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**ARTS, STRUGGLE AND TRANSFORMATION: FROM FEMALE
MILITANTS TO KURDISH WOMEN**

SEVAL DAKMAN ARAÇ
112611020

Doç. Dr. FERDA KESKİN

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ART, STRUGGLE AND TRANSFORMATION: FROM FEMALE MILITANTS TO KURDISH WOMEN

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SEVAL DAKMAN ARAÇ

112611060

Tez Danışmanı : Doç. Dr. Öğr. Ferda Keskin

İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi..... Üniversitesi

Jüri Üyeleri Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Zeynep Talay Tümer

İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi..... Üniversitesi

Jüri Üyesi: Prof. Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ali Akay

Mimar Sinan Üniversitesi..... Üniversitesi

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FOREWORDS

I dedicate this thesis to all the brave-hearted and courageous Kurdish women who have never given up on their resistance against oppression in every area of their lives, first and foremost, to my beloved mother.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FORWORDS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	vi
ÖZET.....	viii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
METHOD.....	2

CHAPTER 1

PHANTOMS OF THE FUNERAL

1.1. Dead Body Produces Historical Knowledge.....	3
1.2. History of subaltern.....	3
1.3. Female Body Traces Gender History.....	6
1.4. Affective Force of Body.....	7
1.5. What is affect?.....	8
1.6. Sakine Cansız Assassination.....	11
1.7. The Similarities Death of Yoyes and Sakine Cansız.....	15
1.8. The Dead Bodies Politics.....	17
1.8.1. What is meaning of death in Kurdish society?	17
1.8.2. Dead is a Psychic Glue.....	20

CHAPTER 2

DEATH AS A MARTYR

2.1. Importance of Death and Funeral Rituals in Kurdish Context.....	25
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2.2. Cultural Heritage of Dead in Kurdish Society.....	26
2.3. Dead is an Evidence of Crime.....	27
2.4. Affects of Martyr	31
2.5. Changing Meanings of Death In Accordance with Neo Liberal Policies.....	38
2.5.1. Make Believe space.....	39
2.5.2. Phantasmic Notions are Changing.....	41
2.6. Peace Process and the Phantomic Martyrdom.....	43
2.7. A Unique Funeral on the Diyarbakir-Dersim Line.....	47

CHAPTER 3

THE FORM OF A NEW RESISTANCE: THE ART OF ZEHRA DOĞAN

3.1. Is The Epistemology of The Repressed Changing?.....	51
3.2. Arts as a Form of Protest.....	55
3.3. Zehra Doğan: Dirty Protest.....	57

CONCLUSION.....	61
------------------------	-----------

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	64
--------------------------	-----------

ABSTRACT

I wanted to evaluate the women's rights movements through the lives and struggles of two important Kurdish women of social worth who lived in the 21st century to answer the question of whether women could really exist in new battlegrounds apart from being objects of consideration and militarism.

My first example is how Sakine Cansız has managed to create a public space within the Kurdish women's rights movement throughout her life and whether she extended beyond masculine discourse after her death. Sakine Cansız has become an important public figure because she constructed the female memory of the Kurdish public movement. During her life, although she tried not to remain constrained within the masculine political discourse, she could not necessarily extend beyond it either. It was an important ethnographic example to examine and analyze her life as well as the symbolic values of her funeral. It was possible to read how the areas of female struggle and how a new Kurdish female figurine surfaced through Sakine Cansız's funeral. She was the messenger of the formation of a new Kurdish female model: a new type of Kurdish woman who did not exist only within the war apparatus or the political discourse and who did not behave sexless. This type of Kurdish woman represents all the women who are capable of using different tools and apparatus to fight hegemony to contribute a serious universal awareness as well as symbolic values to the public space. Just like Zehra Doğan who could carry out a feminist struggle with her male comrades, could underline her female identity and struggled as a Kurdish woman.

ÖZET

Kadın hareketlerinin 21. Yüzyılda dönüşümünü yaşıyan ve ölen iki önemli toplumsal Kürt kadın figürü üzerinden ele alıp, halk hareketlerinde kadınların bedel ve savaşıılık nesnesi olmaları dışında yeni mücadele alanlarında var olabiliyorlar mı sorusunu sormak istedim.

İlk örneğim Sakine Cansız'ın yaşamı boyunca Kürt kadın hareketi içerisinde nasıl bir kamusal alan oluşturduğı ve ölümünden sonra eril söylemlerin dışına çıkıp çıkmadığı sorunsalı. Sakine Cansız, Kürt halk hareketinin kadın hafızasını oluşturduğı için önemli bir kamusal figür haline gelmişti. Yaşamı içerisinde, eril politik söylem içerisinde, kısıtlı kalmayaya çalışsa da, bunun dışına tam olarak çıkmış da değildir. Yaşamı ve cenazesinin sembolik değerlerinin incelenmesi önemli bir etnografik örnektir. Kadınların mücadele alanlarının nasıl değiştiğı, yeni bir kürt kadın figürünün ortaya çıktığını Sakine Cansız cenazesi üzerinden okumak mümkündür. Yeni bir Kürt kadın modelinin oluştuğunun habercisiydi. Kendini salt savaş araçları ve ya politik söylem içerisinde var etmeyen, cinsiyetsiz gibi davranmayan yeni bir Kürt kadını. Bu Kürt kadını, hegemonya ile savaşmak için başka araçlar kullanabilen büyük bir evrensel farkındalık ve kamusal alanda bir sembol değer yaratabilen kadınlar. Kendi erkek yoldaşları ile feminist mücadele yürütebilen, kadın kimliğinin altını çizen, Kürt kadını olarak mücadele veren Zehra Doğan gibi.

INTRODUCTION

I intended on identifying and analyzing the evolution that the Kurdish Women's Rights movement that stemmed out of the general Kurdish movement by considering the issue of gender relations in my thesis work titled 'Art, Struggle and Transformation: From Female Militants to Kurdish Women'. The thesis has been constructed on the cases of two Kurdish women, Sakine Cansız and Zehra Doğan, under three main headings. The first part titled 'Phantom of the funerals' intends on explaining how we can comprehend the history of the oppressed nations and groups through funerals and deaths. In this section, I intended on carrying out a gender interrogation over the funeral of Sakine Cansız, in order to understand the meanings of martyrdom and the price of life within the Kurdish society by examining the cultural and symbolic values of funerals.

In the second part of my thesis, titled 'Death as Martyrs' I tried to analyze why female activists and politicians are transformed into genderless symbols by considering the history of the Kurdish movement. I looked for answers to the question of whether Kurdish women began to abandon their activist identities by referring to how one of the most common and still ongoing rituals has been demolished by the women who attended Sakine Cansız's funeral.

In the third part of my thesis, I intended on looking for answers regarding the question of whether Kurdish women can create new areas and methods of struggle and within the general framework of female Kurdish societal resistance apart from activism and politics over Zehra Doğan's art.

METHOD

The method I used in my thesis titled ‘Art, Struggle and Transformation: From Female Militants to Kurdish Women’ was the anthropological method of the ‘Affect’. In the first section of my analysis, I explained what ‘Affect’ is and why I used it to consider and use it as a tool to analyze the “unspoken” over actual events and incidents that took place in real life. The qualitative method of research has been used in my thesis to carry out event analyses based on descriptive analyses and anthropological methods.

CHAPTER 1

1. PHANTOM OF THE FUNERAL

“Without death there would be no history. History feeds on death. History begins in the grave” (Domanska, 2005)

1.1. Dead body produces historical knowledge

In Hegelian terminology, we can see “history as the slaughter –bench” and this reminds me of the reality that history has been written by the winners and therefore, what we know as traditional history is only the history of their glories, or simply the history of winners. It is getting easier to notice every passing day that all the mass slaughters have been done by the sovereigns who have power and control over the domains of life to allow people to live or die. Control of power provided legitimization to these individuals as well as their mechanisms and the politicization of approaches to history produced their official versions of the truth, which is why classical history has always been limited and instrumentalized by the nation states for centuries. Thus, we can state that the limitations of traditional history restrict different approaches to our communal past, making history only a tool that can be used to manipulate human history as well as the implications it bears for the future.

1.2. History of Subaltern

In other words, it is an undeniable and irrefutable fact that all history became institutionalized by the sovereigns and their interests as a natural outcome of this methodology. So, one question that comes to mind is how can we produce knowledge about the history of the others or the history of the subalterns? Surely, history of subalterns is not a simple story as it includes the stories of women gendered, raced, sexed and classed as well as holocausts, massacres, tribal clashes, guerilla wars, ideological wars, civil wars and many other realities that

are easily distinguishable among the mess of incidents of the past but are not so easy to breakdown. Many of these mentioned incidents failed to reach constructive conclusions and ended up with death and misery. So “*digging up the grave*” may be one of the only alternative ways of re-thinking history. The possibility of creating an alternative history and proposing a different way of thinking about it as well as providing different vocabulary to discuss it has been a recent matter of deep concern to social scientists and the question of whether it would be possible to define and readapt the instrumentalization of both materiality and the discourse remains unanswered. While historical knowledge has become institutionalized and politicized by nation-states and as well as an instrument for present and future politics, it is still a viable question to ask how the problems of historical knowledge can be solved solely on an epistemological level and how we can re-think of the past with only epistemological questions? Is it enough just to concentrate on the way we define and use historical terms and incidents epistemologically when we aspire to challenge conflicting realities?

How can death, as a notion of something (both material and subject) between the present and the past be re-formulated to be included in history? If a person dies, they become a mere tool in the grand pool of historical data, and the case with Sakine Cansız was no exception. History simply cannot be recounted without referring to dead bodies. The important question to be asked should be, how the notions of “death” do and the dead body provide effective, resilient and sound political and historical knowledge to be implemented into public. As Rorty says in one of his essays; provocative theories and ideas create new spaces, new contexts, and in the name of pursuing the pragmatic way of reasoning, provide instruments which bring about change; instruments whose efficiency is not measured by how adequate their description, explanation or representation of an object might be, but how effective they are in bringing about change.¹ Epistemological approach would not be sufficient alone to re-think of history, which was created by sovereigns or to explore history of non-westerners such as

¹ Quoted in, Domanska (2005: 41)

colonized communities, oppressed communities, or communities which were subjected to slaughters, holocausts, and massacres or which have been objects of study in institutionalized history. Eurocentric historical disciplines are not sufficient in re-thinking historical knowledge because capability of conducts as well as historical and scientific knowledge is not separated in western doctrines.

In the light of the Foucault theory; relations between power and knowledge can not be separated from each other. Foucault explains this issue with the ‘*bio-power*’, which according to this notion, is the domain of life over which power has taken control² and since epistemology is preceded by ideology, in the context of classical historical approach, salt epistemological methodology cannot be satisfied as the reconceptualization of historical knowledge for the present or the future. “*The epistemological imperialism of scientific discourse has blocked and protected the concept of the source from potential ontological, aesthetic and ethical investigation, thus considerably limiting the possibilities of its interpretation*”. (Domanska. 2005, 397).

Traditional concept of historical knowledge that refers to a ‘source’ (as in the beginning of something) cannot provide a fully sufficient metaphor to describe the past. Eva Domanska suggested that in order to understand temporal dimensions of existence, we should turn to *notion of the trace (of the past) as complementary and alternative to the idea of the (historical) source*. This means that materials which become important as historical knowledge should give us opportunity to re-produce knowledge of the past in the context of historical and cultural discourse as well as socio-political approach.

The aim of this discussion is to explore the relevance of Sakine Cansız’s ‘existence’ and ‘death’ in the Turkish society and the purge it represents form classical historical and political approaches of the Kurdish movement along with its ideals of producing value for its dead, or as it is better known in social science

² Quoted in, Mmembé (2003: 12)a

literature, the issue of martyrdom (*şehit*). The Affects discharged by the dead body of a prominent and professional female activist of the Kurdish movement such as Sakine Cansız evoke provoking reflections on core-gendered values of the Kurdish society.

In my thesis, I argue that with the assassination of Sakine Cansız, the affect that her corpse created has acquired both political and historical meanings in the context of cultural gender discourse. Sakine Cansız's dead body is both a type of physical material and an ontological standpoint for me. In the light of 'death bodies politics' approach, it can be stated that the dead body creates *the discourse of death*, which is rather historical in discourse, whereas in fact, when speaking of the dead body, we touch the very essence of historical discourse which arguably originates from the contemplation of the dead body. *Without the dead, there would be no history. History feeds on death. History begins in the grave (Domanska 2005, p 398-399)*. Thinking about the ontological source of history and the negotiations between ontological and epistemological questions may be helpful in finding new ways of reformulating the meaning of death as well as the different aspects of cultural gender discourse and politics. I would like to stress the fact that my departure point is not only intended to explore historical knowledge with traces of the past, referring to those elements with existential meanings (ontological) but also to demonstrate the 'dead bodies' politics with epistemological questions in mind.

1.3 Female Body Traces Gender History

I will also try to find out the true affect of her corpse in the context of culture politics and gender discourse within the Kurdish movement as well as the community building processes of Kurds. I argue about the importance of re-conceptualization of historical knowledge within its affective influence because of the dead's capability and role in bridging the past and the present in the context of its symbolic and material meanings. In what ways and how such death happened,

meaning through assassination, torture, rape, suicide et cetera, is important because the body can be used for tracing and tracking in historical time due to its materiality, which is capable of creating a connection between the socio-political discourse of today and that of the past. In brief, the function of the dead body would provide new or unique discussion for past and future cultural knowledge. History has power to create present, but not only for the sovereign but also for the subaltern as well as its relations with the internal domain. We might stress how death creates an affective binding force between sovereignty of nations and the oppressed classes as well as oppressed classes and their struggles against the sovereign.

How does a seismic shift in global politics in the form of neo-liberalism waves, such as the end of the Cold War, the rise of human rights, and humanitarian politics, affect the policy of death on a local scale? Is it also transnational discourses and not only Eurocentric policies that inform local vocabularies of mobilization as witnessed within the Kurdish movement? How does death mediate between historical knowledge of national communities and transnational policies? I will try to analyze Sakine Cansız's dead body in the light of these questions. To finalize my introduction to my logic, how does the death of Sakine Cansız resonate as a bridge between political and social transformation of the Kurdish narratives and politics?

1.4. Affective force of body

In order to understand of how Sakine Cansız's dead body created social fracture within both the political and social-cultural-gender discourse, we might introduce the meaning of the affective force of a dead body and its politicized situation. Particularly, scholars try to escape from prison-house of language using language as a means of escape and "fight" with epistemological instruments,

which is how scholars introduce alternative concepts by redefining the old ones³. In order to analyze the historical and socio-political functions of Sakine Cansız's death, I will use anthropology of affect as a methodology because affect is something that acts as a thinking tool and might be helpful for finding ghosts and artifacts of the funeral of Sakine Cansız. I prefer to use affect anthropology as a methodology in my research for Sakine Cansız death because "*Affect is a modality of knowledge*" where the emotions and feelings escapes from the real.

Linguistics cannot be sufficient alone for explaining the intensive force of death. Despite the fact that the Lacanian approach does not deny the notion of affect, it argues that "affect is not work" because for Lacan, subjectivity is a product of relational construction. He argues that the symbolic order structures the visual field of the imaginary, which means that it involves a linguistic dimension. If the signifier is the foundation of the symbolic, the signified and signification are parts of the imaginary order. Language has symbolic and imaginary values which are implied in the imaginary domain.

1.5. What is Affect

According to the Lacanian theory, there are three orders of unconsciousness; symbolic domain, imaginary domain and the real domain. Symbolic domain refers to all the rules which allow sentences to be composed in human language. Imaginary domain refers to all the functions and processes *that avoid the ordinary connotations of the word*, creating a much larger scope of reference than our everyday use of this word, dealing with images, the visual, spatiality, the body, feelings, affects, emotions, and even perception in significant ways. The real domain is the category "which escapes from the repression." However some recent scholars who work on the Lacanian theory add and argue that without affective force, history and hegemony cannot be conceptualized. For instance; Yannis Stavrakakis who utilizes the Lacanian approach argues that

³ Quoted in Domanska (2005: 47)

Lacanian notion of *the real*, unlike the symbolic and the imaginary, escapes the order of representation so both domination and the resistance in post-hegemonic domain take place through the real and this *real* of post-hegemonic power refers to *Spinoza's potentia: force, energy, potential. Post hegemonic politics revolve around this primordial neo-vitalist real: the motive force, the unfolding, and the becoming of the thing itself. (Lash, 2007:59, 75)*⁴. In this context, Stavrakakis argues that political and social issues are not separate from hegemony or post hegemony, when presenting discourse and affect, as the symbolic and real are mutually exclusive dimensions. It is necessary to explore, in every historical conjecture, the multiple different ways in which these notions interact with co-constituted subjects, objects as well as social and political orders, which is something that is related to the order of affect having a primary role in discursively constructing the social links as affect. Stavrakakis also wants to put emphasize on discourse and affect as mutual engagements, which occur constitutively in their construction as well as reproduction of social and political identification along with socio-political orders. Yannis Stavrakakis argues that the reproduction of political subjectivity in contemporary politics brought a new understanding of construction of hegemonic power and namely that the Foucauldian genealogy of discourse is not sufficient for explaining the potentiality and possibility of social links which are affective. Although Foucault describes how bodies are disciplined and controlled by hegemonic power, he could not explain how the human body resists to the hegemony and maybe Foucault could not live long enough to think further on about the resistance of human body. *What Foucault has not addressed are the points at which the technologies of normalization break down and the moment in which rational disciplines of the body fail to produce docile subjects, either because the subject refuses normalization, even at the cost of death. (Graziano 1992; Obeyesekere 1992; Suez-Orozco 1992; Taussing 1987)*⁵. Moreover the body can also become a subject of politics not only by hegemonic power but also by being an instrument

⁴ Quoted in Yannis Stavrakakis

⁵ Quoted in Aretxaga (2005) "*States of Terrors*": Ch 2: *Dirty Protest*

of resistance of its own, as exemplified in *dirty protesters*⁶ or the hunger strike of political prisoners. The linguistic prison, which is dominated by the hegemonic powers, cannot be descriptive of potentiality of body because the body is a bridge between the metaphysical and transcendental element. For this purpose, the Affect methodology in anthropology might be helpful for discovering the force of the dead by reason of the body possessing both physical features which refer to the trace of the past and psychic ones that refer to the symbolic.

According to Spinoza; affects are states of mind and the body related to it but are not exactly synonymous with feelings and emotions, of which he says there are two primary kinds: pleasure or joy and pain or sorrow. Spinoza claimed that the human and the environment are not separate from one other as they were co-created for the same reason by the same divine.

Therefore, corporeality and peripheral transfer mediate with one another permanently, while the potentiality of the body and nature negotiate in a never ending manner that is totally affective.

Affect is not rooted; it has an uncountable potential that is either negative or positive. Moreover Gilles Deleuze agreed with Spinoza to argue that affect is *rhyzomatic*, like another human body upon my own, which also has an affect on my own duration – as pleasure or pain or joy or sadness. Body has its own potentiality; which are the passages of potential of becoming, the rise and fall of continuous variation *in intensity or immanence*⁷ that passes from one state to another, or one another. Therefore, Brain Massumi mentioned that another specialty of affect is that “*affect, is a non-conscious experience of intensity; it is moment of unformed and instructed potential. It cannot be fully realized and articulated in language, because affect is always prior to or outside consciousness*” (Massumi, *Brain. The Autonomy of Affect*, p.39-40) Since the

⁶Begona Aretxaga (2005) “States of Terrors”: Dirty protest happened at Long Kesh prison in Ireland by IRA militants.

⁷ Quoted in Brain Massumi, *Parables*, 2002

human body and the environment are not separate from each other, history could not have happened without the *transmission of affect* between the body and the environment. Affect anthropology can give us an opportunity to reinvigorate reflections on the past and Sakine Cansız's dead body has thus become an affective tool for my thesis. As Agnew mentioned, "[in] affective history such historical representation that both takes affect its object and attempts to elicit affect like reenactment is less concerned with events, process or structures than with the individual's physical and psychological experience." (Agnew, 2002. P. 34). As Sara Ahmad points out, *affect is a sticky subject* that is linked to temporality, landscape, materials and emotions among others in every context, which resonates in our existence within both the psychical and psychological domains. (Ahmad, Sara) In the above given discussion, I tried to point out that Sakine Cansız's assassination and her body while she was alive as well as her final destination of death have all affective forces in the cultural-political discourse of the Kurdish society in Turkey. Could we assume that the meaning of a dead body for the Kurdish movement in conjunction with the affect of a dead body in the funeral rituals and mourning are both traces of the changing dynamics of the cultural-political gender discourse?

1.6. Sakine Cansız Assassination

Sakine Cansız was assassinated right in the heart of Paris, leading her dead body to become one of the most prominent symbols of the Kurdish Context. She became a heroine, a martyr, a goddess or the Kurdish Rosa Luxemburg, a super politic figurine, extending beyond the boundaries of gender. Following her death, the meaning of her existence as a woman and all her struggles for Kurdish women's rights were forgotten, meaning that her death changed the purpose of her existence. Therefore, the respective audience should be asked the question of whether a corpse has a sex or not. In other words, why does the female existence in life or the female manner of dying make a woman victim or sacred? When Begona Aretxaga wrote about ethnic-politic violence and the gender dilemma

taking place at dirty protests, she stated that “(...) *ethnic and politic violence predicated on the bodies of women cannot be considered as an addendum to violence performed on men’s bodies. They produce disparate meanings and effects that are crucial to both construction of sexual differences and ethnic identity*” (Aretxaga 2005, p.57). Aretxaga stressed the fact that political or ethnic violence performed on a body cannot escape from sexual difference while she also added that although men and women (IRA militants) have common shared values, goals and political consciousness during protests, their methods had different significances. In the light of Aretxaga’s argument, I will infer that besides this issue of political-ethnic violence, political dead bodies cannot escape from sexual differences either. A body that has become a subject of political violence through death thus brings the deep play of sexual differences into the center of social analysis. As I mentioned above, Sakine Cansız was both the first senior female organization member and one of the founding members of the illegal organization. Interestingly, this kind of a planned assassination has never been witnessed throughout the history of the Kurdish context despite the fact that illegal organization is an illegal organization that has been fighting against the Turkish army since 1980s. Another important point is that for the first time in the history of the Kurdish movement, a Kurdish woman was assassinated, regardless of the fact that Sakine Cansız’s killing was performed in Paris, at the very heart of the European civilization in Europe. I should also mention that, Sakine Cansız’s assassination took place in a certain part of Europe where many members of the Kurdish diaspora are living in exile. Europe is a place that offers more safety for diaspora Kurds than their hometown, however the fact that a brutal assassination of this kind took place in Paris implicitly shows that there is no secure place for the Kurds who are doing illegal activism even in Europe. The existing states of spread out fear and anxiety in both Europe and Kurdish region create affective bridges between the illegal organization and the Kurdish community as Kurdish people perceive that there is no another option for Kurdish society other than living in safety. In fact, the assassination of Sakine Cansız created an atmosphere of fear and insecurity for Kurds who are currently living in their region and led

the diaspora to get closer to illegal organization, making Kurdish movement more powerful in the process. Therefore, her life and death have both made sense in articulating subjectivity, gender and power in political hegemony. This unusual political assassination had a huge impact on Kurdish communities in both Europe and Turkey.

Sakine Cansız, as an activist woman and activist was never called a heroine in her life but was made a martyr after she was murdered in the Paris when she became immortal a heroic martyr, a mere goddess. After her death, the Kurdish movement acknowledged her status as a goddess and implicitly she became a sexless figure, free of gender obligations and associations, which is a kind of affiliation that refers to the cultural codes of female militancy.

Throughout the history of the Kurdish struggle, women have been seriously affected by these cultural moral codes and traditional resistance models, which penetrated into the nationalist struggle in the Kurdish society while the heroic ethic proposed a form of activism that poses problems in terms of female identification because the martyr hero, in symbolic order, is *heval*⁸. Activist women can exist only as a model of an active fighter or political activists called *heval*, denying their identities as women. The real existence of activist women performing actions that are culturally defined as masculine can make them the models of a martyr or a hero as a male *heval*. Women who are activists in the political spheres or activists in the Kurdish Context should be purged from their bodily functions like giving birth, having sex or falling in love because they are married with the case, or the *dava* and they also should be purged from their subjectivity, desire and pleasure such as falling in love, getting married, wearing a ring of love. As a matter of fact, these women are recognized as being politically or militarily legitimate at the cost of not being recognized as women which leads them to become 'exceptions'. Sakine Cansız, throughout her live, was one of the 'exceptions' in the Kurdish movement. In every step she took with her life, whether it is when she was a prisoner, an activist in the mountains or an activist in

⁸ Heval is a Kurdish word that means political friendship within the Kurdish movement

Europe, she always challenged the gender problem as well as the cultural dogmas of womanhood. Living her life on her own as attitudinized to all gender norms and cultural-political codes in Kurdish society, she paid the price of traditional women militancy. Her existence alone was a threat to the gender discourse and dynamics in the culture of Kurdish activism. She became the first ever female activist in Kurdish context that resists to feudal norms within the Kurdish society and then she loved a man, falling in love to one of her hevals (comrades)! She got married and wore a ring in the mountains with she was still an active fighter. Her existence was annoying and threatening to some of her comrades and even the leader of activist movement, in some cases, but she continued to live her womanhood to the fullest extent while she was still an activist. When she was murdered in the heart of Paris at, the semantic meaning of her existence shifted into the political and cultural spheres, when she began to be perceived as one of the sexless women, a mere martyr-hero, after which she became one of the goddesses in the history of Kurds. The Kurdish movement declared her to be an immortal hero of the Kurds but although she died at diaspora, struggled for Kurdish context under the authority of illegal organization and she was an ex activist and new politic activist, I wonder whether she really lived for the or more a Kurdish society and free Kurdish women. She cannot answer this question now, but her life and the affect of her dead body may provide an answer for it. What is Sakine's message with her existence and her death for the Kurdish society, especially for Kurdish women? What did the corpse tell us at her funeral? Within the Hegelian paradigm, human death is essentially voluntary, in other words, upon death; the human being truly *becomes a subject* that is separated from animal. (Mmembé, 2003: 14) The ambivalent status of Sakine Cansız's death as well as her almost unearthly nature of existence endows her with great power. Grave and death rituals are becoming important practices for legislating her existence within the context of history and culture. Sakine Cansız's corpse was buried with a unique ceremony and different rituals than casual ones, which means that much like her life, her death and funeral were also unique. The affect of her dead body provided a bridge between a woman and her corpse and vice-a-versa, which is a

situation that I will explain in the below provided chapters. The affect is a sort of connectivity between potentials, and according to Navaro Yashin, *the affect is relational* between man and nature from the past until the future. Affect is not rooted in any establishment because life can never end it or consume it. From a Deleuzian perspective, constants motives, desires, pleasures cannot be rooted every each moment has its own potential and this potential makes connection between body and nature that called *becoming*. The Potential is not always positive or negative; it depends on its position. That's why the Deleuzian approach is not except that all traumas, death, destruction have not only negative, it has also positive potential. In my opinion Sakine Cansız's funeral had rhyzotamic force of becoming *potential* for Kurdish women into the Kurdish movement and society. In the funeral of Sakine Cansız, the corpse tells something to the community, in other words the phantom of Sakine Cansız was walking around to the crowded and was trying to tell something to them. There were many ghosts of Kurdish women who come from the history of Kurdish movement and try to connect with present and future. Shattering screams resonated in the landscape/ funeral. Affect is a sort of psychic sticky between death women and live women; past and today can we say that Sakine Cansız corpse is a psychic glue between past of movement and future of movement? In the funeral of Sakine Cansız, the coffin carried by women, could we say that those women got a message across to ghosts of funeral?

1.7. The Similarities Death of Yoyes and Sakine Cansız

In brief my aim is to hunt ghosts who are *toasting around the death body* of Sakine Cansız in her funeral⁹. Sakine Cansız, who has been an old activist of the Kurdish movement and has remained as an activist for the organization until her death, has been legitimized by both the paramilitary organization members and the Kurdish political parties alike as an eternal martyr. She gained a high position in these movements as an oldest female activist, as someone who has

⁹ Quoted from Begona Aretxaga's '*States of Terros*', 2005

always supported the movement without a question and died for it, or simply as an eternal martyr. Her red hair which has been immensely criticized by the movement at one time has been transformed into a symbol of female martyrdom. Dead Sakine has become one of the most important symbols of the Politics. She has been ridden off her sexuality and has been placed as a brick into the wall of martyrdom. However, at this point, I think that the following issues have to be questioned. I believe that we have to ask ourselves the question which Begona Aretxaga, has repeatedly asked in regards to the female IRA and ETA militants experiences with death and imprisonment in her articles titled "*Dead of Yoyes*" and "*Dirty Protest*" for Sakine also. Aretxaga asks the primary question of whether political violence can emerge out of gender differences map of meaning and for a reply she states that it is not possible for political violence which has been produced by the body and has been applied on the body to emerge out of the gender differences map of meaning. Being one of the most predominantly accepted feminist theoreticians, Julia Kristeva states that a certain divergence has to be produced based on the differences of the female body over the notion of the "*abject*" (Kristeva, J). Although gender is an entity that has been consciously denied due to the fact that it creates differences in political militarism, the political, and combat and resistance practices embodied by women could not escape from the notion of womanhood that has been repressed onto the subconscious level. Although Begona and Kristeva state that subjectivity constructs gender and authority at times of intense political violence, I defend the notion that death also constructs gender and authority at times of intense political violence. Rosi Braidotti: women feel and experience this state of feeling because differences in experience as well as differences in sexuality exist. According to Braidotti, the body becomes affiliated with everything that we do and I agree with this statement, while feeling the urge to add that the body intertwines without physical reality at times of death also because even death cannot escape gender. Therefore, can we say that a politically motivated murder case of a woman cannot be stripped off its gender codes and be viewed solely as a case of martyrdom? In other words, the social deviation that has been created through and during Sakine

Cansız's existence simply cannot be dismissed upon her death. The proof, which is her body, prevents this.

When we consider Sakine Cansız's death in the light of all the given information and arguments, it will not be difficult to state that the activist movement has pushed Sakine's womanhood, self-acclaimed stance as a woman, her feminist struggles and her political activism to the outer realms of the society's consciousness. Such an act was made on the grounds of her being a differentiating element in the camp and therefore succeeded in creating a new reign of power and authority as well as a new area of gender. However, the body itself, dead or alive, has been plaguing the gender discourse as well as the ever-ignored womanhood discourse. In this study, I will try to show that a certain flow of energy, spawning out of Sakine's body during her funeral passed onto other women who are still alive and are still struggling to give them power and determination in the process.

1.8. The Dead Bodies Politics

1.8.1. What is meaning of death in Kurdish society?

A dead body which has political impotence, first, becomes an *evidence of crime* that demands justice from the guilty and then the testimonial point for the act of mourning, referring to the symbolic memory rhetoric in the society. The case of the absent bodies demonstrates both historical and socio-political discourse that provides the official view of the past as well as the perception of the present, providing a communal view of the past that puts the former to the test, focusing on the question of the benefits and costs of the remnants to human 'life'. Moreover discourse of death (the dead bodies politics), has become a key element of definition and belonging for the dependent communities that are fighting for their rights to live under better conditions. In other words, within the Kurdish struggle, the dead human bodies are the reason to fight for their aim in a cultural

sense and in many ways act as powerful affective and symbolic forces that shape power, identity and struggle.

The conflict between the Kurds and the government regarding the demands of the Kurds for living in their region according to universal human rights and standards of living amounts to an argument of life versus the right of death. In the Kurdish cultural and politic spheres, to live with honor is put up against death, as indeed, the body is not important if it cannot make a statement of unity and strength. The conflict, which has been ongoing for the last three decades, resulted in casualties, chaos, and dissolution for both sides, with most of the losses being incurred in the Eastern provinces of the country in the form of both combatants and civilians, living in their cities, villages, and/or urban areas. The given conflict and struggle in the region has turned death into a daily routine.

Conclusively speaking, death became one of the key elements of the Kurdish identity and the symbol of cultural as well as socio-political discourse for the Kurdish struggle. The name assigned to the dead was *bedel*¹⁰, meaning the price to be paid for their belief, which would later on become the official name of the dead within the Kurdish culture, while death became a type of value judgment for the society and its politics. Wedding the dead, living under an atmosphere of death, having a *şehit* became symbolic meanings for cultural values and ethic codes of Kurdish society. Politics of the dead is a significantly symbolic order for the re-creation of the freedom of the Kurdish community, according to Ozsoy who stated that *“this politics of over the dead as a sovereignty struggle that seeks to control and manage human bodies and territories at the borders of death; a fierce struggle fought not only in this world but also extends its metaphysical reach to creation and monitoring of fantastic liminal time-space between this world and the other in order to contain the power of the Kurdish dead”* (Ozsoy 2010: 29) Interestingly, the meaning of death has become both normalized in ordinary life and idealized for Kurdish Context and its hopes for future. Every individual dead body is a component of the political identity of Kurds and every single dead body became a price for their belief, ended up being called the martyrs of Kurdish movement. The condition of death is undeniable in order to re-formulate the political and historical

¹⁰paying the price for the Kurdish struggle against the Turkish state

knowledge for current policies. The politicizing of death (the condition(s) of martyrdom) is very significant to the constitution of cultural politics of the Kurdish struggle and it also conducts the dynamics of socio-political formation and the transformation of the cultural and historical spheres. The corpse is separated from its materiality, which refers to the traces of the past and becomes the symbolic meaning which refers to the memory and present day politics and future hope (*being*).¹¹ As stated above, the corpse is a bridge between the past and the present and in its purpose of tracing the past, the way he or she died, whether it be under torture, in a homicide, suicide, disappearance or assassination case, no longer bears any importance because the body has become meaningful as a martyr and the dead person has started to gain political impotence in present day.

Moreover the way of the killing would tell us how the dead body reflects on its past to transform into the present and future, while the trace of the body would also tell us about what these unjust conditions in this environment are. Within the context of the Kurdish movement, the body is politicized and it becomes an instrument while death itself turns into a political argument moving away from being an individual experience. Those dead bodies' politics are used as a political purpose as the objects of mourning for communities which demand equality and rights. As Louis-Vincent Thomas states "*the corpse is an effective instrument, if only one knows how to use it: it makes a great impression and perfectly fulfills all expectation*" (Thomas 1980:120).¹² That is what political movements do with the dead body and how it serves in the context of politics as an object of mourning or reflection of the past to the present because the corpse is both a witness and an evidence of the past that refers to the present and future. This way, the dead body becomes a subject for the subspace of conflict between the different interests of power and knowledge. In that case, identification of a corpse depends on one's political affiliations, while the description and acknowledgment of the corpse as a martyr, as sacred or as a sacrifice is related to

¹¹ *Beig-being* term barrowed from article of Eva Domanska: "Toward the Aarchaeontology of the Dead Body" (2005) and She studied for 'desaparecidos' in Argentina

¹²Quoted in Domanska(2005:409

one's political purpose. In other words, the dead body produces knowledge in ways of logical argumentation of the past regarding the present, in the name of struggle or justice. If it is a political death, it is considered as evidence and an object of mourning that needs to be included in the reflection of knowledge rather than 'being'. As the work of Eva Domanska suggests, introducing terms alternative to 'dead body', namely the 'trace-being' and the 'trace-Being', changes the repertoire of questions. (Domanska, Eva. 2005: 406)

Her reference point has been the reflection on the dead body and the various aspects of its existence. When she analyzed the case of the Argentinean 'desaparecidos' as material tools and instruments as well as their relationship between the Argentine state and the Plaza de Mayo mothers, she discovered that the dead body acted as an evidence of crime and as an object of mourning, as trace-being and as absent remains, which refer to the unrepresentable absolute past (trace-Being). Hisyar Ozsoy, who studied the Kurdish dead body politics,¹³ mentions that in order to understand the position of a politicized death, expressed and materialized in a dead body, one needs to refer to Freud's notion of the uncanny. As Ozsoy points out, "*the liminal position between life and death turns the corpse into an uncanny entity; "dead" not yet dead, not fully not properly, unless it goes through the symbolic process of initiation into the hereafter. Before the passage to afterlife, the corpse neither living nor dead, but undead; a being and non-being at one and the same time. Blurring the boundaries between human and non-human, life and death and nature and culture the corpse threatens the social and political orders constructed on those very fundamental binaries. It is destabilizing position of the corpse that instigates feelings of dead on horror as well as curiosity, veneration and fascination*". (Ozsoy 2010, p30).

1.8.2. Dead is a Psychic Glue

¹³ Hisyar Ozsoy (2010) PHD dissertation "Between gift and taboo: Death and the Negotiation Identity and Sovereignty in the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey

The dead body alone has its own metaphysical affective force that supplements the creation and *monitoring of fantastic liminal time and space* between this world and the other hereafter, in order to contain the power of the Kurdish dead. Politicized dead bodies re-constituted the cultural, political and historical knowledge in the Kurdish community. In the historical and cultural discourse of the Kurdish political movement, the argument is that there is no distinction between the corpse as a thing and the corpse as a person, because the meaning of life and death get blurred due to the hard conditions that the Kurdish Community lives under. As Achilles Mbembé states, in occasions where people live as the *living dead*, there would be no distinction between life or death, and in fact, death becomes more meaningful. Therefore, in the Kurdish tradition of struggle, death for the liberation against colonial powers is considered more sacred than life as a living dead. Death is psychic glue between the Kurdish community and the struggle for freedom. *Dead bodies are re-positioned in culturally specific ways as powerful, affective and symbolic forces that shape power, identity and struggle. (Verdery 1999: 32).* Paying the price of death for the liberation and honor of the life constitutes the main component of the Kurdish identity in cultural knowledge, and therefore the dead becomes an affective bond with the Kurdish context, making martyrdom a definition of self-sacrifice for their belief, which then is transformed into the sacred. *Death becomes the effective figure that enkindled feeling of militancy and viscerally embeds national pedagogy (Peteet 1991: 151).* People, who were killed for the Kurdish struggle and for the demands for Kurdish movement, provided the moral values for Kurdish politics. The waste economy of martyrdom (*şehit*) produces the language of legal politics, where the affective force of the real physical dead generates the symbolic meanings of Kurdish society's martyrs and the associated politics of the cultural and politic spheres. Sakine Cansız's corpse produced politic argumentation for the current day politics against the government. Within such political sphere and cultural spheres, the dead body of Sakine Cansız as a female martyr, as a sacred value, as a murdered activist and activist, will provide us with

more innovative and insightful information regarding the different aspects of the existence and functions of the dead body rather than the classical historical and political definitions. My concern in writing this thesis is not to give a clear answer to the question of why Sakine was killed, which seems to me as an impossible task, and not to pursue the socio-political and symbolic implication of her assassination either, for it is too early to assess these implications precisely.

What was the political gains or losses associated with the killing of Sakine Cansız? Why was someone else not chosen for assassination? How was her dead body perceived by different interests and power groups? From the beginning of her activism until her death, what was the meaning of her “existence” and “death” for both the political and cultural gender discourse?

To explore the affect of her death for the society and the politics of the Kurdish movement within the context of political and cultural gender discourse, the starting point would be understanding her “existence” and “death’ separately. What did Sakine Cansız’s dead body produce as knowledge for both the political and the cultural spheres?

The Plaza De Mayo mothers of Argentina, according to the Hisyar and Domanska presume that the use of the dead bodies and the economies of death such as the activists funerals within the Kurdish movement, is not only a strategy employed by the dominant side but also by those people who are struggling against the hegemonies in creating their own history, politics and collective memory. The examples provided by Leila Khalila about how the martyr commemorations as well as the produced images of heroism help transform the communal memory into political and social discourse are also in support of this argument. I agree with the part where it is discussed how death is a very effective instrument for the creation of collective remembrance within the political, social and cultural discourse within which it has been created, and also to bridge the individual and the collective, but I find this approach lacking essence and constituency.

Although all these assumptions are true, at the same time, they are also incomplete. What I find to be lacking and what I would like to criticize is the neglect the fact that martyrdom will not be able to escape from sexual differentiation in the cases where political violence, the notions of murder, torture, assault exist, and therefore assuming the problem of gender as non-existent will only leave these assumptions incomplete. For example, the Kurdish people are not a group of beings who have been stripped of gender codes or their feudal structure. Although the mentioned group began to transform itself along with the Kurdish movement, there was no significant transformation in its social structure, which leads me to think that considering this murder case without questioning the mature understanding of activism that has emerged out of the movement itself would be inadequate. Therefore, considering the assassination of Sakine Cansız through the lenses of martyrdom, death and national struggle such as the discussions in the articles of Hisyar, Domanska and Khalila, would leave the issue unhindered at certain points. This would lead one to completely ignore the deviation she experienced due to her feminist existence within the activist camp as well as her activist personality that she developed for the rest of her life. When we look at the murder of Sakine Cansız, which was a politically motivated case, and how the Kurdish movement encoded this death into collective memory, we see that we cannot overlook gender problem just by analyzing the produced discourse. When we look at the assassination, the funeral ceremony and the produced discourse, we see that a certain political discourse of a goddess who has given away her life for her struggle has been created. Does embracing the Kurdish struggle in this context go a single step further away from engraving the incident into the communal mindset as a simple murder case that cannot go further than condemning the ruthlessness of the state? In Sakine Cansız's life, we see how the gender problem reveals itself within Kurdish Context as exemplified through Cansız's uncompromising fight for her womanhood and how she confronted the authorities through marriage, which was opposed by the organizational status quo, through her insistence to wear her wedding ring and to dye her hair red. In other words, Sakine did everything at her disposal to live as a unique woman who

produced her dead body to become a physical trace of the exploitations of history and its discrimination of women's rights. In brief, the dead body of Sakine Cansız has both tangible and intangible political and cultural meanings in the context of gender mainstreaming within the Kurdish community.

CHAPTER 2

DEATH AS A MARTYR

2.1. Importance of Death and Funeral Rituals in Kurdish Context

In this part of my discussion, I will start with chronology, namely the history of the dead and funeral rituals in Mesopotamia and their changing dynamics with an emphasis on political evaluation. My argument will be constructed upon the question of, how, in Kurdish culture, death rituals are related to political affiliations of the Kurdish context.

Mesopotamia has served as crossroads for diverse cultures, religions and languages throughout the ages and historically speaking, Kurdish society is the birthplace of a multitude of different social, cultural and religious traditions related to death and the dead. Before the advent of nationalism in the West and its faulty introduction into the Orient, there existed numerous contradictory religious and cultural groups who lived in the region together. Muslim and non-Muslim groups resided in the same lands and each group had its' own religious and rituals practices concerning human death. Kurdish communities who are dominantly Muslim were familiar to other religious aspects and their rituals for dead in their history, such as Chaldeans, Assyrians, and the Alevis. After the Turkish Republic was established in 1923, due to the organization's strict secular principles, the state took control of the Islamic rituals for both the Kurds and Turks living in the country and therefore, the Turkish nation building process has led to the almost total extinction of non-Muslim groups. However, such enforcement could not deplete the multiplicity of cultural constructions of death, at once because while the state necessitated the nationalist-secular Turkish identity upon its citizens by ignored all the other ethnic identities; it also displaced several different religious groups in the process.

2.2. Cultural Heritage of Dead in Kurdish Society

East side of Turkey is a region of the world that is already predominantly inhabited by Kurds, who are themselves internally, differentiated through cultural, linguistic and religious lines. Moreover, the Muslim population in the country is divided as Alevi Kurds and Sunni Kurds who are distinctively different from Jewish Kurds, the Yezidis and the Syrian Kurds. In fact, the Alevis and Sunni Muslims have both originated from Kurdish roots as their belief is separated from Islam in numerous ways. The Alevi faith derives from a religious group within the Shia sect of Islam, which combined its original teachings with Sufi elements. The Alevi religion therefore technically derived from Islam but went onto form also an ethnic identity that manifests itself in special cultural and traditional practices of death and re-birth rituals, along with unique traditions of poetry, music and political discourse. The mentioned death rituals are observably different than those in the Sunni-Muslim tradition, which is the reason why a Cem Evi, the Alevi's place of worship, is not similar to a mosque in anyway as it rests upon different transcendently and spiritual fundamentals and philosophies. The main character of this story, Sakine Cansız, was one of the Alevi- Kurdish women and therefore I will be mentioning the different aspects of being an Alevi in a Kurdish community with its own unique death ritual processes. The multiplicity of religions and related communities are very important point in understanding the historical and geographic positions of the rituals for the dead, especially in a political environment where the nationalist Republican Turkey took control of religious rituals in the Kurdish society region. Religion became one of the key elements of resistance against the Turkish state as a result of such oppression and altered the non-Muslim community's religious identities, namely the Christians, Chaldeans, Armenians and Assyrians, who were ignored by the state. Interestingly, the Turks and Kurds have in fact common ancestry as Sunni-Muslims, while the Kurds are not respected by the state because of their ethnic identity. The Kurdish identity was intended to be dissolved into the Turkish

identity by state policies, leading the first version of Kurdish nationalism to emerge under the control of religious leaders.

Despite the fact that the religious leaders in the region rioted to demand the recognition of Kurdish nationalism, the Sheik Said (Sunni-Muslim¹⁴) and Seyit Rıza (Alevi's¹⁵ leader) revolts were officially labeled as religious uprising against the Turkish state. Seyit Rıza and Sheik Said along with their supporters both were imprisoned and even their dead bodies were kept hidden from their families and their followers.

2.3. Dead is an Evidence of Crime

¹⁴ There are four Sunni sects in Islam: Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki, and Hanbali. The Hanafi sect is the largest of the four, and its followers comprise 45% of the entire Islamic world. It takes its name from its founder, Ebu Hanife (Numan bin Sabit) (699-767), and is widespread in Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, India, and Pakistan. Sunni Islam itself takes its name from its identification with the importance of the Sunna (the examples from the hadiths). There are numerous small-scale religious differences, as well as some large differences between Sunni Islam and the other sects. For instance, Sunni Islam reveres Ali but does not hold him up as the only true continuation of the tradition of Muhammad, and has no emphasis on his legacy of bringing a divine light from the Prophet (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 2006: 31).

¹⁵ The Alevi faith can be primarily understood as a syncretistic heterodox identity, along with Islam, Zoroastrianism (Iranian), Shamanism, Monotheism, Christianity, among other religious forms of faith. It has numerous more elements of the pre-Islamic Turkish and Iranian religions than Sunni Islam. For example, prayer (namaz), the fasting during Ramadan, the tithing (zakat), and the hajj are alien practices in most Alevi communities. Instead, they have their own religious ceremonies where (Cem), being officiated by the holy men (dedes) belongs to a hereditary priestly caste. As among other schismatic Shi'i groups, 'Ali and the Safavid Shah Isma'il are deified, or at least idolized. Instead of adhering to the Shari'a, the Alevis profess obedience to a set of simple moral norms; they claim to live according to the (batini) meaning of religion rather than its external (zahiri) demands. There is a noticeable conflict among the Alevi groups that it is "represented" differently based on the ideological associations. The first group focuses on the religious aspects of the Alevi faith, defining it as an Islamic sect and a natural part of Islam. This group uses the term "Alevi Islam," and most of them try to present the Alevi faith as true Islam, or the Turkish Islam. The second group directs Alevis to abandon their religious identity and emphasizes the teachings of sources other than Islam, Iranian of Turkish basis Sahin http://www.alevihaber.org/v2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=263&Itemid=39

In the Kurdish society, religious rituals are quite important for the unity and solidarity of the community. To respect the dead and to ritualize such respect is crucial for social segmentation. For instance, in the Kurdish funeral ritual, the corpse is first washed, then shrouded and given a proper burial according to the conventional Islamic rules as the final obligation of the community towards the dead. *“To leave the dead on the ground”* is a very important ritual for both the Islamic tradition and the political resistance of the Kurdish community. Funeral rituals are also important and people are expected to forgive the dead either before or after their death while the community is also expected to forgive the deceased during the funeral, pardoning the misdeeds of the dead during the burial ceremony. People participate in such rituals to perform the last funeral prayer for the dead person before the dead body is buried by the community.

After the burial process, the family members accept condolences for at least three days, and usually in each separate case of death, numerous people pay visits to the house of the dead. In Islamic rituals, family members do not mourn alone, as solidarity is quite an important element among the Kurdish community in both political and religious aspects. Cemeteries, the home of the dead, are sacred places too where people are asked to refrain from talking aloud, singing, whistling or having fun in any way in such location because anything that may disturb the resting dead is regarded as shameful. Formal mourning goes on for forty days while people regularly visit cemeteries, especially during religious holidays, to read verses from the Qoran and pray for the salvation of the souls of their dead.

That is to say, the corpse is an irrevocable element of mourning and therefore the absence of the body provides cultural and psycho-social deprivations for the society. For instance, even today, nobody knows where the Kurdish heroic figures and figurines are buried, while the final resting place of Sheik Said's corpse is also not known by the Kurdish society, which makes commemoration impossible near his tomb or grave. Seyit Rıza who was religious leader of Alevi's also experiences the same finale. Keeping dead bodies of Kurdish leaders a secret

from their families and their society is a disavowal for the existence of Kurds as a true and unique community.

Religious leaders became iconic images of the collective memory in Kurdish society's history while the collective rebellion and martyrdom memories have shaped in accordance with the chronology of the dead. The Kurdish nationalist waves came to being with the help and guidance of religious leaders, after they were given life sentences in the Independence Courts of the Turkish Republic and were imprisoned. Their bodies were hidden from the public, tombs were deemed forbidden by the Turkish state officially, following which the bodies of Sheik Said and Seyit Rıza disappeared unexpectedly and even today nobody knows where they are. "To leave the dead on the ground" is a big shame for the Kurdish society in both the religious and cultural spheres, while due to political reasons, the Kurds are not granted permissions for proper burial in Turkey. Implicitly, due to the denial of the existence of the existence of a Kurdish population and the restrictions imposed on Kurdish funeral ritual rites, such as not allowing the proper burial process to take place or to be able to hide the dead bodies of Kurdish citizens who struggled for their political affiliation, the politics of dead bodies have long become an issue of dual importance as well as a battleground for ideas and aspirations. In brief, the dead body becomes a symbol of resistance for the Kurdish population, while not leaving the dead on the ground is part of an honor code for the Kurdish community in both physical and metaphorical realms. The history of the disappeared dead bodies that fought for Kurdish nationalism in the forms of the Kurdish identity, the Kurdish history and the collective memory of present, shows that the bodily integrity of the dead is always protected. In other words, *dead is an evidence of a crime*, meaning that the crime is denial and annihilation of the existence of the Kurdish identity and this crime is simply not forgettable for the society, leading the corpse to become a symbolic image of "existence" while the rituals of the dead become a sub-space for the remembrance of such crime. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the Kurds, the Alevis, the Sunni-Muslims and the Zazaki who live in

the southeastern part of Turkey have been systematically and institutionally forced to alter their identities by the authorities. In contrast, since Kurds are stateless nation, or even an assimilated nation, they have no real institutional powers against all the odds of institutional handicaps. Particular events which involve the disappearance of dead bodies which are considered as the honor of martyrdom are remembered as the shared basis of being Kurdish. Therefore “*history –telling*¹⁶ arises in various contexts, including memorial ceremonies, political gatherings, and through the intergenerational and public enactment of narratives about the past.

Leila Khalila states that “*particular events are remembered as the shared basis of people hood, the construction and reconstruction of these events, the shifting mood of commemorative narratives, and ruptures in commemorative practices surrounding these events all point to a far less stable notion of historical or national memory and consequently national sentiment than some might think and also national narratives themselves so influential in shaping political strategies and aims are often hotly contested and their reproduction often requires institutions whose power and resources affect what sorts of discursive modes are chosen and what types of narratives are promulgated, and which audiences are engaged.*” (Khalila 2007:3) Due to the fact that there are no formal institutions in Kurdish society, all the stories which include romance, political and social events, wars, massacres, martyrdoms are passed down through the intergenerational transmission of memory, namely by the stories told to children and grandchildren by the elders with un-metered folk songs, dengbej¹⁷ stories, ağıt¹⁸, narratives and all the other oral history sources. Oral history as a legitimate source of historical recounting provides graphic data that engages with the national impetus of the Kurdish community. Within the context of collective

¹⁶ history telling is a concept of Allesandro Porteli’s book which called Battle of Vale Gulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue (1997:6)

¹⁷ Dengbej is a person who travelers in Kurdish society regions, and tell the old historical, political events and romance to society without money. it is a kind of history teller.

¹⁸ ağıt means that requiem

memory of historical resistance in Kurdish communities, funeral rituals and taking dead bodies back for burial are explicitly utilized to legitimize the existence of a new Kurdish identity. Intergenerational transmission of the dead's memory with the oral history originates a different understanding of the dead's rituals. The dead's rituals have been changing in accordance with the socialist/leftist formation of the activist movement during the 1980s. However, during such formation, the dead's rituals have shifted from the religious domain towards the political, while the notion of martyrdom became a significantly important symbol for resistance. The threat posed by the activist movement to the political system and the territorial integrity of Turkey has been recognized as the most serious force of dissolution by the Republic since its establishment in 1923. (Ozdog 2003: preface)¹⁹ The activist movement is unlike most Kurdish political parties, which adopted a conservative outlook and agenda to organize tribal or religious leaders and structures.

2.4. Affects of Martyr

The activist movement on the other hand is one of the most important secular and recusant political movements in Southeastern Turkey and even in the Middle East. Following its developmental stage during the 1970s and its stage of political and armament preparation, the movement initiated a prolonged guerilla war in 1984. Between the 1990s and 2000s, the paramilitary forces of the activist movement were active, while the political process was still on-going. In fact, the activist movement uses violence to achieve their goals and therefore it would be wrong to recognize it as a militarist organization as it is a activist political organization. Without any doubt, the activist movement has its own political agenda and therefore utilizes it its initial obligation to use violence for creating political space for Kurdish politics in Turkey. Activist movement is an organization which originated in the leftist movement in Turkey, representing itself as an anti-colonial and Marxist-Leninist guerilla movement acting against

¹⁹ Quoted in Akaya, A.H & Jondergen J (2011)

colonial powers in the Middle East and therefore not only against the Turkish state during the 1970s and 1980s . Although the illegal organization uses violence to achieve its goals, it would be wrong to state that it is a militarist organization because using violence to reach its objectives is a political strategy and therefore the group should be considered as an activist organization. (Barkey and Fuller 1998: 26)²⁰ Moreover, under the leadership, the activists improved its illegal agenda while still struggling with the Turkish state and moving into the 1990s, the activist movement stepped outside the Marxist-Leninist political sphere leading by the leadership of illegal organization to get arrested in Kenya in 1999, which began a new negotiation process between the activist movement and the Turkish army. While the reconciliation process was going on, both the conflict and the ceasefire between the illegal organization activists and the Turkish army continued as the organization's leader tried to develop his own vision of socialism related to the regional, cultural characteristic break-away from the Marxist-Leninist principles. His intention was to replace the previous Pan-Kurdish aspirations with a new political agenda and commit to the constitution of Kurdish rights under the principle of radical democracy and democratic con-federalism. Therefore, at this point in history, territorial strategies and the ideal of a liberated land seems to have been replaced by an institutional strategy which aimed at the development of a civil society reacting to Kurdish context in a "bottom up" fashion. (Akaya, A.H & Jondergen J 2011: 124, preface).

As Jean Baudrillard mentions, the symbolic exchange is a form of exchange that maintains and organizes social relations and hierarchies, however, that difference to other forms of exchange is that the value of an exchanged object does not value the act of exchanging it. What he means is that life and death are not separate from one another, but are rather coextensive forms of presence. In other words, in regular, ritual festivities, the living "animate" the deceased and make them a part of their present so that both the living and the dead inhabit the same space and according to Baudrillard, capitalism has annulled death, and thus has annulled all alternatives to itself as well as all opposites to itself. We should

²⁰ ²⁰ Quoted in Akaya, A.H & Jondergen J (2011)

say that while activist movement began its organizational existence relying on Socialist-Marxist principles, while also identifying itself as an “armed force against all capitalist, imperialist and colonial power,” its socialist background that fought against poverty, assimilation, colonialism, the notion of life and death were all reanimated by the movement. As Baudrillard emphasizes, the colonial society has annulled its other by destroying all the alternatives and making death not a componential part of life but its direct opposite. The symbolic meaning of death therefore rapidly changed and began to take a stand against life without an identity.

After the formation of the activist movement, the development of national martyrdom politics in the last three decades shows how death works within these cultural conventions and how it is also radically transformed through time. Martyrs’ funerals have also functioned as pedagogic tools, becoming widespread as a unified nationalist narrative. The activists’ deaths and the people who were killed due to their political or ethnic identities also became political martyrs of the Kurdish movement during the organization’s career. Ozsoy states that “the dead and the alive are between fires” and when death occurs normally, “the community is free from its obligations towards the dead upon the burial.” In political discourse and practice, “the burial ceremony is not the end” but rather “*a new beginning of a new set of obligations*” which can be defined through “a secular dualism of body and spirit” where the responsibilities for the body “end by funeral” and the “obligations towards the spirit begin.” According to Ozsoy, the dualism between perceived spiritual and bodily notions can be seen as “a metaphorical substitute for the political ideas for which he/she had died for” whereas a purely secular notion of metaphysics “equates human spirit with political reason and consciousness.” The traditional view on the subject matter dictates that this type of dualism refers to “the immortal life force that separates from the body upon physical death”.

Without any doubt, I should also mention that the dead and the alive are indeed between fires. In the case of the normal dead, the community is free from its obligations towards the dead upon the burial. During the normal dead's mourning process, all the rituals can be completed within the society in contrast to the political dead when the process of mourning does not come to the end and the grief process continues until victory. In politics, the national martyrdom concept or the burial ceremony are not considered to be ends, but rather beginnings of a new set of obligations defined through a secular dualism of the body and spirit: while the obligations towards the dead body end by the funeral, obligations towards the spirit begin. As Ozsoy clarifies, the concept of dualism between the perceived spiritual and bodily notion refers to not “ (...)the immortal life force that separates from the body upon physical death, but a metaphorical substitute for the political ideals for which he/she had died for, a secular metaphysics that tends to equate human spirit with political reason and consciousness.” (Ozsoy 2010: 65)

Martyrs, whether they are guerillas, urban guerillas, intellectuals, or peasants, who have died because of their political identity or struggle for the Kurds, are considered as motivated activists of the Kurdish struggle. The organization developed a discourse regarding the issue of martyrdom, claiming that martyrs are a “bridge between the dead and the ideal life.” However, Ozsoy implies that through the “the substitution of the spirit of the dead with their political ideals”, the Kurdish movement has made it an operative for itself to “be the link between the martyr's ideals and the living community so as to redeem their spirit in life as a source of struggle”. The movement's main intention behind such an action is to “change the mode of exchange for the dead within the framework of communal mourning” so that it can articulate a “life force repositioned in the promotion of struggle”. The illegal organization implicitly states that “the movement's working as a bridge between the martyrs and the living” to make it possible for them to achieve certain goals for Kurdish society such as the eradication of the fear of death, changing the meaning of physical

death, the creation of life in the death for sacred ideals and the creation of a sense of more bearable death as well as establishing the links between such a death and life. In the light of this argument, I will go onto discuss that the best way to fulfill the obligations towards the martyrs is not to weep for or commemorate them but rather remain faithful to their political beliefs while maintaining respect for their struggle and reorganizing personal and communal life in accordance. Martyrs, whether it be guerillas, urban guerillas, intellectuals or peasants, who have died because of their political identity for the Kurdish movement are motivational actors of struggle. Kurdish movement defines martyrdom as a bridge between the dead and the ideal life. The substitution of the spirit of the dead with their political ideals is clearly an operative in the Kurdish movement's declaration of itself to be the link between the martyr's ideals and the living community, in order to redeem their spirit in life as a source of struggle. To change in the mode of exchange with the dead from the framework of communal mourning towards its political articulation into a life force repositioned in the promotion of struggle. According to organization; the movement's working as a bridge between the martyrs and the living led to several achievements in Kurdish context; including the eradication of the fear of death, changing the meaning of physical death, the creation of life in the death for sacred ideals, creation of a sense of more bearable death and establishing the links between such a death and life. Within such a framework, the best way to fulfill the obligations towards the martyrs is not to weep for or commemorate them but to be faithful to their political ideals, maintain their struggle and reorganize personal and communal life accordingly.

It is quite apparent that martyrdom had gained a significant role in the Kurdish struggle whereas on the downside of the issue we see that "death changes and takes control over the spheres of the movement". We see that the dead re-shapes to "re-create and promote the national forms of life". Although within the overall scheme of events, "the movement has bridged between the martyrs and the living", the real power that emerged out of the given issue was "the sacred power of the martyrs that mediated the forms of the alive into the national symbolic".

We see that death “in both epistemological and ontological ways” has become “a form of struggle”. We see that the separation between these two perceptions existed “not [as] part of each other ... to live as a living death or to die as a martyr for the freedom”. Symbolically speaking, the Kurdish movement fathoms and appreciates the gift of martyrdom as “either to die like the martyrs” or “to fight until victory”. This “mythology of martyrdom” and “the accompanying structures of feeling” form a “highly fatalistic” and “activist form of Kurdish political agency” through the mentioned fundamentally supported sentiments in the Kurdish society. For Kurdish nationalism on the other hand, these sentiments are replaced with those of “protecting the region and national community against an oppressive regime”. Islam supports these sentiments as in Islamic theology it is believed that “upon the burial of the body, the spirit goes to Heaven without any judgment as all sins are forgiven in the act of martyrdom”. Although the Kurdish nationalist rhetoric does not mention the issue of Heaven too much, “the pious Kurdish community and most martyr families” believe that the “martyred go to Heaven” as described in Islamic terms whereas the in the “secular nationalist discourse”, it is believed that “the martyr is already buried in the sacred soil of Heaven; the Homeland”.

Although both forms of martyrdom are sacred and have immense effects on the living, shaping their imaginations and life practices, the spirit of the religious martyr starts an eternal life in the hereafter, while the spirit of the national martyr denies the passage and decisively stays here in this world. In Kurdish society, symbolically speaking, every death is immediately exchanged into value and immortal life force. The Kurdish bodies that the state wastes away are recycled as raw materials, for the dreams of a better world, and are accumulated into the moral/political surplus deposited into the immortal power of the nation.

Due to this economy of resurrection power, there exists a privilege to continue life after death, to create life out of death, reverse death into life, namely the immortal life, and transform sorrow into happiness, destruction into hope and ends into

beginnings. At the center of the Kurdish symbolism of martyrdom is the notion of temporality that the dead and the living can co-inhabit a divine temporality that puts an end to the linearity of the martyr's spirit. Such spirit takes countless public and political forms and joins the collective national spirit, which define and supplement each other to be transcended into the sacred domain of immortality. Recognition of martyrdom is a re-conceptualization of the Kurdish identity by the Kurdish context. Above I mapped through the historical and cultural evaluation of political death in the Kurdish society. As I prior mentioned, the political dead were quite respected and have been acknowledged into the society since the times when the Turkish state was first established. All throughout the Republic's history, the activist movement as an illegal organization structure also underlined the fact that martyrdom should be recognized as a bridge between life and death as well as the new creation of life through the death for the sake of sacred ideals as well as the established idealization of death for Kurds.

We can easily see how both of the mentioned forms of martyrdom are considered and officiated as "sacred" and how effectual they have become on the respective population, shaping their imaginations and life practices to lead the spirit of the martyr into its journey to the eternal life and thereafter. Meanwhile, such practices also establish the place and sanctity of the "spirit of the martyr" in this world, not allowing it to leave it without recognition. Symbolically speaking, the Kurdish traditions dictate that every death is immediately exchanged into value and immortal life force, while also dictating that the immortal power of the nation is built and held together through the accumulation of "moral/political surplus", which is fueled by the raw materials that we know as the Kurdish dead bodies. This "economy of resurrection power", which relies on the power to continue life after death, makes it possible for those in charge to create life out of death, reversing death into life as well as reversing sorrow into happiness, destruction into hope and ends into beginnings. We see that the fundamental sentiment of Kurdish martyrdom relies on the notion of temporality, which only the dead and the living can inhabit while the linearity of the martyr's spirit is

haunted by a divine temporality. Such temporality takes countless public and political forms and joins “*the collective national spirit*” that is defined and fortified by one other to be transcended into the sacred domain of immortality. The activist movement assumes that the “recognition of martyrdom” is established through the “re-conceptualization of Kurdish identity”, while I have provided above my interpretation of the “historical and cultural evaluation of political death in the Kurdish society”. As mentioned above, ever since the establishment of the Turkish Republic, “the political dead [have been] quite respected and have been acknowledged into the society” while the Kurdish movement also emphasized the importance of martyrdom as a “bridge between life and death.” The new creation of life through the death for sacred ideals helped establish the idealization of death for the Kurds”.

2.5. Changing Meanings of Death In Accordance with Neo Liberal Policies

The activist movement leader arrested in the year 1999 created turmoil within the activist movement camp as the issue of death penalty became a pressing issue. During these years, both in Turkey and in parts of Europe where Kurds lived, several Kurdish people protested illegal organization’s leader’s arrest by burning themselves in public because such a sacrifice is also considered to be a type of martyrdom.

The peace and reconciliation talks began between illegal organization’s leader and the AKP government in 2004 when illegal organization’s leader legitimized the process as being between the activist movement and AKP only. This process gave birth to a brand new political agenda for the activist movement, which was at large put together by the imprisoned illegal organization’s leader and concentrated on the protection of Kurdish rights within the context of radical democracy and democratic confederation. In this plan, as a result of such new regulations, a new institutional strategy was adopted that replaced territorial

strategies and ideas of a liberated land with the notion of a civil society re-enacting a legitimate Kurdish society. The plan received mixed feedback, with some backfiring and setbacks from both the Kurdish people and the Turkish society and a problematic need to enlighten them about the peace and negotiation process between the AKP government and the activist movement. As a result of such political maneuvers, the issues of political martyrdom and the recognition of martyrdom were subjected to axial change and began constituting psychic *glue* between the Kurdish movement and the Kurdish people. As mentioned above, although the state spent decades trying to oppress the notion of political death, it has been reanimated into public life and the social segmentation of social hierarchy through numerous practices. As a result, within the confinement of Kurdish society, the perception of political death became more secular, national, symbolic and fragmental to guide the construction of cultural, social and political Kurdish policy in this direction. According to Navaro-Yashin, “*arguably, all spaces when aligned with state practices have make-believe qualities.*” (Navaro Yashin 2012: 6). Navaro-Yashin uses this statement specifically for the post-war Northern Cyprus, whereas I use it to construct a Kurdish Context argument to infer that state suppression on such practices also have make-believe qualities. This argument that is mostly used for Northern Cyprus is also helpful for understanding the fundamentals of the issue of Kurdish society as we can observe with ease how state practices also carry similar make-believe properties. What is connected to this reality is that the activists are currently at war with one another, simply in the name of creating martyrs in the process and therefore national legends out of them.

2.5.1. Make Believe space

In my opinion the same goes for the Kurdish society, because when all spaces aligned with state suppression that produces make-believe qualities and the woman adds space and time in hand, phantoms or ghosts appear or linger in a slice of territory in the form of “*nonhuman objects.*” Namely in Kurdish region,

such phantoms or ghosts are martyrs and martyrdom creates new social segmentation, new economies and cultural domains. At this point, one question comes to my mind, which is ‘Who creates the bridge between martyrdom and struggle? While martyrdoms were previously considered to be bridges between life and death after illegal organization’s leader got arrested, the political initiative became more important than militancy. Perception of guerilla martyrdom was also changed with the arrival of neo-liberal political waves. The Kurdish movement structured some make-believe spaces and therefore legitimized the phantoms of martyrdom as socially responsible entities for keeping peace in the region. The meaning of administration, the context of inadequate recognition or illegality also interestingly creates phantasmic perception of the Kurdish Context.

In other words, a phantasm of a new state headed by the activists that would provide protection to the Kurdish society from attacks by the State policies and Turkish Armed Forces as well as shelter, respectable life standards, community and conviviality was supposed to be more preferable over the phantoms that lived in the territory of Kurds. Such spirits are still embedded into the material domain, in spaces, houses, furniture, streets as well as in tangible and intangible discourse such as songs, poets and local unwritten laws and policies.

This logic applies to the Kurdish society at large also, as the mentioned state oppression which creates the make-believe properties through the alignment of social spaces and social obligations as well as the martyrs or phantoms constitute the “nonhuman object” aspect of the given phenomenon in Kurdish society, appearing to people in their intangible and tangible dreaming phases. The issue of martyrdom is a very helpful one as it goes onto creating new social segmentation, economies and cultural domains, which bring the activist movement camp and the Turkish state to an ultimate struggle to possess the capability to exist as links between these martyrs and the political struggle. Although in the past when illegal organization’s leader was arrested, martyrdom created the mentioned link, after his arrest, political initiative became more important and relevant than the actual act of militancy. Guerilla martyrdom was

replaced by neo-liberal political rhetoric and the Kurdish movement capitalized on the issue by structuring certain make-believe subspaces and phantoms of the martyrs to raise awareness to keep the peace in the region. The organization further on utilizes this issue of phantasm perception of martyrdom in its administration and lack of recognition or illegality in its struggle.

In the Kurdish region, the phantasmatic has come into discursive and political conflict with the phantoms as Kurds, depending on their political affiliation of either supporting ideologies that support activists for the Kurds and the recognition of the inadequacy of being traitors. In brief, in line with the political discourse of Kurdish movement, death is considered to be sacred until the day of victory and also death it is also used as a tangible and intangible affective instrument in order to influence the grassroots of the Kurdish movement and lead them to make a stand against the state. To sum it up, death was utilized as psychological glue between the state and the Kurdish movement but it has changed scope and function during the peace process that was initiated between the state and illegal activist organization.

2.5.2. Phantasmic Notions are Changing

The institution of martyrdom is run by Kurdish context, and I argue that the as a result, martyrdom has become a phantasmatic notion within the Kurdish society in the cultural and political spheres. Activists commemorations have transformed in fascinating ways, as the nationalistic militancy shaped the contours of Kurdish life in the mountains and the heroic narratives predominated the practices of commemoration. These narratives legitimize present-day activism by locating it in every circle of the movement. For examples, it is possible to consider the affective power of songs about martyr guerillas, photos of guerillas, guerillas songs which are sung by guerilla music bands, the secular *Newroz*²¹

²¹ Newroz, meaning new (new) day (rose), is often referred to as a Persian holiday to welcome the arrival of Spring. The Kurds also celebrated Newroz historically as a cultural form. In the early

festival, commemoration ceremonies of martyrdom, the renamed streets names after martyrs (değer aileleri), social status of being a martyr relative, peace mother's initiatives and so on. From a general standpoint, in Kurdish society, the dead reanimated the social structure as well as the sequences of processes embodied within the activist movement struggle. Phantasmatic has object qualities but it is also materialistic and tangible. Recognition of death has semantic value which shifted during the 2000s with the rising influence of Kurdish politics in the state when the differences between the communities of Turks and Kurds were acknowledged, recognized, and coded into social practices in the region where BDP municipalities and policies existed. Yet distinctions had not yet been articulated in the form of separate ethnic or national definitions, but have been recognized only implicitly separated living. Affect can be studied and detected in all social, political and economic transactions and my aim in the study was to investigate into the affect of Sakine Cansız's death to explore how such affect challenged the phantasmatic reality of activist movement discourse. In this sense, I suggest looking at Navaro-Yashin's concept of 'hauntology' in Northern Cyprus

1990s, Newroz was politically revived as a symbol of resurrection and freedom, typically celebrated by folk dances around big bonfires lit by used tires. The centrality of fire in Kurdish national mythology has several origins. One argument is that the ancient Kurdish religion was Zoroastrianism which regards fire as sacred. The myth that became popular in the 1990s was first invented by a Kurdish poet named Abdullah Tewfik in the 1930s. Tewfik modified the legend on the resistance of a blacksmith named Kawa against the tyranny of the Assyrian king Dehaq (Zahhak or Zahak) about two and a half millennia ago, which was probably an ancient Persian legend. According to the Kurdish version, Dehaq had two serpents growing over his shoulders and everyday he sacrificed two young men whose brains were given to the serpents so as to alleviate the pain he felt. However, the man who was responsible for the sacrifices would instead kill a man and mix his brains with that of a sheep, thus saving one man a day. The discontent that grew against Dehaq's tyranny got organized into a full-scale revolt led by Kawa, who had already lost several sons. Kawa trained the surviving young men into an army soldier and marched to Dehaq's castle where he killed him with a hammer and burned the castle into ashes and set fires on the hillsides to celebrate his victory. In contemporary Kurdish versions of Newroz, the fire that Kawa lit on Dehaq's castle turns into a symbol of resistance against tyranny, the beginning of a life free of oppression. The activist movement has further modified this legend by incorporating the story of Mazlum Doğan, who hung himself in the infamous Diyarbakir prison on the day of Newroz in 1982 to protest the inhumane prison conditions. Mazlum, a central committee member of the activist movement, who also wrote its Manifesto, was declared by the activist movement to be the Modern Kawa, connecting the past and present Kurdish freedom struggles in the mythical time of national liberation. Although Mazlum hung himself, the first news from the prison was that he celebrated Newroz by burning his body and turning his death into the most powerful weapon against the Turkish military regime. Later, it became clear that he did not burn himself but celebrated Newroz in his cell by lighting three matches and then hung himself.

because her work is an excellent ethnographic study for haunting ghosts with affect instruments. She mentions the *“materiality presence and endurance within phantasmatically crafted space and polity,”* which is a brilliant point for sure that she owes to her studies in Northern Cyprus, when she explored the affect of materiality and spaces which were crafted by governmental policies.

She suggests that the phantomic is a marker point of political stance, affiliation, conflict and resistance in daily life and that’s why the fantasy factor in the phantasmatic is not a figment of imagination, a construct, discourse but rather a concentrate of social practices such as tangibility and the real. As Begonia Aretxaga states, *“fantasy is not which exceeds discourse”* so that means we labeled fantasy or the phantasm as materiality, actual, polity and discourse. Dead bodies are phantoms of the repose on Kurdish society and have been haunting them in the psychological/psychic sphere. As Derrida mentions in ‘Specters of Marx’, *“hegemony still organizes the repression and thus the confirmation of a haunting that means haunting belongs to the structure of everyday life hegemony”*²² and he gives several examples from specters of Marx that haunted Europe. While Derrida criticizes on positivism on a different level, he says that specters are simulacrum and should be considered that way. However, my study is about a political assassination of a Kurdish women, and my aim is to study with the lens of affective anthropology, and in that sense, it seems impossible to me that the subject matter be analyzed only within the context of the cognitive. As I mentioned above, if we are talking about how affect of political deaths haunt a society, we cannot separate its materiality and conceptuality.

2.6. Peace Process and the Phantomic Martyrdom

It would not be wrong to state that this political transformation that took place after the peace talks began and the democratic sovereignty rhetoric was

²² Derrida, Jacques : Writing and Differences quoted from Yael Navaro Yashin (2012)

implemented is a hard one to perceive in terms of communal and social perception. Much like the activist movement itself has repeatedly stated, the promise made to the martyrs who have sacrificed themselves for free Kurdish society and has been waiting for the day of victory ever since has become psychic glue that ceased to exist against all the tyranny and assimilation efforts of the state. After the peace talks, the fact that the Kurds and the state would have a sit down and negotiate with each other created a new rhetoric and a new political environment that would be hard for the Kurds to accept. The Kurdish people have believed so intensely that they would win the struggle through fighting that it would be hard to call anything gained through negotiation or through peace a victory.

What was even worse was that it would not be a mistake to state that the common consciousness of the people perceived this issue as a form of treachery against those who have been waiting for freedom. Feelings and promises dedicated to martyrs, shrink to every segment of the social, and communal life. For instance, most songs that are written in memory of martyrs of Kurdish society mention promises which the society gave to them for victory. Many names of the songs like “Serhildan” (rebellion) and *welat* are the Kurdish people’s promises to their martyrs and many other songs are written to commemorate the names of martyrs of Kurdish society such as *Beriwan*, *Zilan*, *Heval Harun* .²³

New generation Kurdish names are getting closer and closer to famous martyr’s guerilla names which leads on to conclude that it is possible and important to imagine how the notion of martyrdom is an important tool for the Kurdish movement.

Moreover, the activist movement illegal organization as well as the Kurdish political parties such BDP (Peace and Democracy Party) restructured a new concept of martyrdom which is in line with the peace process. The political martyrdom has a different context from social perception of martyrdom. The

²³ These are the names of some of the famous comrades of the activist movement

activist movement's leader and the BDP gained much more legal status in the process and the notion of martyrdom has been changing on its axis, heading towards a different direction. The activist movement and BDP's political discourse produced and crafted phantasmatic notions of martyrdom and there are phantasmatic practices in all over the Kurdish society that are expressed in tangible and intangible elements, leading one to conclude that some more examples of BDP's political maneuvering following the peace process. For instance; the municipality of Diyarbakir organizes a dinner during every Ramadan to honor the families of martyrs, where thousands of people gather to commemorate the dead. The dinner starts with ceremonies of respect to the dead, and usually takes the form of a meeting with lengthy talks on the value of martyrs and an extended expression of commitment to their ideals, and then continues with music concerts. Besides, during religious holidays, Kurdish activists and politicians regularly pay visits to the families of the martyrs, who are named as '*değer aileleri*' (families of value in Turkish) in popular culture. Having a martyr in the family is usually taken as a sign of loyalty to the national cause and personal trust, while *the bedel* (price/cost) that family pays in the form of giving their children to the struggle is exchanged into status, value and prestige, as evidenced by the very name *değer aileleri*. Although such a prestigious position may provide them with ease and advantage in accessing material resources and power, most families shy away from asking for personal favors, as such a practice might damage their reputation. In other words, as long as the families follow the narrative of the altruistic self-sacrifice and perform selflessness, they enjoy prestige. Otherwise, they may turn into targets for gossip and be despised as immoral people using their dead for personal reasons. Despite this puritanical symbolic economy constructed around the martyrs, many of Kurdish parliamentarians, mayors, members of local councils, or chairs and executives of Kurdish Institutions are members of the martyred or activists' (potential martyr) families.

One other exemplary form in which the dead are reanimated and processed into struggle is the case of the Kurdish initiative of Peace Mothers. Established in Istanbul in 1999, Peace Mothers is an organization created by Kurdish women whose children, husbands or close kin were murdered during the civil war. In the last decade, the Mothers have been able to mobilize the power culled from their dead children into a struggle for justice and peace. Similar to Mothers in Argentina, Chile, ex-Yugoslavia and other regions of the world, the deployment of motherhood along with sorrow and pain as political faculties coupled with the power of their dead have enabled them to gain significant visibility in Turkey and abroad in their struggle for Turkish-Kurdish and intra-Kurdish peace. Consisting of mostly rural and illiterate women whose villages were destroyed as part of the counter-insurgency warfare during the 1990s, the Mothers have created networks with several international groups and institutions, and have had many visits to the capitals of European politics such as Strasbourg and Brussels to bring the case of the Kurds into the agenda of the European Union, to which Turkey is in the process of accession. In most cultural and political activities in Diyarbakir, ranging from illegal demonstrations, municipal receptions, party congresses to Newroz celebrations or election campaigns, the Mothers always appear in the frontline of the struggle. In the current state of peace politics, their words and experiences are positioned as the ultimate truth of the brutalities of war, while their testimonies of war and calls for peace are regarded as sincere and genuine, which is a process that effectively translates or re-genders the sufferings of the Kurdish community into maternal suffering. The authority of the Mothers relies on the same moral economy created around the dead that processes their pain and suffering into respect and prestige. There exists no significant class hierarchies among the Mothers, who are mostly urban poor or displaced rural Kurds, yet they have their own hierarchies built into the very economy of death that grants them respect and prestige. The mothers of well-known martyrs have more authority than others, while the number of children lost in the process, which is the amount of pain and suffering, is the ultimate scale and arbiter that measures and allocates

their share of respect and prestige. These mothers are instrumental in dealing with the peace process initiative and operate as a non-governmental organization.

The instrumental use of gendered stereotypes in the name of national security becomes most evident in the intimate interrelationship of nationalism and mothers of martyrs.

2.7. A Unique Funeral on the Diyarbakir-Dersim Line

“The space of what can only happen to a woman” (Gayatri Spivak)

Sakine Cansız’s assassination is a very significant turning point for the Kurdish movement as it possesses effective properties and symbolizes a point in time when definitions and aspirations changed forever.

Sakine Cansız’s funeral was a unique funeral because it brought together numerous different groups of interest and motivation within the Kurdish movement, such as the activists, the political organization, the feminist movement, the ex-activists, meaning that the contradictions of the Kurdish movement used the associated power of Sakine’s dead body during her funereal. The unpredictable assassination of Sakine Cansız incurred a large scale impact on the Kurdish community during the negotiation process as well as its growing disenchantment with the AKP government. Particularly, Kurdish women who are sympathizers of the Kurdish movement were aggravated and shocked. Sakine Cansız’s funeral was brought to Turkey, to her hometown of Dersim, so that tens of thousands of people and mostly women participated in this funeral ceremony to protest the event that is labeled as “women murders”, meaning political assassinations of women or women martyrdom. However, such female martyrdom funerals became a symbol of women’s freedom because of their shared valued of being free women under the pressures of cultural, historical, political and gendered social situations and structures. The coffin of Sakine was carried only by women and her funeral rites were carried out in an array of political agencies with various political affiliations in existence.

Although in Islam and Alevism, the coffin cannot be carried by women due to religious restrictions based on faith and belief, the fact of the matter is that there were numerous funerals for female martyrs that happened in the history of the Kurdish nation; the Kurdish female funeral was indeed the first feminist funeral. In this regard, the funeral of Sakine Cansız also reshaped cultural and political codes, which claimed gender within the Kurdish movement. The Kurdish movement in various ways is a multilayered structure as it has protective ethnicity rights, freedom of speech, constitutional rights, and war against feudalism, women's rights as well as others. As a result of the understanding of this multilayered formation, Sakine Cansız's life as well as her death should give some important insights into the organization, its culture and struggle. Cansız struggled against both the Turkish state policies and gender policies in the Turkish society and her assassination made her a unique example in the history of Kurds. Moreover, her funeral ceremony provided a social devastation within the Kurdish society as her death had an effective and discursive impact. Sakine Cansız's death is a psychological connection between the Kurdish society and its historical and political aspects of existence. Sakine Cansız's death positioned her over politics, over societies and even over the political as statements of ends mostly function as performative ones, which makes it possible to speak of an invocation of "new" beginnings. One should also notice that in the process of nationalizing death in Kurdish context, the formal structure and sequence of funeral proceedings have largely remained unchanged.

CHAPTER 3

THE FORM OF A NEW RESISTANCE: THE ART OF ZEHRA DOĞAN



Dogan, Zehra 2016



Picasso, Pablo 1937

“I received a jail sentence for 2 years and 10 months because I painted a picture with Turkish flags hanging from ruined buildings. In reality, it was them who took this picture. I only visualized it...” (Zehra Dogan, 2016) These words that belong to the painter Zehra Doğan, who painted the ruined Nusaybin due to the curfews 2016, reminded me of the words of Pablo Picasso that he used to define his famous painting, Guernica. When asked to explain the dominant “horse and bull” figures in his painting, Guernica, which is being regarded as the world’s most important anti-war painting detailing the Spanish Civil War, Picasso’s response was “this bull is a bull and this horse is a horse... What you think might be true if you assign values and meanings to certain elements in my paintings but it was not my idea to assign such values and meanings. I should have arrived at the same ideas and conclusions as you did, except instinctually and unconsciously. I am painting for the sake of painting. I draw objects as they are.” Following this conversation, the observer asks Picasso “Then please answer me Mr. Picasso, did you paint this painting?” Picasso responds: “No! You did!”

In this thesis study, I will investigate into the formation of artistic production by active women in the Kurdish movement as one of the new

organizational forms as well as its infiltration into the masses as a new organizational form.

In this suggestion that I strive to establish, I intend to discover the factor that trigger the artists to produce their works while seeking answers for the question of whether if the produced works of art can indeed be a psycho-social glue for the young members of the Kurdish society. In addition, I will also seek the answer for my research problem of how works of art are formed for Kurds, the influential factors involved in the process and how such works of art come into interaction with the masses after forming. While seeking such answers to questions under the first heading within the thesis study that will be analyzed under two such headings, I will be making use of the notion of ‘affect’ which is used as an instrument of expression in anthropology. Under the second heading, I will be making use of sociological examples in order to analyze how the works of art detailed under the second heading infiltrate into the masses, in the light of Theodore Adorno’s theory of the cultural industry.

3.1. Is The Epistemology of The Repressed Changing?

One of the most notable events of contemporary history which motivated me to write this thesis was the global acknowledgement and recognition of the solidarity between Banksy, a globally accredited and significantly controversial artist and the artist/journalist Zehra Doğan, who was arrested because of a painting she painted. After being arrested for “creating propaganda materials for a terrorist organization” when she painted the replica of a photograph taken in Nusaybin, Mardin in 2016 during the curfews being applied to citizens of the city, she turned the prison cell she was staying into an arts workshop.

In the shadow of the ongoing shooting war, in a geography where the problems of migration, gender and identity persist and the struggles of the hegemony continue with all the power apparatus, the world’s most important mural artist Banksy hears about the painting that has led to the arrest of Zehra Doğan after the news

breaks out and transcends beyond the boundaries of Turkey. Banksy ends up painting a Zehra Doğan mural depicting her behind gigantic bars with a caption that reads “Freedom for Zehra Doğan” on one of the busiest streets of New York, one of the world’s capitals. Zehra Doğan who has been imprisoned in Nusaybin screams her vengeance in New York, while a piece of art is transformed into a public struggle apparatus for the Kurdish struggle by gaining a symbolic value.

As Banksy crowns his support for Zehra Doğan with yet another piece of art, all the world begins to wonder who Zehra Doğan is and why she is kept imprisoned, leading Google to provide all the necessary answers in the age of digital technologies. Millions of people end up supporting a nation’s struggle, both on an emotional and ideological level, after being influenced by a work of art. Zehra Doğan later wrote Banksy a letter of appreciation and in return, Banksy shared the letter on his social media accounts, which have more than 8 million followers. Millions liked the photo while hundreds of thousands commented on it. A part of the letter read: “Although I am currently being held as a prisoner, I wonder if I can really call myself a prisoner after hearing about such a valuable support? Some people are hearing my voice a lot louder than before and how strange is it that when the sovereigns who I speak, or I am forced to speak, the same language with, do not understand me, while people who I do not speak the same language with or live in the same geography do.”

“Arts is a merit that transcends beyond speech and a lot more can be said about the subject. I cannot thank you or Borf enough. I would have never imagined that my portrait would be projected in a city like New York. The support you provide me with is something unimaginable even for a person like me who spends 12 hours of 24 in a day, dreaming. I thank you for everything you have done. I already feel stronger with your support and now I am painting Efrin because she is worth it.” Banksy, in his interview with the New York Times said, “I feel very sorry for her, I myself have painted material that deserved far more than imprisonment.” This solidarity between the two artists over their art works remind us of how important arts is as a form of action. Soon after in 2017, at the annual

Imprisoned Authors Day that is organized by the International Union of Authors (PEN) on the 15th of November every year, a letter was written for Zehra Doğan who was still being imprisoned due to her ideas and works by the world's most important activist artist Ai Wei Wei. The fact that Zehra Doğan was among the persons whom PEN decided to pay main page to on this day that is organized annually on a global scale to inform the international public about the situations of five people who are “facing legal trouble or pressure because they have used their freedom of speech” created a massive sense of awareness throughout the Kurdish geography against the oppression of the authority.

In his letter, Ai Wei Wei stated that “although I myself am coming from an authoritarian society where freedom of speech is limited, I was still shocked that an artist was imprisoned because she drew a painting that reflected actual reality. If a state is capable of imprisoning artists, journalists or authors this way, it means that we are still living in an age of darkness where ideas and creativity cannot be protected or developed. A society like this cannot deal with the requirements of our current age when ideas are freely discussed on a global scale and is deprived of free debates and criticism that are both necessary for a functioning democracy. I am influenced and impressed by your works and send you my good wishes. I address the international community for your immediate and unconditional release. I also hope that the Turkish government will realize the effects of its wrong conducts against artists, journalists, authors and academicians to set free all the individuals who have been imprisoned this way.” (Ai Wei Wei, 2017)

When the President of the Committee of International PEN Imprisoned Authors, Salih Tripathi announced this award that creates social awareness on a large scale, he used the following statement:

“This year, the persons that have been nominated have paid considerable prices due to their dedication to the use of the freedom of speech for peaceful ways.”

The use of the word “peaceful ways” is a term that creates significant distraught for those in charge and with authority. Zehra Doğan was released in 2019 and

became an important public figure for the struggles of the Kurdish society thanks to the international network she created during the process after she was imprisoned for a piece of art work that she painted. Doğan, who was invited to Paris by Banksy and Borf this year to London, will be opening a grand exhibition with Banksy to protest the government backed oppression and the resultant state of inequality of the Kurdish society in peaceful manners.

Zehra became the first Kurdish woman to create public awareness when she was still living without taking part in the armed struggle or becoming a political object in the international arena. This important role was something that Zehra Doğan earned through her arts, which was her peaceful resistance against authority. Zehra Doğan has created a brand new form of resistance within the Kurdish struggle by extending beyond warfare and using her arts as a means. She also develops a feminist discourse when using arts' universal language. The modern society has reconstructed its artistic acts with capitalism. The modern person has been confronted by an authoritarian structure which controls them with the hegemony's mass communication devices, thinks for the person and controls them in every aspect of their lives. This structure is called the culture industry. It is seen that the cultural forms produced as a natural consequence of capitalism have managed to seize control over all the perceptive management of all the societal elements and human beings' objectivity, through the culture industry by increasing its influence over human life and modes of production.

This designation has also infiltrated into the modes of artistic production. Arts have also experienced intrinsic change. According to Adorno, modern arts have gained a judgmental and autonomous structure by structurally disrupting its previous cult mode of production. With the autonomous structure it gained, arts bestowed upon itself further responsibility to protect freedom and express ideas and beliefs for the society. The element that makes modern arts are acceptable within the confinement of arts is the "idea of freedom."

Adorno thinks that art challenges the culture industry by voicing the call for freedom. Such a challenge occurs through the negation of ideas that are rested upon the identity principle. While the elements of the culture industry are based on the identity principle imposed by the mind, arts put such identity on a hold to express the “non-identical”. It is precisely due to this feature that art insists on witnessing the incompatibility between the object and the subject regardless of the pressure it endures from the identity principle. In other words, arts re-establish the relationship between the mental and the sensory.

Therefore, for Adorno, arts are one of the most fundamental elements that need to be referred to for the revelation of both the social and personal forms of freedom. It is rather obvious that Adorno stresses the fact that arts are an important medium which allows oppressed groups to express their ideas of freedom. The culture Industry within the modern society foresees that it is necessary to motivate people against the intention of the authority to make the people obey the order and status quo with non -negotiable sense of acceptance and seeks to infiltrate into every aspect of communal life to achieve such a feature. Can arts exist as a form of protest within such a relationship out of which it originated?

3.2. Arts as a Form of Protest

What leads arts into rebellion and protest is initially the partnership of pain, cruelty and joy and eventually the obligatory criminal partnership that includes the previous partnership in its entirety and grants it meaning. Let us not shy away from repeating that if art criticizes the conditions which have produced it, it gains constituency “... *What is arts’ method of protest? The answer is simple: such a protest is the action less gesture of suffering. However, such a gesture is not a pointless or inconclusive debate that arts engage into with what it represents. What is being protested is pain and cruelty, while what we refer to as the gesture is arts criminal partnership in protecting such pain.*” (E. Zeytinoglu,

p. 252, *Cogito*, 2003). This criminal partnership is inevitable because as Adorno also states, “every work of art falls back into the application it escapes.” The responsibility developed towards desperation and cruelty leads the individual to search for ways to reverse the system which has pushed them into desperation. In today’s modern society, as well as the capitalist and neo-liberal systems, the individuals or societies which are trapped in desperation and seeking to make their voices heard, are bound to use capitalist instruments to accomplish such a task. According to Adorno, this vicious cycle can be affirmed as the protest of arts and can be transformed into an actual protest within the mass industry using its own instruments. This ambivalent relationship exists within the nature of arts.

When creating the painting that led her to imprisonment, Zehra Doğan did not contribute anything new to the system and on the contrary, merely reflected the photograph taken by the authority’s control mechanisms onto her canvas. Her work is not a new form of expression or a unique re-telling of a subject matter that was put together for the sake of arts. Her work disturbed the authority and was sentenced to imprisonment because the artistic replica of reality or as Adorno coins it, the art that emerged out of reality was found to be disruptive. It is not well known whether if there would be this big of a hassle had the instrument of the protest not been arts, Arts which has transformed the world of pain by preserving it within itself merely expressed the insufficiencies and improbabilities against the pragmatism of the world.

Although this type of a protest is considered to be intended to address social reality, it is also the protest of sociability of arts in its own geography. This paradox takes us to Adorno’s suggestion of the negative dialectic, which states that “arts’ state of agreement with identities within a unity of identities, incorporates protest into its modus operandi. Arts and protest will upload their modus operandi to each other in constant opposition.” (E. Zeytinoglu, p.254, *Cogito*, 2003). Zehra Doğan’s painting in reality, is the point where arts has to damage itself against the protest in a compromising manner, and this point is also

where the protest becomes masculine against arts because arts carries the quality of having an eternal sense of spirituality through the existence of “a body living through time”, regardless of all the pain the body and the spirit endure. Therefore, arts and protest comprise an identity in modern day society, which excludes one another but helplessly includes one another at the same time, within the painful realm of the oppressed.

Therefore, can arts construct a vector of struggle for the Kurdish Context? Although it would create an insufficient suggestion to attempt answering this question in the 21st century of information and technology, without taking into consideration vectors such as the speed of information spread, technology, the internet, social media and the mass communication capabilities, it should also be noted that all the mentioned are deep and important enough to be discussed in separate theses regarding the ways and directions they would take the human societies into. Therefore, I wish to pose my simple question in the light of our current age’s technological vectors: can art practices construct a new style of struggle for the Kurdish society?

Can women who cannot exist within the public domain as anything else but warriors, who have to remain under the shadow of masculine politics and struggle, and who usually end up being transformed into objects of struggle, create a new space for themselves within the Kurdish context with arts and extend beyond masculine domain or politics?

We can comprehend that Kurdish women do not need to engage into armed struggle, become martyrs or a spokesman for a discourse to be able to become a part of the struggles of a repressed nation by examining the case of Zehra Doğan who managed to create her own discourse.

3.3. Zehra Doğan: Dirty Protest

Artistic production which has become Zehra Doğan’s personality within the Kurdish movement for freedom has become an instrument for the expression of

the masculine language, while the “dirty protest” she carried out during her prison experience created a feminist slit in the status quo. Zehra managed to defeat the masculine authority by creating the necessary painting tools and materials, which were restricted by the prison authorities, from her own self source, meaning her menstrual blood and the strands of her hair, and continuing to produce arts. It will be useful to look at other ethnographic examples that overlaps with the ethnographic example of Zehra Doğan in order to better understand the symbolic value of menstrual blood.

Under the prison conditions which Zehra Doğan has been kept under, the fact that she used spoiled food remnants, birds’ feces in addition to menstrual blood necessitates that we should consider the subject as an act of female resistance. This is due to the fact that menstrual blood is a material that has symbolic value, which demands the prideful recognition of Doğan’s struggle, her female identity and gender differences and therefore she used it for her artistic production that was also her weapon of resistance. Violating the political authority’s restriction of access to her required materials by using menstrual blood, a material that is naturally available to her, and painting using such a “dirty” and “unbearably odorous” material constitutes both a resistance and an imitation of the violence imposed by the authority. (Mimesis violence)

In the letter she wrote from prison, she states the following:

“When a guard summoned me and said ‘excuse me but I hear you are painting with menstrual blood, please do not do so because the prison personnel is disgusted by it and they are also worried that they might catch an infection’, I responded: ‘Disgusting? What is disgusting is the fact that we are being held here for no reason, and even worse that the materials I require to produce as an artist are not being allowed for me to have. I can protest such a disgusting application by using something, a material that is considered to be disgusting by the collective perception. Something that is found to be disgusting by the masculine

apprehension, meaning menstrual blood. Since you are disgusted, I completed my mission.” (Kedistan web, Zehra Doğan)

In the field of ethnic and political struggle, considering the ethnography of the female prisoners of IRA, which constitutes arguably the very first example of dirty protesting in history regarding how the female sexual identity was ignored not only by the political authority but also their own partners in struggle, will help us understand the given situation at hand through the transformation that Zehra Doğan brought into the Kurdish movement.

The male prisoners of the Ireland Republican Army which was known as the IRA between the years 1978 and 1981 attempted an extraordinary protest against the British rule and the prison officials. In order to protest the political and physical violence implemented on their bodies, the prisoners refused to leave their prison cells for showering or going to the toilet. This way, the prison turned into an area of dirty protest. After a short while, the female prisoners who have not extended beyond their identities as IRA militants until that day, joined the revolt to protest the violence and rape applied by the administration and utilized mimetic violence by spreading their menstrual blood and feces on the walls of the prison, in turn carrying out an unprecedented act that stemmed out of their sexual differences.

The female IRA prisoners who have fought using the masculine language of the armed and political struggle until that day, have never considered gender to be an important element in the act of differentiation. IRA’s female members desperately wanted to become a part of the organization but such an intention was consciously denied on the grounds that such an inclusion would create gendered differences for the organization’s activism. The female differences were considered as insignificant and were ignored to make sure that they did not supersede the ethnic struggle and therefore the female members were forced to internalize a masculine war language. The dirty protest at the Amargah prison

involving menstrual blood reveals that the political violence produced by the body and applied to other bodies, cannot escape the meaning map of gender difference. In her article 'The Dirty Protest', Begonia Aretxega states that "the visibility of the menstrual blood within the confines of the prison constituted the worst sacrilege and curse directed both at the male dominated "political community" and the colonialist powers by the women's bodies." (p. 237, Aretxega Begona, Society and Theorem)

If we were to express it from a Lacanian perspective, menstrual blood was facing us as the symbol of a certain reality that was excluded from language. Menstrual blood provides a feminist criticism of not only the political authority but also the area of political struggle which we are all a part of after surfacing as a real value on its escape from the symbolic.

The most important point that Sakine Cansız and her friends made affectively sensible yet somewhat could not escape from its symbolic value during their ethnic and political struggles was their lack of sufficient evaluation for gender differences.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, the transformation of Kurdish women has been addressed over the issue of gender relations which directly and deeply affect the Kurdish movement. The purpose of the thesis is to provide an anthropological study of such a movement over Sakine Cansız and Zehra Doğan who have become public figures within the Kurdish struggle. The problem of women's gender inequality in public spaces within the Kurdish movement has also been addressed by starting the discussion from the unique death and funeral rituals of Sakine Cansız. As a result, a study concerning the self-positioning of Kurdish women within the authority and patriarchal structure over the use of notions of martyrdom, heroism and the politics of the price of life was provided.

In such a pursuit, I considered the cases of Sakine Cansız and Zehra Doğan as two public figures that represented the past and future of the Kurdish Women's Rights movement. Ever since the initiation of the Kurdish movement, the female identity has been glorified by using genderless definitions such as mothers, sisters, heroines and goddesses to be positioned as an ethnic element and motivation of the movement.

In the first part where we focused on Sakine Cansız, my motivation was to convey the reasoning as to why it was significantly limited in possibility for becoming a part of the Kurdish movement or within the public sphere as a woman without initially becoming a part of the armed and political struggle by referring to the issue's political and cultural dimensions. The most dominant reason why I chose to investigate into the notions of martyrdom and the price of living was to reveal the underlying is of gender relations.

To explain how the Kurdish female consciousness, which originated and developed in the Kurdish movement, was formed without being constrained by the struggle that created it, which areas it infiltrated into and how it developed a new language by referring to how a political discourse was created over a dead

body. I also strived to investigate into the meaning of the Kurdish women's willingness to transcend beyond the funeral rituals of the Kurdish Context during Sakine Cansız's funeral as a part of their struggle. I tried to convey the process of transformation, which began and developed with Sakine Cansız as the representative of the foundation of the Kurdish movement and turned activist women into Kurdish women by following the ghosts between the funerals and dead bodies. I tried to discuss Sakiye Cansız's struggle with gender rather than her political struggle. My intention was to explain how she became an influence for thousands of women living within the Kurdish geography in fighting the masculine mentality. She wanted to pass on a message to women, as her life signified the capability to struggle without compromising on womanhood, the female body, and emphasizing the female identity, regardless of the area of struggle. Thousands of women at her funeral surely must have taken her message and appeared there to show their support for her.

I consider the values and principles that Zehra Doğan represents to be a road map for all Kurdish women, and even all women, because she managed to open up a different zone of the meaning within the context of gendered civil struggle by using all the natural resources of the female body as opposed to a bodiless existence and emphasizing the Kurdish female identity.

Art opens the doors for a new area of existence for us apart from armed resistance and allows us to escape the gender relations zone. The art of Zehra Doğan exemplifies a new model of struggle for us. I think that Zehra Doğan managed to earn a new form of representation for the Kurdish movement and Kurdish women with her art and protest method. The representation of Sakine Cansız sowed the seeds of the new Kurdish female identity and the representation of Zehra Doğan helped the seed grow and flower.

The ideas that this thesis paper intends on expressing are the general criticism towards the notion of gender. I intended on revealing through the funeral of Sakine Cansız, that although the structures within the Kurdish struggle present and defend themselves as secular and in favor of social justice values, such structures themselves could not overcome the problem of gender. Sakine Cansız's constant struggle with the masculine language within the movement she existed in throughout her activist life and the fact that it was essentially women who claimed her funeral, can both be comprehended as rebellion and criticism against gender problem existing in society.

There exists gender problem within the Kurdish context. Sakine Cansız's crimson hair and the engagement ring that she never took off from her finger throughout her life are both symbols of her struggle with gender problem. Throughout her life, she has carried out not only a political struggle but also a personal struggle against the masculine mentality within the Kurdish movement where she existed to transform it to a more egalitarian attitude. Her battle to remain as a woman has become an example for other women who joined the movement later on and opened new frontiers.

The women superseding Sakine Cansız have now become capable of carrying out their struggles in any field of life primarily as women in the light of her struggle against gender. Zehra Dogan's struggle as primarily a woman, using all the freedoms granted to her by her female body and spirit that is described in the section dedicated to her seems to prove this point. The paintings she created during her prison years clearly express how politics or activism is not the only proper methods to struggle against identity politics or gender issues.

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