianization attempts led firstly by Reza Shah Pahlavi and later by the Islamic Khomeini regime. Pointing out the fact that the leaders of the Kurdish, Turkmen, Baluch and Qashqai tribes have had both conflictual and collaborative relations with the Iranian state depending on the circumstances, Beck states that their within-tribe legitimacy was "often based on the ideologies and systems of values they shared (or professed to share) with their political supporters". Through

mediation of such symbolic systems such as "notions of shared history, genealogies, (political charters), rituals, language, notions of territory, notions of the tribe, tribal names and sentiments of honor," the tribal leaders have related themselves to their supporters (p.195).

Such symbolic constructions also include "modes of residence, migration, dwellings, apparel and expressive arts (music, dancing and weaving)." Hence, for Beck (1990), that legitimate ground upon which the tribal leaders have built their authority and drawn their power was the main reason behind the support of the tribal people. To put it other words, the tribal men support its leaders, recognize their legitimacy and accept their authority also because of such shared cultural symbolic systems in addition strong political authority of the tribe leader (p.195)." Her perspective emphasizes inner sociological dynamics of the tribes in producing and reproducing its subjects and group identities.

Formation of group solidarities via common socialization and mediation of cultural constructions encourages the members to preserve their cultural peculiarities and band together around such solidarities particularly in the presence of an external and physical threat. As Tibi (1990) puts it,

> To understand the complexity of the existing societal subdivisions in Middle Eastern nation-states, we must recognize how intertwined ethnicity and sectarianism are with tribalism. In this sense the tribe, not as a social organization but rather as a referent of identity and group solidarity is the most important element of what we may call ethno-politics(p.141).

Beck (1990), further in his analysis, points out this fact by saying "tribal communities sometimes" have been transformed into ethnic groups, especially when the people involved, if they continue to invoke commonly held [tribal] ideologies, were drawn under state control" (p.196). She adds that the coercive centralization, westernization and Persianization attempts led by Reza Shah Pahlavi in Iran led

some of the tribal groups such as Kurds to develop "politicized tribal and ethnic identity" (p.207).

3.4 Tribe in making: defining dialectical nature of tribe-state relations

Tribal solidarities are formed, evolved and reinforced within a dialectical relation with the states whose capabilities vary from time to time. It is not possible to think of such solidarity networks exclusively and isolated from the political authority with whom they are in a constant dialectical interaction. The so-called Kurdish tribes are partly creations of the states with whom they have been interacting for centuries though the degree of interaction may have changed from time to time depending on the internal and external capabilities of the states and tribes (Van Bruinessen, 1982). Almost none of the significant acts related with them such as foundation, consolidation, expansion, invasion, protection, production, conflict and resistance come into existence independent of the largest political authorities in their surrounding environment. As sociologically tight divergent sources of political authorities, they are sensitive and responsive to their surrounding environment.

> The impact of the state on the tribes is, in fact, much more varied and penetrating than has become clear so far; the said destruction of the emirates, punitive campaigns against unruly tribes, forced settlement and the levying of taxes are only a part of the entire spectrum. We have seen that would-be chieftains of a tribe often depend on outside support, alliances with other tribal chiefs or, more usefully, a powerful state. At times, tribes were armed and given military duties by states, which could not but affect the internal organization. In a certain sense, the tribes as described in the preceding chapter, may, I think, even be seen as creations of the state. (Van Bruinessen, 1982, p.134)

Throughout the Ottoman history, the Kurdish tribes had enjoyed a certain level of autonomy from the center. The loose governing structure of the empire had left a significant space and power vacuum to be filled by the tribes in the Kurdistan

region. Until the late Ottoman period, they had no significant tension with the Ottoman dynasty which, however, started to reform and centralize its administrative structure from that period onward. The previous relations between the Kurdish tribes and the dynasty were characterized by non-interference policy as much as possible. From the late-Ottoman period-onward, a new sort of the tribe-state relation, which developed in spite of each other, came into existence. "The increasingly interventionist state, and its set of disciplinary practices, was a radical departure from the Ottoman era, when local affairs had been largely beyond the reach of the central state" (Belge, 2011, p.99).

Within the foundation of the republic, the Kurdish tribes partly lost their autonomy and entered into a confrontational relation with the new republic, which did not want to share the political authority with them in no way. An official report which was drawn up following the Sheikh Said rebellion in 1925 "urged the elimination of the influence of local authorities, such as tribal leaders, religious sheikhs, and landlords, in order to establish direct rule of the citizens by the government" (Belge, 2011, p.99). The government decided to crack down on all sources of local authorities mainly because of two reasons, first of which was that all early republican period Kurdish revolts had been led by the traditional leaders. "The massive participation of the traditional elite in the nationalist contest was one of the main reasons for this new vigor" and "this massive resistance was made possible by the participation of the traditional dignitaries" (Bozarslan, 2003, p.164). Secondly, the Ankara government was also trying to shift the loyalty of the Kurdish subject from the tribal chieftains to the nation state and make them legible citizens.

This confrontational relation with the republican government coupled with the coercive assimilation policies led to strengthening of the tribal solidarities in a

significant level. The local Kurdish community, whose language was banned, and whose culture was repressed, were gathered around tribes. Hence, in a dialectical manner, the state's violent treatment of the local Kurdish community led to strengthening of the tribal solidarities which, in the long run, has been a significant protector of the Kurdish cultural identity.

Besides, the state had long been absent in the Kurdish geographies as regards infrastructural service and economic assistance They had long lived under the shadow of the *Agha* rule and the tribe meant much for them considering the conditions that they had to live through. In a way, the conditions forced them to live in a closed society. In the absence of the state as a distributor of income and protection, value of the tribe as a divergent source of political authority rose dramatically. They had long paid their "imam"[1] themselves by donating their sheep and cows, they arranged within-tribe marriages in this semi-closed society and they grazed their sheep together.

The lack of administrative, economic and judicial infrastructure which has been coupled with the cultural marginalization attempts on the side of the Turkish state, has fostered tribal identities. It helped the tribes expand their domain of influence and better position themselves as conflict-resolution mechanism and distributor of scarce economic resources.

Kurdish landless peasants working in the fields have long been exploited by the tribal leaders who have also not fairly distributed the subsidies that they have taken from the state. Clientelism has long formed the base of economic relations in the region as the so-called tribal chiefs have bestowed privilege upon their relatives

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[1] The person who is responsible for religious education of village

even openly (İlyas, 2019, p.89). However, most of the Kurds have not been able to get out of the tribal structure due to such economic, social and political reasons.

An experienced RPP politician, Abdülhak Hamit Renda, in the reports that he had prepared about the Kurdish provinces in the East and Southeast in 1925, he frequently complains that the locals apply to the *aghas* or sheiks to solve their disputes as both the state's administrative, judicial and economic infrastructure is very weak in most of the Kurdish-dominated provinces. He argues that such local tribal and religious leaders are the reasons why the locals are ignorant and not loyal the state, adding that in order to decrease the influence of the *aghas* and sheiks in the region, the state should improve its infrastructure. It should build roads, bridges and schools, invest in public works and connect these remote areas to the center (İlyas, 2014, p.332). In doing so, for him, it might be possible for the Ankara government to shift the loyalty of the Kurds from the tribal chiefs to the state.

After almost twenty years, another well-known RPP politician, Necmeddin Sahir Sılan, was almost writing the same sentences in his reports that the presented to the RPP. Sılan, who later joined the Democrat Party of Adnan Menderes, had written 13 reports over "Eastern Question." He presented 9 of his reports to the RPP in which he mostly suggested that the state should increase its presence in such areas by investing in public works and administrative reforms while at the same time building highways and train roads to connect these places to the west of the Republic (İlyas, 2014, p.344).

In a similar vein, Belge underlines the point that how the state officials sent to the Kurdish provinces were not able to disseminate the official propaganda and work effectively due to the structural incapacities at the level of the state and powerful kinship ties among the Kurds (Belge, 2011). As dynamic entities located at the

periphery of the republic, the tribes have been responsive and sensitive to the policies, acts and strategies of the government in Ankara. I argue that the so-called dialectical relation among the two should never be forgotten though it would have a collaborative or conflictual nature depending on the external circumstances and inner capacities of the each. Hence, inadequacy of administrative and economic infrastructure at the level of state for a long time throughout 20. century was one of the reasons why the Kurdish tribes, parallel sources of political have strengthened. The so-called dialectical interaction between the surrounding political authority and Kurdish tribes should never be forgotten if one needs make sense of political context in the Kurdistan geography.

CHAPTER4

RESEARCH METHOD

AND OPERATIONALIZATION

4.1.Methodology

4.1.1Motive for research and selection of research area

I started to get interested in the Kurdish question in my high school years. I went to boarding high school in eastern province of Erzurum, where a significant portion of the students were Kurdish. Many of them were from neighboring Kurdish provinces such as Elazığ, Bingöl and Ağrı. There were also students coming from far southeastern Kurdish provinces including Batman, Diyarbakır and Şırnak. Especially the students coming from Southeastern provinces were keen on the Kurdish question and they were mostly able to speak Kurdish fluently.

The Kurdish students from Elazığ, Bingöl and Ağrı were also able to speak their native tongue fluently but not all of them were really interested in the Kurdish question. In a way, they were culturally Kurdish, but they simply did not seem to be politicized. The appearing difference between these two types of Kurdish students drawn my close attention. In other words, as high school student, I realized that a Kurdish student can speak Kurdish fluently and seem to be quite Kurdish in cultural terms. However, he does not have to have a political Kurdish identity which I will explain in detail below.

In addition to that, I had myself grown up in a district in Erzurum where Kurds and Turks live together for a long time. I am ethnically Kurdish and in general the Kurds in the district I had grown up are not really interested in the Kurdish issue. Although a significant number of them are assimilated and can hardly be

differentiated from the Turks, there are also some Kurdish communities who are not assimilated yet in many respects including speaking their native tongue, performing their cultural practices. However, almost all of them are not interested in political demands of the Kurdish community in Turkey and they apparently do not have a political Kurdish identity which I will again explain below. Hence, it drawn my attention that why some Kurds living in the same district are completely assimilated while some of them are still preserving their cultural Kurdish identity despite the fact that they do not seemingly have any political motive to preserve their cultural identity.

Consequently, my childhood and high school years experiences led me to question link between assimilation and politicization of the Kurds in Turkey. I acknowledge that repression of Kurdish culture and comprehensive nation-building policies in Turkey have been deeply influential on the Kurd's resistance to assimilation. State's repressive policies forced the Kurds to respond and delayed assimilation of the Kurds to a certain degree. However, after I have encountered with Kurdish communities which still preserve their cultural Kurdish identity without experiencing state repression, I started to think that there might be another variable which has the potential to decelerate assimilation of the Kurds. In a similar vein, my high school years experiences made also me think that a new variable can have the potential to partly explain why some Kurds have been able to preserve their cultural identity without developing a political Kurdish identity.

After having conducted a preliminary research in the afore-mentioned district, I realized that almost all assimilated Kurdish villages are non-tribal in terms their societal organization while those Kurds who have been able to preserve their cultural identity are members of some tribes. Therefore, I thought that societal organization

might have a potential to explain assimilation of the Kurds in Turkey to a certain degree. However, I also decided to include repression factor in my research since it has been very influential on the Kurds' resistance to assimilation in Turkey. In light of these preliminary findings, I decided to conduct a hypothesis generating case study in three different districts of Erzurum which included both tribal and non-tribal Kurdish groups. Besides, a tribal Kurdish village which has a history of state repression was included in the research in order to understand how repressive state apparatus and tribe have intervened.

4.1.2 Research method

A case study was conducted in the selected area to generate new hypotheses about the assimilation question. Case studies are epistemic strategies dedicated to formulating establish and generalize causal hypothesis. Although some scholars looked at case studies as last resort in case there is not a better alternative and find them not quite scientific, importance of case studies in the social sciences in theory developing has been revisited recently thanks to their analysis of social phenomena in its inner context. Being also called as situated analysis, case studies are rich in detail and dedicated to representing complexity of social reality faithfully (George, Bennett, Lynn-Jones & Millet, 2005, p.7). They are "reservoirs of local knowledge that becomes evidentially useful when understanding and intervening in the social world in order to fix it, change it, and improve it." The most substantial way that the case studies fulfill such evidential role is "by formulating causal hypotheses in a rigorous and conscientious way" (Ruzzane, 2015).

However, case studies frequently face the challenges of lack of control and generalizing power. Examining single cases might bring rich and fruitful results but

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generalizations of the findings will remain questionable. Being aware of such challenge, Lijphart (as cited in Ruzzane, 2015) argues that case studies can be more useful if their distinctive relation to theoretical generalizations is determined clearly. In terms of their relation to theoretical generalizations, there are six types of case studies which are theoretical case studies, interpretive case studies, hypothesis-generating case studies, hypothesis-confirming case studies, hypothesis-infirming case studies and deviant case studies (p.12). The method used in the current thesis can be classified under hypothesis-generating case studies which are selected for the purpose of theory building. According to the Lijphart (as cited in Ruzzane, 2015) the aim of these kind of case studies to contribute "to the formulation of new generalizations in areas where no theory, or very unsatisfactory theory, exists" (p.12.-23).

A similar taxonomy was made by Eckstein (as cited in George, Bennett, Lynn-Jones & Miller, 2005, p.7) who called hypothesis-generating case studies as heuristic. For the author, case studies have a high potential of offering theoretical solutions to the complexity of social phenomena as they make an intensive analysis of the subject and they do not limit the inquiry to pre-defined certain variables. Having luxury of being not restricted to act with predefined variables, case studies increase the probability and potential that new variables and substantial relations among them to be explored.

Hence, an exhaustive case study dedicated to developing substantial hypothesis about assimilation of the Kurds in Turkey was conducted in several tribal and non-tribal Kurdish villages in three different district of Erzurum province, namely, Pasinler, Narman and Karayazı. The aim was discovering how variables such as tribe, state repression and assimilation have intervened since the foundation

of modern Turkey. While having some pre-defined possible hypothesis in hand before the field, such intensive case study offered the researcher chance of exploring new explanatory variables about the assimilation issue. While not having bold claims about size and representative power of its sample, the current study aimed at reaching out substantial deep-down information about the issue through conducting of in-depth interviews.

4.1.3 In-depth interviews

Considering that aim of the research was to collect data about personal histories, experiences and perspectives of the individuals, in-depth interviews, a qualitative research method (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013, p.36), were applied in the thesis. Initially, several in-depth interviews were conducted with the locals living in the selected villages with the help of personal connections while the rest were made through snowballing technique used mostly by anthropologists. Snowballing technique is frequently applied when "collecting a sample from a population in which a standard sampling approach is either impossible or prohibitively expensive, for the purpose of studying characteristics of individuals in the population" (Handcock & Gile, 2011, p.368). Those with whom an interview was done in the selected villages mostly gave references who have potential for the research and would like to speak about the issue and express their opinions.

Semi-structured interviews, a qualitative research technique, are used in the thesis. While the respondents were asked some fixed questions prepared for all interviewees, they were also asked some additional questions if needed. The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that a researcher can ask out of text

questions in order to clarify certain issues (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016).

A totally structured did not seem to be quite feasible for the thesis that the interviewees had some reasons to hide their real notions in order to stay away from any trouble with the state as they were aware that they were talking about quite sensitive and political issues. For such reason, it was occasionally needed to ask additional questions to clarify the point. Hence, rather than fully structured interviews, semi-structured interview technique is used in the thesis.

Similarly, a totally unstructured interview, for which no questions are prepared in advance, makes comparison of answers given to different questions by different respondents difficult. The data that researcher has gathered might be very disorderly, making scientific interpretations difficult. So, questions should have been fixed to a certain degree in order to categorize and interpret the primary data (Newcomer, Hatry & Wholey, 2015).

In order to make interviewees feel comfortable and express themselves better, some interviews were done in Kurdish while some were conducted in Turkish. Particularly, older people tend to express themselves better in Kurdish. Interview questions can be found in the Appendix A.

4.1.4 Limitations to research

Case studies are rich in detail but weak in terms making broad generalizations. They have a significant potential in exploring new variables and generating new hypothesis but have low external validity. Considering the limitations about nature of the study, it is expected that this case study would open space for more comprehensive and extensive researches on the topic in the future. By this way, the

validity of research findings can be tested in a wide-scale research and findings could be or not generalized for whole Kurdish population in Turkey.

Almost all interviewees did not want their voices to be recorded. Especially, the questions about state and political demands of Kurds often created a nervous atmosphere. Occasionally, it was needed to ask additional, indirect and covert questions to clarify the point.. Most interviewees also felt comfortable talking to me if I was accompanied with a familiar face to them and if the interview was done in a conversation mood.

4.2 Operationalization of concepts

4.2.1 Systematic state repression

Foundation of the modern republic marked the beginning of new era for the Turkish state. It had to rebuild the country from ashes of the long-lasting empire. Considering the popularity of nation states across the world, the state elite decided to create a homogenous nation-state composed of Turks (Kirişçi, 2000, p.1). Hence, the Kurds constituting a considerable portion of the society had to be Turkified, if needed, through repressive policies (Aslan, 2011). However, repression was not totally result of the assimilation policies. Kurd's resistance to assimilation brought a second wave repression, which turned into a vicious cycle in time. In the thesis, exposition to systematic state repression is used to imply intentional use of force and discriminating policies by the state toward Kurds for ethnic reasons.

4.2.2 Ethnicity and Kurdish ethnic identity

Ethnicity usually implies a minority group living within the boundaries of a nation-state and is usually involved in challenges. However, there is no common definition

of it except some elements in it such as common culture and language (Hutchinson & Smith, 1993). It becomes more difficult if one needs to make such definition in Turkey which has a long history of denial of different ethnicities and has a sharp understanding of territorial unity (Sirkeci, 2000). Similar to Hutchinson's definition, Kurdish ethnicity can be defined as a minority living within boundaries of different nation-states in the Middle East with a common culture, history and language.

In Turkey, there is not any official recordings of ethnicity and the Kurdish population is generally estimated through questions related to mother tongue. During the interviews, the respondents were asked about their native tongue together with their father's/mother's and grandfather's/grandmother's. Ethnic Kurdish identity is operationalized in the thesis in a way that one is accepted to be ethnically Kurdish if his or her ancestors were speaking Kurdish going two generations back. Based on this criterion, those who are not able to speak Kurdish fluently are also accepted Kurdish if they stated that their native tongue and their mother's native tongue is Kurdish.

4.2.3 Kurdish cultural identity

State elite in early republican period frequently associated Kurdish cultural identity with tribalism. Kurdish subjects, organized around kin and blood, were viewed to be ignorant and most importantly irrational in the state reports (Yeğen, 2010, p.235). Such outlook is superficial for various reasons as it does not consider power of tribal identity. The tribe take consent of their members and generate loyalty. Tribal identities are more than primitive allegiances (Van Bruinessen, 2000, p.19).

It is true that the tribe has a certain political power, members are expected to comply with the rules within tribe to a certain degree (Van Bruinessen, 1999, p.6)

and it has partly exploited its members (McDowall, 1996, p.10). However, these kinds of political authorities cannot survive for centuries merely through exploitation of its subjects. Whether it is a state, kingdom or tribe, any political authority must justify legitimacy of its rule in the eyes of its subjects. In the long run, it must create its loyal subjects. "Tribal loyalty remained far stronger for village or pastoralist Kurds than new ideas about national identity. *Aghas* were a good deal more concerned with holding or increasing their position locally" (McDowall, 1996, p.13).

Kurdish culture has long been mainly production of tribes. Societal norms, collective rituals and principles were shaped in accordance with it. However, not all Kurds are organized around politically powerful tribes. "Kurdish tribal cohesion is based on a mix of blood tie and territorial loyalty; yet a substantial number of Kurds in low-lying areas are not tribal even in a territorial sense" (McDowall, 1996, p.8). These non-tribal Kurds also have *or* had similar cultural attributes. Going toward east and northeast of Turkey, one can encounter many Kurdish communities without political authority of tribes.

It would be misleading to draw clear-cut boundaries of Kurdish culture or traditions since culture is itself a live and dynamic entity. Cultural creations are vulnerable to change.

> Any anthropological account of the culture of any society is a type of snapshot view of one particular time. Should the ethnographer return several years after completing a cultural study, he or she would not find exactly the same situation, for there are no cultures that remain completely static year after year. (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2012, p.12)

To this respect, it would be more accurate to claim that there are certain core values, norms and principles to the Kurdish culture. For example, line of descent has been profoundly strong in the Kurdish society. Love for kin and blood contributed to consolidation of the tribe, which, in turn, played a pivotal role in strengthening of

blood ties among the Kurds. Such value attributed to the kin did not always pave the way to formation of tribal order in each Kurdish community, but, it has formed base of many sub-cultural traits in the society. Protection of the blood members is *or* was distinctive feature of almost all Kurdish communities. Conflicts and blood feuds among the families or tribes are plain reflections of this societal habit.

"Oral culture constitutes societies' memory. Particularly in the societies in which the script is not well-developed, culture transmission between individuals occurs orally. This interaction transforms into oral literature and music over time" (Çiftçi, 2015, p.115). Similarly, Kurdish culture has mostly been transferred from one generation to other through oral sources. Folkloric songs, in which long stories are told, are some of the unique traits of this culture.

They have long been indispensable parts of the weddings. The one singing these long songs are called "dengbejs" who have a special place in the society. These songs mostly include love, migration and suffering stories (Kardaş, 2012). For example, many bloody events that took place between the Kurdish insurgencies and the Turkish soldiers were composed as songs and sang by "dengbejs" (Verstraete, 2019). Hence, "dengbejs" are unique folkloric items of the Kurdish culture.

Distinctive performing of weddings and funerals are also fundamental elements of the Kurdish culture. Dengbejs would sing and long lines of folkloric halay dances are formed during the weddings. Some dances like "Şemmame, Mircan or Koçero" are performed by almost all Kurds. Even it has disappeared now, the rural Kurds used stage their own plays in the weddings. In some parts of the Kurdistan, the rural Kurds still bring bag of sugars to the funeral house, but it has abandoned mostly. The sugar had been a rare product previously and as a sign of their caring for family of the dead, the rural Kurds would bring them sugar.

Participation to these collective rituals are inevitable sociological duties. Those who do not obey are publicly shamed for being ignorant and non-caring toward their relatives.

> Weddings and funerals as rituals play important role in continuation of tradition and strengthening the solidarity between Kurds. Every member of the community participates to these ceremonies to support each other and to maintain solidarity. On the other hand, having knowledge about these issues may help us to see the interaction between different groups and to what degree these groups are bound to their traditions. (Akbay, 2003, p.95)

Within community marriages have long been a trait of Kurdish culture. It is still a strong societal habit in many parts of the Kurdistan geography, but its significance has been decreasing. Within community marriages were seen to be right in the society because it was believed that it would strengthen the family and kin (McDowall, 1996, p.8). Within community marriages were also common among these non-tribal Kurds.

Ability to speak one's own language and using its unique metaphors are substantial signifiers of cultural identity. Frequency of words in certain areas of life and expression of certain feelings in language are reflections of the living culture. For example, the Kurdish language is quite rich in terms of the words used to describe relatives. There is a unique term for almost every relation type. As an interesting example, the words used for one's nephew and nieces change according to sister or brother relation. A different word is used for son of one's brother's daughter and different for sister's daughter, or grandsons and granddaughters are called differently depending whether they are one's daughter's or son's children. Strong kinship ties and their deep infusion into daily lives of the Kurdish society impinge upon language itself. For this reason, speaking one's own language and its proper usage are taken to be fundamental bearers of cultural identity in the thesis.

Without giving reference to religion, any effort to describe what cultural Kurdish identity entails in Turkey would be insufficient. The Kurds in Turkey mostly belong to Sunni sect of Islam while the Alevi Kurds are included in Shia sect. The Sunni Kurds are divided too among themselves as Shafii and Hanafi. They are differentiated from each other in terms of practicing religious rituals. While the Shafii denomination is known for its strict Islamic rules, the latter has a more of flexible interpretation of Islam (Van Bruinessen, 1991, p.2-3).

Whether being Hanafi or Shafii, the rural Kurds are deeply sensitive about religion. Cultural Kurdish identity is fused with Islamic principles and religious figures are very influential in the society. The sheiks are highly respected in the society for being man of God and wisdom that even tribe leaders apply to their consultation from time to time (Van Bruinessen, 1992b, p.6).Their position is so strong that usually they are the ones who reconcile rival tribes or end blood feuds. However, the sheiks are not independent from the tribe leaders even if they are man of God and wisdom. There is also a covert interest-based relation between the Sheik and the agha (İlyas, 2009, p.59-60)who tends to use the former's position and words to justify his equivocal acts.

Consequently, in the thesis, strong descent of line, ability to speak native tongue, practice of collective rituals, upholding of traditional norms and values, and deep fusion of tradition and religion are all considered to be substantial signifiers of the Kurdish culture identity.

4.2.4 Politicized Kurdish identity

The Kurds are not like Jewish and Christian minorities as they have a common ground with the Turkish majority, Islam. In terms of belief and lifestyle, they are different than Armenians or Jews but close to the Turks. Hence, at which point they could be called minority has been discussed by many ranging from intellectuals to newspaper editors (Çağaptay, 2002, p.68). It is still debatable whether Turkishness has really been open to them even if they have been Turkified or assimilated (Yeğen, 2009).

With all these questions in their mind, the Turkish state elite decided that assimilation is the most plausible option. Assimilationist policies of the state faced resistance and in turn ethnic Kurdish identity has been politicized in Turkey. Those who resisted faced a second wave of repression (Bozarslan, 2000, p.25). Resisting Kurdish subject has come to acquire a sense of national belonging and political consciousness (Yavuz, 2001).

Politicized Kurdish identity is one of the key variables examined in thesis as it has a strong correlation with repression issue. It is considered to have developed in response to the state policies. The term does not simply refer to any identity which is political. An ordinary Kurd may vote for the Islamist Justice and Development Party (JDP) and his or her choice can conveniently be called political. Accordingly, he can have a political identity which is affiliated with the JDP. However, in the way it is used in this thesis, political identity mainly alludes to a politicized ethnic Kurdish identity affiliated with or close to the armed Kurdish national movement *or* the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party. The latter division must be made for the fact that the two are not fully encompassing clusters. A politicized Kurd can vote for the HDP but still may not support the armed movement or vice versa.

CHAPTER5

CULTURE, ASSIMILATION AND IDENTITY

There is extensive body of literature written over the assimilation question in Turkey which mainly focuses on element of repression while neglecting complex social, political and cultural structure of the Kurdish minority in Turkey (Yeğen, 1996; Zeydanlıoğlu, 2008; Van Bruinessen, 1992c). The Turkey's Kurds are deeply divided among themselves in terms dialect, sects and ethnographic composition. Four different dialects of Kurdish are spoken in the region and the community are also divided in terms of belief or sects. While some portion of the Kurdish society defines themselves as Sunni, some other are known as Kurdish Alevi classified under Shia sect of Islam (Van Bruinessen, 1997).

Kurds are divided among themselves not only in terms of language and belief, but also with regard to their societal organization. Despite the fact that they are well-known for their tribal structure, there are also non-tribal Kurdish communities living in eastern Turkey, mainly in Ardahan, Kars, Erzurum and Iğdır provinces. They have either lost their tribal character in hundreds of years or they are ethnographically non-tribal. Particularly, in the current thesis, I shall examine how tribalism itself and its interaction with repressive state policies has affected assimilation of the Kurds. Therefore, a hypothesis-generating case study was conducted in three district of eastern Erzurum province, namely, Pasinler, Narman and Karayazı. In Pasinler district, one each tribal and non-tribal Kurdish village without a repression history were selected while in Norman district, geographically adjacent to Pasinler, a non-tribal Kurdish village again without a repressive state memory was examined. In the third district of Karayazı, a tribal village which has

experienced repression was selected and studied. A map of districts can be found in the Appendix B. Name of villages and interviewees are changed in the thesis in order not to reveal their reveal identities for confidential reasons. A brief information about the examined villages can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Villages

Village Name	District	Tribal or Non-Tribal	Exposition to Systematic State Repression	Assimilated or Not
Sarıgöl	Pasinler	Non-Tribal	No	Assimilated
Kayadibi	Pasinler	Tribal	No	Not
Kızılkaya	Narman	Non-Tribal	No	Assimilated
Nimetoğlu	Karayazı	Tribal	Yes	Not

5.1 Case of Kayadibi: resistance to assimilation without politicization

5.1.1 History

Kayadibi village is located at the Pasinler district of Erzurum, which is one of the closest districts to the city center that it only takes half-one hour go to Erzurum city center from Pasinler. It is a tribal Kurdish village. Pasinler has population of 29,400 currently (Genel Nüfus Sayımı, 2017), 80% percentage of which are estimated Turkish while the rest is Kurdish. Unfortunately, there is not any official record showing the real population distribution because ethnic identities are not asked during population census. Hence, the percentage was calculated based on number of villages known Turkish and Kurdish by locals. Kurdish villages in the districts are generally located at mountainous areas while the Turkish ones are mostly located the Pasinler lowland.

As far as the villagers told, the state did apply to systematic assimilation policies in the Pasinler district. The collective memory of the Kurds living in the area shows that the state did not follow any policy implying it saw the Kurdish population

there as a danger. The locals do not recall any memories that they were mistreated because of their ethnic identity and forced to assimilate by the state. When I asked whether their ancestors would be Turkish or not, I was told that their fathers and grandfathers were speaking Kurdish. They certainly accept that they are Kurdish.

The Kurds in Kayadibi village, one of the villages are members of Cemaldin Tribe which is scattered through a large geography in eastern Turkey. According to the rare written sources, the Cemaldin tribe was originally located in the Botan region of the Northern Kurdistan from where it has spread to Kars, Erzurum, Ardahan, Iğdır, Şanlıurfa, Van and Muş provinces. In Erzurum, the members of the tribe live in Pasinler, Tekman, Hınıs and Karayazı districts (Perinçek, 2014, p.93).In Pasinler, there are five villages inhabited by the Cemaldin members. Estimated population of these villages is about 2,000. Kayadibi locals said that they migrated to the area during 1930s because they escaped a blood feud in Northeastern Ağrı province. Their relatives still live in Ağrı, they frequently visit each other and their connection with their brethren is quite strong.

5.1.2 Geography and way of life

The winter is quite difficult for the locals who are mostly farmers like the surrounding other Kurdish villages. They also cultivate land, but geography and soil are not so suitable for agriculture. However, the Turkish villages are mostly located around the Pasinler lowland which is quite fertile for cultivating, and the Turks both cultivate land and raise cattle. The tribal Kayadibi villagers lead a traditional life in economic terms.

Similar to almost every village in Turkey, the youth does not prefer to stay in the village and migrates to big cities for job or educational opportunities. Compared

surrounding villages, Kayadibi has lost less youth but still it constitutes a considerable number for the village. The young who preferred to stay at the village does the same things with their fathers with slight differences. Those who migrated to big cities for job opportunities work mostly in construction sector and live at the peripheries of big cities. A few of those young people who were interviewed still speak Kurdish fluently and do not seem to have lost much of their cultural identity. They complain about how they were forced to migrate because of economic conditions, still paying visits to their families and relatives occasionally.

5.1.3 Culture and assimilation

Kayadibi has an estimated population of 200 and 40 km far away from the Erzurum city center. The locals are member of the Cemaldin tribe which is scattered through a large geography in eastern Turkey. According to the rare written sources, the Cemaldin tribe was originally located in the Botan region of the Northern Kurdistan from where it has spread to Kars, Erzurum, Ardahan, Iğdır, Şanlıurfa, Van and Muş provinces. In Erzurum, the members of the tribe live in Pasinler, Tekman, Hınıs and Karayazı districts (Perinçek, 2014,p.93).

As for the known history, the Kayadibi villagers have not been exposed to systematic state violence due to their ethnic identity. Their ancestors came to and settled in Pasinler in the mid-1930s after they left their hometown in the Northeastern province of Ağrı. There are two different claims why they left their village in Ağrı and came to Erzurum. Firstly, the locals said that their ancestors were dislocated after the Sheik Said Rebellion and relocated in Pasinler. Secondly, they left their hometown because of a blood feud or territorial disputes with other tribes.

Locals told that they have not been mistreated by the state so far because of their ethnic identity and apparently they do not have ethnic claims. The Kurds are minority in the district, and it was highly probable that they might have been absorbed by the Turkish majority. However, up until beginning of 2000s, the members of the Cemaldin tribe living in the Kayadibi village were able to protect their cultural identity even though they had not yet developed a political identity. Seemingly, strong kinship ties and powerful collective rituals enabled the Cemaldin members to protect their cultural identity. They did not also develop an ethnic political consciousness or political Kurdish identity affiliated with the Kurdish national movement or HDP.

The locals still speak Kurdish fluently. Children also speak Kurdish fluently as well although they are being educated in Turkish schools. Their weddings, funerals and collective rituals are still highly Kurdish with slight infusion of non-Kurdish materials. All women, who are mostly uneducated, still speak Kurdish fluently while using Turkish occasionally. They stage their folkloric plays, dengbejs sing their long songs, and they perform their cultural dances in their weddings albeit a certain level of cultural erosion is visible. They attend funerals of their relatives together regardless of distance and climate conditions and not long time ago they used to bring some food to funeral home. One of elderly people told they used to bring bag of sugars to the funeral house previously. Sugar was a rare product and he said by this way they were showing that they cared for the family of the dead.

When asked about how important their cultural norms to them, a local from Kayadibi told a story of freezing with is fluent Kurdish. He said that they attended funeral of one of their relatives and two of their friends almost froze to death on their way to another Cemaldin village, Yakacı, in Pasinler. "Since all the roads were

closed by the snow, we had to walk from one village to another but two of us were about to freeze after we were caught by a snowstorm." As I asked what if you just did not attend funeral because there was a possibility that you would die, he responded that "it was really important for us to attend funeral and if not, it was a shame for us.". Similar to other interviewees, when asked how things are now, he said they have lost some elements of their culture and tradition. Accepting that there is a certain amount of cultural erosion under the influence of mass media, internet and globalization, he stated such importance given to cultural practices before was keeping them together and unified.

Kinship is the dominant idiom of organization in the tribe and members consider themselves distinct when compared to other Kurdish tribes or Turks. As a powerful socio-political entity, the tribe firstly offers its members opportunity to be member of a community and have a strong tribal identity. Conflicts with other tribes foster solidarity within tribe. One of the interviewees from Kayadibi told if someone wants to insult a person, he calls the person with the name of tribe called "Hassen." It is one of the Kurdish tribes scattered along several eastern Turkey provinces. The Cemaldin and Hassen tribes have had occasional confrontation for decades triggered by abduction of girl by a member of Hassen tribe from one of Cemaldin villages. The interviewee told she married with the guy without approval of her father who felt humiliated. Afterwards, the two sides fought several times and according to the locals, several people from both sides were killed so far. However, killings did not take place in Kayadibi but other in Cemaldin villages, he added..

The members feel both flattered and powerful by being members of the Cemaldin tribe. In case a fight broke out, the locals in Kayadibi are so confident that their fellow tribal men would come to their help as fights between families and tribes

is a recurring phenomenon among the Kurds. These recurring fights or bloody conflicts between the Kurdish tribes are not merely sociological coincidences. Rather, they are tangible reflections of love for kinship and blood in society. An interview, in his 50s from Kayadibi, told that "We fought many times with Turks for grazing lands. They were bringing their animals to our lands which are not even big enough for our flocks. But, we could deter them because we are very crowded and fight well. Still, they are afraid of us." There are five Cemaldin villages in Pasinler and the Turks sometimes call them "ruthless."

Cemaldin tribe belongs to Shafii sect of Islam which is classified under Sunni denomination. It is differentiated from Hanafi sect with its strict interpretation of Islamic rules. Locals told if they touch a woman, they cannot pray. They should firstly perform an ablution and then they can pray. When asked about pre-arranged marriages, an interviewee said that previously man could not see face of girl before a religious marriage was formed" (Imam Marriage). Even if the girl's family gave their consent for marriage, groom could only see bride at the wedding." Responding a further question, he added that "things have changed nowadays but we are still sensitive about marriage issues."

Seemingly, the rural Kurds believes institution of family is sacred like the surrounding Turkish villages and it should be protected as much as. According to the Islamic principles, both acts, marriage and divorce of two people, are rightful acts that the latter is also way that would be applied in case partners are not happy. However, the cultural Kurdish reflex strictly rejects act of divorce, making it almost impossible for the partner who might choose to divorce otherwise. An interviewee from Kayadibi told that one of his friends married to a girl from another Cemaldin village, Yakacı, five years ago. The guy wants to divorce for years but the girl's

family blocks it. As it was a within-tribe marriage, he told, it was almost impossible for him to divorce his wife and he will have to live rest of his life with his wife. Divorce is perceived to be very insulting act for the family of girl.

5.1.4 State-society relations: social assistances and political choice

Distribution of social assistance has become a highly controversial topic in the literature particularly after the Islamist Justice and Development Party (JDP) came to power in 2002. Within the JDP, Turkey has taken more decisive steps toward the neo-liberal economic model which has been ideal way of managing economy since 1980s. In a neo-liberal economic model, market is expected to expand and manage itself within minimum intervention by the state. The main goal is to maintain smooth functioning of economy and particularly protection of the market, which, indirectly means protection of business interests. However, In the JDP's model of neo-liberal economy, the protection of the poor has been the main goal (Aytaç & Öniş, 2014). The model enabled the JDP to generate significant support among the low middle class in Turkey particularly through social assistance.

> It appears that by and large productive welfare state institutions promote market development, and therefore are potentially more aligned with business interests, while protective welfare state institutions shield citizens from and in the labor market, rendering them less compatible with business interests. (Aytaç & Öniş, 2014, p.6)

During the Islamist JDP period, share of social assistance in the GDP has increased dramatically. Together with and in parallel to that, agricultural subsidies, housing aids and food stamps targeting the rural poor have also shown remarkable increase. Between the years of 2003 and 2009, as percentage of social expenditures in the GDP "free health care card (Green Card) program expenditures by 115 percent, education based conditional cash transfer by 201 percent, health-based

conditional cash transfer by 313 percent, food stamps by 422 percent, housing aid by 2500 percent, education aid by 772 percent and disability aid by 1034 percent" increased (Yörük, 2012). It is claimed that the JDP has been using social assistance targeting especially the poor as a political leverage (Öniş, 2012). Calling it controlled neo-populism, Öniş (2012)states that the JDP has been able to make affective use of various formal and informal mechanisms of redistribution in order to generate support among the poor.

Nature of this social assistance have been examined by many, some of who have come to argue that the JDP's social assistance has been distributed to the Kurdish poor disproportionately that the state has been trying to contain social unrest with social assistance. The assistance has been distributed not based on social need but social unrest. Based on the statistical data that he gathered, Yörük argues that distribution of social assistance per regions are not necessarily correlated with poverty rate, which indeed, according to him, have correlated with density of the Kurds living in the regions (Yörük, 2012, p.524). "Social assistance programs are directed disproportionately at the Kurdish minority and to the Kurdish region of Turkey, particularly to the internally displaced Kurds in urban and metropolitan areas" (Yörük, 2012, p.518). It is claimed that this disproportionate distribution of social assistance policy led by the JDP is a reflection of benevolent containment of the Kurdish question.

The state has applied to various methods to solve the Kurdish unrest diverging from sheer force to "ideological, religious, economic, and social paternalism" (Yörük & Özsoy, 2013, p.153). Ultimately, it is claimed that it has found out a new way to contain the long-lasting conflict. Reflections of generous social assistance in the form of gratitude to the state can be seen in different Kurdish

geographies three of four villages that were examined in the thesis. All examined tribal or no-tribal villages are highly benefiting from generous social assistances whose contribution to strengthening of real economy is controversial.

The villagers that was spoken to and known by indirect contacts in Kayadibi, showed no significant hostility against the Turkish state. They are even thankful to the state for distribution of social assistances, agricultural subsidies and infrastructural improvement. They benefit highly from the welfare pensions and economic assistances offered by the state. Everybody can benefit from health services freely, the elderly and sick people are carefully taken care of, the widow has salary, the farmer is paid for every newborn animal and each acre of land, everybody can benefit from free coal distributed each year, etc.

It is possible to find households where four or five people have salaries coming from social welfare pensions. The state even pays the parents taking care of his disabled children who have also salaries. The ministry provides vehicles for the disabled children who are taken from their home for rehabilitation two times in a week and brought back during the evening.

I talked to local in Kayadibi, named Selahattin, who told me that he has two disabled children and they have four salaries in their household. Two disabled children have salaries, the state pay their mother for taking care of them and pays him for his all children going to school. A guy named, Umut, in his mid-30s, said that he has never paid social insurance tax in his life, but his family can benefit freely from health services. He told me that he received a paper for income check, and it was written on the paper that if his registered income is below 10 thousand TL per year, he can benefit from the health services freely. They are raising cattle and they found many ways to take social assistances from the state. He proudly told that he

transferred all his cattle to his father's name on paper and his income fell below 10 thousand TL. Even if their income is above 10 thousand TL per year, all family members can benefit from health services by paying approximately 80 TL per month as part of General Health Insurance Regulation passed in 2017 (Bilgi Kartları, 2018).

The Kayadibi villagers suffer from heavy winter conditions, and before the JDP they were not able to reach the district and city center during the winters for months because their roads were closed by the snow. Such improvements or developments may not seem very important things from outside, but these are valuable things for their small and contained life. They have simple necessities in their life, and when the state responds to such simple necessities, they express their gratitude.

5.2 Case of neighboring Sarıgöl: story of cultural erosion

5.2.1 History

Sarıgöl is located at the Pasinler district of Erzurum, which is one of the closest districts to the city center. Not belonging to any tribe or having a tribal connection, history of the Kurds living in Sarıgöl village dates back to late early 20th century. Their ancestors came to Pasinler from Iran and founded the village in the area. The oldest person in the village told that their ancestors firstly settled around Çıldır Lake near northeast province of Ardahan. While some preferred to stay there, some continued toward more west and settled in eastern province of Erzurum. When they arrived at Erzurum, some decided to settle at Northeast district of Narman and the rest stopped in the neighboring district of Pasinler. Today, their grandsons live in Kızılkaya village in Narman district and Sarıgöl village in Pasinler district. They are two neighboring districts indeed. The relatives still visit each other. As far as the

villagers told, the state did apply to systematic assimilation policies in the Pasinler district. The locals do not recall any memories that they were mistreated because of their ethnic identity and forced to assimilate by the state

When I asked whether their ancestors would be Turkish or not, I was told that their fathers and grandfathers were speaking Kurdish. They certainly accept that they are Kurdish except a few individual cases seen among the youth who see it more prospective to claim to be Turkish. Mostly educated young students living in metropolitan cities prefer to call themselves Turkish. Considering their scarce knowledge about history of their ancestors and their worry about not be excluded by their Turkish friends, these young student's claim could be called as a reflection of opportunism that they do not want to face societal cost of being Kurdish. For them, it is a liability to be considered Kurdish.

5.2.2 Geography and way of life

Sarıgöl is located at a mountainous area and it is 20 km way from district center. It is neighbor to Kayadibi village and they are also farmers. They raise cattle and work in field during the summer. On average, they have 25-30 cows and its population is around 100. Geographically, it is almost the biggest village in Pasinler. They have large grazing lands and forests. Contrary to this, Turkish villages are generally located at Pasinler lowland and most of them only cultivate land and do not raise cattle. Villagers suffer from heavy winter conditions and their road is frequently closed by snow. However, their roads are cleared by the district municipality. Depending on the year, winter may last more than five months. Winter is also a difficult time for the villagers as they have to feed their animals inside their barns through more than five months.

The village has lost most of its population during the last two decades and the youth usually does not prefer to stay at the village. Mostly, villagers migrated to Erzurum city center and run small and midsize shops. They are totally uneducated but considerable number in the new generation are educated and some of them have university degrees even. However, the new generation also mostly work in construction and industry. Except a few public teachers, they do not have positions at the public offices. A few villagers who left the village more than 30 years ago succeed in their business and acquired significant fortune. Mostly, they deal with construction and natural gas distribution, etc.

5.2.3 Culture and assimilation

Except older generations locals almost forgot Kurdish and it is rarely used among the young regardless of education level. Some jokes peculiar to their culture are made in Kurdish but language is about to be forgotten. They have mixed with the neighboring Turkish villages, arranged marriages and they have become quite same with the other Turkish villages. A man in his 40s told me that they are giving their daughters to Turks and the Turks are not doing the same. He complained the Turkish Demirci village took more than ten girls from them while they even could not succeed in taking one from them, claiming that the Turks see them backward and uncivilized. However, the Turks do not see it wrong to take girls from the Kurds.

They barely carry the cultural elements that would differentiate them from Turks, and they are mostly assimilated that is accepted by them as well. When asked whether it is a problem for them to lose their Kurdishness, one from the crowd replied with a joke saying that "the best Kurd is the dead one." The man continued that being Kurdish has only been a liability for him throughout his life and it is better

for them to get rid of it. I asked the question "What you will be after getting rid of your Kurdishness and for the Turks you are backward and how will you become Turkish?" At this point, they were all confused because they know that they will not be accepted as Turks by the surrounding Turkish villages even if they are completely assimilated.

I talked to several people from Sarıgöl who live in Erzurum city center. They constantly came to village and visit their relatives. One of them told that he does not like Kurds even if he is Kurdish and he proudly told how they attacked the Kurds who came to Erzurum for imprisoned leader of the HDP, Selahattin Demirtaş's rally in 2015. While Demirtaş was speaking, the Kurdish crowd gathered at Station Square was attacked by the locals with knifes, stones and even with camp cylinders. A minibus was burned with camp cylinders while there were several people inside. One of the men in the minibus was burned to death while others were severely injured. The guy I talked told me he was among the group who attacked Kurds. Not only him, some other Kurdish guys from the Sarıgöl village also told that they also beat the Kurds during the rally and added they thrown stones to the buses carrying Kurds to the rally and broke their windows.

They are accusing the Kurds in the rally of betrayal and supporting terrorism. Hence, they find the things that they did right. Some of these guys are members of the Nationalist Action Party's Grey Wolves House. Interestingly, they do not deny they are Kurdish, and they sometimes curse on the Kurds. I witnessed a man named HacıFevzi to curse on Kurdish nation in Kurdish language. He said "God damn the Kurd" while reading about a clash took place between the PKK militants and Turkish soldiers.

Older people in the village told stories how once they used to organize folkloric scenes and plays in the weddings, etc. "We were performing our plays in every wedding. While performing folkloric halay dance, one was singing before and others were repeating afterword since it was hard to find music cassettes." They told that dengbejs were really important them and there were some men in the village who used to sing songs of famous Kurdish dengbejs such as Şakiro. Today, weddings are almost modern, and they mostly play Turkish songs. As younger generations totally forgot the Kurdish, they do not prefer to play Kurdish songs in the weddings. They also do not want to make their Kurdishness public. A young guy from Sarıgöl working in construction in Erzurum city center told that his wife and her family did not know he was Kurdish when they got married. He said that he had to hide because the girl's family would never give him their daughter and he told his wife after they got married. He added they did not play Kurdish songs in his wedding to hide their Kurdishness. In addition to that, he said it is not important for him to be Kurdish.

Peculiar cultural elements are also about to disappear among the Sarıgöl locals. A woman interviewee told that previously they could not show their love to their children if their fathers or father-in laws were there. She said that they would find it disrespectful and by this way they were showing their respect for their fathers. "We were living in small-houses and we were crowded. We would not eat together with man and we used to close our mouth our veil. I am still sometimes involuntarily do it." Covering of faces with veil is called Yashmak and it is also prevalent in other Middle eastern countries. The women I talked in Sarıgöl and also Kızılkaya told that they were very sensitive about it especially in the presence of their father-in law.

During the interviews, I saw some old women who had a dressing around their head that they call "Kaççık." They wrap it over their veil, and it was generally

white. Younger generations of woman do not wear it. Instead, they prefer to wear colorful headscarves. Locals also told that previously women used to lament for the dead by saying long stories resembling to a song. While crying for the lost ones, they used to say long poetical stories about life of the dead and their love for them. These cultural traits are almost forgotten.

Seemingly, a spontaneous assimilation process has successfully worked out in Sarıgöl village without any interference by the state. Majority Turkish community has been able to absorb the non-tribal Kurdish community which is seemingly Turkified. Not surprisingly, some youth does not accept that they are Kurdish as they see Kurdishness as a liability.

5.2.4 State-society relations: social assistances and political choice

In Sarıgöl, the state does have a very image of caring father and villagers do not complain about their economic conditions. Similar to Kayadibi, they are paid for each acre of land, each newborn animal, every sick person, every, widow an elderly. Their roads are cleared every day during the winter, their children are taken to school each morning and brought back evening with shuttles of district national education directorate. They can benefit from health services freely and they can even call ambulance to the top of mountain.

In Sarıgöl, I witnessed an emergency call that one of the men from neighboring upland made. These people come to the upland during summers for grazing, and the plateau they settle is 15 km away from the Sarıgöl village. The road between the plateau and Sarıgöl is not so suitable for cars and minibuses. However, when the guy from the upland made the call that they have a woman about to give

birth, a fully equipped ambulance worth almost 300 thousand TL was sent in a short time to the upland whose road passes through Sarıgöl village.

The ambulance could not reach the upland and severely damaged in its way to the plateau. The woman was carried in a tractor until it reached the ambulance. The interesting point here is that even the guy made a second call a day later, an ambulance would come again although the officials know that the road is not suitable for ambulance. This kind of services that they have never seen before is deeply appreciated by them and very influential on their political choices.

The villagers are given tons of free coal each year that they do not use but sell. According to the information taken from an indirect contact who bids for transportation of free coal distributed by the municipality in Pasinler, each year 18-millon TL worth coal distributed to the people in the district most of whom do not use but sell it. With this sum of money, the state can establish two-midsize oil and crisp factories in Pasinler each year where people mostly plant potatoes and sunflower in large and irrigated Pasinler lowland. Instead, the state prefers to distribute free coal which is not even used.

5.3 Case of Kızılkaya: story of cultural erosion-II

5.3.1 History

Kızılkaya is located in Narman district of Erzurum and villagers are not member of any tribe. According to the information taken from locals, their ancestors came from Iran at the late 19th century and settled in Narman. They are relatives of Sarıgöl villagers. When asked why their ancestors left their hometown and came to Erzurum, some referred to war-related causes while some claimed it was because of climate and drought.

Kızılkaya went through a hard period during 1980s as village was destroyed by an earthquake in 1983. Mostly children died during the earthquake because it took place toward the dawn when older members of families were working in the fields and children stay at home. One of the women that I talked said that she lost her four children. Almost all families lost someone in the earthquake. Villagers told that the state took care of them after the quake and soldiers helped them to bury the bodies, brought them food and tents, water, etc. They expressed their gratitude for the state particularly on this matter. The told that they do not have any complaint about the state except one party rule and military interventions.

5.3.2 Geography and way of life

It is located between Turkish villages at lowland. Contrary to Sarıgöl and Kayadibi, it does not have mountainous geography and they have large fields at the lowland. They cultivate land and raise cattle. Economically, they are not significantly different than the neighboring Turkish villages. They also face problem of migration, but its population outnumbers Sarıgöl and Kayadibi. Climate is quite moderate, and it does not snow a lot in the village due to altitude of the lowland. Villager can easily reach the district center because their roads are covered with asphalt. They were provided with water and electricity services at 1980s.

5.3.3 Culture and assimilation

Narman district is predominantly Turkish and yet there are not any official records showing the exact distribution of population per ethnicity. Roughly, based on the field observation, it can be said that almost 20 percentage of population living in the district is Kurdish and they mostly live in the villages. The whole population of the

district is 21, 814 and just one fourth of the population lives in the district center (Narman, 2017).

Kurdish villages are scattered among the Turkish ones and almost all the Kurds are assimilated. While some see no wrong in it accepting that they are ethnically Kurdish but assimilated in time, some strictly reject the argument that they are Kurdish. A quite interesting fact about them is that a significant portion of the Kurds living in the Narman district vote for the Nationalist Action Party (NAP) and they are loyal members of the Grey Wolves Houses of the NAP. Even, many Kurds see Kurdish race as backward, tribal and savage.

While some of the villages are completely assimilated, there are some other Kurdish villages which are half-assimilated. These non-tribal Kurdish villages are scattered among Turkish villages and they do not have a strong socio-political order. Seemingly, their loose societal order has expedited cultural erosion. Kızılkaya, is a non-tribal Kurdish village located between Turkish villages. It is half-assimilated and generally vote for the Justice and Development Party (JDP) while younger generation vote also for the NAP.

I conducted several interviews in Village Coffeeshop where I talked to several youth and old people together. They are hardly differentiated from neighboring Turkish Tüten village. I asked the villagers the question "How do you define yourself/ Who are you?" and all of them replied that they are Muslim. None of them expressed Kurdishness issue. I asked a second question all of them "How do you differentiate yourself from the Tüten village?" Except some unimportant minor details, they again replied that they have no differences with the Tüten people, adding that they are both Muslims and Kurdishness is not so important for them.

Only the older generation can speak Kurdish but not fluently. They also speak Qurmanci version of Kurdish and they frequently use Turkish words while speaking Kurdish. For example, original word for door in Kurdish is "Deri" and instead, they use Turkish word "Kapı" for the door. None of the gave an interview in Kurdish. They occasionally used Kurdish among themselves when I was in the coffeeshop. Similarly, I heard that they used a deformed version of Turkish word "Aynı" meaning "same" in a Kurdish sentence instead of original Kurdish words such as "wekehev, layî, mîna or hevşêwe" meaning "same." Guest-welcoming is an important societal ritual in Kurdish society and when I went to Kayadibi or Nimetoğlu villages, the locals met and ask me in with the Kurdish word of "Keremke or Kerembika." In Kızılkaya, they directly spoke Turkish when asking me in and I heard that they used Turkish word "buyur" for asking someone in while speaking a very degenerated version of Kurdish among themselves.

The villagers are mostly relatives and none of them recalled a tribal period in their history when I questioned whether they may have lost their tribal character in time. One interview told they have never heard of agha or tribe in their village and they are not tied to any tribe. However, the man told that they have relatives in Ardahan, Kars and Pasinler (Sarıgöl village). They also do not remember blood feud in the village. One of the old men recalled an event of killing but he said it happened almost involuntarily.

The village are composed of several families but going two generations back they are apparently relatives. There is a certain segregation between families as they are all attributed different traits, but sharp identity lines do not exist between them. There are four main families in the village, each of them is known for their different traits. For example, one of the families called "Kemişkek" which is known for

cowardice. Another family is known for its fight skills.. Kızılkaya village, which is almost same with Sarıgöl, has assimilated to a large extend, rarely bears cultural elements of Kurdishness and Kurdish language is almost forgotten.

5.3.4 State-society relations: social assistances and political choice

Similar to Kayadibi and Pasinler, Kızılkaya villagers also benefit from same services and social assistances. During interviews, no one in the Kızılkaya expressed any resentment against state. They did not talk about any traumatic memory with the state, and they are also thankful for being in their service. Not attributing any significant value to Kurdish identity, they mainly emphasis their Muslim identity.

The Kızılkaya locals told me a story about an earthquake took place in early 1980s, in which, hundreds of people lost their life in the district. The earthquake took place toward dawn and mostly children were trapped in the wreckage as their parents were going to field and start to work before the dawn. Recalling how the soldiers helped them, buried their sons and provided them with food and shelters, old people pictured an image of compassionate state. They are proud of Adnan Menderes and Turgut Özal when they asked how they see the politics.

Except the JDP, their collective memory of the state was mainly associated with the secularism. They were not apparently pleased with it. Villagers old that their perception of the state changed after the Islamist JDP came to power in 2002 for two main reasons. The first one is about religion. For the first time in the history of the republic, they said, they saw a religious person in power. Secondly, they told me they started to see a state caring for them. (They particularly mean social welfare pensions, agricultural subsidies, infrastructural improvement, etc.)

Services and social assistances provided by the JDP has a big influence over political choice of the locals. They recall certain parts in the history of Turkish republic with a great honor, namely terms of Adnan Menderes and Turgut Özal. They all vote for the Islamist JDP and no other political party could not win an election in these villages since 2002. They do not support the Kurdish national movement and do not have a politicized Kurdish identity affiliated with the PKK or HDP.

5.4 Case of Nimetoğlu: tribal identities and resistance to assimilation

5.4.1 History

Nimetoğlu village is in Karayazı district of Erzurum which shares border with southeastern provinces of Ağrı and Muş. Villagers told that they are members well-known Berazani Tribe. In his work, Şerefname (n.d.); History of Kurds, Şeref Han states that the Berazani tribe is originally nomad, the tribe men earn their livelihood through animal husbandry and they are very pious (p.294). Ziya Gökalp (1999) states that Berazani tribe has originally its roots in Şanlıurfa province and some clans tied to it were left to Iraq as a part of an agreement signed with France (p.57). Members of tribe today also live in Muş, Kars and Erzurum. Nimetoğlu is one of many Berazani villages in Karayazı. Some of them are big and populated ones while some are just small hamlets. Some villagers also claimed that their ancestors joined the Sheikh Said Rebellion, but it was not verified by all of them.

5.4.2 Geography and way of life

Nimetoğlu is located a mountainous area and its almost 25 km away from district center. Winter is difficult for villagers as it snows a lot during the winter. Their roads are generally closed by the snow and district municipality clears their roads as much as possible. Locals told that it was not same before the Justice and Development Party (JDP) came to power. They were not able to reach district center for weeks and they used to use horses. They told that they do not have the same problem anymore. Population of the village is around 250 and it has also experienced migration problem like many villages around. Particularly, youth migrated to big cities for job opportunities and they mostly live at peripheries of the cities.

The geography in Berazani villages is not very suitable for agriculture and villagers earn their livelihood through raising sheep. They go to highlands for grazing during the summer together. They come back toward winter and they feed their sheep inside their barns during the winter.

5.4.3 Culture and assimilation

Nimetoğlu village is tied to Karayazı district which shares borders with Ağrı and Muş provinces. The district is completely Kurdish and resembles the Southeastern provinces of Turkey. People are more concerned with politics (especially Kurdish problem). The Kurdish political party, People's Democratic Party (HDP) is very influential in the district that the other political parties do not even stand a minor chance of winning in elections.

The population of Karayazı is around 28,000 (İlçemiz Karayazı, 2018) and all Kurdish. In the general elections took place in June of 2018, the pro-Kurdish political party, HDP, took the 74% of the votes while the support for Selahattin Demirtaş,

imprisoned leader of the party, was %71 for presidency (Seçim 2018, 2018). The support for HDP and Demirtaş was more than 90% in the examined Nimetoğlu village.

The district has a history of violence and state interference, and according to the information taken from the locals, there are some small bases of the armed Kurdish movement, PKK, in the mountainous areas. People follow politics day by day. The Karayazı Municipality was run by a trustee appointed by the government until March 2019 as the former mayor was accused of having links with the PKK and using the state resources for illegal activities of the PKK (Karayazı belediyesi, 2016). In the municipal elections took place in March 2019, the HDP took back the municipality by taking 65% of the votes (Yerelseçim, 2019).

All the Kurdish villages in the district are tribal. Their connection with the Southeast is stronger and their cultural elements is more pervasive when compared to those of the Kurds living in Pasinler and Narman. The village is one of several villages tied to the Berazani tribe. The villagers are relatives and they have strong cultural connection. They still speak their language fluently and only a small portion of them can be called half-assimilated.

I encountered with some people in the district center who claimed they are Berazani before visiting the village. As far as I saw, the Berazani tribe has a certain fame in the district and locals respect it for its fame and power. Even the young ones were proudly saying that they are Berazani. I talked to a university student from the Nimetoğlu village who goes to village during summers. He has a sympathy toward the Kurdish movement, and he has leftist ideas indeed. He also told stories how some of his relatives in the village went mountain because of state violence. However, when he comes to back to Karayazı, he says that he becomes a Berazani again. He

does not much speak about Marxist ideas near his relatives. Instead, he wears his "Puşi" and he again becomes one of them. He says that he does not really favor tribalism in Kurdish society but this sense of belonging as Berazani still honors him somehow.

It is a frequent case in the Kurdish society that tribes or families are known for their certain characteristics. As I have mentioned for family lines in Kızılkaya, such differentiation or segregation exist also at the tribal level. Zirkan, Cemaldin and Berazani are the biggest tribes in Karayazı and these tribes have many villages also in neighboring Hınıs and Tekman districts. They are known by the locals for their particular attributes.

In the district, people respect the Berazani tribe and even it has the power to occasionally challenge decisions of local state authorities. One of my contacts, a state Imam who worked in one of small villages tied to the Berazani tribe for three years, told me he was firstly appointed to the biggest Berazani village, but he was rejected. He stated that the tribe leader, *agha,* openly opposed the government appointment by claiming that they have their own Imam.

The local state authorities could not convince the tribe leader and sheikh, and my contact told that he was appointed to a small hamlet again tied to the Berazani tribe where there were only ten households. He stated that indeed their Imam was the Sheikh who lived by the generous donations of the locals and he did not want to lose it. As he had a certain influence on the locals and tribe leader, the Sheikh convinced them that they state's paid Imams would harm their piety. After the tribe leader was convinced by the Sheikh, he told his decision to the locals and nobody objected from the village. Obedience of locals to the tribe leader's decision and their internalization of his decisions is quite visible in this case.

My contact claimed the agha and sheik had a covert interest-based relation that the agha occasionally goes to the Sheik to justify his equivocal acts such as blood killings, controversial marriages, etc. However, that does not mean the Sheikh's authority is totally based on reciprocal benefits with the agha. He had a clear influence on the locals as he is seen as man of God and wisdom.

Regarding the case, a local from Nimetoğlu, named Beşir, told me that government's toleration agha might be because of a clientelist relations between the agha, state and his close circle. In return for certain autonomy, the government demand the agha support in the elections or officials are bribed by him. He did not want to give more detail about it indeed.

The geography in Berazani villages is not very suitable for agriculture and villagers earn their livelihood through raising sheep. They go to highlands for grazing during the summer together. Flocks are divided according to tribes if different tribes graze their flocks together. Issue of tribal identity is even important here for locals. They told that there are also nomadic tribes coming from Diyarbakır and Şanlıurfa for grazing, but they stop mostly at northern districts of Erzurum. I was told that these nomadic tribes have some sort of collective economic model that they stay at highlands for almost four months and the tribe leader gathers all cheese and butter. He is responsible for selling the products, paying mountain rent and distribute income fairly. Flocks are even divided per tribe.

A villager, named Cemil, who is almost 90-years old, told me that they did not have tractors to cultivate land until the Democrat Party (DP) came to power. It was this time that first tractors came to the district and lands were cultivated with the help of technology. However, he said, such abundance did not last long after Demirel took over the government. He said they all had sheep, but their life standards were

very low, and state was very weak that even they would not feel the existence of it if not close surveillance of the army.

Their roads were closed for months and they used horses to reach the city center. He stated they did not have water in the village until early 1990s and they were bringing water from a headwater with buckets. Even after the water came to village, they were carrying it to their home with buckets from a fountain located at village square again and water was distributed to households like ten years ago. Similarly, electricity was brought to the village at the end of 1980s. Today, they have both water and electricity but even the district center resembles to an abandoned city. Only investment that could be associated with the state are municipal building and hospital.

The locals from Nimetoğlu told that they had limited contact with the state for job opportunities or social welfare until 2000s. They started to receive significant amount of social welfare from the state only after that time. Hence, they have sustained their economy mostly by themselves. In parallel to that, incapacity of the state as distributor of economic resources and provider of public services inevitably fostered local distribution authorities. Tribes run a de-facto economy in their influence area and members continued to live in that sociologically powerful community. As tribe is also a powerful cultural creation, it delayed cultural assimilation to a certain degree.

However, not everybody was apparently happy with that tribal order. I talked to political figure who is from one of the Berazani villages but lives in Erzurum city center. The man was imprisoned for political crimes and he had stayed in jail for 3 years for affiliation with the PKK. Interestingly, although he was very keen on Kurdish question and defended Kurdish rights, his Kurdish was worse than almost

every villager I talked. He is also a member of the People's Democracy Party (HDP). When I asked question about the agha, he told me with Marxist jargon that the agha has been symbol of exploitation in Kurdish society and he has been no different in his tribe, Berazani. He told that the agha sent his girls to school and they studied at universities. However, he added that they could not send their daughters to school because the agha and sheikh were telling them girls will lose their piety in the schools. He added situation has changed after 2000s, but agha's orders were not even disputed among the villager at that time.

As I have mentioned earlier, conflict is also an important factor that empower tribal identity. Not only fights with the other tribes but also confrontations with the state also foster tribal identity. The oldest villager in Nimetoğlu, Ferzende, told that when he was in his 20s the RPP was in power and state was very aggressive against them. He told that once the soldiers brought together all Kurds from twelve villages in the district and randomly killed more than ten people. He said they did not even really understand why they were exposed to violence. When asked about his national feeling at that time, he said nobody knew anything about Kurdish nationalism. He told they used to love Sheikh Said but their love was due to piety of Said not because he was a nationalist. Ferzende added particularly after the Sheikh Said Revolt they were under close surveillance of the Turkish army which had suspicions about the tribe's intentions to support the rebels. As the tribe was scattered along a large geography, the state kept them under close surveillance. In turn, tribal men united among themselves but with a sense of belonging this time. As they came to realize that their culture and language are suppressed because they are Kurdish, they started to see the tribe in a different manner. After the locals faced mistreatment because of

their cultural identity, their relationship with the tribes becomes very complex and tribe might turn into a symbol of ethno-politics. As Tibi states;

> To understand the complexity of the existing societal subdivisions in Middle Eastern nation-states, we must recognize how intertwined ethnicity and sectarianism are with tribalism. In this sense the tribe, not as a social organization but rather as a referent of identity and group solidarity is the most important element of what we may call ethno-politics. (Tibi 1990, 141)

A villager told that once two young militants were killed by the soldiers and they were hanged by transformer near a foothill and they stayed there for days. The soldiers hanged bodies from transformer so that everybody could see it. The families could not go take the bodies because they were afraid they would be killed too. Ultimately, a few notable people from Berazani tribe, including Cemil, (They call him Uncle Cemil) took the bodies after talking to soldiers.

I witnessed an interesting case of tribalism and political reaction in Karayazı. When I was in the village, there was a wedding evening and we were invited to attend the wedding together with my contact. We accepted the offer and stayed for the wedding which was very crowded. We were introduced to many relatives, each of who stated their relation to the groom in detail. After music started, long lines of folkloric halay dance was formed but a guy told us that it was forbidden to play a Turkish song in the wedding. They were mostly playing cultural Kurdish songs and they were showing a political reaction toward ban on Kurdish through ban on Turdish. I did not question who banned the Turkish songs in the weddings, (like the agha, etc) as it was seemed to be a publicly taken and internalized decision. Wedding was a strange of infusion of traditional Kurdish life and politicized reaction to ban on Kurdish. The wedding again verified the Tibi's observation regarding how ethnicity and tribalism intervened in the Middle East. Tribal Kurdish identity is apparently

fused with a political (even nationalist) reaction and it is highly probable that this complex fusion can delay assimilation of the Kurdish subject.

After the wedding, I was introduced to family and I could find the chance to talk a woman named Seyran in her 20s. She had three children and she was talking about joining the ranks of PKK like his brother who was killed before by the soldiers. She did not try to hide her notions like many other villagers, and she was quite sensitive about the Kurdish question. With her fluent Kurdish, she said that she married with his current husband after her father took consent of the agha, adding that it was an arranged marriage. "If somebody comes to you for marriage, he has to take consent of the agha. I am not complaining about my marriage. I like my family and children, but I want to do something for Kurdish cause." She was not seemingly complaining about the traditional order in the village. Her character was interesting in the sense that she stated her sympathy for Kurdish national movement, but she was apparently happy living in that traditional society, tribe.

Indeed, there is a duality in minds of the villagers about ideological position of the Kurdish national movement. The villagers are all pious and even most of them pray five times a day. They live a traditional life and preserve their cultural identity within that tribal order. They arrange their marriages within their way, they do not feel close to Marxist ideology and more importantly they respect the societal order they live in. However, the PKK recruits many of his militants from the villages, traditional Kurds. The rural Kurds do not share leftist ideas but they a have common point with the PKK that they have grievances toward the state. Interestingly, the Kurds in Nimetoğlu have a politicized Kurdish identity but that does not include a leftist ideology beneath it. Villagers talked about state violence and killing of their relatives, expressing a clear resentment against state.

5.4.4 State-society relations: social assistance and political choice

Karayazı has a very politicized atmosphere and people are very close to the Kurdish national movement. However, the state does not prefer to cut down on social assistances only because they do not vote for the JDP. Nimetoğlu villagers also benefit from generous social assistances, public services and infrastructural facilities. They have some resentment toward the state but not because they are discriminated or mistreated economically. Their frustration is due to their political demands. Last but not the least, imprisonment of Selahattin Demirtaş apparently made them to lose their faith in the state to a large extend.

The villagers told that they do not have any problem to access to free public health services. Similar to the Kurds in Pasinler and Narman, they are paid for each acre of land, each student, each disabled child, each patient companion or even each newborn animal. The state is using its material resources as much as possible in the district.

The Nimetoğlu villagers are sheep farmers and they are also paid for each newborn animal. The state also pays the villagers compensation for the animal dead from several dangerous diseases. A villager told that once their sheep are caught by foot-and-mouth disease and almost every household lost 20-30 sheep in a few days. He stated the government sent a veterinary and he vaccinated their flocks. They were all paid for their dead sheep after it was confirmed that their death was becauseof the foot-and mouth disease. They are given free coal each year. I encounteredalso with a family with 8 children and the state pays their mother for 6 of them as they go to school. A man named, Halil, told me he transferred his tractor to his father on paper

so that his annual income to fall below 10 thousand TL. By this way, he could benefit from health services freely.

Although the state does not prefer to cut down on social assistances in the area, it does not turn into electoral support in the elections. Social assistances and infrastructural investments are important for villagers, but they do not see it enough apparently. One of the respected figures both in Berazani tribe and Nimetoğlu village, Cemil, told a story that many times he brought sick children to hospital with his horse during the winter before the JDP came to power. He said that once he had to walk until the district center after the horse because child's mother rode on the horse. He thought that it is not religiously appropriate to ride with the woman and she also would feel uncomfortable. Hence, he decided to walk in the snow. The woman was the wife of schoolteacher and he said they were trying to meet their every need. He stated snowstorms used to continue through days and they were giving the teacher firewood, butter, cheese, milk, etc.

Cemil told that the teacher had a sick child suffering seizure and every time he was bringing him to doctor in the district. He added the tribe was meeting every need of the teacher. Not only state servants, he said they would the same for their all relatives in the village. They support each other economically if one goes into trouble. As a reflection of this solidarity, almost everybody calls each other "pismam" meaning "cousin."

Although, they are thankful to the JDP for its services, there is duality in their mind. They criticize the government for operations against the Kurdish militants or making use of Kurds in elections. They are concerned with daily politics and seemingly they have certain sympathy for the national movement.

All In all, Nimetoğlu villagers express their gratitude for social assistance but that does not turn into vote for the JDP. A man named, Hekim, said they thank the government for the coal, but they do not vote for them. They have to release Demirtaş and free their language. He added it is because they voted and supported the HDP that people now can hear what they say. A summary of findings for each village can be found in the Appendix C.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Long-lasting violence between Kurdish rebels and Turkish army caused the death of thousands so far while many more were wounded or dislocated. The state's policy toward the Kurds did not significantly change according to the governing political parties. Either state's nationalist reflex provided politicians limited chance for solving the problem or politicians preferred to stay in their comfort zone by not risking the nationalist vote. Yet, they mostly failed in their efforts to solve the Kurdish question. The expectation that the Kurds will lose their cultural identity and be Turkified if necessary polices of assimilation were pursued apparently lost its credit. Together with the PKK's popular uprising, , the state has largely failed in its assimilation agenda in most of the Kurdistan geography.

The question as to why the state largely failed in its effort to Turkify Kurds is answered mostly with reference to suppression of Kurdish ethnic identity, while role of tribal organizations in preserving cultural Kurdish identity is neglected. However, early republican period uprisings were mostly supported by traditional Kurdish leaders, tribes and sheiks. Constant conflict in the region and capacity of the Kurds to respond to the state created its own never-ending resistance-repression circle. Ill-treated, marginalized and discriminated Kurdish subject developed an ethnic consciousness in time, mostly within boundaries of the traditional order. The tribes, which were de-facto rulers in the region under the Ottoman rule, have turned into instruments of ethno-politics. Even though the Kurdish national movement rejected traditional rule and saw it as a liability, it recruited most of its militants from the tribes, and it was able to partly survive with the help of tribes. Tribal communities

were important in supporting the Kurdish national movement, even a violent one, because ethnic identity was important for them.

Tribal identity is more than a primitive allegiance. The tribe leader takes consent of its members and tries to legitimize its rule in their eyes. The hypothesis-generating case study that I conducted on two tribal and two non-tribal Kurdish communities in eastern Turkey showed that repression is an important factor that fosters tribal identity and in line with that protects cultural Kurdish identity (Nimetoğlu villagers). As in case of Nimetoğlu and Kayadibi villagers, not only conflict with state but also inter-tribe conflicts strengthen tribe and fosters group identity. However, in the literature, tribal organization as a source of resistance to assimilation has largely been neglected or mostly evaluated in an instrumental manner rather than as a variable by itself. Even though scholars like Aslan (2011), Yeğen (2007) or Belge (2011) attributed a certain importance to the tribe, particularly its role in preserving cultural identity has been overlooked. The current thesis aims to highlight the importance of tribes in preserving cultural identity and develop a hypothesis which claims that tribes, and not merely state violence, are critical institutions in retaining cultural identity. More systematic research needs to be done on the issue.

This qualitative study also demonstrated that not only state's military capacity but also its economic and administrative incapacity strengthens tribes. Tribes take consent of their members, generate their loyalty and they could become divergent sources of political authority as distributor of scarce economic resources particularly when the state showed infrastructural, economic and administrative incapacity. Tribal Kayadibi villagers preserved their cultural identity to a large extent

while neighboring non-tribal Kurdish village, Sarigöl, is almost completely assimilated even though neither one experienced systematic state repression.

The research also showed that a Kurdish group can preserve its cultural identity without getting politicized as in the case of Kayadibi villagers. These villagers told that they have not been mistreated by the state so far, because of their ethnic identity and they are not interested in the Kurdish political demands. They are culturally Kurdish and do not have politicized identity affiliated with the Kurdish national movement or the HDP.
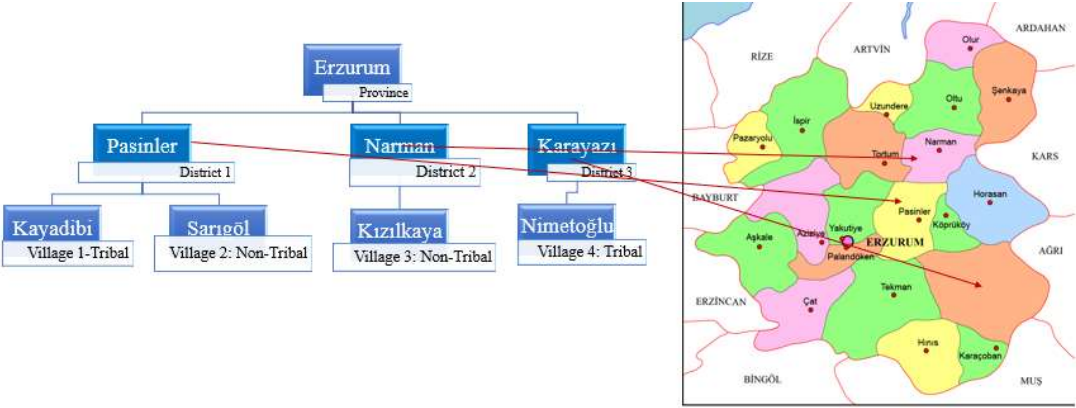
Another important finding in the research is that state's generous social assistances turn into vote in non-repressed Kurdish communities regardless of their level of assimilation, while the repressed ones still vote for the HDP. All villagers expressed their gratitude toward the state for generous social assistances and voted for the JDP, but only repressed and non-assimilated Nimetoğlu villagers that had a strong tribal organization said they do not vote for the JDP. My research urges us to think more extensively on how Kurdish political identity can be preserved without resorting to political violence.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1.   How would you define yourself if you had to specify an identity?

2.   How much native tongue is important for you?

3.   Do you identify yourself as Kurdish?

4.   What does make someone Kurdish?

5.   What does assimilation mean to you and would you identify yourself as assimilated?

6.   How much Kurdishness is important for you?

7.   What are your societal rituals or cultural acts?

8.   Have you ever mistreated by the state or Turks because of your identity?

9.   Are you member of any tribe?

10.   If so (Q.10), what does tribe mean to you? How do you see it?

11.   If so (Q.10), does being member of X tribe honor you? Is it an important identity for you?

12.   If so (Q.10), would you tell me how kin important for you?

13.   If so (Q.10), what are your cultural rituals (weddings, funerals, etc.)? How do you see them? did or should they change or etc?

14.   If so (Q10), would you tell me how do you see other members of tribe?

15.   What is state for you? What does it imply?

16.   How do you see politics? What does make vote for a certain political party?

17.   How do you see Kurdish national movement?

18.   Do you receive social services and assistances provided by the state?

APPENDIX B

FIELD AREA

APPENDIX C

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS PER VILLAGE

1.Kayadibi Village

Geography and Way of Life

- ✓ Located in Pasinler district
- ✓ 60 km from Erzurum city center
- ✓ Mountainous area
- ✓ Heavy winter conditions
- ✓ Farmers
- ✓ Water and electricity came at late 1980s

History

- ✓ Came from Ağrı in 1930s
- ✓ Tied to Cemaldin Tribe
- ✓ Never exposed to state repression
- ✓ One of four Cemaldin villages in the district

Culture and Assimilation

- ✓ Not assimilated
- ✓ Preservation of cultural values
- ✓ Not experienced significant cultural erosion
- ✓ Kurdish is spoken fluently
- ✓ Not politicized

Cases & Examples

- ✓ Freezing on the road to attend funeral
- ✓ Divorce not allowed
- ✓ Abduction of Girl
- ✓ Fight with Turks
- ✓ Weddings, dengbejs
- ✓ Bringing Sugar to Funeral house

2.Sarıgöl Village

Geography and Way of Life

- ✓ Located in Pasinler district
- ✓ 40 km from Erzurum city center
- ✓ Mountainous area
- ✓ Heavy winter conditions
- ✓ Farmers Water and electricity came at late 1980s

History

- ✓ Came from Iran at late 18th century
- ✓ Non-tribal
- ✓ Never exposed to state repression
- ✓ Relatives of Kızılkaya Village in Narman

Culture and Assimilation

- ✓ Assimilated
- ✓ Experienced significant cultural erosion
- ✓ Kurdish is forgotten
- ✓ Pious
- ✓ Not politicized

Cases & Examples

- ✓ Marriage with Turks, Demirci Village
- ✓ «The best Kurd is the dead one
- ✓ Not Playing Kurdish Songs in the weddings»
- ✓ Rally of Demirtaş
- ✓ «God Damn the Kurd»
- ✓ ddisappearance of poetical songs, dengbejs and cultural elements

3. Kızılkaya Village

Geography and Way of Life

- Located in Narman district
- 100 km from Erzurum city center
- Located at lowland
- Farmers
- Water and electricity came at late 1980s

History

- Came from Iran at late 19th century
- Non-tribal
- Never exposed to state repression
- Relatives of Sarıgöl Village in Pasinler

Culture and Assimilation

- Assimilated
- Experienced significant cultural erosion
- Kurdish is forgotten
- Not politicized

Cases & Examples

- Muslim Identity
- Degenerated Kurdish
- No difference with Turks

4. Nimetoğlu Village

Geography and Way of Life

- Located in Karayazı district
- 120 km from Erzurum city center
- Mountainous area
- Heavy winter conditions
- Farmers
- Water and electricity came at early 1990s

History

- Came from Ağrı at late 18th century
- Tied to Berazani Tribe
- Exposed to systematic state repression
- One of more than ten Berazani villages in Karayazı

Culture and Assimilation

- Not-Assimilated
- Not experienced significant cultural erosion
- Kurdish is spoken fluently
- Pious
- Politicized

Cases & Examples

- Youth is proud of Berazani tribe
- Rejection of Imam
- Grazing
- DP: Tractors came
- Agha's Girls
- 12 Villages
- Ban on Turkish at Wedding
- A Politicized Woman: Seyran

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