The London School of Economics and Political Science

Collective memory and competition over identity in a conflict zone:
the case of Dersim

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Abstract

Nations are not becoming conflict-free zones as once envisioned. They remain zones of conflict and of competition. It has been argued that competition over the memory of foundational events or of national identity can strengthen national identities. In some cases, however, competition brings more competition, leading only to fragmentation. When such competition continues without producing a definite outcome, the question remains: *why is there continuous competition?* This thesis answers this question through a case study, that of Dersim in the Turkish Republic. Despite appearing from the outside to be a unified zone of insurgent conflict against the Turkish state, Dersim is, in fact, a contested ground and a zone of conflict where multiple insurgent movements struggle not only against the state but also against each other. Why is it that Dersim remains a conflict zone in which the number of conflicting groups simply increases? Why do we not see a victorious or dominant movement but, rather, continuous competition that does not strengthen the nation but engenders new, 'sub-nation(alism)s'*?* This thesis does two things. Firstly, it explains why there is this incessant competition. Secondly, it maps out the arenas in which this competition takes place, tracing its origins further back than the 1990s. I argue that competition continues because nationalist movements impose concepts of ethnicity and nationalism on the region in order to homogenise what remains a heterogeneous community. The outcome of this competition may not be 'nation-building' nor 'strong collective identity,' but neither does Dersim totally fragment. On the one hand, Dersimlis have been torn apart particularly by ethno-linguistic definitions of their collective identity that are unsuitable for the type of community it is. On the other, such is the tradition of resistance to the central authority in Ankara, that Dersimlis exhibit the same degree of solidarity that one finds in more cohesive nationalist movements.

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Abbreviations

AP	Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*)
Apocular	Apoists (*Apocular*)
BABK	Western Anatolia Regional Committee (*Batı Anadolu Bölge Komitesi*)
BDC	Berlin Dersim Community (*Berlin Dersim Cemaati*)
BDP	Peace and Democracy Party (*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi*)
CHP	Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*)
CUP	Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*)
DABK	Eastern Anatolia Region Committee (*Doğu Anadolu Bölge Komitesi*)
DAM	Dersim Research Centre (*Dersim Araştırmaları Merkezi*)
DDKD	Revolutionary Democratic Culture Associations (*Devrimci Demokratik Kültür Dernekleri*)
DDKD/KİP	Revolutionary Democratic Culture Associations/ Workers party of Kurdistan (*Devrimci Demokratik Kültür Dernekleri/ Kürdistan İşçi Partisi*)
DDKO	Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearts (*Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları*)
DEHAP	Democratic People's Party (Demokratik Halkların Partisi)
DEP	Democracy Party (*Demokrasi Partisi*)
DERADOST	Dersim Armenians and Alevis Friendship Society (*Dersimli Aleviler ve Ermeniler Dostluk Derneği*)
DEV-GENÇ	Turkish Revolutionary Youth Federation (*Türkiye Devrimci Gençlik Federasyonu*)
DEV-SOL	Revolutionary Left (*Devrimci Sol*)
DEV-YOL	Revolutionary Path (*Devrimci Yol*)
DHF	Democratic Rights Federation (*Demokratik Halklar Federasyonu*)
DHKP-C	Revolutionary People's Liberation Party Front (*Devrimci Halkın Kurtuluş Partisi Cephesi*)
DOBP	Dersim Common Memory Platform (*Dersim Ortak Bellek Platformu*)

DSKD	Dersim 1937-38 Genocide Opposition Association (*Dersim Soykırım Karşıtı Derneği*)
DSP	Democratic Left Party (*Demokratik Sol Parti*)
DTP	Democratic Society Party (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi*)
DYİC	Association of Reconstruction of Dersim (*Dersim Yeniden İnşaa Cemaati*)
EMEP	Labour Party (*Emek Partisi*)
ESP	Socialist Party of the Oppressed (*Ezilenlerin Sosyalist Partisi*)
FDG	European Federation of Dersim Associations (*Föderation der Dersim Gemeinden in Europa e.V.*)
FKF	Idea Clubs Federation (*Fikir Klüpleri Federasyonu*)
HADEP	People's Democracy Party (*Halkın Demokrasi Partisi*)
HAK-PAR	Rights and Freedom Party (*Hak ve Özgürlük Partisi*)
HBDH	People's United Revolution Movement (*Halkların Birleşik Devrim Hareketi*)
HDP	People's Democratic Party (*Halklarin Demokratik Partisi*)
HEP	People's Labor Party (*Halkın Emek Partisi*)
KADEK	Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Assembly (*Kürdistan Özgürlük ve Demokrasi Kongresi*)
KAWA	Kurdistan Proleteriat Union (*Kawa*)
KD	Kurmeş Association (*Kurmeşliler Derneği*)
KOMKAR	Union of Associations of Kurdistan (*Kürdistan Dernekleri Birliği*)
KONGRA-GEL	People's Assembly (*Halkların Kongresi*)
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*)
MİT	Turkish Intelligence Agency (*Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı*)
MKP	Maoist Communist Party (*Maoist Komünist Parti*)
MLKP	Marxist Lenninist Communist Party (*Marksist Leninist Komünist Parti*)
ÖDP	Freedom and Solidarity Party (*Özgürlük ve Dayanışma Partisi*)
ÖTP	Free Society Party (*Özgür Toplum Partisi*)

ÖZDEP	Freedom and Democracy Party (*Özgürlük ve Demokrasi Partisi*)
PDKI	Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq (*Partîya Demokrata Kurdistan a Irak)*
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*)
PSK	Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan (*Türkiye Kürdistan Sosyalist Partisi*)
TD	Tunceli Association (*Tuncelililer Derneği*)
TDKP	Revolutionary Communist Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Devrimci Komünist Partisi*)
THKO	People's Liberation Army of Turkey (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu*)
THKP-C	People's Liberation Party-Front Turkey (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi*)
TİKKO	Turkish Workers and Peasants Liberation Army (*Türkiye İşçi Köylü Kurtuluşu Ordusu*)
TİP	Worker's Party of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi*)
T-KDP	Kurdistan Democrat Party in Turkey (*Türkiye'de Kürdistan Demokratik Partisi*)
TKDP	Kurdistan Democratic Part of Turkey (*Türkiye Kürdistanı Demokrat Partisi*)
TDKP-İÖ	Revolutionary Communist Party of Turkey Construction Organisation (*Türkiye Devrimci Komünist Partisi – İnşaa örgütü*)
TKDP-KUK	Kurdistan Democratic Part of Turkey- Kurdistan National Liberators (*Türkiye Kürdistanı Demokrat Partisi - Kürdistan Ulusal Kurtuluşçuları*)
TKP	Communist Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Komünist Partisi*)
TKP-ML	Communist Party of Turkey Marxist-Leninist (*Türkiye Komünist Partisi-Marksist Leninist*)
TRT	Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (*Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurumu*)
TUDEF	Tunceli Associations Federation (*Tunceli Dernekleri Federasyonu*)
YEK-KOM	Federation for Kurdish Associations in Germany (*Almanya Kürt Dernekleri Federasyonu*)
ZAZA-DER	Zaza Language and Culture Association (*Zaza Dil ve Kültür Derneği*)

"Today, we – actors and analysts alike – are no longer blind to ethnicity, but we may be blinded by it".

Rogers Brubaker and David Laitin[1]

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[1] Rogers Brubaker, David Laitin. 2004. "Ethnic and nationalist violence." In *Ethnicity Without Groups*, edited by Rogers Brubaker, 88-115. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

1 Introduction

The nation-state has been the dominant political entity since the 19th century, and has *per se* been built upon at least some degree of nationalism. Gellner noted, in 1996, that the number of cultural groups exceeds the number of nation-states in the modern world, which "has only space for something of the order of 200 or 300 national states".[2] Statistics show he was rather optimistic about the numbers. As of 2016, the United Nations consists of 193 member states, and two non-member states.[3] Despite the significant increase in the number of states in the world since the early 1900s, there are still many nations without states; enough, indeed, to be gathered in an encyclopedia.[4] We know that neither nationalism nor nation-states have faded in the global era and nationalist projects continue to exist. Nations are not becoming conflict-free zones as once envisioned[5], rather they remain zones of conflict, indeed of competition. Some competitions over the nature of national identity take place within nations strengthen a nation;[6] some lead to the emergence of stateless nations, such as Scotland; some competitions are managed within relatively peaceful federal systems, such as Spain or Belgium; and some trigger armed conflict, such as Ireland or Kurds in Turkey. In some cases, however, competition brings more competition, where competing movements neither succeed nor fail, but rather lead only to further fragmentation. As nationalist competition continues both among and within nation-states and stateless nations, the question remains: *why is there continuous competition?*

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[2] Gellner, Ernest. 1996. "Ernest Gellner's Reply 'Do nations have navels?'." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 2 (3): 366-370, 369.

[3] The Holy See and the State of Palestine are non-member states in the UN. *Non-member States*. Available from http://www.un.org/en/sections/member-states/non-member-states/index.html.

[4] Minahan, James. 2002. *Encyclopedia of the Stateless Nations: Ethnic and National Groups around the World. Westport*, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

[5] Hobsbawm, Eric J. 1990. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: programme, myth, reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; see also Sabanadze, Natalie. 2010. "Globalization and Nationalism: the Relationship Revisited." In *Globalization and Nationalism: The Cases of Georgia and the Basque Country*, 169-186. Budapest: Central European University Press.

[6] Hutchinson, John. 2005. "*Nations as Zones of Conflict*." In: SAGE Publications Ltd. <http://www.myilibrary.com?ID=51208>

Fredrik Barth emphasises that it is the "ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses".[7] What shapes nationalist movements is ethnic boundary *making* and the "process of constituting and re-constituting groups by defining the boundaries between [groups]".[8] This ethnic boundary making process among different groups involves competition. Highlighting that in some cases, this competition itself reinforces new fragmentation and competition, this thesis poses the following theoretical research question: *Why do identity movements not only compete with assimilationist and/or oppressive states but also among each other?* More importantly, *why is it that in some cases, competition causes further fragmentation instead of resulting in coherent outcomes, such as a consensual definition of the collective identity, or definitive failure?*

1.1 The Case

To answer the questions posed above, I use Turkey's Dersim region (Tunceli, as it has been officially called since 1935) as a case study. In what follows I will briefly introduce the case and explain the reasons of my case-selection.

Historically, the name "Dersim" refers to a region within the Ottoman borders (Figure 1, drawn in read). Modern Turkish discourse on Dersim tends to centre on the city of Tunceli, which is surrounded by Erzincan to the north and west, Elazığ to the south, and Bingöl to the east (Figure 1). Throughout this research, "Dersim" will be used interchangeably to refer to either the larger geographical space or the modern city of Tunceli.[9]

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[7] Barth, Fredrik. 1969. "Introduction." In *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organisation of Cultural Difference*, edited by Fredrik Barth, 9-38. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

[8] Wimmer, Andreas. 2008. "Elementary Strategies of Ethnic Boundary Making." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* no. 31 (6):1025-1055.

[9] In this thesis, I use the name of identification used by my interviewees: this decision does not stem from my own value-judgement. The majority of my respondents and the Dersimli community I encountered during fieldwork refer to the city of Tunceli as Dersim, usually avoiding the official name of the city.

Figure 1 Map of the city of Tunceli within Turkey and the larger Dersim region before the establishment of the Turkish Republic

Due to its heterogeneous character and autonomous space, Dersim was a "magnet" for heterodox religious communities, such as Alevis (beginning from the 16th century), and for Armenians (especially in the 19th century). Arguably, Dersim's geography played a key role in its long period of autonomy: it is a mountainous region with numerous rivers, lakes, valleys, and grottos. These rugged features help to explain several key aspects of Dersim's history. First, Dersim was a distant land where diverse groups could live autonomously. Second, it meant that Dersim was not an agriculturally-friendly area and the Dersim community (hereafter Dersimli)[10] could not have a self-contained economy. Third and related to the previous aspect, Dersim's economy could be described as a "plunder-economy", whether this was truly the case or not. Due to this notoriety, Dersimlis were described as "bandits": a name, which later became a point of prejudice against Dersimlis for the modernising Turkish state. Fourth, despite several military campaigns, Dersim remained unconquered by military forces, whose unfamiliarity with the region put them at a serious disadvantage.

Other factors lent Dersim its individuality. Dersim community was predominantly dominated by the Alevi sect of Islam, which marked it as a "problem" from the time of the Sunni Ottoman rule. Second, multi-lingual Dersimlis did not fit the Turkish state's definition of "ideal Turkish citizenry"[11] particularly from the 1930s onwards. Dersimlis were also distinct from the

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[10] Throughout this thesis, I will refer to the pre-national, heterogeneous Dersim community as Dersimlis.
[11] For more information on this campaign see Aslan, Senem. 2007. ""Citizen, Speak Turkish!": A Nation in the Making." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics,* 13(2):245-72.

communities neighbouring the region. They could not be united with the larger Alevi community of Anatolia, nor could they be linked to linguistic communities (Kurdish or Zazaki) nearby.

Given these circumstances, Dersim survived as a closed, relatively autonomous region until the early 1930s. The period beginning with the Act of Settlement in 1934 marks the beginning of a series of determinant actions to subjugate the region through force. With the Law of Tunceli in 1935, sections of the larger Dersim region were separated and joined with neighbouring cities. The remainder of the greater Dersim area was reorganised as a new city, and called Tunceli. With this, the area lost its reputation as a safe and distant space for "others" and also its centuries old partially autonomous character. Throughout 1936, the central Turkish government built roads, bridges, schools, post stations, military barracks and police stations in the name of "modernisation" and "civilisation". The army intervened Dersim first on 4 May 1937, and three military attacks took place until September 1938. Based on official accounts, 13,100 people were killed in Dersim in 1938,[12] and around 12,000 people were exiled the same year.[13] The population of Dersim in 1935 was reportedly around 101,000.[14] This shows that in the aftermath of 1937-38, Dersim lost one quarter of its population.[15] With the ethnic cleansing[16] in Dersim in 1937-38, the Turkish state has aimed at "pacifying, disciplining, and further assimilating the southeast in accordance with the vision of a homogeneous Turkish nation-state".[17] However, the 1937-38 ethnic cleansing is the only historical background of the larger political conflict in Dersim, which I will discuss more in Chapter 3.2

What makes Dersim a good case for studying competition is that it is still a conflict zone where multiple insurgent movements have been active from the late 1960s onwards, fragmenting the collective memory and identity of Dersim in terms of ethno-linguistic definitions. Built upon how to define Dersim's identity, this competition has consolidated and Dersimlis have gradually developed, as Kalyvas writes, "strongly held national loyalties referring back to allegedly ancient

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[12] *Resmi raporlarda Dersim katliamı: 13 bin kişi öldürüldü.* 19 November 2009. Available from http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/resmi-raporlarda-dersim-katliami-13-bin-kisi-olduruldu-965187/.

[13] Aygün, Hüseyin. 2009. *Dersim 1938 ve Zorunlu İskan*. Ankara: Dipnot. See also Aslan, Şükrü. 2010. "Genel nüfus sayımı verilerine göre Dersim'de "kayıp nüfus": 1927-1955." In *Herkesin Bildiği Sır: Dersim*, edited by Şükrü Aslan. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

[14] Aslan, Şükrü. 2010. "Genel nüfus sayımı verilerine göre Dersim'de "kayıp nüfus": 1927-1955." In *Herkesin Bildiği Sır: Dersim*, edited by Şükrü Aslan. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

[15] The state archives are still closed, so the official number of deaths and deportations during and in the aftermath of Dersim 1937-38 are still uncertain.

[16] I choose to identify the events of 1937-38 in Dersim as ethnic cleansing – i.e. an act of deportation, displacement, and mass murder of an unwanted ethnic group. When I refer to my respondents, however, I use their identification of Dersim 1937-38 to reflect their designation.

[17] Dressler, Markus. 2015. *Writing Religion: The Making of Turkish Alevi Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 124.

identities".[18] As a result, the pre-national Dersim mentality has been replaced by competing nationalist identities, including Turkish state nationalism, the Kurdish movement, and other emerging movements such as Kirmanc, Zaza, Alevi, or Armenian, which have all failed to monopolise the heterogeneous Dersimli identity. In a sense, these movements respectively represent of state, ethnic, and cultural/civic forms of nationalist projects.

The traumatic memory of Dersim 1937-38 was a key aspect of competition. Following many years of confusion, these various groups have finally agreed, albeit not yet unanimously, to define Dersim 1937-38 as a massacre, at least, if not an act of state "genocide"[19]. However, these groups are far from in agreement as to which particular identity the Turkish state was acting against. That is to say, there is little consensus regarding whether the "genocide" was directed against Kurds, Alevis, Zazas, Kirmancs, or Armenians. Turkish nationalism, the Kurdish movement, or relatively new Alevi, Zaza, Kirmanc, or Armenian mobilisations, or rising Islamist-nationalist state policies fail to control Dersim's collective identity.

Thus the outcome of this competition is not 'national-building' or a 'strong collective identity,' but neither does Dersim fall to pieces, as competition continues without certain resolution. The empirical question used to explore the theoretical question of why there is continuous competition then, is, *why is it that Dersim remains a conflict zone in which the number of conflicting groups ever increases only engendering new, sub-nation(alism)s instead of a winning movement?*

This study examines how Dersim's collective memory and identity are contested by different political movements since the late 1960s from within Turkey and the Turkish Diaspora in Europe. In attempting to understand Dersim, one must criticise the modern concepts of ethnicity and nationalism: I argue that Dersim stands as a heterogeneous region where inhabitants are united under the "idea" or "mentality" of a collective Dersimli identity. The ongoing competition results from competing movements' disregard for, or failure to grasp, the inclusive Dersimli identity. As these nationalist movements seek to monopolise Dersim to create a homogenous identity, by imposing a single language or by redefining ethnicity, they find only partial support and competition is preserved.

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[18] Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2015. *Modern Greece What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York: Oxford University Press, 49.

[19] Beşikçi, İsmail. 2013. *Tunceli Kanunu (1935) ve Dersim Jenosidi*. Istanbul: İBV Roni Yayınları.

From my standpoint, what defines the heteregenous Dersimli community, first and foremost, is its Alevi religious identity. However, it shall be underlined that this belief system is a unique form of Alevism, which is combined with various unorthodox religious practices, such as Shamanism, Paganism and Armenian beliefs. Moreover, Dersim is a multi-lingual community: Dersimlis speak Turkish, Kurdish (*Kırdaşki)*, and/or Dersimce[20] (*Kirmancki, Zone Ma, Desimki, So-be* in original parlance, also referred to as Zazaki or Dimilki[21] in the literature). Regardless of what their mother tongue is, and bestowing on the term "Kirmanc" an ethnic identity, Dersimlis identify themselves as Kirmanc, saying "*Ma Kirmancim*" (I am Dersimli).[22]

What I suggest is that, although language should not truly be a determining factor in defining Dersim's collective identity, it is nonetheless a focal point for nationalist projects. The movements that compete over the collective identity of Dersim by and large conduct their debate through its ethno-linguistic identity. It is for this reason that nationalist projects competing to homogenise Dersim's collective identity find only partial support, and competition continues.

1.2   Dersim: the "Switzerland of Turkey"?

"The Switzerland of Turkey" (Appendix 1) is a symbolic epithet that comes from a news article published in the *Tan* Newspaper on 15 June 1937,[23] during a period when the Turkish state was conducting a military operation in Dersim. The article reported that Tunceli, as a backward region, was to be modernised by the state to become a central ski resort, similarly to resorts found in Switzerland. Today, there is one modest ski resort in the Ovacık district of Dersim but the city can hardly be described as the Switzerland of Turkey. Despite being known as "a city of enlightened

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[20] Throughout the thesis, I use Dersimce to refer to the language, which can alternatively be described as Kirmancki, Zazaki, Zone-Ma, Desimki, Desimi, or So-be. This is a conscious choice for consistency of language in the thesis, and also to avoid being labeled as supporter of the Kirmanc or Zaza movement. I discuss the linguistic diversity in Dersim more in sections 1.1 and 4.2.

[21] See also Keskin, Mesut. (2010). "Zazaca üzerine notlar" In *Herkesin Bildiği Sır: Dersim*, edited by Şükrü Aslan. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

[22] Gülsün Fırat is among the academics who claim Dersimlis identify themselves as "Kirmanc"; however, in using this term, she includes only Kurdish and Dersimce speaking Alevis in Dersim, excluding Turkish speaking Alevis. Contrary to her usage, I argue that "Ma Kirmancim" includes Turkish speaking Alevis of Dersim as well. The Kırmanc identity is multilingual and it is inclusive of Kurdish, Dersimce, and Turkish speakers. See Fırat, Gülsün. 2010. "Dersim'de etnik kimlik" In *Herkesin Bildiği Sır: Dersim*, edited by Şükrü Aslan, 143-144. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

[23] The article is signed with an abbreviation, Ş.M.Ş, but I have not found the full name.

people facing towards the West",[24] Dersim comes last in an index of urban life satisfaction, situated 81st out of the 81 Turkish provinces.[25]

Swiss identity, despite being largely accepted by the citizens of Switzerland, does not refer to a homogenous linguistic or religious identity, as is often seen in modern states. Scholars still disagree over how to conceptualise Switzerland as an outlier case: is it a case of civic nationalism, or a multinational state? Is it a case of post-nationalism, or as Habermas defines it "an exemplary case of constitutional patriotism"?[26] Regardless of how it is categorised, Switzerland is a 168-year-old Federal Republic and an established state, whereas Dersim is not. Dersim is a zone of conflict, which marks it as a case of ongoing competition by rival nationalist movements. Explaining the mechanisms of this competition necessitates not only debate regarding how we observe such situations empirically, but also what theoretical explanations we can use.

Through a case study of Dersim, my aim is to unearth rich data and to support a theoretical argument regarding nationalism and ethnicity. Using the case of Dersim, an area where different nationalist movements have neither disappeared nor succeeded in monopolising a collective identity for decades now, I argue that competition persists because nationalist movements interpret and impose concepts of ethnicity and nationalism in order to homogenise inherently heterogeneous communities. As scholars, we must acknowledge this vicious cycle of nationalist domination and detach ourselves from the existing grammar of nationalism in order to explain why there is competition and why it does not result in cohesion in many cases.

Some of the existing theoretical answers to these questions lie in theories of social movements, transnationalism and diaspora, theories of social cleavages and nationalism. Is it the size of Dersim and its community that causes this fragmentation? Are Dersimlis too small to be nation? Or is it the large Dersim community in the Diaspora that competes over Dersim's collective identity, for emotional reasons or political and/or economic rationales? Is it the Turkish state that

[24] Dersim is the highest ranking city in Turkey for literacy and education index, Well-Being Index for Provinces, 2015. 22 January 2016. Available from http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=24561; it also ranks highly regarding other quality of life measures such as "least adolescence birth rate" and "gender equality", Hülya Demirdirek, Ülker Şener. January 2014. 81 İl İçin Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitliği Karnesi. Türkiye Ekonomi Politikaları Araştırma Vakfı (TEPAV). Available from http://www.tepav.org.tr/upload/files/haber/1391012395-8.81_Il_icin_Toplumsal_Cinsiyet_Esitligi_Karnesi___Taslak.pdf.
[25] *Well-Being Index for Provinces, 2015*. 22 January 2016. Available from http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=24561.
[26] Marc Helbling, Nenad Stojanovic. 2011. "Switzerland: challenging the big theories of nationalism" *Nations and Nationalism* no. 17 (4): 712-717, 713.

causes such fragmentation in Dersim society by a "divide and rule" policy to mobilise different groups in Dersim against the strong Kurdish movement? Is it because of the identity movement boom in the post-Cold War period? Can it be that the societal cleavages in Dersim reinforce conflict and division; that the absence of cross-cutting cleavages among Dersimlis make for continuous competition over the meaning of their identity? Understanding the ongoing competition in Dersim since the late 1960s requires discussion over the meanings key terms, such as "nation", or "ethnicity". The unit of analysis, then, is the competition itself; explaining this competition, I argue, is dependent on a full understanding of how competing movements conceptualise notions of nation and ethnicity.

Laitin defines the nation as "a population with a coordinated set of beliefs about their cultural identities … whose representatives claim ownership of a state (or at least an autonomous region within a state) for them by dint of that coordination".[27] He argues that ethnic or national conflicts do not cause civil wars, but rather conflicts *are made* ethnic or national. Banton, agreeing with Laitin, suggests that "ethnic conflict occurs when the ethnic dimension becomes associated with some other tension-generating dimension".[28] A variety of factors interplay in the association between ethnicity and conflict, including psychological, cultural, territorial, historical, and political dimensions that continually re-shape national identity.[29] Laitin accepts that "whatever the costs of cultural heterogeneity, the costs of eliminating cultural heterogeneity … are surely higher".[30] Similarly, Hutchinson acknowledges that "the very strengths of political nationalism—its capacity to construct a permanent apparatus uniting different groups and to channel communal energies towards one single goal—also becomes its weakness".[31] In this way, conflict becomes an internal and continuous presence in nations and nationalism.

In studies of nationalist conflict, we are often faced with issues of homogeneity, which entail the key aspects of ethnicity, culture and language. Ethnicity is defined, similarly to other concepts, such as a common past, common identity, common belief, common language, or even a common territory. And it is often through ethnicity, whether homogeneous or heterogeneous, that we define

[27] Laitin, David D. 2007. *Nations States and Violence*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 40-41.
[28] Elliott D. Green, Michael Banton, Montserrat Guibernau, David Laitin. 2009. "Fifth *Nations and Nationalism* Debate on David Laitin's *Nations, States, and Violence*." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 15 (4): 557-574, 561.
[29] Guibernau, M. Montserrat. 2007. *The identity of nations*. Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity, 11.
[30] Laitin, David D. 2007. *Nations States and Violence*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 112.
[31] Hutchinson, John. "Cultural Nationalism, Elite Mobility and Nation-Building: Communitarian Politics in Modern Ireland." *The British Journal of Sociology* 38, no. 4 (1987): 482-501, 497.

nations. Ethnicity is a fluid concept though; and it often brings conflict and fragmentation, regardless of whether we believe it is a given or constructed phenomenon. My contention is that nationalist movements cause ongoing conflict and competition, and the existing grammar of nationalism complicates theoretical explanation as to why competition never fades.

There is now a body of literature on ethnicity and nationalism that examines ethnicity and nations in a dynamic and processual manner, questioning how they work instead of how they should be defined.[32] Brubaker criticises analysts for adopting "*categories of ethnopolitical practice* as our [analysts'] *categories of social analysis*" (emphasis in original).[33] Instead, he suggests the term *groupism*, which is "the tendency to treat ethnic groups, nations, and races as substantial entities".[34] For Brubaker, ethnic groups, nations and races are not homogeneous entities, rather, they are framed and contested.[35] History, memory, nationality and ethnicity usually involve many readings and interpretations. But sometimes "groupness may *not* happen … [it] may *fail* to crystallise" despite conflict or the efforts of intellectuals.[36] Or, I suggest, in some cases groupness *may* happen, but only to a *limited* extent that prevents particpants from successfully homogenising a community, but it then triggers new groupisms that further fragment that community. Therefore, the question is not only how ethnicity works, but also how ethnicity may work to cause fragmentation and competition.

Tilley identifies two types of ethnic movements: inflationary and reconstructive. Inflationary ethnic movements are those that "intensify ethnic divisions in a population largely united by common values, lifestyles and interest", whereas reconstructive ethnic movements are those that "redefine the political position of an already distinct cultural segment".[37] Both inflationary and reconstructive ethnic movements "mimic each other superficially in their methods"[38] but it is the modern state that fosters further ethnic tensions and divisions. Tilley writes:

> We must be honest: the researcher almost inevitably brings a bias to the study of ethnic movements, tending to see them as reconstructive or inflationary depending

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[32] Brubaker, Rogers. "Ethnicity, Race, and Nationalism." *Annual Review of Sociology* 35 (2009): 21-42, 29.

[33] Brubaker, Rogers. 2004. *Ethnicity Without Groups*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 10.

[34] Ibid., 10.

[35] Ibid., 8.

[36] Ibid., 12.

[37] Tilley, Virginia. 1997. "The terms of the debate: untangling language about ethnicity and ethnic movements." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* no. 20 (3): 497-522, 509.

[38] Ibid., 510.

on his or her political views, beliefs and/or theoretical orientation.[39] … But beyond such biases, researchers inevitably rely, as they should, on the knowledge and experience they draw from their case study or regional specialisation.[40]

In answering the epistemological question of how we know what we know, my ontological position is somewhat multifaceted. On the one hand, I am a realist in the sense that I believe that nations cannot be built out of all cultural substrata. On the other hand, from a constructivist perspective, I accept that collective identity and nationalism are phenomena in continuous production and I am examining different versions of social realities that are "historically situated and entangled in power relationships".[41] Constructivism, while not a guide to outcomes, is a guide to the activities I focus on in this thesis, but the competition is not only among intellectuals, having also sociological roots as well as physical outcomes, such as violent conflict. In this study, I suggest taking a step backwards to criticise this inter-subjectivity with a somewhat realist approach by accepting that the roots of nations and nationalism are naturally-occurring and can be identified empirically. That is, nation-builders do encounter real limits to their ambitions and cannot simply impose their conceptions of nationhood on all societies without significant modification.

I argue that it is this nationalist perspective *per se* that defines communities based on their "ethnic" identities and distinguishes societies by their religious or linguistic character, which causes and maintains competition in communities that cannot be characterised by a sense of homogeneous ethnic belonging. Meanwhile, as much as I try to detach myself not only from the existing and conflicting discourses over Dersim's collective identity, as the researcher, I may have been reinforcing it. I recognise this "intellectualist bias", as Pierre Bourdieu calls it, which might cause analysts "to construe the world as a *spectacle* … to miss entirely the *differentia specifica* of the logic of practice".[42] I discuss issues of self-reflexivity and dig into the methods in Chapter 1.3.

1.3   Methods

The literature on the Dersim 1937-38 issue has been growing over recent years. Numerous works, scholarly or otherwise, have been produced regarding the Dersim issue by commentators

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[39] Tilley, Virginia. 1997. "The terms of the debate: untangling language about ethnicity and ethnic movements." Ethnic and Racial Studies no. 20 (3): 497-522, 515.

[40] Ibid., 516.

[41] Weeden, Lisa. 2009. "Ethnography as Interpretive Enterprise." In *Political Ethnography What Immerson Contributes to the Study of Power*, edited by Edward Schatz, 75-95. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 80.

[42] Pierre Bourdieu, Loic J. D. Wacquant. 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 39.

who I term "the Dersim intelligentsia". Their work consists of books, novels, documentaries, music, and civil society organisations. In addition, there have been multiple events, such as festivals, commemorations or meetings, organised by these civil society institutions. Despite the abundant activities on Dersim, there is no fixed definition of or agreement regarding the nature of Dersim's collective identity. Quite to the contrary, there are contradictory, if not openly opposing, views on these issues. Different factions also openly accuse each other of distorting Dersim's historical, cultural, and sociological reality.

Despite being a Turkish citizen, as Dersimlis also are, I was still an outsider to Dersim, being a non-Dersimli, non-Kurdish/Dersimce speaker, and non-Alevi. One disadvantage of my outsider status was that my knowledge was based on research and individual readings. As such, Dersim was a complex political and ideological battleground that was difficult to fully comprehend. One can easily fall into a trap of reading or hearing the same line of argument, and fail to understand the variety of interpretations. Or else, reading opposing definitions of Dersim's collective memory and identity was so puzzling. However, not having a prior personal stance on the Dersim issue was an advantage in some ways: it allowed me to engage with people espousing different views without facing prejudice or being prejudiced.

I used three methods to examine the mechanisms through which competition on Dersim's collective identity is maintained by nationalist movements. First and foremost, I interviewed the intelligentsia of the movements in Dersim. Second, I examined secondary data, such as books, novels, journals and documentaries. Third, and to a lesser extent, I conducted political ethnography. With this data triangulation, I was able to combine and verify or refute the information I had collected from my interviewees, documents, and also from the field.

1.3.1 Interviews

It is no longer only historians who determine what happened in the past, but also "activists, politicians, citizens, artists, film producers, media magnates, custodians of museums, and many other experts".[43] Elites produce[44], imagine[45], or invent[46] the nation, leading to "interpretive battles"

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[43] Assmann, Aleida. 'Transformations between History and Memory', *Social Research,* 75 (2008), 49-72, 54.

[44] Nora, Pierre. 1996. "General introduction: Between memory and history." In *Realms of memory: Rethinking the French Past*, edited by Lawrence D. Kritzman Pierre Nora. New York: Columbia University Press.

[45] Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Revised ed. London: Verso.

[46] Terence O. Ranger, Eric J. Hobsbawm. 1992. *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

over the past.[47] Following a brief review of discussions on Dersim, I present the views of the Dersim intelligentsia, who are the producers of the competition itself.

I conducted 56 interviews (Appendix 2), 55 of them being face-to-face, one being a written interview responded by email. I began conducting interviews in the spring of 2014, and my last interview took place in February 2015. The interviews took place in different parts of Turkey (Istanbul, Eskişehir, Ankara, and Dersim) and Europe (Brussels, Cologne, Stuttgart, Munich, Hannover, Berlin, Geneva, and Zurich). I received oral consent from my interviewees, and turned the recorder off when asked, or I discarded content that they did not want me to use in my research. With only a few exceptions, my interviews were voice recorded, and for those few who did not want interviews to be recorded, I took notes. The notes and oral records, all in Turkish, were transcribed in their original version. I only translated the parts quoted in this dissertation. The interviews were semi-structured, designed in conversational style and they usually lasted one to two hours, depending on how detailed interviewees' answers were. Each interviewee is given a number and referred to as Interviewee # throughout the dissertation for their anonymity.

In selecting my interviewees, I relied on my primary research on the Dersim issue. As such, I wanted to interview those who were known for their views and various works on Dersim 1937-38 as a subject matter. Some names immediately arose among musicians, novelists, politicians, and academicians. I made a list of these names, based on what they do (i.e., politicians, civil society organisation administrators, authors, lawyers, filmmakers or musicians). I then selected those from each profession whose views on Dersim's collective memory and identity seemed to contradict each other. I also included people who lived in the Diaspora, since my literature review showed that the Diaspora was an important element in discussions over the Dersim issue. My interviewees came from various age groups, professions, and organisational and/or ideological connections. I began with a list of names and through snowball sampling I reached others.

The Dersim community is a small one, and Dersimlis have strong community ties, despite their disagreements on political matters. I gave my interviewees oral information about myself and the research that I was conducting. As I conducted more interviews, it became less necessary to

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[47] Neveu, Erik. 2014. Memory Battles over May '68: Interpretive Struggles as Cultural Re-Play of Social Movements. In *Conceptualizing Culture in Socual Movement Researcg*, edited by Priska Daphi Britta Baumgarten, Peter Ullrich: Palgrave Macmillan.

introduce myself: they already knew me, and what had transpired in previous interviews. I began these semi-structured interviews either by requesting personal information from my interviewees, such as where and when they were born or what their mother tongue was, or by asking for their opinion or ideas on Dersim's collective memory and identity. I asked them how they defined Dersim's collective identity and collective memory of the 1937-38 events. Then, I asked them how they had become politicised, what kinds of studies they had conducted on Dersim, and why they defined Dersim's collective identity the way they did. I also asked them about their opinions regarding the politicisation of the Dersim issue, what they thought about the collective Dersim identity, and how they viewed the role of the Diaspora. Conducting semi-structured interviews allowed me to ask the questions that I had prepared before, but this approach also allowed my respondents to reflect more freely on their ideas, memories and personal life histories as they wished.

As a researcher, I was not only listening to life stories but also co-constructing them.[48] My interviews were, in a way, a "co-produced identity performance".[49] All interviewees showed respect and admiration for my academic identity as a PhD candidate from a foreign university. I often felt that they wanted to convince me that their approach to Dersim's collective identity was the right one. To avoid this self-reflexivity issue, I often told my interviewees that I had no preconception as to what Dersim's collective identity was, but that I was willing to find out through my research. In many interviews, I referred to a view opposing the one an interviewee was explaining, saying, "Ok, I will play devil's advocate here, but some people oppose your views". I did this to elicit a reaction to views that did not concur with their own. From these reactions, I was able to deduce the level of competition over the different approaches to Dersim's collective identity. Although I heard opposing arguments raised by my interviewees, whom would turn to backbiting or even harsh accusations at times, I simply chose to nod in a non-judgmental manner and not to comment.

1.3.2   Written Documents

The second set of data I used in this research were primary and secondary written sources, such as books on Dersim, printed or online newspaper articles and opinion columns, websites, and novels. Particularly for Chapters 5 and 6, I relied on written documents. For Chapter 5, I researched

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[48] Essers, Caroline. 2009. "Reflections on the Narrative Approach: Dilemmas of Power, Emotions and Social Location While Constructing Life-Stories." *Organization Articles* no. 16 (2):163-181.
[49] Godwin, Sandra E. 2001. "Book Review: Storylines: Craftartists' Narratives of Identity." *Contemporary Sociology* no. 30 (5): 542-544.

and compared two journals that functioned as organisational propaganda tools in the 1990s, and reviewed websites of Diaspora organisations and written comments on their functions. Chapter 6 presents a detailed analysis of the novels that use the events of Dersim 1937-38 in their storylines.

I began reading novels about Dersim out of curiosity, due to my interest in the Dersim issue after I had started this research. I found the novels, all published in Turkish,[50] in bookstores and online booksellers; some I found in second-hand booksellers; and some were gifted to me from the personal libraries of Dersimli acquaintances. With only a few exceptions, these books could be categorised as historical fiction.[51] I supported my analysis of this body of literature with additional sources, such as the forewords to the novels, reviews of these books or interviews with their authors. I also used interviews I had already conducted, prior to my reading, with certain authors and publishers of these novels. As I read more, I realised how political much of the work was: most plots addressed the same stories of the Dersim 1937-38 ethnic cleansing. I ended my analysis with the most recently released books, published in June 2015, but these will surely not be the last publications on the issue: Dersim 1937-38 has become the subject of much popular interest and so writers are likely to continue to address these tragic events far into the future.

In terms of other source material, I supported my argument regarding organisational competition over Dersim with two sets of data. First were the archives of the journals *Özgür Gelecek* (meaning "Free Future") and *Özgür Halk* (meaning "Free People"). I limited my research to two years: from 1993, when the illegal Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) intensified its activities in Dersim, to 1994, when the Turkish government began its military operation in Dersim. These journals present important data that allows one to see concrete evidence of the divisions between these two illegal groups in Dersim. I accessed the journals in the İsmail Beşikçi Library in Istanbul. Both journals were legal publications, with official copyright pages; nonetheless they were strongly linked to illegal organisations,[52] namely TİKKO (Turkish Workers and Peasants Liberation Army) (*Özgür*

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[50] I excluded the novels that are published in languages other than Turkish, such as Dersimce and Kurdish, since these books are less popular and audiences also have less access to these books. Also, Kurdish or Dersimce books do not show significant differences in terms of context, storyline, or definition of Dersim 1937-38 memory and identity.

[51] There are numerous books about Dersim 1937-38, which are mainly narrations of the oral history research conducted by the authors/researchers. Examples of such books are Yıldız, Celal. 2003. *Dersim Dile Geldi 1938'in Çocukları Konuştu*. Istanbul: Tij Yayınları; Yağan, Emirali. 2013. *Dersim Defterleri Beyaz Dağda Bir Gün*. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları. Although they involve some narration, I did not include those books in novel category. These are, in my opinion, documentary novels.

[52] I am using the form of identification used by my interviewees and not my own value-judgements. The majority of my respondents as well as the Dersimli community I encountered during fieldwork refer to illegal organisations, such as the

Gelecek) and the PKK (*Özgür Halk*), at least ideologically. Both journals continue to be published today, although there have been disruptions over the years, neither having changed their ideological stance.

I also searched the websites of Dersim organisations in Europe, and articles about the festivals that the European Federation of Dersim Associations (FDG) and the Association of Reconstruction of Dersim (DYİC) organise in the Diaspora. I viewed posters of these events online, and I searched through videos and photographs taken at these festivals to note any differences in symbols (e.g., on flags or banners) used.

1.3.3   Ethnography

As I was searching through written documents and conducting in-depth interviews with Dersim's intelligentsia, I also began, to a lesser extent, to conduct a political ethnography. Here, I use political ethnography following Wolford, who espouses "the need for (and practice of) ethnographic investigations of politics, where elections and states are no longer the privileged site of political life, rather *people* are".[53] However, I went beyond only using face-to-face contact or participant observer methods on-the-ground: I also sought to develop a "sensibility" where I attempted to understand "the meanings that the people under study attribute to their social and political reality".[54] I visited the city of Dersim several times, which allowed me to better comprehend the dynamics of its politics and society. I was already familiar, from my prior research, that there were competing movements in Dersim. However, through political ethnography, I was able to collect more evidence through conversations, participant observation, and passive observation of interaction. Political ethnography allowed me "direct contact with political processes" rather than solely relying on the information I had collected from interviews with the Dersim intelligentsia or the written records I overviewed.[55]

PKK or the TİKKO, as guerrilla movements or legitimate nationalist revivals. This is a conscious choice for consistency of language as here and elsewhere in this thesis, I refer to these as insurgent organisations.

[53] Wolford, Wendy. 2007. "From Confusion to Common Sense: Using Political Ethnography to Understand Social Mobilization in the Brazilian Northeast." In *New Perspectives in Politicak Ethnography*, edited by Matthew Mahler Lauren Joseph, Javier Auyero, 14-36. New York: Springer, 19.

[54] Schatz, Edward. 2009. "Ethnographic Immersion and the Study of Politics." In *Political Ethnography What Immerson Contributes to the Study of Power*, edited by Edward Schatz, 1-22. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 5.

[55] Tilly, Charles. 2007. "Afterword: Political Ethnography as Art and Science." In *New Perspectives In Political Ethnography*, edited by Matthew Mahler Lauren Joseph, Javier Auyero, 247-251. New York: Springer.

My first visit to Dersim was in June 2014 for a conference, followed by visits in August 2014, November 2015, March 2015, and finally in May 2015 (Table 1). Dersim's political climate after the June 2015 elections in Turkey became increasingly tense, with the rise of military controls and illegal activities in the region, along with other parts of southeastern Turkey.

Table 1 Visits to Dersim and events in which I participated

Date	Event
June 2014	1st Anatolia Trauma Studies Days
July-August 2015	14th Munzur Nature and Culture Festival
November 2015	Remembrance Day for Seyyid Rıza's execution
March 2015	Newroz
May 2015	Remembrance Day for the Dersim (1937-38) Genocide

During these visits I observed and participated in political activities and debates on many occasions. The Anatolia Trauma Studies Days in Dersim was a lively two-day conference that addressed the mainly the psychological, social, and cultural impacts of trauma, with a special emphasis on Dersim historicity. I was a panellist in this conference, giving a talk on Dersim 1937-38 in literary works. At the 14th Munzur Festival, I observed how both legal and illegal leftist and Kurdish organisations openly found voice in the region. This was the latest Munzur Festival to have taken place at the time of writing.[56] My next visit was to the Memorial Day for Seyyid Rıza[57], in the Seyyid Rıza Square in Tunceli city centre, where people gave short speeches and lit candles in memory of the Dersimli leader and victims of Dersim 1937-38. During Newroz celebrations, I visited Dersim once again. Newroz is almost a "national day" for the Kurds in Turkey, and the Tunceli municipality organised the celebrations. Finally in May, I joined a group of people in Dersim as they visited a ruined house in the village of Hozat, where Dersimlis were reportedly "burnt alive" in 1937-38. This was a commemoration of the Dersim 1937-38, where deputy candidates, local leaders, administrators of local organisations, and Dersimli people took part. On all of these occasions, as I

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[56] The 15th Munzur Festival was cancelled in memory of the 33 civilians who were killed in the Suruç terror attack on 20 July 2015. The 15th Munzur Festival took place in 28-31 July 2016.

[57] Seyyid Rıza was a tribal chief and religious cleric in Dersim, known for his rebellious character from the state perspective, and his resistance for the Dersimlis from the local perspective.

observed people's appearances or activities (if they wore Diyarbakır or Dersimi *puşi*, or if they were playing Kurdish music or authentic Dersim music) and listened to many, often conflicting, speeches made by leaders of various organisations, it became clearer to me that there are conflicts even in the simplest definitions of Dersim's memory and identity both of the past and for today.

During my fieldwork, I established close relationships with members of the Dersimli community, which allowed me to communicate informally and gain more insight regarding ongoing discussions over the Dersim issue. I visited Dersim frequently and on most important occasions, such as commemoration days. Many times, Dersimlis jokingly asked me if I was a "spy"; humorously, they wondered if I was from the CIA, KGB, MOSSAD or MIT. Having maintained contact with Dersimlis, I often hear questions about how my research is going and if I have used material from the interviews I conducted with them.

In some societies competition may strengthen the nation: this has not been the case in Dersim. With this case study, I argue that existing theories cannot explain *why* there is only competition between nationalist movements with no unified identity as the outcome. This is because extant theories take a modern approach in explaining what constitutes an "ethnic" identity. The existing movements that compete in Dersim fail because ethno-lingual perceptions of ethnic/national identities cannot explain multi-lingual, multi-cultural, heterogeneous, and pre-modern communities. The existing empirical literature on Dersim as a political topic is very limited, often non-standard and based on the personal judgements of researchers. Therefore, besides its theoretical contribution, this research endeavours to contribute empirically to existing studies of Dersim.

1.4   Thesis Structure

To summarise, this chapter has suggested that modern definitions of nation and ethnic movements based on linguistic homogeneity trigger continuous competition in heterogenous, multilingual societies. It introduced the case of Dersim as an excellent example for supporting this argument, as it has been a zone of conflict for several decades and, despite this ongoing competition, nationalist movements' attempts to homogenise have never succeeded. The introduction chapter also discussed tools and techniques I used to analyse this single case study. In doing so, it examined different empirical aspects to explain why there is competition and through which mechanisms this competition is practiced.

The subsequent chapters are organised as follows: Chapter 2 reviews some of the theoretical discussions on why there is competition and why it may trigger new conflicts instead of a definitive result. In doing so, it looks at theories of social movements, transnationalism and the diaspora, social cleavages, and most importantly, theories of nationalism and ethnicity. Chapter 3 examines the history of Dersim as a conflict zone. It first reviews the political history of Dersim from the Ottoman Empire until the 1937-38 act of the Turkish Republic. Then, it reviews how existing literature competes over how to define Dersim's collective identity. Based on this historical and literature review, I claim that Dersim is a case of continuous competition, both physically and ideologically.

Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 deliver the empirical findings regarding the mechanisms of competition over the collective identity of Dersim, and how ethno-linguistic perceptions of national identity create and maintain this competition between different movements. Chapter 4 focuses on the life histories of the intelligentsia I interviewed. The chapter aims to show how the Dersim intelligentsia disagrees on how to define Dersim's collective identity, despite their obvious personal similarities in terms of their sociological backgrounds, childhoods and politicisation stories. Chapter 5 analyses the political milieu in Dersim over the years, where one observes a tension between the leftist ideology and the Kurdish movement, followed by rival identity movements mushrooming from within Turkey and the Diaspora in the 1990s onwards. Chapter 6 observes how, over time, organisational competition has shifted from illegal leftist organisations in Turkey to legal identity movements, with Diaspora actors becoming increasingly important. Chapter 7 reveals changes in how the collective memory and identity of Dersim have been represented in fiction. It analyses novels and short stories written about Dersim 1937-38, considering literary work as cultural tool-kits: products of the interplay between the intelligentsia, political context and organisational networks. Chapter 8 concludes with an overview of the empirical findings and theory, and then suggests avenues for further research.

2

Competition: Theoretical Perspectives

2.1   Introduction

This chapter focuses on theories of social movements, the diaspora, cross-cutting cleavages, nationalism and ethnicity to explore various explanations for the causes and mechanisms of ongoing competition within movements. By doing so, it begins to unpack theoretically the empirical puzzle of this research, that is, why do we see identity movements that neither fail and disappear nor succeed in monopolising identity in Dersim? Why does competition bring new emerging movements and more fragmentation? Is Dersim too small to be a nation? Do competing movements lack economic or political resources to succeed? What role does the Dersim Diaspora play in framing this competition? Does the 'divide and rule' policy of the central Turkish state promote cultural cleavages to split Dersim society? Is it the absence of cross-cutting cleavages in Dersim that cause the failure of these competing movements to dominate the collective identity of Dersim? Does the transition from class movements to identity movements cause this competition? What is the role of nationalism and ethnicity in this struggle?

I will argue that the various theories that seek to explain splits and competition within movements are stuck in an "ethnicity" approach that is "treated in [a] purely categorical way", as Calhoun describes it.[58] The existing theoretical literature often falls into the same trap of using the concepts of ethnicity, culture, language and religion to explain heterogeneous societies. As a result, the theoretical approaches mostly explain *how* competition takes place but do not answer the question of *why* there is competition. Empirically, likewise, different—and constantly emerging—identity movements seek success by using the same lines of arguments as other identity movements do. I argue that the more identity movements fail to comprehend pre-national collective mentalities and identities, the more competition emerges.

2.2   Too small to be a nation?

Is Dersim too small to be a nation? Can this be the reason why competing movements in Dersim fail to succeed? This can hardly be the case as Dersim is not any smaller than many other

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[58] Calhoun, Craig. 1993. "Nationalism and Ethnicity." *Annual Review of Sociology* no. 19:211-239, 228-229-231.

small nations, including Monaco, Malta, or Singapore. The city of Tunceli covers an area of 888 km^2 with around 80,000 inhabitants. The number of Dersimlis in Turkey and in the Diaspora exceeds this number, as over 80,000 Dersimlis live in Istanbul, and around 300,000 Dersimlis live in Europe.[59] Dersim is known to be an area where various insurgent groups, including radical leftists or nationalist movements, are well organised with significant material and human resources. Dersim is not an ideal-typical nation-state, but neither does it necessarily fit into the Turkish state, of which it is a part; nor does it fit in with other nationalist movements, i.e. Kurdish nationalism, for that matter. Dersim is a unique region: Dersimlis in the past used to call it *Welat Desimo* (Dersim Land) or *Hardo Dewres* (Land of the Dervish).

Weber defines the ideal legal-rational state as "a human community that claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory".[60] Territories, or spaces, are internal parts of nationalist politics. Nation-states entail homogenisation as they are, as Giddens defines them, "territorially bounded administrative unit[ies]".[61] State-making policies involve "place-making strategies", where central administrations predominantly target, or ignore, certain regions within their territories.[62] In return, "the specific social, economic, and political characteristics of the regions" all suffer, leading a region to become backwards, non-modern, or tribal in the eyes of a central authority.[63] There is then a dual relationship between space making and state making. Space becomes a "produced and constitutive social reality" more than a physical place.[64]

From the 1930s onwards, the Turkish state regarded Dersim as a backward region. Aiming to "modernise" it, Turkish officers planned to turn "backwards" Dersim into "second Switzerland"[65] by re-mapping Dersim "from the ground-up-to integrate its physical and human landscape into the imagined nation-state via whatever means necessary".[66] The centuries-old social, cultural, political,

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[59] Istanbul'da hangi ilden kaç kişi yaşıyor? Available from http://www.cilagazete.com/istanbulda-kac-dersimli-yasiyor-tuik-acikladi/.html.

[60] Weber, Max. 1991 [1948]. "Politics as a Vocation." In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, edited by C. Wright Mills Hans Heinrich Gerth. London: Routledge.

[61] Giddens, Anthony. 1985. *The nation-state and violence. A contemporary critique of historical materialism* Vol. 2. London: Polity.

[62] Gündoğan, Azat Zana. 2011. "Space, state-making and contentious Kurdish politics in the East of Turkey: The case of Eastern Meetings 1967." Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies no. 13 (4):389-416.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid., 393.

[65] Watts, Nicole. 2000. "Relocating Dersim: Turkish State-Building and Kurdish Resistance, 1931-1938." New Perspectives on Turkey, no 23: 5-30, 5.

[66] Ibid., 8.

and economic structure of Dersim was redesigned by the Turkish state beginning from the 1930s, and Dersimlis were now expected to be the loyal citizens of the Turkish republic by speaking proper Turkish, paying taxes and sending their offspring to do military service. They were expected to be proper Turkish citizens, or as Üstel puts it, "appropriate citizens".[67]

Gellner argues that ethnic homogeneity and common education is a precondition for nations and their economic success.[68] On the one hand, Dersim has long been an autonomous region in deprivation, with no significant industry, farming or breeding. This has been the case during the Ottoman period and Turkish republican era. On the other hand, Dersim did not have a central figure or authority to define a homogeneous, national Dersimli identity. As I will argue in more details in Chapter 2.6, Dersim's collective identity has been a pre-national one with multiple religious and linguistic features.

So it is not the size of Dersim but its fragmented political context that makes it a failed or *failing* case of nationalist competition. Since the Ottoman era, Dersim has been a zone of conflict and beginning from the 1960s it became a contested ground for insurgent movements. Social movements, including the left, the Kurds, the Alevis or the Zazas have been mobilising, recruiting organisational resources and people in Dersim for decades now. In doing so, these movements have built upon Dersim's traumatic collective memory of 1937-38 and have narrated Dersim's insurgent collective identity, framing Dersimlis' so-called "rebellion and resistance" against the Turkish state during 1937-38. As the number of insurgent movements increased in this small province, the fragmentation also increased, which caused more competition rather than a coherent movement that is able to dominate Dersim's collective identity.

2.3   Social movement theories

In the case of Dersim, we see what Massicard terms "polymorphous and divided"[69] movements that at times ally and at other times struggle against each other. Social movement theories provide a useful approach to understand the economic, political, and cultural conditions under which these split movements emerge, the mechanisms through which they operate, the national and transnational dynamics affecting these movements as well as their outcomes. In order

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[67] Üstel, Füsun. 2009. *Makbul Vatandaşın Peşinde: II. Meşrutiyet'ten Bugüne Vatandaşlık Eğitimi.* Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
[68] Gellner, Ernest. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
[69] Massicard, Elise. 2013. *The Alevis in Turkey and Europe*. Oxon: Routledge, 33.

to understand why there is ongoing competition among movements in Dersim, this section will look more into identity frames and movement outcomes according to social movement theories, examining how social movements diffuse, split, or spin-off new and alternative movements and identity frames.[70]

Movements emerge due to several factors, including "the availability of adequate organisational resources, the ability of movement leaders to produce appropriate ideological representations, and the presence of a favourable political context", according to Della Porta and Diani.[71] Once they develop, initiator movements play a role in the rise of new movements in different ways, such as providing organisational structures, adding tactics to new movements' repertoires, and constructing new ideologies and frames for new movements. [72] Staggenborg defines the role of movements in creating allied or opposing movements as "mobilisation outcomes".[73] By this, he underlines that movements create new movements, either in support or opposition to the initial movement itself. The outcomes of initiator movements can be "social movement spillover"[74], where initiator movements guide other movements. Alternatively, initiator movements can cause spin-off movements, where new movements emerge by splitting from the master logic of the initiator movement through "cultural innovations whose diffusion gives the protest cycle its characteristics, shape, and momentum", in the words of Mayer and Whittier.[75]

Whittier suggests that "the personnel or organisations of one movement may affect another movement through direct contact, or the changes that one movement brings about in the larger social movement sector, culture, or political opportunities may indirectly affect other movements".[76] The interplay of political opportunity structures, cultural opportunities or

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[70] McAdam, Doug. 1995. "Initiator and Spin-Off Movements: Diffusion Processes in Protest Cycles." In *Repertoires and Cycles of Collective Action*, edited by Mark Traugott. Durham: Duke University Press.

[71] Donatella Della Porta, Mario Diani. 2007. *Social Movements an Introduction*. Malden, MA and London: Blackwell Publishing, 63.

[72] Whittier, Nancy. 2004. "The consequences of social movements for each other." In *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, edited by David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule and Hanspeter Kriesi, 531-552. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

[73] Staggenborg, Suzanne. 1986. "Coalition Work in the Pro-Choice Movement: Organisational and Environmental Oppostunities and Obstacles." *Social Problems* no. 33 (5): 374-390.

[74] David Mayer, Nancy Whittier. "Social Movement Spillover." *Social Problems* 41, no. 2 (1994): 277-98.

[75] Ibid., 236.

[76] Whittier, Nancy. 2004. "The consequences of social movements for each other." In *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, edited by David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule and Hanspeter Kriesi, 531-552. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 532.

constraints, and the targeting of audiences are important in explaining how various factors shape, characterise, and determine the continuity of identity frames.[77]

Beginning from the 1960s, the leftist movement in Turkey was home to insurgents from various groups, including students, workers, Kurds, Turks, Alevis, and Dersimlis. Even the left, as I will discuss more in Chapters 5 and 6, was not one entity but split into many factions. The Kurdish movement, and namely the PKK itself, emerged from the left. The so-called "Turkish left" and Kurdish movement have been simultaneously active since the 1970s. Arguably, the PKK split from the leftist ideology to take a more nationalistic route in the 1980s and 1990s, putting ethnic Kurdish identity at the hub of their struggle.

With the impact of their discontent with the Kurdish movement, Alevi supporters of the PKK were mobilised both in Turkey and in the Diaspora, through to the end of the 1980s and especially from the 1990s onwards. Increasingly self-aware of their religious identity, Alevis felt threatened by the overwhelmingly Sunni elements in the identity of the Kurds in Turkey.[78] This was followed by a Zaza split from the Kurdish and Alevi movements to form a new movement focusing on their ethno-linguistic identity. Zazas, and later Kirmancs, argued that their identity was not a variation of Kurdishness (nor was Zaza or Kirmanc language a variety of Kurdish) but a discrete ethnic identity. At the same time, however, all the movements aforementioned frequently used discourses from leftist ideology. They were fragmenting but not failing.

Frames and discourses play an important role in identity formation processes in social movements.[79] "Movement culture", as Staggenborg calls it, is a collection of symbols, rituals, values and ideology that is not only shared but also created within a movement to form the collective identity of the movement.[80] Emphasising the fluidity and on-going nature of the term identity, Melucci uses a verb, "to identise" instead of the noun, "identity".[81] If social movements and identities are processes, as opposed to objects, then identity formation is also a course of action

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[77] Robert D. Benford, David A. Snow 2000. "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology* no. 26: 611-639, 628.

[78] Joost Jongerden, 'Violation of Human Rights and the Alevis in Turkey', in *Turkey's Alevi Enigma*, ed. by Joost Jongerden Paul Joseph White (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 71-97.

[79] Ibid.; see also ; Snow, David A., Doug McAdam. 2000. "Identity work proceses in the context of social movement: clarifying the identity/movement nexus." In *Self, Identity, and Social Movements*, edited by Timothy J. Owens Sheldon Stryker, Robert W. White. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

[80] Staggenborg, Suzanne. 1998. "Social Movement Communities and Cycles of Protest: The Emergence and Maintenance of a Local Women's Movement." *Social Problems* no. 45 (2): 180-204, 182.

[81] Melucci, Alberto. 1989. *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

and should be defined as *identisation*. McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly call this process an "identity mechanism", which is subject to change and contestation. Politicisation of a collective identity is not an "all-or nothing or on-off phenomenon", in the words of Simon and Klamendars.[82] Framing takes place in stages, such as an increasing awareness of the identity (e.g., from common grievances), identification of a common enemy, struggle for power, and the involvement of third parties (e.g., the larger community). An outcome of this struggle is that identity frames take multiple directions within these movement processes. "Strategic framing" implies the "conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action".[83] Competing social movements have competing strategic framings, but they are also in interaction with each other.

Dersim has had a unique place in this movement competition since the late 1960s, as it holds elements from the Turkish left, as well as ethno-religious and ethno-linguistic mobilisations, such as the Kurdish movement, the Alevi renaissance, and the Zaza and Kirmanc movements. Each competing movement put forward a new identity frame, strategically framing Dersim's collective memory and identity. As a result, Dersim 1937-38 and Dersim's ethnic identity has been defined in different ways in different time periods and by different movements, shifting, on the one hand, from rebellion to massacre, and on the other hand, from Turk to Kurd, Alevi to Zaza, Kirmanc, and lately Crypto-Armenian. Social movement theories are useful to highlight these processes and mechanisms, yet they do not explain the reasons why, in some cases, social movements continue to split and compete without succeeding or failing.

Both domestic and transnational dynamics play a role in shaping conflict over national and ethnic identities. As much as structural factors, such as the changing economics, politics, and society in Turkey, the Diaspora community living in Europe also played a key role in sparking "long-distance nationalism".[84] Kaya classifies three approaches of diaspora identities. The first approach views a diaspora as a societal category beyond the nation-state both politically and economically. The

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[82] Brian Simon, Bert Klamendars 2004. "Politicized Collective Identity: A Social Psychological Analysis." In *Political Psychology*, edited by Jim Sidanius John T. Jost, 449-465. New York: Psychology Press, 455.

[83] Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, Mayer N. Zald. 1996. *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movement: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*. New York: Cambridge University Press; see also McCarthy, John D. 1997. "The Globalization of Social Movement Theory." In *Transnational Social Movement and Global Politics*, edited by Charles Chatfield Jackie Smith, Ron Pagnucco. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

[84] Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. 1992. *Long-Distance Nationalism. World Capialism and the Rise of Identity Politics*. Amsterdam: Centre for Asian Studies Amsterdam.

second approach views a diaspora as a new form of identity and consciousness, forming a new community away from the homeland. This last approach, which this study takes, focuses on the mechanisms of identity and culture production by the Dersim Diaspora.[85] The next section asks whether the Diaspora community can be the cause of movement competition in Dersim.

2.4 The role of the Diaspora

The third possibility that causes ongoing competition without a definitive success or failure in Dersim is that the movements in Dersim are divided because most of its leading individuals and organisations work and live in the Diaspora. Safran identifies several common characteristics of Diaspora communities, such as being dispersed from their original homeland and retaining a collective memory of that homeland, feeling partly alienated in their host communities, and being committed to restoration of their original homeland through "ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity".[86] As Esman puts it, diaspora communities "remain socially and culturally in the homeland that they have left behind".[87] Due to this in-betweenness, Diaspora communities also formulate "a conception of identity which lives in and through … hybridity" and the Diaspora serves as a "dialogic space wherein identity is negotiated".[88] These hybrid identities also function as new movements that re-formulate and re-shape the identity politics of home countries. Cohen describes it as the ability of diaspora communities to "mobilise a collective identity … in solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries".[89]

Access to neo-liberal economics—and thus capital[90]—and the cultural resources supplied by it, such as cultural rights and education,[91] are key factors that give Diasporas their enormous power over the economy, politics, and culture of a home country. Diasporas may cause or influence ethnic conflicts either financially (supply of money), militarily (supply of weaponry) or politically (support for certain political parties).[92] Panossian's study is a good example that discusses the role of Diaspora

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[85] Kaya, Ayhan. 2004. "Political Participation Strategies of the Circassian Diaspora in Turkey". *Mediterranean Politics* no 9(2):221-239.

[86] Safran, William. 1991. "Diaspora in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return." *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, no 1(1): 83-99, 83-84.

[87] Esman, Milton J. 2009. *Diasporas in the Contemporary World* Cambridge: Polity Press, 121.

[88] Jana Evans Braziel, Anita Mannur. 2003. *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 5.

[89] Cohen, Robin. 2008. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge, 7.

[90] Hall, Stuart. 1997. "The Local and Global: Globalization and Ethnicity." In *Dangerous Liaisons*, edited by Aamir Mufti Anne McClintock, Ella Shohat, 173-187. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 10.

[91] Leezenberg, Michiel. 2003. "Kurdish Alevis and the Kurdish Nationalist Movement in the 1990s." In *Turkey's Alevi Enigma*, edited by Joost Jongerden Paul J. White. Leiden: Brill.

[92] Esman, Milton J. 2009. *Diasporas in the Contemporary World* Cambridge: Polity Press.

in re-formulating Armenian national identity.[93] His study suggests that the Armenian Diaspora has played a key role by culturally and financially organising support for Armenian identity. The diaspora has kept Armenian identity alive and helped Armenians reformulate their national identity.[94] We can talk about a similar impact of the Diaspora on reformulating Dersim's identity, but it has not been as bonding or strengthening as in the Armenian case.

There is no consensus on whether the Diaspora or Turkey was the triggering factor most influential on the Kurdish, Alevi, Zaza, or Kirmanc movements. The Kurdish movement has mostly developed its organisational network in the Diaspora, mainly in Germany, stating "German soil became a setting in which to wage a battle for a Kurdish state".[95] Though not as a separatist movement, the Alevi community also mobilised in the Diaspora, transforming Alevi religiosity into Alevism as a new identity movement. Sökefeld suggests that the Alevi migration to Europe was "perhaps the most important" factor for the flourishing of the Alevi movement.[96] Although the Diasporic atmosphere allowed former leftists organisational opportunities, it also caused diffusion of the Turkish left. Sökefeld writes:

> In the early 1960s the first Alevis came as 'guest workers' to Germany, and in the late 1970s they were joined by an increasing number of political refugees, most of them various kinds of 'Marxists of Alevi descent'. I use this expression because most of these people probably would not have designated themselves simply as Alevis at that time.[97]

The activities of the Berlin Dersim Community (BDC) are an example of the role of elites in constructing and (re-) framing movements. Akçınar's[98] ethnographic study on the BDC shows that the activities of the association varied from family events, such as weddings or picnics, to religious,

[93] Panossian, Razmik. 2000. *The Evolution of Multilocal National Identity and the Contemporary Politics of Nationalism: Armenia and its Diaspora*, Department of Government, London School of Economics.
[94] Ibid., 198.
[95] Alynna J. Lyon, Emek M. Uçarer. 2001. "Mobilizing ethnic conflict: Kurdish separatism in Germany and the PKK." *Ethnic & Racial Studies* no. 24 (6):925-948, 927-928.
[96] Sökefeld, Martin. 2004. "Religion or Culture? Concepts of Identity in the Alevi Diaspora." In *Diaspora, Identity and Religion: New Directions in Theory and Research* edited by Waltraud Kokot Carolin Alfonso, Khachig Tölölyan, 133-155. London and New York: Routledge Publications.
[97] Ibid., 137.
[98] Akçınar, Mustafa. 2010. *Re-invention of Identity: The case of Dersim Community Association in Berlin*, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University

cultural, and political events such as *Cem* rituals, *Gagan* and *Newroz* celebrations,[99] and commemorations of the 1938 Dersim events.[100] The religious, cultural, and political events stressed above are significant in terms of representing the role of these Diaspora associations for identity (re-) framing and mobilisation through "remembering their selective past and culture", which allowed Dersimlis in Berlin to "perform and re-invent" a new particular identity.[101] With these activities, the BDC acted as "a big Dersimi family" in the Diaspora, this family having been created by the initiators of the association in the 1990s.[102]

Overviewing the sociological background of the BDC entrepreneurs, Akçınar suggests that both the political and personal profiles of the founders play a significant role in the characteristics of their community.[103] In brief, the establishers of the BDC were all leftists coming from Dersim where they lived until their early 20s, and all were still in contact with their homeland identity. Akçınar argues that they "strategically" used their "sameness" to break away from leftist organisations "in which Dersimli people did not have a chance to give priority to their own culture".[104] The initiators and members of the association mostly shared informal ties, such as family ties, which created a "trusting environment" for wives of the members to participate in the association.[105] The members were mainly middle-aged labour migrants who came to Germany in the 1970s and 80s. Akçınar describes them as being "well-educated immigrants", who were "capable of investigating an issue via books or the internet, or participating in symposiums or conferences organised not only by the BDC, but also other Alevi or Kurdish associations in Berlin".[106] They were economically better off than other Turkish labour immigrants as well, working in regular jobs or sometimes owning their own businesses, allowing them spare time for association activities.

In addition to providing economic support, the Diaspora also played a key role in discussions of Dersim's collective memory, culture, and identity. Each person in Dersim "sat in front of the

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[99] *Gagan* is the last month of the year for Dersimlis, representing the end of the year; *Newroz* is the beginning of spring for many cultures, including Kurds, Zazas, Turkmens, Afghans, Georgians and others.

[100] The naming of the Dersim events depends on the political perspective, varying from a simple rebellion to a massacre or genocide.

[101] Akçınar, Mustafa. 2010. *Re-invention of Identity: The case of Dersim Community Association in Berlin*, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University, 63.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Akçınar, Mustafa. 2010. *Re-invention of Identity: The case of Dersim Community Association in Berlin*, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University, 73.

[104] Ibid., 51-52.

[105] Ibid., 55.

[106] Ibid., 56.

Internet in their homes and created an imaginary Dersim. This imagined homeland was their destructed dream," said Interviewee 20, an exile who still cannot return home.[107] Interviewee 13, who is a Dersimli living in Istanbul, also claims that the Dersimlis who went abroad for various reasons many years ago think Dersim remains the same place. He said, "They wanted to see Dersim as they left it, forty years ago. They did not want to see the reality, and they became aggressive. The reality is, capitalism entered Dersim. Dersim is resisting, but it is also changing, and it will change".[108] "There are so many of our people in the Diaspora, even more than there are in Dersim. But they are all dreaming different things … some turn Dersim into a political tool, and some work for this language and culture to remain", said Interviewee 21, who was exiled to Germany at the age of 62.[109]

My interviewees, who fled to Europe either on legal or illegal terms, commonly expressed an appreciation of the unrestricted atmosphere they enjoyed in Europe. The comfortable European atmosphere also made it easier for former activists to sit back and distance themselves as individuals from the turmoil in Turkey. This allowed them to realise different things about themselves, and their ideology. Remembering the heyday of the leftist struggle, Interviewee 8 told me, "during the 1968 protests six people died in Germany, and 6000 in Turkey. We solve everything with violence. It is right to want socialism, but I asked myself, with axes and knives? In Europe, I became more relaxed".[110] Interviewee 43 made a similar point as he told me he had a chance to listen to himself, and recognise who he was as he escaped from the chaos and sorrow in Turkey.[111]

Interviewee 52 believes that the people in the Diaspora were trying to find a way back to Turkey and Dersim, and to take part in freeing their homeland.[112] "The Dersimlis got organised in Turkey, and then went abroad," Dersimli researcher Interviewee 54 told me. As they enjoyed relatively comfortable lives in Europe, and with their intellectual background, they became better at organising Dersimli society.[113] Europe also had a productivity effect on the intelligentsia. Interviewee 19 and Interviewee 38 told me separately that they much benefited from the public libraries in Germany when doing research, saying, "I must admit that my most efficient years as an

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[107] Interviewee 20, interview by author, 2014.

[108] Interviewee 13, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 27 May 27 2014.

[109] Interviewee 21, interview by author, Cologne/Germany, 23 February 2015.

[110] Interviewee 8, interview by author, Dersim/Turkey, August 2, 2014.

[111] Interviewee 43, interview by author, Geneva/Switzerland, 26 September 2014.

[112] Interviewee 52, interview by author, Delbruck/Germany, 24 February 2015.

[113] Interviewee 54, interview by author, Dersim/Turkey, 1 August 2014.

author are my years in Europe … There's no censorship, no taboos, the sources I have supplied here could occupy me for many more years".[114] My interviewees in Europe frequently addressed these taboos, pressures, and fears they had felt in Turkey. Interviewee 48 said:

> Here, there's a free environment, here you don't need to hide the things you read, or the meetings you attend. There's no police behind you. People come here from a place of fear, a republic of oppression, where their friends are murdered, their villages are burnt down. There's freedom here.[115]

Interviewee 33 also talked about the free environment in Europe where he worked legally for many years; in contrast to the illegal institutions he managed in Turkey. He said, "I used to go everywhere [in Europe], to political parties, to parliaments … In the 1990s, the Alevi foundations were established. The Alevi movement also flourished in Europe, they established federations and all".[116]

Interviewee 22 highlighted that the Diaspora plays a positive part in discussions on identity of Dersim, saying, "I think the authentic Dersimli identity was constructed in Germany".[117] Interviewee 23 also finds Yaşar Kaya and Zülfü Selcan's work quite positive, and admits he "partly took part in it and helped".[118] One of the most acknowledged works the FDG conducted was the oral history project on Dersim. Interviewee 12 from FDG administration in 2011, told me that the FDG came up with this idea in 2007, and turned it into a solid project in 2009.[119] Since 2010, the FDG has been conducting an oral-history project about Dersim 1937-38. These productions have affected people back in Turkey. Serhat Halis, who writes columns and blogs in newspapers and other journals, explains his personal enlightenment, saying: "This [production] was coming from Europe, I am talking about a generation older than I am, who had to go to Europe for political reasons, and came with new conclusions about Dersim after making alternative readings. I have read their writings, and I re-evaluated the social realities".[120] One way or another, developments in Europe have been very influential on identity movements. Interviewee 42 describes the cultural discussions about Dersim in Europe, especially in Germany and Sweden, as a "renaissance", claiming "even being Kurdish was

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[114] Interviewee 38, interview by author, Delbruck/Germany, 24 February 2015.
[115] Interviewee 48, interview by author, Hannover/Germany, 25 February 2015.
[116] Interviewee 33, interview by author, Ankara/Turkey, 11 March 2015.
[117] Interviewee 23, interview by author, Ankara/Turkey, 11 November 2014.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Interviewee 12, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 5 January 2015.
[120] Interviewee 51, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 23 April 2015.

a crime in Turkey".[121] His argument implies that he draws parallels between the identity of Dersim and Kurdishness, and the Diaspora's positive impact on highlighting this connection.

The role of the Diaspora has also been criticised, and at times it has been found to be harmful for Dersim society. Interviewee 24, an administrator at the Dersim Research Centre (DAM), said, "I can't say I understand what Europe [meaning the Diaspora] is trying to do … I don't find it very healthy".[122] "The Diaspora had a progressive role at the beginning," said Interviewee 27, "but I think now they draw the movement back".[123] Interviewee 7 also finds the Diaspora problematic, as he regards their dispute politically, rather than identity based. "People that help establish these associations have political identities," he told me, "Though I do not doubt their good intentions … this has become a struggle to exist in the political sphere".[124]

There is, in fact, serious competition that is carried out by people and institutions in Europe. This will be examined empirically in Chapter 6, but this debate has also found voice in the academic literature. Bruinessen claims that the Kurdish perception of other movements has been highly suspicious. He writes:

> Kurdish nationalists perceived them [Zazaist and Kirmanc-Alevi movements] to be potentially dangerous and suspected the Turkish secret police to be the true motor behind this separatism in Kurdish ranks. … They were equally distrustful of the official sponsorship of the Turkey-wide Alevi resurgence, which they considered as an ill-disguised attempt to drive a wedge between the Kurdish Alevis and the other Kurds.[125]

During my interviews, too, I encountered many comments about how the Kurdish movement was, and is, sceptical of the new-comers, the Alevi, Zaza, or Kirmanc movements. "When I wanted to learn Zazaki in the Berlin Dersim Community in 1998, people told me not to go there, that they are Zaza activists, separatist and enemies of the left. I became a member of the BDC in 1998," Interviewee 55 from the FDG, told me.[126] The reason why the BDC received such a bad name

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121 Interviewee 42 , interview by author, Berlin/Germany, 27 February 2015.
122 Interviewee 24, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 8 September 2014.
123 Interviewee 27, interview by author, Dersim/Turkey, 17 July 2014.
124 Interviewee 7, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 3 September 2014.
125 Bruinessen, Martin van. 1997. ""Aslını inkar eden haramzadedir!" The debate on the ethnic identity of the Kurdish Alevis." In *Syncretistic religious communities in the Near East*, edited by Brbara Kellner-Heinkele Krisztine Kehl-Bodrogi, Anne Otter-Beaujean, 1-23. Leiden: Brill, 18.
126 Interviewee 55, interview by author, Cologne/Germany, 23 February 2015.

was quite likely because it was perceived as being a rival to the Kurdish movement in Europe. Interviewee 50 commented on this issue saying, "The Dersimli intellectuals in the Diaspora played a role in raising awareness on Dersim identity. Because this was regarded as anti-Kurdish activity, it was not taken seriously and it wasn't supported".[127] Interviewee 50's view on this is very important in both highlighting the role of the Diaspora in the Dersim movement, as well as implying the disincentivising role the Kurdish movement played, a movement in which he himself was active until his resignation in 2013.

The intelligentsia of the Kurdish movement, on the other hand, find the Kurdish movement's role on the Dersim issue positive. "The Dersim tragedy has not been talked about for 71 years," said Interviewee 15, "and for the first time after 71 years we tried to tell the world about this tragedy in the European Parliament … following the lead of Feleknas Uca[128], who is Yezidi Kurdish herself".[129] Interviewee 5 from the Dersim 1937-38 Genocide Opposition Association, told me that other movements were late in realising the effects of Dersim 1937-38 on Dersim community, which the Kurdish *Yurtsever*[130] movement had long noticed, saying, "all of a sudden, they [other movements working on Dersim] looked and saw that we were talking about the genocide [in Dersim] in the European Parliament [in 2008]".[131]

Theories of social movements and diasporas are useful to explain the economic, political, organisational and cultural factors through which movements emerge, function and split, and how national and transnational factors and actors shape this competition. But they do not to put forward concrete reasons to explain *why* these movements cannot achieve a consistent, integrated Dersim movement or identity. Cross-cutting cleavages theory is, however, a potentially more effective way to explain this ongoing competition.

2.5   Cross-cutting cleavages: From left to identity politics

I have already discussed how leftist social movements have split and re-framed into identity movements since the 1960s in Turkey. This has been, in a way, due to the global shift from a focus

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[127] Interviewee 50, interview by author, Ankara/Turkey, 11 November 2014.
[128] Feleknas Uca, who has helped the DYİC arrange a meeting in the European Parliament, has been elected the Diyarbakır deputy of the HDP in the 2015 general elections in Turkey.
[129] Interviewee 15, interview by author, Brussels/Belgium, 22 February 2015.
[130] Patriot (*yurtsever* in Turkish) word here implies the author's ties to the Kurdish movement, as *Yurtsever* is a word often used by Kurdish sympathisers.
[131] Interviewee 5, interview by author, Stuttgart/Germany, 25 February 2015.

on class cleavages to "non-class cleavages in society", such as racial, linguistic, or religious identities.[132] Can this shift explain why there is ongoing competition in Dersim?

The phenomenon of the post-Cold War era is well described by popular rephrasing of the famous quote from the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* that began, "A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of communism" to read "[a] spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of nationalism".[133] Commenting on this relationship between ethnic and labour movements, Hobsbawn argues, "socialist movements were not, ever, anywhere, movements essentially confined to the proletariat in the strict Marxist sense".[134] He claims that, before the fall of the Soviet Bloc, many ordinary people accepted the workers' movement purely for personal pragmatic reasons, such as a better future and equal rights.[135] With the emerging nationality boom, or identity boom, of the post-1989 period, parties on the Left began searching for "ways to reconcile their class perspective with real-life problems, such as discrimination, civil liberties and equal access to opportunity".[136]

Dersim is a representative case of the phenomenon described above, where both class based and ethnic cleavages cross-cut. Not even in the heyday of the Turkish left did Dersimlis not know about their ethnic, religious, and linguistic particularities that marked them as *personae non gratae* by the Turkish state. Likewise, despite conducting identity-based politics, activists working on Dersim have not necessarily abandoned their leftist stance, at least discursively. Throughout my interaction with activists and Dersimlis, I heard many stories about the nested nature of revolutionary class-based activities and the ethno-religious identity of Dersim. These were stories about so-called People's Courts established by revolutionary fighters in Dersim, where the chief judge referred to almighty figures from Alevism, such as Hixir,[137] or stories about revolutionary fighters invoking the traumatic—yet inspiring—Dersim 38 "resistance" to the people of Dersim.

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[132] Yeoh, Kok Kheng. 2003. "Phenotypical, Linguistic or Religious? On the Concept and Measurement of Ethnic Fragmentation." *Malaysian Journal of Economic Studies* no. 40 (1&2): 23-47, 23.
[133] Nimni, Ephraim. 1991. *Marxism and Nationalism*. London and Concord: Pluto Press, 1.
[134] Hobsbawm, Eric. 1996. Identity Politics and the Left. Paper read at Barry Amiel and Norman Melburn Trust Lecture, at Institute of Education, London.
[135] Hobsbawm, Eric. 1996. Identity Politics and the Left. Paper read at Barry Amiel and Norman Melburn Trust Lecture, at Institute of Education, London.
[136] Eşkinat, Doğan. 2013. "Gezi Park: Negotiating a New Left Identity." *Insight Turkey* no. 15 (3): 45-49.
[137] *Hixir* is the most almighty figure in the Dersim Alevism after God. Hixir is the most addressed by Dersimis in their daily life when they need help.

The co-existence of religious and linguistic identities in Dersim has been key to the unity of the Dersim community, though I cannot necessarily describe it as inter-ethnic cooperation.[138] As I will argue in this research, not all identities are ethnic, in the sense that modern nationalism defines them. Dersim has a pre-national identity, where religious beliefs and linguistic plurality define the collective identity. On the one hand, despite the ongoing competition between rival movements in Dersim—including the state, insurgent organisations and cultural institutions—Dersim does not fragment due to this pre-national identity, or what can be defined as cross-cutting cleavages. On the other hand, insurgent movements struggling against the Turkish state authority find strong support in Dersim due to the overlapping cleavages in Dersim that mark them as the 'other' for the Turkish state mind-set. An Alevi is usually regarded as leftist, while someone who defines her mother tongue as a language other than Turkish is most likely deemed as a Kurd.

One of the reasons behind competition in Dersim is that overlapping cleavages within the Derslimli society are re-interpreted and imposed as national, homogeneous sources of identities. As insurgent movements entered Dersim, either as leftist movements or nationalist movements, they have broken the pre-national Dersimli identity. Nationalist movements that try to homogenise communities did not comprehend that an atheist Marxist could as well belong to the Alevi identity or a Kurdish nationalist could speak Dersimce.

The theory of cross-cutting cleavages is a useful explanation for why, despite all competition, Dersim does fragment. Yet, it still fails to explain *why* people feel the need to choose between the different identities of which they feel a part. What is meant by concepts that reoccur in identity movements, such as "ethnicities" or "collective identities"?

Thus far, I have discussed why there is ongoing competition in Dersim by questioning if Dersim is too small to be a nation, or if competition is caused by politicised individuals and organisations in the Diaspora. I have also discussed the role of identity frames and splits in social movements and the absence of cross-cutting cleavages in Dersim. Although these theories are useful, I suggested that they do not explain *why* there is competition that only triggers more competition instead of a definitive outcome.

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[138]Laitin, James D. Fearon and David D. 1996. "Explaining Interethnic Cooperation." *The American Political Science Review* no. 90 (4): 715-735; see also Wilson, Steven Lloyd. 2015. "Social identity, cross-cutting cleavages, and explaining the breakdown of interethnic cooperation." *Rationality and Society* no. 27 (4): 455-468.

The remainder of this chapter focuses on theories of nationalism and ethnicity. Hobsbawm described ethnicity as a "*real* sense of group identity which links the members of 'us' because it emphasises their differences from 'them' … [although] what they actually have in common beyond not being 'them' is not so clear, especially today".[139] Ethnicity, once it is politicised, destroys shared mentalities, commonalities, unity, and brings divisions and conflict. I will argue that theories of nationalism, as well as nationalist actors on the ground, give nation and ethnicity an ontological validity that sets a barrier to the understanding of pre-national, heterogeneous societies, upon which where modern nationalism is often imposed brutally.

2.6   Theories of nationalism

Are nations primordial or modern entities? That is, is the nation state a modern phenomenon in that it redefines and gives meaning to symbols to create a national identity anew; or is a nation built on enduring myths, traditions and symbols that matter greatly to those who make up the nation? This question perhaps summarises the main difference of perspective between modernists and ethno-symbolists. Modernists claim that ethnicity is a manipulation, whereas ethno-symbolists claim pre-existing ethnic ties must be taken into account for understanding the emergence and maintenance of modern nations. The debate is so complicated that modernist Umut Özkırımlı, in his critique of respected ethno-symbolist John Hutchinson, asks, "Is Hutchinson a postmodernist too, or am I an ethno-symbolist? Or are we both postmodern ethno-symbolists?"[140]

Whether modernist or ethno-symbolist, theories of nationalism often describe nations as culturally integrated communities, both seeing ethnicity as a core element that makes up nations and nationalism. When concepts of ethnicity and nationalism are politicised to become "ways of identifying oneself and others, of construing sameness and difference"[141], this can lead to cultural integration, or to the fragmentation of societies along racial, linguistic, religious, or cultural lines. One reason for this fragmentation is that the homogenisation of nationhood is continuous and brings external struggles and internal contestations that sustain rival nationalist projects.[142] These rival projects often use "nationalist" concepts themselves giving nationhood its "unfinished" or "vicious cycle" character. In fact, both modernist and ethno-symbolist approaches agree that

[139] Hobsbawm, Eric. 2012. "Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today." In *Mapping the Nation*, edited by Gopal Balakrishnan, 255-266. London: Verso, 258.

[140] Gerard Delanty, John Hutchinson, Eric Kaufmann, Umut Ozkirimli, Andreas Wimmer. 2008. "Debate on John Hutchinson's *Nations as Zones of Conflict*." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 14 (1): 1-28, 9.

[141] Brubaker, Rogers. 2012. "Religion and nationalism: four approaches." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 18 (1):2-20, 4

[142] Hutchinson, John. 2000. "Ethnicity and modern nations." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* no. 23 (4):651-669.

nations are "modern entities, created by nationalists".[143] However, there is disagreement as to whether a nation is a pure manipulation or construction, or whether pre-existing ethnic ties are used instrumentally in its construction. That said, Lieven writes, "It is of secondary importance where nationalist ideas … came from, how 'genuine' or 'artificial' they may be … the real test is do they work?"[144] Building on this question I ask, do nationalist ideas always come to a resolution? What happens when competition only triggers more competition, whether with the central authority or within insurgent movements?

A previous attempt to understand pre-national heterogeneity can be found in a study on the Balkan Peninsula by Kitromilides, who describes the pre-national identity in the Balkans as the "Balkan mentality" and suggests that scholars can only understand this mentality by escaping from the existing nationalist discourse that internally divided the Balkan Peninsula.[145] His historical perspective is valuable: he sees modern definitions of ethnicity as mostly constructed upon linguistic and/or religious homogeneity, which inevitably trigger nationalist conflict. Kitromilides writes:

> Ethnicity is a factor of distinctiveness and therefore cannot make for commonalities; nationality is a factor of division and therefore undermines the sense of shared meanings; finally, nationalism is *ipso facto* a machine of conflict and violence which annuls first and foremost those deep affinities and unspoken assumptions which form the psychic substratum of a shared 'mentality'.[146]

As nationalist ideology entered the Balkans, people began to refer to their national identities instead of their territorial belonging. Malesevic explains the shift from pre-national identification to nationalism in the Balkans, writing, "instead of identifying with one's village or one's strata an overwhelming majority of people see themselves first and foremost as members of distinct nations".[147] Kalyvas describes the Balkan Peninsula as having been a "mosaic of linguistic and religious groups" before nationalist ideologies emerged, turning it into a contested conflict zone.[148]

[143] Gerard Delanty, John Hutchinson, Eric Kaufmann, Umut Ozkirimli, Andreas Wimmer. 2008. "Debate on John Hutchinson's *Nations as Zones of Conflict*." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 14 (1): 1-28, 18.

[144] Lieven, Anatol. 1997. "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?: Scholarly Debate and the Realities of Eastern Europe." *The National Interest* no. 49: 10-22, 16.

[145] Kitromilides, Paschalis M. 1996. "'Balkan mentality': history, legend, imagination " *Nations and Nationalism* no. 2 (2):163-191, 170.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Malesevic, Sinisa. 2012. "Did Wars Make Nation-States in the Balkans?: Nationalisms, Wars and States in the 19th and early 20th Century South East Europe." *Journal of Historical Sociology* no. 25 (3):299-330, 306

[148] Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2015. *Modern Greece What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York: Oxford University Press, 47

Macedonians, for example, were "primarily tied to religion and locality rather than national categories".[149] Greek nationalists also "began to conceive of the Balkan Peninsula as divided along ethnic rather than religious lines".[150] This division was a shift from a collective identity based on region and religion to "a collectivity clearly delineated by its language and its cultural heritage".[151] When a subjective collective consciousness, whether constructed or inflated, integrates a large social group by combining several kinds of objective relationships (economic, political, linguistic, cultural, religious, geographical, historical), then we have a nation.[152] And when that nation has a state, a nation-state, it "has the monopoly of what it claims to be the legitimate use of force within a demarcated territory and seeks to unite the people subjected to its rule by means of homogenisation".[153]

Guibernau suggests that nation builders achieve such homogenisation by "creating common culture, symbols, values, reviving traditions and myths of origin, and sometimes inventing them".[154] As nation-states have become the dominant political framework of government, collective identities have become, for governments, the main sources, or challengers, of the gain or exercise of power. [155] Therefore, nation-state formation often carries projects of the assimilation and homogenisation of "others" within the "nation". Brubaker writes that "strong notions of collective identity imply strong notions of group boundedness and homogeneity" and they continue to "inform important strands of the literature on … nationalism".[156] Modern social theory also underlines homogenisation in the relationship between states and nationalism.[157] Hall claims that homogeneity, as for liberal thinkers including John Stuart Mill, Robert Dahl and Ernest Gellner, is "a 'must' if a society is to function effectively".[158] Smith, an ethno-symbolist, also suggests that "the indivisibility of a state entails the cultural uniformity and homogeneity of its citizens".[159]

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[149] Ibid., 47.
[150] Ibid., 23.
[151] Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2015. *Modern Greece What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York: Oxford University Press, 24.
[152] Hroch, Miroslav. 2012. "From National Movement to the Fully-formed Nation: The Nation-building Process in Europe." In *Mapping the Nation*, edited by Gopal Balakrishnan, 78-97. London: Verso.
[153] Guibernau, Montserrat. 2000. "Nationalism and Intellectuals in Nations without States: the Catalan Case." *Political Studies* no. 48: 989-1005.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Hsiau, A-chin. 2000. *Contemporary Taiwanese cultural nationalism*. London and New York: Routledge.
[156] Brubaker, Rogers. 2004. *Ethnicity Without Groups*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 37.
[157] Hall, John A. 2003. "Conditions for National Homogenizers." In Nationalism and its Futures, edited by Umut Özkırımlı, 15-33. New York Palgrave Macmillan, 29.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Smith, Anthony. 1986. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Blakcwell, 134

Be it *a priori* or constructed, primordial or instrumental, ethnicity plays a key role in understanding nationalism as a way to impose homogenisation on societies. Calhoun writes that "ethnicity or cultural traditions are bases for nationalism when they inculcate it as habitus … not when (or because) the historical origins they claim are accurate".[160] It is true that many nationalist projects have succeeded regardless of the antiquity of their claims and many nationalist projects have failed even if their claims appeal to a particular society. As a result, there are nations without states, or states struggling with ethnic divisions, where the concepts of ethnicity and nationality, described by linguistic, religious, racial, spatial, and/or cultural aspects, become "pervasive axes of social segmentation in heterogeneous societies".[161] Nationalisms in the nineteenth and twentieth century have been as "obsessed with history, as with ethnicity".[162] And ethnicity, as a concept, begs a clear definition in order to understand the debates surrounding nationalism and nationalist/ethnic movements.[163] I particularly find Hroch's theory on national revivals and Hutchinson's theory on competition that strengthens a nation useful: both of these focus on the role of entrepreneurs and culture in nationalist projects. In what follows, I will discuss these theories, addressing their strengths and weaknesses.

2.6.1 Nationalist revivals and continuing competition

I have already emphasised that nationalist competition does not always result in successful nation-building. This does not imply, however, that theories of nationalist revivals and competition are insignificant. What are the alternative outcomes to nationalist revivals? What happens when there is a heterogeneous community that cannot be homogeneously defined, as in the case of Dersim? Going to the initial question of this research of why is there ongoing competition without a definitive outcome, this section examines Hroch's and Hutchinson's studies from a critical perspective.

Commenting on the national revivals in Eastern Europe in the 20th century, Hroch argues, "The beginning of every national revival is marked by a passionate concern on the part of a group of individuals, usually intellectuals, for the study of the language, the culture, the history of the oppressed nationality".[164] This is the primary stage, Phase A, during which patriots conduct scholarly

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[160] Calhoun, Craig. 1993. "Nationalism and Ethnicity." *Annual Review of Sociology* no. 19:211-239, 222.

[161] Brubaker, Rogers. 2012. "Religion and nationalism: four approaches." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 18 (1):2-20.

[162] Calhoun, Craig. 1993. "Nationalism and Ethnicity." *Annual Review of Sociology* no. 19:211-239, 225.

[163] Tilley, Virginia. 1997. "The terms of the debate: untangling language about ethnicity and ethnic movements." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* no. 20 (3): 497-522.

[164] Hroch, Miroslav. 2000. *Social preconditions of national revival in Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

research by collecting information on "the history, language and customs of the non-dominant ethnic group"[165], while not necessarily putting forward nationalist demands. In Phases B and C, activists begin seeking more support from their ethnic group, and then turn their scholarly activity into a mass movement seeking a "possible project of creating a future nation".[166]

Scholarly interest in the production of a standardised identity is not always accomplished or unchanging in nationalist movements. Although Hroch acknowledges that when Phase A is not complete, it causes handicap,[167] his analysis lacks an explanation of this handicap and its consequences. Thus, Hroch's model fails to explain the competition over the definitions and descriptions used by national movements or ethnic groups. Further to this, Siddiqi's case study on rival nationalist movements in Pakistan shows that Hroch's A-B-C model does not necessarily end with the formation of a culturally homogeneous nation-state. Presenting an alternative scenario, Siddiqi suggests that there can be competition among groups during transition between phases. In fact, Hutchison suggests that "conflict is endemic to nations" and that the idea of a unitary nation-state is a myth.[168]

Hutchinson suggests that as nationalist projects become successful, their capacity, and likelihood, to construct a homogenous national identity increases, which then triggers new internal conflicts, creating an atmosphere in which new cultural nationalist projects may flourish.[169] He writes:

> But if ethnicity invokes ancient origins, within every ethnic community there are competing conceptions of descent, authentic history, culture and the territorial domain … even many 'established' nations are riven by embedded cultural differences that generate rival symbolic and political projects.[170]

This introduces the vicious cycle within which nationalism operates. Despite differences regarding their main goals, political and cultural nationalisms go hand in hand. Cultural nationalism might trigger political nationalism, while political nationalism might trigger alternative cultural

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[165] Hroch, Miroslav. 2012. "From National Movement to the Fully-formed Nation: The Nation-building Process in Europe." In *Mapping the Nation*, edited by Gopal Balakrishnan, 78-97. London: Verso, 84.

[166] Ibid,

[167] Hroch, Miroslav. 2010. "Comments." *Nationalities Papers* no. 38 (6): 881-890, 889.

[168] Gerard Delanty, John Hutchinson, Eric Kaufmann, Umut Ozkirimli, Andreas Wimmer. 2008. "Debate on John Hutchinson's *Nations as Zones of Conflict*." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 14 (1): 1-28, 19.

[169] Ibid., 497.

[170] Hutchinson, John. 2000. "Ethnicity and modern nations." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* no. 23 (4):651-669, 661.

nationalist projects. Hutchinson suggests that political nationalists pursue a state with a homogeneous collective identity shared by citizens by using traditional or cultural sentiments in an instrumental manner.[171] Cultural nationalists do not necessarily seek a state but a "distinctive historical community" that combines the modern and traditional. Furthermore, as the USSR and the Yugoslavian cases prove, cultural nationalism can be the primary step towards political nationalism, and "ethnic groups that complete … the nation-building process … are more likely to claim independence during a political crisis".[172]

However, Delanty criticises Hutchinson for focusing too specifically on the obvious tensions between statist and ethnic nationalisms instead of explaining the relationship between the ethnic and civic components of nationalism.[173] Woods compares ethnic and civic nationalism, writing, "If political nationalism is focused on the cultivation of political autonomy, cultural nationalism is focused on the cultivation of a nation".[174] Nation-states expand market economies and communication systems; but, meanwhile, their goals regarding collectivity, sovereignty, and territory are often far from "civic".[175] According to classical definitions, in civic nations subjects subscribe voluntarily to political institutions and the principles of the nation. Ethnic nations, on the contrary, "are founded on a sense of self-identity determined by 'natural' factors such as language and ethnic consent", as Zimmer puts it.[176] However, observation of reality reveals these classical definitions of civic and ethnic nationhood often overlap: Hall has pointed out that "civic nationalism may be as resolutely homogenising as is ethnic nationalism".[177] Additionally, Wimmer has argued that "the boundaries of political networks during the early periods of nation-building and the power configuration between them thus crucially shape the contours of the nation".[178]

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[171] Hutchinson, John. 1987. "Cultural Nationalism, Elite Mobility and Nation-Building: Communitarian Politics in Modern Ireland." *The British Journal of Sociology* no. 38 (4): 482-501, 486.

[172] Shcherbak, Andrey. 2015. "Nationalism in the USSR: a historical and comparative perspective " *Nationalities Papers* no. 43 (6):866-885, 867

[173] Gerard Delanty, John Hutchinson, Eric Kaufmann, Umut Ozkirimli, Andreas Wimmer. 2008. "Debate on John Hutchinson's *Nations as Zones of Conflict*." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 14 (1): 1-28.

[174] Woods, Eric Taylor. 2014. "Cultural Nationalism: A review and annotated bibliography." *Studies on National Movements* no. 2.

[175] Elwert, Georg. 1997. "Switching of we-group identities: The Alevis as a case among many others." In *Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East*, edited by Brbara Kellner-Heinkele Krisztine Kehl-Bodrogi, Anne Otter-Beaujean. Leiden: Brill, 82.

[176] Zimmer, Oliver. 2003. "Boundary mechanisms and symbolic resources: towards a process-oriented approach to national identity." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 9 (2): 173-193, 174.

[177] Hall, Stuart. 1997. "The Local and Global: Globalization and Ethnicity." In *Dangerous Liaisons*, edited by Aamir Mufti Anne McClintock, Ella Shohat, 173-187. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 28.

[178] Wimmer, Andreas. 2011. "A Swiss anomaly? A relational account of national boundary-making." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 17 (4): 718-737, 734.

Despite acknowledging its destructive role over nations, Hutchinson also highlights that the deeply embedded conflict between rival movements can have a positive role.[179] Put differently, competition among different nationalisms in a nation-state does not necessarily weaken it, but may strengthen the nation. Hutchinson writes:

> Although ethnicity is compatible with pluralism, it is a constrained pluralism. Where we find such contestation it is not necessarily benign – it does by definition offer choice and possibly a regenerating alternation, as previously excluded energies, social groups and institutions are 'made' available to the nation.[180]

Hutchinson also acknowledges that failure to include other groups can produce polarisation, writing, "diversion of public energies into symbolic issues (e.g. language) … [can lead] at worst into destructive conflict and even violence".[181]   However, Wimmer underlines the importance of addressing other cases where policies imposed by a central state authority towards non-dominant groups reinforce sub-nations instead of strengthening that nation. In return, rival cultural nationalist projects emerge in reaction to attempts at assimilation and Hutchinson's suggestion that a nation-state may be strengthened, does not occur.

In order to explain why nationalist competition, in some cases, fails to produce a definitive outcome, my theoretical argument is that we, as scholars, need to reconsider the concept of ethnicity as it is emphasised and imposed on peoples by modern nationalism and modern nationalist projects.

2.6.2   Ethnicity and collective identity

Ethnicity is not a political concept alone. Rather, ethnicity "may acquire political functions in certain circumstances, and may therefore find itself associated with programmes, including nationalist and separatist ones".[182] This is precisely what Kitromilides talks about when he suggests that a pre-nationalist Balkan society and Balkan mentality existed in the 18th century. Malesevic, likewise, underlines that even in the 19th century Balkans "nationalism as a fully fledged trans-class

[179] Hutchinson, John. 2005. "*Nations as Zones of Conflict*." In: SAGE Publications Ltd.
        <http://www.myilibrary.com?ID=51208>, 94.
[180] Hutchinson, John. 2005. "Nations as Zones of Conflict." In: SAGE Publications Ltd.
        <http://www.myilibrary.com?ID=51208>, 94. 112.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Hobsbawm, Eric. 2012. "Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today." In *Mapping the Nation*, edited by Gopal
        Balakrishnan, 255-266. London: Verso, 258.

ideology was almost non-existent".[183] The Balkan Peninsula, up until the 18th century, was not Yugoslavian, Serbian, Bosnian, or Croatian but it was "free of … internal national divisions".[184] The Iberian Peninsula in the 13th century, likewise, hosted groups to be later ethnically defined as Spanish, Portuguese, or Catalonian. Brubaker argues that people unite and divide along linguistic and religious lines, which are often taken for granted, although they are *not* primordial phenomena.[185] He writes, "claims made in the name of religious and linguistic groups are similar to –and again, also interwined with- claims made in the name of ethnic groups or nations".[186] He describes this relationship as "the politicisation of culture and the culturalisation of politics".[187] In what follows, I will discuss how religious belief systems, language, and collective memory are politicised; and how politicised religion, language, and memory culturalise politics.

To begin with, religious belief systems are important fortifiers for local communities suffering pressure exercised by dominant groups. Coakley identifies three impacts of religion: social labelling, potential to highlight differences among groups, and increasing group solidarity, which gives religion its "communal, ideological, and organisational dimensions".[188] Similarly, Brubaker identifies three ways in which religion and nationalism resemble identification, social organisation, and political claim framings.[189] Both Coakley and Brubaker suggest that religion plays an important role in defining and uniting a group of people by differentiating them from others, which in return politicises their identity.

The most obvious example of the role religion plays in nationalism is perhaps Jewish nationalism. In addition, the role Catholicism played in the construction of Irish national identity, the role the Orthodox and Catholic churches played in the Serbian national revival, or the role the Apostolic Church played in Armenian national identity can all be highlighted. "From a political point

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[183] Malesevic, Sinisa. 2012. "Did Wars Make Nation-States in the Balkans?: Nationalisms, Wars and States in the 19th and early 20th Century South East Europe." *Journal of Historical Sociology* no. 25 (3): 299-330.

[184] Kitromilides, Paschalis M. 1996. "'Balkan mentality': history, legend, imagination " *Nations and Nationalism* no. 2 (2):163-191, 170.

[185] Brubaker, Rogers. 2012. "Religion and nationalism: four approaches." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 18 (1):2-20; see also Brubaker, Rogers. 2013. "Language, religion and the politics of difference." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 19 (1): 1-20.

[186] Brubaker, Rogers. 2013. "Language, religion and the politics of difference." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 19 (1): 1-20, 4.

[187] Brubaker, Rogers. 2012. "Religion and nationalism: four approaches." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 18 (1): 2-20; see also Brubaker, Rogers. 2013. "Language, religion and the politics of difference." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 19 (1): 1-20.

[188] Coakley, John. 2011. "The Religious Roots of Irish Nationalism." *Social Compass* no. 58 (1): 95-114, 109.

[189] Brubaker, Rogers. 2012. "Religion and nationalism: four approaches." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 18 (1): 2-20.

of view," Brubaker writes, "claims made in the name of religion –or religious groups- can be considered alongside claims made in the name of ethnicity, race or nations".[190] What Brubaker rightly underlines is that religious movements use the "grammar of modern nationalism even when they are ostensibly anti-nationalist or supra-national".[191] Aktürk's analysis of the Islamic origins of secular nation-building in the cases of Turkey, Algeria, and Pakistan shows that the concepts nationalist projects use are not necessarily based on linguistic nationalism, but involve also religious nationalism.[192] Although these states were mobilised and succeeded on the basis of religious unity, "their political elites chose a secular and monolingual nation-state model" that led to future challenges.[193] Dersim's religious identity was not the determining factor for the strongly secular Turkish Republic's military operation in Dersim in the 1930s, but its multi-lingual character was one of the causal factors.

Brubaker claims that "religion has tended to displace language as the cutting edge of contestation over the political accommodation of cultural difference in Western liberal democracies", especially as it proliferates with immigration.[194] He suggests, "religious pluralism entails deeper and more divisive forms of diversity"[195] than linguistic aspects, especially in the European political atmosphere. Underlining the important role of language and religion in studying ethnicity and nationalism, Brubaker suggests that language is a more concrete term than religious identity.

Second, language is a key factor in defining ethnic identity. Gellner is among the scholars who emphasise the role of language: a common language is needed for modern nations to establish "context-free communication, identification with literate high cultures, and exo-socialisation through state-organised school systems".[196] Social communication is an important element of nation-building, through which people imagine a community, to which they believe they are

[190] Ibid., 5.

[191] Ibid., 14.

[192] Aktürk, Şener. 2015. "Religion and Nationalism: Contradictions of Islamic Origins and Secular Nation-Building in Turkey, Algeria, and Pakistan." *Social Science Quarterly* no. 96 (3).

[193] Ibid. 778.

[194] Brubaker, Rogers. 2013. "Language, religion and the politics of difference." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 19 (1): 1-20, 16.

[195] Ibid., 3.

[196] Brubaker, Rogers. 2013. "Language, religion and the politics of difference." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 19 (1): 1-20, 2.

connected by comradeship.[197] Anderson famously pointed out the role of print capitalism that functioned in favour of nations as imagined communities. It was the association of capitalism and print, that is print capitalism, which "made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways".[198] The role of different vernaculars is to be highlighted here. As "languages-of-power" emerged against Latin, e.g., French or English, the Christian imagined community faded and new communities emerged relying on these vernaculars.[199] This brought "a new fixity to language" that later engendered "languages-of-power", which then assimilated other vernaculars.[200]

May it be defined as language, dialect, or ethnolect,[201] linguistic identity "acts as a substitute for factors of integration in a disintegrating society" and allows groups to differentiate themselves from "others". In a sense, it plays the same role as religion. We-groups become increasingly attached to languages as communication increased with modernity. As Elwert points out, "the idea that one nation should have one language and, later, that one language makes a nation"[202] is a common and widely accepted one. Nation-states, attempting "to make the nation fit the state"[203] aim to unite linguistic variations under a mono-lingual identity. As the Dersim case shows, "one nation-one language" understanding is not unique to nation-states: it has also been used by competing nationalist movements increasingly since the 1990s in an attempt to homogenise and define Dersim's ethnicity based on its linguistic identity.

Along with religious and linguistic aspects, nation-building processes also involve cultural aspects, such as remembering, inventing, or imagining a collective identity, marking collective memory as the third factor that defines ethnicity. As Olick puts it, collective memory is not a "thing" but a "process".[204] History, in this way, becomes both subject and object in political disputes[205], as

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[197] Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Revised ed. London: Verso.

[198] Ibid., 52.

[199] Ibid., 56.

[200] Ibid., 57.

[201] Dembinska, Magdalena. 2013. "Ethnopolitical Mobilization without Groups: Nation-Building in Upper Silesia." *Regional and Federal Studies* no. 23 (1): 47-66, 48.

[202] Elwert, Georg. 1997. "Switching of we-group identities: The Alevis as a case among many others." In *Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East*, edited by Brbara Kellner-Heinkele Krisztine Kehl-Bodrogi, Anne Otter-Beaujean. Leiden: Brill, 83.

[203] Calhoun, Craig. 1993. "Nationalism and Ethnicity." *Annual Review of Sociology* no. 19:211-239, 226.

[204] Jeffrey K. Olick, Joyce Robbins. 1998. "Social memory studies: From 'collective memory; to the historical sociology of mnemonic practices." *Annual Review of Sociology* no. 24:105-140.

[205] Heisler, Martin O. 2008. "The Political Currency of the Past: History, Memory, and Identity." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* no. 617 (The Politics of History in Comparative Perspective): 14-24.

it is often used for political purposes, such as controlling or shaping a population. Kansteiner defines collective memory as "unconscious absorption", resulting from this conscious manipulation.[206] The functional role of symbolic events, and especially key figures, becomes the "equivalent of sanctity".[207] The mediated and manipulated past, collective memory in other words, is crucial in forming people's identities.[208] Neveu takes this one step further, claiming that it is also "a machine to make and unmake identities".[209] Historians, folklorists, artists, and other intelligentsia of emerging nationalist groups narrate past events and describe certain figures, as Malesevic writes, to "prove the existence of an uninterrupted continuity" of their national identity.[210] These events need not be real, they can simply be narrated; and they need not be glories, they can also be traumatic pasts. Likewise, the iconic figures who are described in historical accounts can be historical heroes or historical enemies of a nationalist movement. The symbolic events and actors of collective memory are thus changeable: memories of certain events can be erased from collective memory but memories may also be kept alive.

Memory, similarly to language or religion, can also be contested and its reconstruction may lead to contrasting outcomes.[211] One possibility is of reconciliation in disputes through remembering and creating "cosmopolitan memories".[212] Memory of the Holocaust is an example of such a memory, where Holocaust remembrance shifted from silence to recognition, and from recognition to the spread of these memories. Despite the increasing "cosmopolitanisation" of memories in the global era, some memories are still contested.[213] But a second possibility is a failure in reconciliation, where memories are not cosmopolitan but incompatible between parties. The tension between Russia and Estonia over the Bronze War and even the Bronze Soldier monument is an example of

[206] Kansteiner, Wulf. 2002. "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies." *History and Theory* no. 41 (2): 179-197, 180.

[207] Brubaker, Rogers. 2012. "Religion and nationalism: four approaches." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 18 (1): 2-20, 3

[208] Jeffrey K. Olick, Joyce Robbins. 1998. "Social memory studies: From 'collective memory; to the historical sociology of mnemonic practices." *Annual Review of Sociology* no. 24:105-140, 111.

[209] Neveu, Erik. 2014. Memory Battles over May '68: Interpretive Struggles as Cultural Re-Play of Social Movements. In *Conceptualizing Culture in Socual Movement Researcg*, edited by Priska Daphi Britta Baumgarten, Peter Ullrich: Palgrave Macmillan, 295.

[210] Malesevic, Sinisa. 2012. "Did Wars Make Nation-States in the Balkans?: Nationalisms, Wars and States in the 19th and early 20th Century South East Europe." *Journal of Historical Sociology* no. 25 (3): 299-330, 321.

[211] Misztal, Barbara A. 2010. "Collective memory in a global age: Learning how and what to remember." *Current Sociology* no. 58 (1): 24-44.

[212] Andreas Huyssen, Daniel Levy. *Globalization and the Emergence of Cosmopolitan Memories* 21 April 2002. Available from http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/articles_papers_reports/916.html.

[213] Ibid.

such a dispute over memory.[214] Likewise, South Korea and Japan have failed to reconcile over the memory of World War II for over 70 years.[215]

After decades of silence followed by disagreements on the definition of Dersim 1937-38, it is finally, largely, recognised as an act of massacre towards the Dersim community by the Turkish state. The lack of agreement on the definition of Dersim's collective ethno-religious and ethno-linguistic identity makes Dersim a contested region. As I have discussed, religion, language, or memory can all be evoked or invented in the works of entrepreneurs seeking to create groups.[216] In this way, identity becomes a part of people's everyday lives. Brubaker summarises this point, writing:

> [Entrepreneurs use identity] to persuade people to understand themselves, their interests, and their predicaments in a certain way, to persuade certain people that they are (for certain purposes) 'identical' with one another and at the same time different from others, and to organise and justify collective action along certain lines.[217]

2.7   Conclusion

According to Hroch, "all researchers have to define their terms, and have the freedom to construct their own concepts". Such freedom is crucial for researchers seeking to understand activists of a nationalist movement, who may not understand certain terms, for example, "the nation", in the same sense throughout multiple stages of nationalisation.[218] The terms of ethnicity and collective identity that I have examined here are the key terms that movement activists consistently use to categorise and mobilise people. Although primordialists may believe that these concepts are natural, ancient *a priori* realities, the vast majority in academia today does not view these concepts as natural. Instead, most scholars acknowledge that such concepts are changing, overlapping, and modern phenomena.

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[214] Jörg Hackmann, Marko Lehti. 2010. *Contested and Shared Places of Memory*. London, New York: Routledge.
[215] *Contested Memories and Reconciliation Challenges: Japan and the Asia Pacific on the 70th Anniversary of the End of the Second World War*. Available from https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/contested-memories-and-reconciliation-challenges-japan-and-the-asia-pacific-the-70th.
[216] Brubaker, Rogers. 2004. *Ethnicity without Groups*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
[217] Ibid., 32.
[218] Hroch, Miroslav. 2010. "Comments." *Nationalities Papers* no. 38 (6): 881-890, 885.

When we talk about Dersim today, we talk about a myth, a renaissance of the Dersim idea. Zırh claims that this awakening invokes different and often conflicting identities emphasised by different groups that can be identified as a "negotiation process" over the Dersimli identity.[137] Put differently, Dersim has been, and still is, an arena of struggle, instead of a case of success. Many years of competition over Dersim has not produced a strong Dersimli identity, but rather a fragmented and conflicted identity. A journalist from Dersim, Interviewee 18, says "Dersim is not a controlled city,"[219] and I agree. Dersimlis shift their definition of self-identity over time, over issues, and political conjuncture. Erdal Gezik elaborates on this point, writing:

> Someone that you know as a 'leftist' or 'Alevi' can turn into a heated 'Kurdish nationalist' or 'trueborn Turk'. Or people with a 'leftist identity' who used to refuse ethnic or religious features in the past can become 'pro-Alevi', 'pro-Kurd' or in the end 'pro-Dersim or pro-Zaza' and they can defend their identities with a surprising determination.[220]

As competing movements in Dersim focus on religious, linguistic, and cultural aspects of the Dersim identity through a homogenising, modernist and nationalist perspective, I argue these movements fail to grasp its pre-national, multi-linguistic and multi-cultural identity. Failing to acknowledge this pre-national, heterogeneous Dersimli identity, existing movements in Dersim only partly grasp Dersim's collective identity from a religious or mono-lingual aspect. As a result, these movements find some support and continue to exist, but never achieve definitive success.

The attempts by political scientists to unravel the causes behind conflicts between homogenising nationalist projects are, arguably, hindered by existing definitions of ethnicity, as such definitions are not outside the field of this competition. I have suggested here that an understanding of the pre-national, heterogeneous mentalities of societies is needed if we want to explain when competition strengthens a sense of nationhood and when it leads to fragmentation and disunity. Therefore, I have reconsidered the existing concepts of nationalism and ethnicity in order to explain *why* there is competition and how competition causes more competition. I have argued that the existing theoretical explanations to competition do not explain why in some cases these movements neither fail nor triumph but trigger more fragmentation and competition as an

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[219] Interviewee 18, interview by author, Dersim/Turkey, 17 March 2015.
[220] Gezik, Erdal. 2012. *Dinsel, Etnik ve Politik Sorunlar Bağlamında Alevi Kürtler*. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 106.

outcome. I have suggested that, we need to take a step backwards and question the terminology that we use when discussing nationalism. In other words, we need to question to what "ethnicity" refers to and how it is related to "nations" and "national identities". Moreover, I have argued that the ways identity movements and theoretical literature apply these terms can be identified as both causes and outcomes of nationalist competition. My suggestion is to detach from the current use of nationalism terminology in order to better understand societies that cannot be easily understood via modern conceptions of nations or ethnicities. Only in this way, that is moving away from understanding ethnicities as homogeneous entities, one can understand societies or nations that fail or continue as conflict zones.

3

Dersim as a Conflict Zone

"Any study of nation and nationalism that is not historical – i.e., grounded in a precise historical context- is nonsensical, useless, and (I would add) usually in nationalist tone". Antione Chollet[221]

3.1   Introduction

The term "conflict zone" may suggest a "non-spatial concept"[222] where communities conflict over the myths of a nation over a period of time. A conflict zone also implies "recurrent conflict" with links to past conflicts in a certain "environment" that hold for multiple generations.[223] Moreover, the term can also be a spatial concept, concentrating on a specific area. Dersim, as a small region located within the eastern part of Turkey, is physically a conflict zone, and so it is a conflict zone both spatially and non-spatially. From the late 1960s, Dersim has hosted multiple rival insurgent movements that compete on the one hand with the Turkish state, and on the other hand amongst themselves. These movements competing over Dersim's collective identity today are not "nationalist" in the sense that they wish to establish a "Dersim nation-state". The political or cultural nationalist projects of Kurds, Kirmancs or others, do not necessarily struggle for such a goal, but nonetheless they do still seek to impose their ideologies on the region.

This chapter draws a general framework of the Dersim case. First, it focuses on the historical background of Dersim, from the Ottoman period until the ethnic cleansing of the Turkish Republic in 1937-38. Historical evidence points to both the Ottoman and Turkish state authorities viewing Dersim as a problematic region, and that the 1937-38 acts of the Turkish state were neither independent from the past nor coincidental. Second, it reviews the existing literature on Dersim's collective identity and finds that there is a lack of common understanding of who Dersimlis are, even

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[221] Chollet, Antoine. 2011. "Switzerland as a 'fractured nation'." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 17 (4): 738-755, 740.
[222] Kissane, Bill. 2016. *Nations Torn Asunder the Challenge of Civil War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 97.
[223] Ibid., 91-92.

in scholarly work. Resting on this framework, I claim that Dersim is a case of continuous competition, both physically and ideologically.

3.2   Chronology of events

The events taking place in Dersim between 1937 and 1938 have been viewed from differing perspectives over many decades. One line of argument, still current today, viewed these events as military operations of the young Turkish Republic against rebellious Dersimli tribes, who refused to accept the central state authority. Another perspective is related to the first one, but it portrays the same rebellious activity as glorious, stressing the insurgent and resistant character of Dersim. The rising leftist and Kurdish movements, from the late 1960s onwards, viewed Dersim in this way in order to organise Dersimlis and involve them as actors in their movements. Yet another view considers the events not as legitimate state operations, or as a Dersim uprising, but as a state massacre, or *tertele* in Dersimce. Remembering Dersim 1937-38 as a state massacre arose in the 1990s, and from the 2000s onwards various people began addressing the Dersim tragedy of 1937-38 as a clear act of genocide. Today, the incidents of 1937-38 are largely accepted as a massacre, although not in the official government account, despite Recep Tayyip Erdogan's apology in 2011.

A more comprehensive way to analyse these events, which I choose to define as ethnic cleansing[224], is to examine carefully their chronology. Table 2 shows a chronology of events before and shortly after the 1937-38 incidents. In what follows, I will briefly review the Ottoman, Young Turk and Republican periods, their ideologies and the major events that took place within these periods. By doing so, my purpose is to show a chronology of events that brought Dersim to the events of 1937-38.

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[224] Due to the fact that Dersim 1937-38 is not yet accepted as genocide, I prefer to use the notion of ethnic cleansing. However, I should emphasise that events taking place in Dersim in 1938 and its aftermath satisfy all five criteria of the United Nations definition of genocide. Furthermore, the majority of my interviewees defined it as an act of genocide, and for consistency of the research I use the term genocide whenever my respondents or sources do so.

Table 2 Chronology of events in Dersim until the 1948 Amnesty

Period	Era	Significant Events
Ottoman Period	1299-1847 (*Millet* system)	1514 Battle of Chaldiran
Late Ottoman Period	1839-1908 (Modernisation period)	Ottoman reports on Dersim Battalions
Young Turks (1908-1918) and The Committee of Union and Progress Period	1908-1923 (Nationalisation process)	1908 Watershed Disciplining Battalions 1915 Armenian Atrocity 1920-21 Koçgiri
Turkish Republican Period	1923-1948 (Establishment of Turkish nation-state)	1926-1935 Dersim reports and Disciplining Battalions 1934 Act of Settlement 1935 Tunceli Law 1936 Infrastructure Building 1937 Military Operation 1938 Ethnic Cleansing 1948 Amnesty

3.2.1   The Ottoman Period

In the second half of the 1400s, Turkmen tribes in Anatolia began supporting militarily the emerging Safavids. These Turkmen tribes wore red headgear and they were thus known as *Kızılbaş* (meaning Redheads). The leader of the Safavids, Sheikh İsmail, conquered Iran and declared Iran a Shiite state. Kehl-Bodrogi claims that "the Ottomans started to stress orthodox Sunnism as their state religion and to treat all manifestations of religious heterodoxy as political opposition", due to their struggle with the Safavids.[225] The defeat of Sheikh İsmail in the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514 was

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[225] Kehl-Bodrogi, Krisztina. 2003. "Ataturk and the Alevis: A Holy Alliance?" In *Turkey's Alevi Enigma*, edited by Joost Jongerden Paul J. White, 53-70. Leiden: Brill, 54.

followed by physical attacks on Alevis, whose murder became "permissible by Islamic Law" in 1548.[226]

Consequently, the Alevis living on the borders of the Ottoman Empire were subject to increasing alienation. Alevis under Ottoman rule began living in remote places, such as the Dersim region. Kehl-Bodrogi highlights two notions here: *Takiye* and *Dede*. Takiye means Alevis who, in order to escape from persecution and oppression, concealed their religious identity. *Dedes* were the respected religious leaders/people among Alevis, who became important figures in the social, political and religious life of the Alevis as a people "independent from the outer world and its institutions".[227] Both of these terms are important in terms of explaining the Alevi way of life in their remote hideaways.

The *millet* system is "an innovation that Ottoman rulers used to organise the empire's religious groups from the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 to the nineteenth century".[228] In this system, Muslims belonged to a single, overarching *millet*, and various non-Muslim groups constituted other non-Muslim *millets*. The Muslim *millet* consisted of all Muslims regardless of their ethnicity or language, or to which Islamic sect they belonged. Karpat argues that this system was "a response to the heterogeneous society in the Balkans".[229] However, the heterogeneity within the Muslim *millet* was not really taken into account, as the Alevis were not recogonised within the Muslim *millet* but they were also not given a non-Muslim *millet* status either; thus, Alevis lacked a defined status or identity under the Ottoman rule. In fact, Aktürk claims that Alevis under the Ottoman rule "were often more harshly treated, persecuted, and excluded than non-Muslims".[230]

3.2.2   The Late Ottoman Period

Şerif Mardin describes the trigger that initiated reforms in the late-Ottoman period as the Empire's "continued military defeats and losses of territory".[231] The modernisation of the Ottoman Empire started with the declaration of the *Tanzimat*, meaning "reforms," in 1839. Following this was

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[226] Kehl-Bodrogi, Krisztina. 2003. "Ataturk and the Alevis: A Holy Alliance?" In *Turkey's Alevi Enigma*, edited by Joost
    Jongerden Paul J. White, 53-70. Leiden: Brill, 55.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Karen Barkey, George Gavrilis. 2016. "The Ottoman Millet System: Non-territorial Autonomy and its Contemporary
Legacy." *Ethnopolitics*, no 15(1):24-42, 24.
[229] Karpat, Kemal H. 2002. *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History: Selected Articles and Essays.* Leiden, Boston,
Köln: Brill, 619.
[230] Aktürk, Şener. 2009. "Persistence of the Islamic *Millet* as an Ottoman Legacy: Mono-Religious and Anti-Ethnic
    Definition of Turkish Nationhood." *Middle Eastern Studies* no. 45 (6):893-909, 904.
[231] Mardin, Şerif. 2000. *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernisation of Turkish Political Ideas*:
    Syracuse University Press. 134

a period when "a considerable number of Western-inspired political and social reforms were carried out in the Ottoman Empire".[232] In 1876, Sultan Abdülhamid II published the first formal constitution of the Ottoman Empire. Although the Sultan "prorogued the parliament and shelv[ed] the constitution" in 1878, "the movement did not die".[233] This was still a period of constitutionalism and modernisation, particularly with regard to legal, administrative, and educational reforms.[234]

Sultan Abdulhamid II established the Hamidiye Auxiliary Force in 1890. Klein[235] states that the official reason for the founding of the Hamidiye regiments was the protection of the eastern borders from Russian invasion. She stresses, however, that there were many other latent factors behind the decision to establish this force, such as strengthening the central authority, benefiting from the tribes as military powers, hindering Armenian activism, or carrying out a policy of pan-Islamism.[236] Her list also contains the claims that the Hamidiye regiments were for "creating a bond with the Sultan and the Kurds, civilising the tribes and taming them into tax-paying peaceful agriculturalists".[237] However, members of other ethnicities, such as Alevis, non-Sunni Kurds or Dersimlis, were not a factor here. The Kurdish political actor, Nuri Dersimi[238] describes these tribes as poor peasants who were used to fight to Kurds' disadvantage, while Aygün[239] claims "the relationship constituted with the Sunni Kurds were resented from the Dersimli Alevis, who were regarded as unreliable". As discussed below, there were also four main reports (Table 3) on Dersim signalling the exclusion of Dersimlis by Ottoman rule.

The reports were written by different Pashas and local administrators in the late Ottoman period, respectively in 1896, 1899, 1903 and 1906. These reports mainly detail rebelliousness or criminality, such as disobedience of a state authority (e.g., not paying taxes or refusing army service) or banditry, which was often due to either a rejection of feudal rule or severe economic hardship. The response to these issues mainly involved building a strong military force in the region, or even

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[232] Ibid., 3.

[233] Ahmad, Feroz. 2008. *From Empire to Republic: Essays on the Late Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* Vol. 1. Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University Press, 2

[234] Ibid., 3. See also Lewis, Bernard. 1965. *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* 3rd ed London.

[235] Klein, Janet. 2011. *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press; see also, Kodaman, Bayram. 2011. "The Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiments: Abdulhamid II and the Eastern Anatolian Tribes." In *War and Diplomacy: the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the Treaty of Berlin*, edited by Peter Sluglett Hakan Yavuz, 382-428. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 392.

[236] Klein, Janet. 2011. *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

[237] Ibid.,5-7.

[238] Dersimi, Dr. Nuri. 2012. *Kürdistan Tarihinde Dersim*. 3rd ed. Istanbul: Doz Yayıncılık

[239] Aygün, Hüseyin. 2011. *Dersim 1938 ve Zorunlu İskan*. Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları. 64

establishing military rule. Also, there were attempts at improving the lives of local Dersimlis by building roads, educating children and "showing kindness". Furthermore, there were propositions to "save Dersimlis" from tribal chiefs and religious leaders by deporting these men. Whilst there is at least some consistency in terms of the definitions of the problems and suggested solutions in these reports, descriptions of the collective identity of Dersim changed from "*Kızılbaş"* [Alevi] increasingly to "Kurdified Turks". Table 3 shows how these reports gradually re-defined Dersimli identity over the years.

Table 3 Dersim reports in the Committee of Union and Progress Era

Year	Dersim Report	Dersim Identity
1896	Şakir Bey and Zeki Pasha Report	*Kızılbaş*
1899	Şakir Pasha Report	*Kızılbaş*
1903	Arif Bey Report	Kurdifying Turks
1906	Hamdi Bey's Report	Increasingly Kurdified Turks

Source: Yıldız, Mehmet. 2014. *Dersim'in Etno-Kültürel Kimliği ve 1937-1938 Tertelesi*. Istanbul: Chiviyazıları Yayınevi, 49-50.

Following these reports, there were several military operations termed "disciplining operations" in the region, also known as "flood operations". Some of the main operations were conducted respectively in 1907, 1908, 1909, 1914, and 1916. Kieser claims that from 1908 until the eve of World War I, the Young Turks were in favour of persuading the Dersimli people politically.[240] However, Dersim turned into a "political-demographic problem" for Unionists who feared "an alliance between Alevis and Christians, namely Kurdish Alevis and Armenians with a demographic weight affecting about half of the total population in a large part of the Eastern provinces".[241] Especially following the 1915 Armenian Genocide, people in Dersim increasingly worried about their own future as a community that was religiously non-Sunni and ethnically non-Turkish.

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[240] Keiser, Hans-Lukas. 2003. "Alevis, Armenians and Kurds in Unionist-Kemalist Turkey (1908-1938)." In *Turkey's Alevi Enigma*, edited by Joost Jongerden Paul J. White, 177-196. Leiden: Brill, 178.
[241] Ibid., 179.

3.2.3   The Young Turks and the Committee of Union and Progress Era

Young Turks carried out a revolution in 1908, aiming to "rescue the [Ottoman] Empire from the old order and liberate it from the control of the European powers".[242] Social and political reforms had already been made, at some level, in the *Tanzimat* era, and they were continued until World War I. Ahmad asserts that at the beginning of the uprising, Unionists were not Turkish nationalists but Ottoman patriots: they did not exclude non-Turkish elements as "there was no attempt to dissolve the *millet* system and create an Ottoman identity".[243] Therefore, the first period of the Young Turks and the CUP can be described as an "Ottomanisation", not in the sense of nationalisation, but rather in the sense of a "dynastic designation".[244] They demanded a constitutional state and a place for the Ottoman Muslims in the Ottoman Empire.

The nationalisation process that was initiated by the Young Turks and the CUP was strongly Islamic, regardless of ethnic identities. Aktürk argues: "the mobilised masses belonged to what were known as the Muslim *millet* in the Ottoman times, including Albanians, Circassians, Lazes, Kurds, Turkmens, and other Muslim ethnic groups".[245] During the Erzurum and Sivas Congresses, Muslims from various ethnic backgrounds identified Islam as the uniting factor. Therefore, it can be argued that this was not a liberation war of the Turks, but rather a war of the Muslim *millet* of the collapsing Ottoman Empire.[246] The pragmatic cadres who established the Turkish Republic allied with the Muslims, including Kurds and Alevis, in order to establish "the widest common front against the invaders during the War of Liberation".[247]

The Koçgiri Unrest (Figure 2) is one of the primary examples of resistance against the newly established Turkish state. It took place between 1920 and 1921 against the recently established national assembly in Ankara. Prior to this, Mustafa Kemal had invited Koçgiri leaders to the Sivas Congress (1919), where Koçgiri clan leader Alişan demanded autonomy under the Ottoman Sultan's warranty. His demands were rejected and the Sivas Congress ended with an even stronger emphasis on the "unity of the Muslims and exclusion of all non-Muslim elements from the national

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[242] Ahmad, Feroz. 2008. *From Empire to Republic: Essays on the Late Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* Vol. 1. Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University Press, 29

[243] Ibid., 98.

[244] Ibid., 106.

[245] Aktürk, Şener. 2015. "Religion and Nationalism: Contradictions of Islamic Origins and Secular Nation-Building in Turkey, Algeria, and Pakistan." *Social Science Quarterly* no. 96 (3), 787.

[246] Ibid., 789.

[247] Aktürk, Şener. 2009. "Persistence of the Islamic *Millet* as an Ottoman Legacy: Mono-Religious and Anti-Ethnic Definition of Turkish Nationhood." *Middle Eastern Studies* no. 45 (6):893-909, 903.

movement".[248] The military commander in Koçgiri was Nurettin Pasha, and under his rule there was "systematic destruction of villages and many civilian casualties in addition to 500 dead rebels".[249] His son-in-law, Abdullah Pasha, later became the military governor in Dersim and Koçgiri was presumably the "preliminary stage of the ethnocide carried out by Kemalist Turkey in Dersim in the 1930s".[250]

Figure 2 Map of Koçgiri within historical Dersim
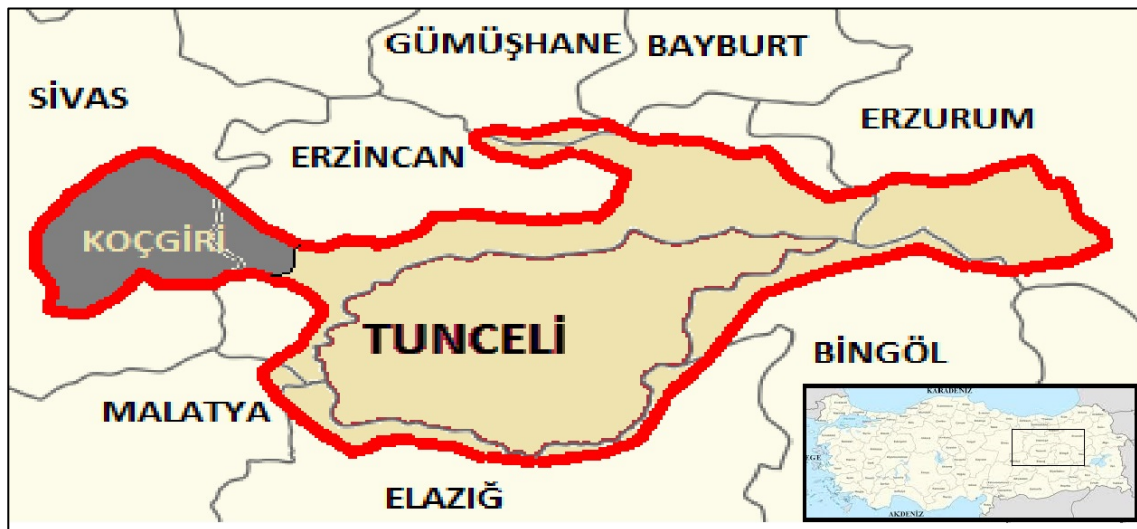
3.2.4   The Turkish Republican Period

The establishment of the Turkish Republic is often regarded as a step forward to a society more tolerant of diversity "since it is assumed that the principle of secularism in the Republic did away with the legal categories of religiously-defined *millets*, and deemed all subjects equal citizens regardless of religious affiliation", as Aktürk writes.[251] Despite the fact that the republic was constitutionally civic, "one could become a real Turk to the extent to which one adopted the ideals, values, and attitudes of the ethnic Turks".[252]   Following the Treaty of Lausanne and the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the ruling cadres dropped the *ümmet* policy that united the

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[248] Keiser, Hans-Lukas. 2003. "Alevis, Armenians and Kurds in Unionist-Kemalist Turkey (1908-1938)." In *Turkey's Alevi Enigma*, edited by Joost Jongerden Paul J. White, 177-196. Leiden: Brill, 134.

[249] Ibid., 186.

[250] Ibid., 187.

[251] Aktürk, Şener. 2009. "Persistence of the Islamic *Millet* as an Ottoman Legacy: Mono-Religious and Anti-Ethnic Definition of Turkish Nationhood." *Middle Eastern Studies* no. 45 (6):893-909, 895

[252] Heper, Metin. 2007. *The State and Kurds in Turkey*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Muslim elements and implemented increasingly secularist and Turkish nationalist policies.[253] Shortly after its establishment, Turkey abolished the Caliphate (1924). This was an unexpected act, since Muslims from various groups "expected the continued application of Islamic law and the recognition of ethnic and linguistic diversity within Turkey".[254]

But the Turkish Republic was formulated as a secular yet religiously Sunni and ethnically Turk nation-state, especially from the 1930s onwards. Although it was secular on paper "the form of religion was re-shaped according to an individualist and centrally-organised notion of 'official Islam'", according to Köse.[255] From 1923 onwards, and especially after the 1930s, official state policies became increasingly intolerant of "outsiders", namely the non-Turkish and non-Muslim elements left within the nation-state. The Turkish Republican period was not a modernisation era in the late Ottoman sense, or a nationalisation era in the CUP model, but a strong orientation towards constituting a Turkish nation-state. Although many Anatolian Alevis were content with the secular tone of the recently founded Turkish state, due to their ethnic and linguistic particularities, Alevis in Eastern Anatolia were suspicious. The state may have been secular, but Dersimlis knew what had happened to Anatolian Armenians, in fact the Dersimlis were known for helping Armenians escape from the *Tertele Vıren* ("First Massacre" in Dersimce) in 1915.[256] Dersimlis identify 1938 as *Tertele Peen* ("Second Massacre" in Dersimce).

There were numerous ethnic (Kurdish), religious (Alevi) insurgencies against the central state authority in the early 1920s. These insurgent ethnic and religious groups also interacted with each other, forming various alliances to resist the assimilative policies of the central authorities (e.g., the 1920 Koçgiri and 1925 Sheikh Said unrests). Köse believes that Alevis who did not speak Turkish but who spoke Kurdish or Dersimce had "a much more cynical and, to a certain extent, antagonistic vision of Republican Turkey in comparison to Turkish Alevis".[257] Since Dersimlis were neither ethnically Turk, nor Turkish speakers, they were considered "elements to be cured" by the Turkish

[253] Aktürk, Şener. 2015. "Religion and Nationalism: Contradictions of Islamic Origins and Secular Nation-Building in Turkey, Algeria, and Pakistan." *Social Science Quarterly* no. 96 (3), 790.
[254] Ibid.
[255] Köse, Talha. 2013. "Between Nationalism, Modernism and Secularism: The Ambivalent Place of 'Alevi Identities'." *Middle Eastern Studies* no. 49 (4): 590-607, 603.
[256] Mehtap Tosun, Özgür Bal. 2013. "'Yol'da Kurulan Kimlik: Dersim Ermenileri." In Dersim'i Parantezden Çıkarmak: Dersim Sempozyumu'nun Ardından, edited by Songül Aydın Şükrü Aslan, Zeliha Hepkon. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
[257] Köse, Talha. 2013. "Between Nationalism, Modernism and Secularism: The Ambivalent Place of 'Alevi Identities'." Middle Eastern Studies no. 49 (4): 590-607, 603.

state elite. Dersimlis were, in a way, stuck between integration with the central Turkish state and disintegration from it with its particular religious, linguistic, and cultural identity.

As the Turkish Republic was established in the 1923, its founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk quickly implemented a series of revolutions to construct a modern and homogeneous Turkish identity. The first population census of the Turkish Republic was conducted on 28 October 1927, one day prior to the fourth anniversary of its establishment. Tamer and Çavlin Bozbeyoğlu argue that this census was a "symbol of both modernisation process in the country and the power based on population size".[258] Modernisation here can be regarded as an attempt to westernise the Turkish nation in many aspects, such as defining the linguistic and religious identity of its people, its demography and also its economic potentials. The census categorised the religious identities as Islam, Catholic, Orthodox, Armenian, and Christian. This is problematic for two reasons. First, Muslims were not categorised in terms of their religious sect, which neglected the predominant Alevi existence in Dersim. Second, the Christians sects were categorised problematically, as if Catholic and Orthodox were not Christians. This categorisation can be explained by the fact that the young Turkish Republic wanted to know how many were "us" and how many were "them", which was based on the religious identity.[259] The results of the population census in 1927 for Dersim showed that Dersim was predominantly Muslim (%98), therefore Alevi.

The census also showed that 69.5% of the Dersimlis spoke "Kurdish". Sertel claims, "Zazas are the majority in this region and therefore Zazaki is more common," arguing that Dersimce was categorised as Kurdish by census officers.[260] 29.8% of the Dersimlis spoke Turkish and 0.74% spoke Armenian. Linguistic identity became increasingly important for the construction of the modern Turkish identity in the 1930s, when Turkish language "became the only official language, not just at the national level, but also at the local and even at the individual level" according to Aslan.[261] Accordingly, the "nationalist pseudoscientific linguistic hypothesis," the Sun Language Theory was developed.[262] Demir argues that the Sun Language Theory was basically a discussion on the

[258] Aytül Tamer, Alanur Çavlin Bozbeyoğlu. 2004. "1927 Nüfus Sayımının Türkiye'de Ulus Devlet İnşaasındaki Yeri: Basında Yansımalar." *The Journal of Population Studies* no. 26: 73-88, 88.

[259] Ibid., 80.

[260] Sertel, Savaş. 2014. "Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin İlk Genel Nüfus Sayımına Göre Dersim Bölgesinde Demografik Yapı." *Fırat University Journal of Social Science* no. 24 (1): 269-282.

[261] Aslan, Senem. 2007. ""Citizen, Speak Turkish!": A Nation in the Making." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics,* 13(2): 245-272.

[262] Aydın, Yaşar. 2014. "Book Review: Darwin'den Dersim'e Cumhuriyet ve Antropoloji." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 20 (1): 177-179.

modernisation and nationalisation.[263] "Linguistic difference was a potential source of ethnic distinctions and eventually it was going to be politicised by the future national states and turned into a factor of conflict," claims Kitromilides.[264] Dersim religiously belonged to a non-Sunni sect of Islam, it was a multi-lingual region, and it refused the authority of the central Turkish state. It was thus an "abscess" to be cut out.

The reports on Dersim prior to the 1937-38 ethnic cleansing show less reference to the Alevi identity in Dersim, but more emphasis on ethnic identity (i.e., Turk, Turkic and Kurdish). Table 4 shows how descriptions of Dersim's identity underwent changes over the years. Moreover, it shows differences between the reports' authors, who were writing almost concurrently. Over the period covered by the reports, Kurdification of the Dersimlis was added as a problem to be solved. Interestingly enough, Halis Pasha's Report in 1930 reveals that Dersimlis feared that they might be treated as the Armenians had been and they were thus terrified of extermination. Fevzi Çakmak's report in 1930 refers to the Alevi identity in Dersim. His report blames Dersimlis for "using the Alevi identity to Kurdify the existing Turkish villages and expanding the Kurdish language".

Table 4 Dersim reports during the Turkish Republican period

Year	Dersim Report	Dersim Identity
1926	Hamdi Bey Report	Increasingly Kurdified
1926	Cemal Bey Report	Alevi and truly Turk, Turkmen
1930	1st Inspectorate General Report	Turkish/ may become Turkified soon
1930	Halis Pasha	Turkish
1930	Chief of General Staff Fevzi Çakmak	Kurdish
1930	Fevzi Çakmak Report	Kurdish
1930	Rüştü Bey Report	Turkish
1935	İsmet İnönü Report	Kurdish

Source: Yıldız, Mehmet. 2014. *Dersim'in Etno-Kültürel Kimliği ve 1937-1938 Tertelesi*. Istanbul: Chiviyazıları Yayınevi, 51-54.

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[263] Demir, Gökhan Yavuz. 2007. "Türkçenin Pirus Zaferi," *Trajik Başarı/Türk Dil Reformu,* Geıffrey Lewis, Istanbul: Paradigma Yayıncılık.

[264] Kitromilides, Paschalis M. 1996. "'Balkan mentality': history, legend, imagination " *Nations and Nationalism* no. 2 (2):163-191, 171.

In an analysis of the Dersim reports, Yıldız states that, although the definition of Dersim's collective identity changed over the period, Dersimlis were "never counted as Shafii [Sunni] Kurds".[265] The Turkish state, in the meantime, aimed to Turkify and Sunnify Dersim. The analysis of the Ottoman Empire period to the Republican era shows that there was continuing prejudice and displeasure from the central authority towards the Dersim region and its inhabitants.

One of the initial acts to Turkify Anatolia was the 1934 Act of Settlement. In a parliament speech, Kütahya Deputy Naşit Hakkı Uluğ referred to this law that would unite Turkish citizens around "one language, one feeling, one culture and one ideal".[266] Şükrü Kaya, who was the minister of interior at the time, also claimed that through the passing and enforcement of this law, Turkey would be a country speaking one language, thinking in unity, and united in spirit. Although unified thinking and spirit are rather subjective notions, and thus hard to witness in documentation, it is possible to find frequent reference to the "single language" goal.

With an increasingly racist tone, Turkish state officers began distinguishing between Turkish and Kurdish "races" in the 1930s. Deputy of the parliament and former minister Mahmut Esat Bozkurt's often cited speech claimed that:

> All, friends, enemies and the *mountains* [the emphasis on mountains is important here as Bozkurt implies enemies live in mountains. It should be noted that Turkish state ideology described Kurds as "mountain Turks" for a very long time], shall know that the Turk is the *master* of this country. All those who are not pure Turks have only one right in the Turkish homeland: the right to be *servants*, the right to be *slaves*" [emphasis by the author].[267]

Dersim fits the phrases 'enemy' and, being a mountainous region, 'mountains' used by Bozkurt in his speech. In fact, Dersimlis, as well as the Kurdish people and regions, were mainly described as mountain people by state officials. With this ideology freely accepted, the Tunceli Law passed in the Turkish Parliament in December 1935 with no opposition. As a consequence of this

[265] Yıldız, Mehmet. 2014. *Dersim'in Etno-Kültürel Kimliği ve 1937-1938 Tertelesi*. Istanbul: Chiviyazıları Yayınevi, 55.
[266] Bülent Bilmez, Gülay Kayacan, Şükrü Aslan. 2011. *Toplumsal Bellek, Kuşaklararası Aktarım ve Algı: Dersim '38'i Hatırlamak*. Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 30.
[267] Keiser, Hans-Lukas. 2011. "Dersim Massacre, 1937-1938." *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*.

law, Dersim was no longer a part of Elazığ but a city in its own right, renamed Tunceli, which is a Turkification of the original name. Furthermore, a state of emergency was declared in the city and Abdullah Alpdoğan, the head of the Fourth General Inspectorate, became the governor with full authority.

İsmet İnönü, prime minister at that time, under President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's orders, went to Anatolia in 1935 to prepare a detailed report on Anatolian Kurds. In this report, İnönü revealed his concerns for a potential "Kurdistan" in Erzincan and also suggested that Dersim should be "improved under a military rule".[268] İnönü's program required development of the area, and, perhaps, the disarmament and resettlement of Dersimlis. According to his plan, 1935 and 1936 would be spent on building infrastructure in Dersim, such as roads, bridges or police stations. His plan also included policies of assimilation, such as teaching Turkish language to Dersimlis, moving them away from their homelands and breaking up families. For this, İnönü recommended building missionary boarding schools, where Turkishness should be "propagated".[269] As the policies following the 1937-38 events show, many Dersimli children were either adopted by Turkish military officers or sent to boarding schools for assimilation.[270]

In 1936, Dersimlis surrendered 7,880 armaments to the Turkish government[271] and the building of infrastructure in Dersim continued, causing tensions between local Dersimlis and state military officers. There are various versions of how the first state operation in Dersim began in 1937, some accounts claiming that military officers insulted local people, others claiming that tribal attacks against the newly-constructed infrastructure triggered reprisals. However, in May 1937, with the participation of Ataturk and Fevzi Çakmak, the Council of Ministers "decided secretly on a forceful attack against western-central Dersim, to kill all who used or had used arms and to remove the population settled between Nazimiye and Sin".[272]

Initially, İnönü was the Prime Minister and the military operation mainly targeted the tribal leaders in Dersim. First, other Dersimlis killed activist Alişer and his wife. Later, on 12 September

[268] Yıldız, Mehmet. 2014. *Dersim'in Etno-Kültürel Kimliği ve 1937-1938 Tertelesi*. Istanbul: Chiviyazıları Yayınevi, 55.
[269] Ibid.
[270] Sıdıka Avar's memoire, *Dağ Çiçeklerim* is an example of this policy. Avar's book is about her years as a teacher who 'educated' Dersimli girls in boarding schools. Avar, Sıdıka. 2011. *Dağ Çiçeklerim.* Ankara: Berikan Yayınevi.
[271] Ağar, Ömer Kemal. 1940. *Tunceli Dersim Coğrafyası*. Istanbul: Türkiye Basımevi. 33 In Bülent Bilmez, Gülay Kayacan, Şükrü Aslan. 2011. *Toplumsal Bellek, Kuşaklararası Aktarım ve Algı: Dersim '38'i Hatırlamak*. Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 31.
[272] Keiser, Hans-Lukas. 2011. "Dersim Massacre, 1937-1938." *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*.

1937, Seyyid Rıza, who is known as the "leader of the Dersim rebellion" surrendered, unarmed. In a parliamentary speech in September 1937, İnönü claimed that the "Tunceli problem has been solved and state had established its authority". Seyyid Rıza was executed in November 1937, İnönü having resigned prior to this, on 25 October 1937. Celal Bayar became the new Prime Minister. Süleyman Demirel, the 9th President of the Turkish Republic, later explained:

> Atatürk and Marshal Fevzi Çakmak sat down and talked. They decided that Tunceli should be cleared. Since they knew that İnönü was not very willing to make such a "clearance" they asked Celal Bayar, "Will you do it?" Mr. Celal Bayar told us this story; he said "I will". Then they plunged [into Dersim]. İsmet Pasha has Kurdish blood, a little. Mr. Erdal [Erdal İnönü was the son of İsmet İnönü, he was also a politician] also told me once or twice that they had Kurdish blood.[273]

Prime Minister Celal Bayar focused his attentions on Dersim and in spring 1938 a "manual booklet" was distributed in Elazığ, explaining how to raid villages and burn down village houses.[274] At the end of the first military operations, tribes continued to resist with fears of otherwise "perishing" and the central Turkish government "embarked on a general cleansing in order to eradicate once and for all this [Dersim] problem", as purported by Prime Minister Bayar himself in his parliament speech on 29 June 1938.[275] Between August and September, *Tertele* took place in Dersim.

Official information on the outcome of this ethnic cleansing has not been given clearly. During a speech he made, Erdoğan referred to certain official accounts. Based on these, a total of 13,806 Dersimlis were killed and around 12,000 Dersimlis exiled to Western parts of Turkey (Figure 3). Aslan compared the population censuses of Dersim's Hozat district in 1935 and 1940 and found that more than 10,000 people were lost, making Hozat the most seriously affected region in Dersim.[276]

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[273] Arcayürek, Cüneyt. 2000. *Büyüklere Masallar Küöüklere Gerçekler*. Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 81 In *Toplumsal Bellek, Kuşaklararası Aktarım ve Algı: Dersim '38'i Hatırlamak*. Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 33.

[274] *Nokta*, Vol 25, 1987 in Bülent Bilmez, Gülay Kayacan, Şükrü Aslan. 2011. *Toplumsal Bellek, Kuşaklararası Aktarım ve Algı: Dersim '38'i Hatırlamak*. Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 34.

[275] Keiser, Hans-Lukas. 2011. "Dersim Massacre, 1937-1938." *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*.

[276] Aslan, Şükrü. 2010. "Genel nüfus sayımı verilerine göre Dersim'de "kayıp nüfus": 1927-1955." In *Herkesin Bildiği Sır: Dersim*, edited by Şükrü Aslan. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 411.

Figure 3 Map of deportation of Dersimlis to western cities of Turkey after 1937-38
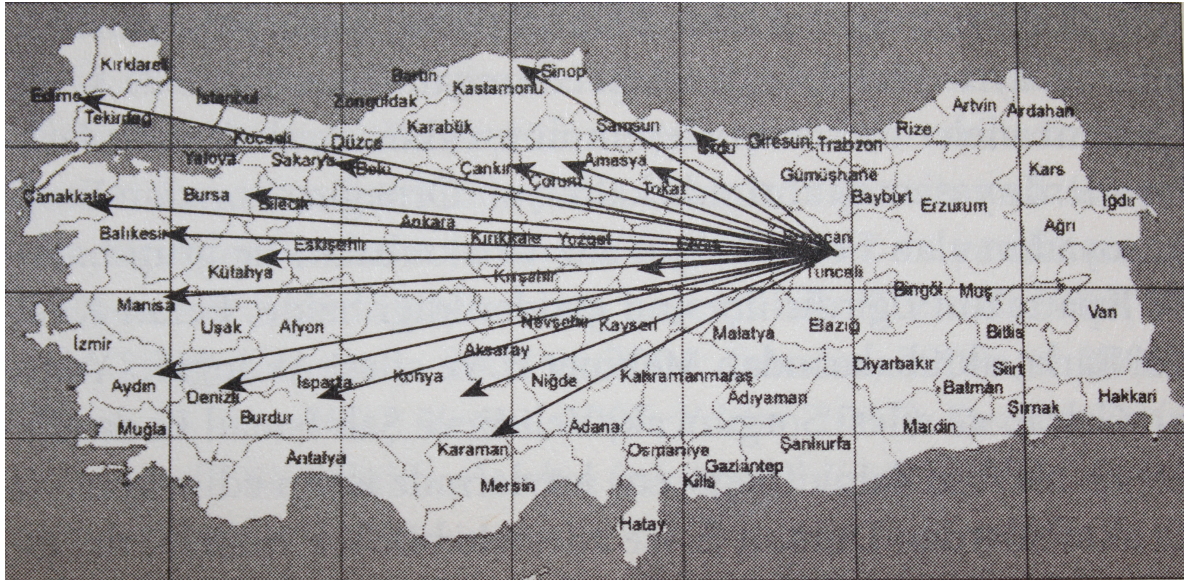
Source: Sibel Yardımcı, Şükrü Aslan. 2010. "Memleket ve Garp Hikayeleri: 1938 Dersim sürgünleri ile bir sözlü tarih çalışması." In *Herkesin Bildiği Sır: Dersim*, edited by Şükrü Aslan. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 418.

In a meeting in 1936, internal inspector Abidin Özmen took the floor and suggested that as an "advanced nation" Turkey would assimilate those people who speak Kurdish with policies including sending village children to boarding schools. [277] These boarding schools would deliver Turkish propaganda under a program in which pupils would learn to "speak Turkish ... and to love their Turkish ancestors".[278] Continuing this mindset of proud nationalism and indoctrination, after the military operations in 1938, Kaya instructed the Ministry of Culture to open boarding schools for Dersimli children of over five years of age. The purpose of the Turkish state was to assimilate the younger Dersimli generation into Turkishness through education and marriage. In instances other than deportation or schooling, Dersimli children were converted to Turkishness and Sunni Islam through adoption as adopted-helpers.[279]

This short review of the chronology of events leading up to the 1937-1938 ethnic cleansing has described how Dersim has been a "problematic" region for the central state authorities, since as early as the 16th century. Dersim has remained a closed region, geographically isolated, which helped preserve its autonomy over many centuries. Beginning from the late-Ottoman period, Dersim's insubmissive, heterogeneous and Alevi character attracted many violent attempts at

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[277] Doğan, Yalçın. 2012. *Savrulanlar*. Istanbul: Kırmızı Kedi Yayınevi, 50.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Ibid., 28.

subjugation. Following the modernisation and nationalisation policies of the Turkish Republic in the 20th Century, Dersim came under fire due to its non-Turkish identity. Arguably, neither the state operations in 1937 nor the ethnic cleansing in 1938 were coincidental. Quite the contrary, these were doubtlessly pre-planned. What is still debated upon are not the actions of the Turkish state, but the nature of the collective identity in Dersim that was targeted. The following section reviews the existing literature, which is in disagreement regarding this issue.

3.3   Competition over Dersim's collective identity in the academic literature

Within the existing literature, there is much disagreement on how to define the collective identity of Dersim 1937-38. In accordance with this struggle over how to define this collective identity, one can observe various definitions of who Dersimlis are. These definitions are variously based on ethnic, religious, and/or linguistic belongings. Quite often, existing studies link the ethno-religious identity of Dersim to a so-called linguistic homogeneity, which I argue results in endless competition over Dersim's collective identity.

To underline this point once again, Dersimli identity is an ethnic identity on its own, which defines religiously Alevi and linguistically Dersimce, Kurdish (*Kırdaşki* in local language) and Turkish speaking people. To date, the literature on Dersim has not agreed on this definition. Today, the Dersimli intelligentsia, regardless of their ideological position, largely accept that people from Dersim identify themselves as "Kirmanc". Nonetheless, competing nationalist movements are now presenting their own interpretations of the Kirmanc identity, instead of accepting the pre-national definition of the term. In other words, these movements have accepted the terminology, but not the connotation of the terminology. Table 5 shows various interpretations of the Dersimli identity by different groups.

Table 5 Identities in Dersim and their ethnic, religious, and linguistic implications

Identity	Ethnicity	Religion	Language
Dersimli (Kirmanc)	Kirmanc	Alevi	Dersimce, Kurdish, Turkish
Turk	Turkmen	Alevi	Turkish
Kurd	Kurd	Alevi-Sunni	Kurdish
Zaza	Zaza	Alevi-Sunni	Zazaki
Alevi-Zaza (Kirmanc)	Zaza	Alevi	Zazaki
Armenian	Armenian	Armenian Christian	Armenian

This table shows that Turkish, Kurdish, Zaza, Alevi-Zaza, and Armenian perceptions of Dersim's collective identity do not fit the religious and linguistic definition of pre-national Dersimli identity. The Turkish perspective, which was also the official perspective in the late Ottoman period, the early Republican years, and in the assimilation process following the events of 1937-38, views Dersim as originally Turkish. The Kurdish perspective sees Dersimce language mainly as a dialect of Kurdish, thus an internal element of Kurdish identity.[280] Furthermore, Dersimlis are often sceptical of the Kurdish perception of Alevism, since Kurds in Turkey predominantly belong to the Sunni sect of Islam. The Zaza movement, meanwhile, emerged as a reaction against an increasingly homogenising Kurdish movement. However, in the same vein as the Kurdish movement they criticise, the Zaza movement defines Dersim from its own ethno-linguistic perspective. Furthermore, the term "Zaza" also has a Sunni connotation; hence it is not an internal element in the Dersimli identity. The Alevi-Zaza notion is to some extent closer to the pre-national Dersimli identity, but it mainly refers to the fact that Dersimlis are Alevis and Zazas, often neglecting Dersim's multilingual identity. More recently, the emerging Armenian movement considers Armenian identity as a crucial, if not dominating, factor in Dersim. Here, I will present examples of various scholarly works that define Dersimli identity from these different perspectives. The existing literature, as I will explain,

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[280] There are a number of linguists who argue that "Zazaki" or Dersimce is not a dialect of Kurdish. Terry Todd, in his PhD dissertation, argues that Dimili [Zazaki, Dersimce] is a separate language and not a Kurdish dialect. See Todd, Terry. 1985. *A Grammer of Dimili (Also known as Zaza)*, University of Michigan; see also Keskin, Mesut. 2010. "Zazaca üzerine notlar" In *Herkesin Bildiği Sır: Dersim*, edited by Şükrü Aslan. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

fails to comprehend the social reality of Dersim's identity, creating a scholarly framework for the ongoing competition in Dersim as a conflict zone.

3.3.1 Dersimlis are Turkish

Following the establishment of the Turkish Republic, there was a systematic drive to create a sense of uniquely Turkish culture and identity. Arguably, this was a period of "national narcissism", when the superiority of Turkishness was preached to Turkish citizens.[281] The Sun Language Theory was introduced in the 1930s, when nationalist state ideology was at its peak, claiming simply that all civilised languages originated from Turkish. Thus, it was unsurprising that Dersim's collective identity was described as Turkic and of Turkmen origin. Official state reports, as I discussed in Chapter 3.2, for the most part referred to the danger of the Kurdification of the originally Turkish Dersim region.

M. Şerif Fırat, a schoolteacher, wrote a book on the history of Varto and the Eastern Provinces of Turkey in 1948. Fırat identified Kurdish and Dersimce speaking groups as Turks who are called "Kurdish" due to their linguistic diversity, describing them as "valuable Turkish brothers" and "mountain Turks".[282] According to Fırat, Kurdish and Dersimce are "sounds" rather than languages, having diverged from standard Turkish. He underlined that Kurdish and Dersimce speaking Alevis practice their religious *Cem* rituals in Turkish, which reflects their connection to "Turkish ancestors".[283]

Cemal Şener also defines non-Turkish speaking Alevis as originally Turks. Alevi Turkmens forced to flee the Ottoman central authority "had to move to villages at the back of beyond, and immediately forget Turkish and learn Kurdish and Zazaki to save their lives".[284] Irene Melikoff is also among the scholars who regard Dersimlis and Alevis as being descendents of "Kurdicised (or Zazaicised) Turkmen Kizilbas tribes".[285] Bruinessen criticises Melikoff for undoubtedly accepting that Dersimlis are Turks, instead defining Dersimlis as "Kurdish (and Zaza) Alevis".[286] This brings us to the

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[281] Viyale, Kıvılcım. 2009. "Resmi Tarihler Kuşatmasında Dersim." *Kırmanciya Beleke* no. 1.

[282] Fırat, M. Şerif. 1983. *Doğu İlleri ve Varto Tarihi*. Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1.

[283] Ibid., 200

[284] Şener, Cemal. 2002. *Aleviler'in Etnik Kimliği: Aleviler Kürt Mü? Türk Mü?* Istanbul: Etik Yayınları.

[285] Bruinessen, Martin van. 1997. ""Aslını inkar eden haramzadedir!" The debate on the ethnic identity of the Kurdish Alevis." In *Syncretistic religious communities in the Near East*, edited by Brbara Kellner-Heinkele Krisztine Kehl-Bodrogi, Anne Otter-Beaujean, 1-23. Leiden: Brill.

[286] Ibid.

next two definitions of the collective Dersim identity, which describe Dersim as ethnically Kurdish and Zaza.

3.3.2   Dersimlis are Kurdish

Bruinessen uses the term "Alevi Kurds" for all Kurdish or Dersimce speaking Alevis, regardless of whether they define themselves as Kurds or not. Although this is may be an arbitrary terminological convention, it is still problematic in the sense that he is choosing one ethnic definition over another, with no direct reference to how Dersimlis define their identity. While he describes Dersim as the "heartland of the Kurdish Alevis", he fails to refer to the local identity of Dersimli tribes that describe themselves as "Kirmanc"; rather, he uses the linguistic definitions of Kurd or Zaza. Concurrently, Cemal Şener, who views Dersim from a Turkish perspective, points out that Alevis aged 60 or over living in Eastern Anatolia do not identify themselves as Kurd or Zaza, instead referring to themselves as "Turks". Interestingly, Bruinessen makes no reference to any existing oral history project to support his remarks.

Nuri Dersimi and İsmail Beşikçi are frequently cited with regard to the Dersim issue. Nuri Dersimi defined Dersim as a Kurdish rebellion and Seyyid Rıza as a Kurdish martyr who devoted his life to the Kurdish nation and Kurdistan.[287] Dersimi, born in 1890, was a veterinarian, who also happened to be a Kurdish nationalist. He participated actively in the Koçgiri Unrest, fleeing first to Elazığ in 1926 and then to Syria in 1937. Nonetheless, he became increasingly popular following the publication of his memoir in 1952, which became a frequently cited work about Dersim 1937-38 through to the end of 1980s.

Beşikçi, in *Tunceli Law (1935) and the Dersim Genocide*, accusess Turkish universities and scholars of having knowingly overlooked the "Kurdish nation fact".[288] This, Beşikçi continues, was a colonialist policy of the Turkish state administration against the Kurds, and the Tunceli Law contributed to the "Kurdistan policy" of the Turkish state.[289] What is rather noteworthy is that in the first two forewords of his book, respectively in 1977 and 1989, Beşikçi only refers to the Kurdish element in Dersim, whereas in the prologue of the 2013 edition of his book, he notes the importance of touching upon the Kurdish, Alevi and Zaza dimensions of the Dersim issue.[290]

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[287] Dersimi, Vet. Dr. M. Nuri. 2014. *Hatıratım*. Istanbul: Dam Yayınları, 20.
[288] Beşikçi, İsmail. 2013. *Tunceli Kanunu (1935) ve Dersim Jenosidi*. Istanbul: İBV Roni Yayınları, 254-255
[289] Ibid., 256.
[290] Ibid., 12.

3.3.3   Dersimlis are Zaza

The idea that the Dersim collective identity is Zaza emerged from the Diaspora in the 1980s. Ebubekir Pamukçu, a Sunni Zaza who lived in Sweden, was the ideological leader of this Zaza movement, which not only involved Dersim but all Zazaki speaking parts of Eastern Anatolia (Figure 4). The Zaza nationalist movement claims that Zaza people and Zazaki language have been neglected equally by Turkish and Kurdish ideologies, and it is thus critical of both movements. Although this movement has not found significant support, despite the publication of the journals *Ayre* and *Piya* in Europe, it has helped the Zazaki language to gain international recognition.

Figure 4 Zazaki speaking regions in Turkey. Light blue section shows Dersimce speaking parts.
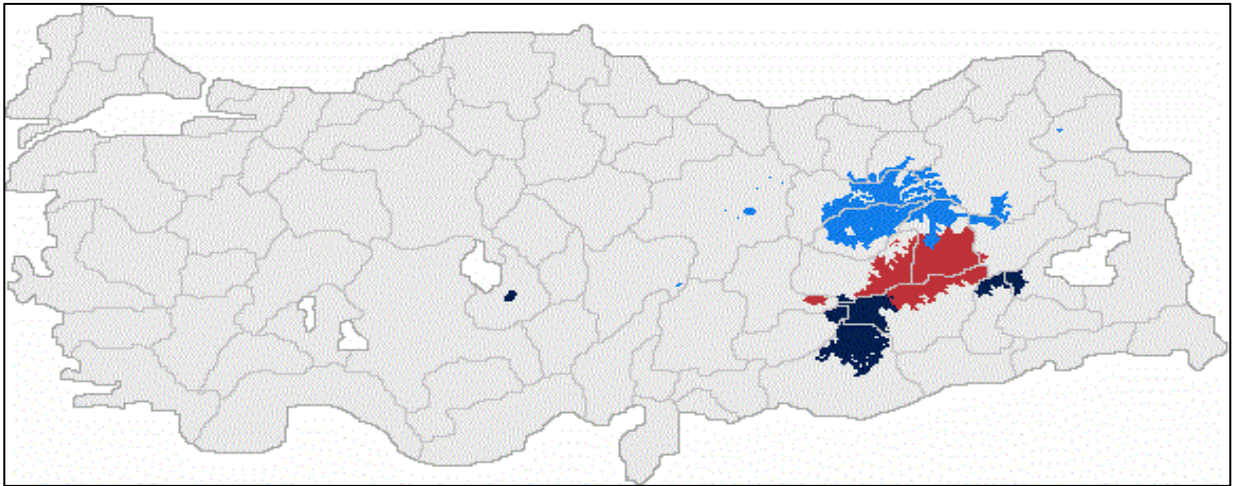
Source: *The regions where Zaza is spoken in Turkey, with the three main dialect areas.* 17 August 2011. Available from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zaza_language#/media/File:Zaza_DialectsMap-5.gif.

Potentially due to this international recognition of the Zazaki language, many people began defining the spoken language in Dersim as Zazaki, and thus Dersimlis as Zaza. However, Dersimlis define their own language as Dersimce (*Kirmancki*, *Zone-Ma, Desimki* or *So-be* in local language) and there is phonetic difference between Zazaki and Kirmancki.

Zülfi Selcan, a commited Zaza nationalist and the head of the Zaza Literature and Language Department at the University of Munzur in Tunceli said in an interview in 1993, "to make the people accept a common national identity, the Alevi-Sunni contradiction must be transformed into mutual

tolerance".[291] Nevertheless, "Zazaness" implies Sunni religious affiliation for Dersimlis, whereas Dersimlis are predominantly Alevi and "the traditional religious boundary has proven to be difficult to overcome".[292]

In the journal *Kırmanciya Beleke*, the Zaza movement is defined as a "far-fetched nation building attempt" that fails to understand the Dersimli Alevis who "fought many years not to become Zaza [Sunni]".[293] In addition, this Sunni element in Zaza identity connects Zazas to Sunni Kurds, these two groups being unlikely to form separate nations due to their "sociological, religious, geographical, cultural, folkloric, musical, and racial connections".[294] Perhaps due to this connection between Kurdish and Zazaki speaking Sunnis, many claim that defining Dersim as Zaza is problematic, as it indirectly connects Dersim to the larger Kurdish movement.

Fevzi Rençber's article details the variety of identity definitions imposed on Dersim.[295] His research is based on surveys he conducted in the cities of Tunceli, Bingöl, Elazığ, and Erzincan with 823 randomly selected respondents. There was a single, multiple-choice question: respondents were asked to answer, "as Zaza-Alevis how would you identify yourself ethnically?", the choices being (a) Turk, (b) Kurd, (c) Zaza or (d) other. 70% of the respondents identified their ethnicity as Zaza, however, the phrasing of the question seems problematic. Because respondents were addressed as "Zaza-Alevis" and with no option to select Dersimli identity, the results should probably not be given too much credence.

3.3.4 Dersimlis are Alevi-Zaza (Kirmanc)

Kehl-Bodrogi distinguishes a separate "Alevi-Zaza nationalist" movement. A group of intellectuals split from mainstream Zaza nationalism, stressing the Alevi particularity of certain Zazaki speaking groups, such as the Dersimlis. Kehl-Bodrogi's account of Alevi-Zaza nationalism is problematic since she interchangeably uses the notions of Zaza and Kirmanc, writing, "when addressing the Alevis, he [Seyfi Cengiz] prefers the term Kirmanc, the traditional self designation of the *Alevi Zazas* in Dersim [emphasise by the author].[296] This is noteworthy, as it exemplifies how

[291] Selcan, Zülfi. 1993, *Desmela Sure* Vol 9 retrieved from Kehl-Bodrogi, Krisztina. 1999. "Kurds, Turks, or a people in their own right? Competing collective identities among the Zazas." *The Muslim World* no. 89 (3-4), 439-454.

[292] Kehl-Bodrogi, Krisztina. 1999. "Kurds, Turks, or a people in their own right? Competing collective identities among the Zazas." *The Muslim World* no. 89 (3-4):439-454, 451.

[293] Viyale, Kıvılcım. 2009. "Resmi Tarihler Kuşatmasında Dersim." *Kırmanciya Beleke* no. 1.

[294] Ibid.

[295] Rençber, Fevzi. 2013. "Din-Kimlik Tartışmaları Ekseninde Zazaca Konuşan Alevilerin Etnik Kimliği Üzerine Bir Deperlendirme." *The Journal of Academic Social Studies* no.6(6), 945-955.

[296] Ibid., 453.

scholars continue to use the term Zaza for Dersimlis, even though some of them do acknowledge that Dersimlis never identify themselves as Zaza due to its religious connotation. This, in turn, causes confusion in defining Dersim's identity.

Seyfi Cengiz, the leader of the Alevi-Zaza movement, was a diaspora activist. In an article published in 1991, Cengiz wrote:

> Though they speak the same language and are most probably of the same origin, being divided into Sunnis and Alevis, in the course of history has led the emergence of two separate peoples (*halk*) [nations]: the Zazas and the Kirmancs. The Kirmancs regard the Zazas as not 'from them' and vice versa. It is thus evident that in this case unity in belief has priority as a constitutive feature of the nation.[297]

Cengiz simply wanted to create a nation that belonged to Dersimce-speaking Alevis, using Alevism as "the basis of political solidarity and the ideological and cultural cement of national unity"[298], however, this attempt ultimately failed. Kehl-Bodrogi claims that "Cengiz's utopia was not only the creation of a nation out of Zazaki-speaking Alevis, but a socialist 'Peoples Republic of Kirmanciye'.[299] His movement failed to turn into a mass movement, as it lacked organisational networks, cultural propaganda tools, and the economic and military strength that greatly assisted other movements, especially the Kurdish movement. Halil Can's ethnographic study on a Dersimli family living in Germany is entitled "Alevi-Zaza belongings beyond borders".[300] A passage from one of his interviewees shows how complicated the self-definition of a Dersimli may become:

> D [Interviewee]: When I say "Zaza", they say "then you are a Kurd". Then I say "no, we aren't Kurds, and we aren't Turks either". Then I say "I'm Zaza" [and] when we speak of religion I say "I was raised Alevi. I'm an Alevi".[301]

Today, even the political/cultural movement that defines Dersim as Kirmanc often refers to the language in Dersim as Zazaki, whereas "Zazaness" is not an internal element of pre-modern Dersim culture and identity. Although the Alevi-Zaza notion potentially approximates an objective

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[297] Cengiz, Seyfi. 1991. "Dersim Sorunu: Kirmanc-Alevi Ulusal Sorunu" *Desmela Sure* No 1.
[298] Ibid.
[299] Kehl-Bodrogi, Krisztina. 1999. "Kurds, Turks, or a people in their own right? Competing collective identities among the Zazas." *The Muslim World* no. 89 (3-4): 439-454, 454
[300] Can, Halil. 2013. "Alevi-Zaza Belongings Beyond Borders." *German Politics and Society* no. 31 (2):79-92, 79
[301] Ibid., 85.

characterisation of Dersimli identity, it mainly fails to recognise that the Dersimli ethnic identity entails Kurdish and Turkish speaking Alevis as well.

3.3.5   Dersimlis are Armenian

More recently, the Armenian identity in Dersim has been discussed in academia.[302] Dersim's common history is an important factor that draws Dersimlis and Islamised Armenians together. Bora[303] notes that the untrustworthiness attributed to Dersimlis is partly due to their closeness with Armenians. Bora refers to Hasan Reşit Tankut's sociological study on the Zazas in the early 1930s, where he points to the friendship between Dersimlis and Armenians "in order to destroy Turkishness".[304] Dersimli Alevis "very much love the Armenians" he explains, "it is a fact that an Armenian is a very close friend of an Alevi".[305] In a statement following the 1938 military intervention in Dersim, Commander Abdullah Alpdoğan claimed that Armenians, who hid their identity and lived as Turks in Tunceli, "had their fingers in the Dersim rebellion" and that "they existed in every anarchy, chaos, mess".[306] Such a view survives even today, as the former head of the Turkish History Foundation, Yusuf Halaçoğlu said "the ones we know as Kurdish Alevi are in fact Armenians" in August 2007.[307]

Ethnologist Hranush Kharatyan suggests that the "wide-scale religious conversion of the Armenians started since the 17th century and already in the 19th century the conversion reached a point, when it was not only very difficult to differentiate between the Armenians and Alevis outwardly, but also the social-cultural life of the Alevis was much like the Armenian one".[308] Furthermore, Kharatyan claims that the Dersimlis knew well who Crypto-Armenians were by knowing from which villages they came, recognising names, and harbouring memories. The

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[302] The Hrant Dink Foundation held a conference called "Islamicised Armenians" in November 2013. One of the panels specifically focused on the Dersim issue. The panel speakers shared the argument that there is a strong Armenian element in the Dersimi history.

[303] Bora, Tanıl. 2013. "1930'lardan 1950'lere resmi milliyetçiliğin Dersim'e bakışı: Asimilasyonizmin kırılganlığı." In *Dersim'i Parantezden Çıkarmak: Dersim Sempozyumu'nun Ardından*, edited by Songül Aydın Şükrü Aslan, Zeliha Hepkon. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 90.

[304] Tankut, Hasan Reşit. 2000. *Zazalar üzerine sosyolojik tetkikler*. Ankara: Kalan Yayınları, 78.

[305] Ibid., 79.

[306] Aygün, Hüseyin. 2011. *Dersim 1938 ve Zorunlu İskan*. Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 93-94.

[307] He later insists that his statement is an answer to the question about the 1.500.000 Armenians disappearing in 1915. Halacoglu claims that the Armenians were not killed, but they hid their Armenian identity under Kurdish-Alevi identity. For the video of his initial statement see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ji0TJgIBPq4.

[308] Kharatyah, Hranush. *The search for identity in Dersim Part 2: the Alevized Armenians in Dersim* 2014. Available from http://repairfuture.net/index.php/en/identity-standpoint-of-armenia/the-search-for-identity-in-dersim-part-2-the-alevized-armenians-in-dersim-armenian.

Armenians and Alevis of Dersim shared a common environment in harmony, according to Kharatyan, until 1938. She writes:

> For the Armenian Christian population still left in Dersim, the year of 1938 immediately extorted any display of the Armenian identity. The remaining Armenians were wholly Alevised, they prohibited themselves to speak Armenian, and though the local population knew quite well about the existence of the Alevised Armenian villages, no sign of Armenian life could be noticed not only in Dersim, but also in the Armenian settlements of Dersim.[309]

Serhat Halis is critical of this Armenian argument. He suggests that Alevis in the Ottoman Empire were so excluded that Armenian identity was more favourable than Alevism. According to Halis, the Ottoman fetwas stated that an Alevi could become a Muslim only by being sublimed in an intermediate form, such as transitioning first to Christianity.[310] Therefore, Halis suggests that the argument that Armenians became Alevised is illogical; however, it is a fact that Dersimlis did see Armenians as an internal element of their heterodox community. Gürdal Aksoy, meanwhile, claims that Dersim culture is not a Kurdish culture *per se*, but it is not an Armenian culture either. For him, Dersim is a mixture of intercultural interaction among various communities, including Turks, Kurds, Alevis, and Armenians.[311] Standing somewhere in between these arguments, Tosun and Bal suggest that the Dersimlis and Armenians had a "common life culture" both because they have lived together in the Dersim region since the 1600s, and also because Armenians living in Dersim have been absorbed into Dersim culture over the years.[312] They also refer to Armenian Priest Bardizaktsi's report in which he identified this as a "loss of religion and nationality" in the late 1800s.[313]

3.4 Conclusion

Dersim has been, and still is, a zone of conflict. This chapter has discussed this observation in light of historical and political aspects. Historically, a chronology of events shows that the actions

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[309] Kharatyah, Hranush. *The search for identity in Dersim Part 2: the Alevized Armenians in Dersim*. 2014. Available from http://repairfuture.net/index.php/en/identity-standpoint-of-armenia/the-search-for-identity-in-dersim-part-2-the-alevized-armenians-in-dersim-armenian.

[310] Halis, Serhat. *Pozitivist Ulus Tasarimi Ermeniler ve Dersim*. 2013. Available from http://blog.radikal.com.tr/politika/pozitivist-ulus-tasarimi-ermeniler-ve-dersim-15385.

[311] Aksoy, Gürdal. 2012. *Dersim Alevilik Ermenilik Kürtlük*. Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları.

[312] Mehtap Tosun, Özgür Bal. 2013. "'Yol'da Kurulan Kimlik: Dersim Ermenileri." In Dersim'i Parantezden Çıkarmak: Dersim Sempozyumu'nun Ardından, edited by Songül Aydın Şükrü Aslan, Zeliha Hepkon. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 143.

[313] Ibid.

of the Turkish state in 1937-38 were not unique. Dersim has been viewed as a 'problematic' region for several centuries, due to its heterodox character. It was a closed region that acted autonomously, thus both the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish republic viewed it as "outside" the state and aimed to take it under control. Therefore, Dersim was a region to be conquered, usually by means of violence. Politically, the competition over Dersim's collective memory can also be traced in the literature, including scholarly work. The review of studies on Dersim presented here shows that there are rival perceptions over the definition of Dersim's collective identity. The current literature defines Dersim's collective identity in contradictory terms, such as Turkish, Kurdish, Zaza, Kirmanc, or Armenian. The main argument of my research will be that competition over Dersim's collective identity is due to language being the dominant aspect in defining ethnicity in nationalist movements. Modern concepts of nationhood that define ethnicity through linguistic unity fail to explain certain communities, such as the Dersim community. Furthermore, this misconception of ethnicity is the main reason behind ongoing competition in some cases, as these nationalist movements only partially represent the heterogeneous character of the society to which they refer. The following four chapters explore the ongoing competition in Dersim through empirical research, beginning with the sociological background and life stories of Dersim's intelligentsia who I interviewed.

4 Life Stories

"There is an identity based on a lie, a language without a memory and a memory that is false. It is a state performance and it is by force. Then we all become sick." Interviewee 34[314]

"I do not want to tell you my inner world … I don't want you to suffer … My hopes and feelings for Dersim have never faded." Interviewee 43[315]

4.1 Introduction

I conducted long interviews with the Dersim intelligentsia in different parts of Turkey and Europe, asking them about their perspectives on the collective memory and collective identity of Dersim. Luckily, I must admit, my participants' responses often went beyond the context of the questions I asked: they often shared personal anecdotes, such as from their family histories, childhood or school years, and in particular, they told me about their politicisation as youngsters. Hearing such stories helped me better comprehend what it means to be born into the Dersimli identity, which entails a certain feeling of unity despite its highly fragmented nature. This unity stems from a shared collective trauma, communicated from the memories or stories told of the 1937-38 ethnic cleansing. Very simply, they shared a feeling, or experience, of having been oppressed and discriminated against based on their ethnic, religious, and/or linguistic identity over multiple generations. This shared memory has perhaps prevented the worldwide Dersimli community from splintering entirely, but nonetheless, there is still much disunity, since their political awareness is shaped by interplay of competing political, social, spatial, organisational and cultural contexts.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, it aims to show that although the activists of Dersim now largely agree on how to define the 1937-38 actions of the Turkish state, they still

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[314] Interviewee 34, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 24 October 2014.
[315] Interviewee 43, interview by author, Geneva/Switzerland, 26 September 2014.

disagree strongly over how to define Dersim's collective identity. I argue that despite sharing similar sociological backgrounds and life stories, Dersim's intelligentsia fail to agree upon Dersim's collective identity because they misconceptualise Dersimli ethnicity as a result of over focus on language. The debate on what Dersimli people's mother language is, that is Kurdish or Dersimce, and on whether Dersimce is a dialect of Kurdish or a discrete language, triggers competition. In fact both Kurdish and Dersimce (also Turkish and Armenian to a certain extent) make up the linguistic identity of the heterogeneous Dersim community. Likewise, whilst my interviewees often told similar stories of how they had been politicised, they often ended up defining Dersim's collective identity in contradictory ways. This, again, can be explained by their politicisation having occurred via identity movements that have attempted to hegemonise Dersim's ethnic identity through a desire to impose mono-lingualism.

Accordingly, the first section of this chapter shows how Dersim's intelligentsia define Dersim by asking them how they define Dersim 1937-38, how they define Dersim's collective memory, what their mother tongue is, and whether they view Dersimce as a dialect of Kurdish or a distinct language. The second section provides more information on the sociological background of my interviewees. Third, I delve deeper into the personal histories of Dersim's intelligentsia, focusing on their childhood and school years, continuing to their adult lives as Dersimlis and their experiences of politicisation. Having been politicised within movements that have strongly held but conflicting views on Dersim's collective identity, these intelligentsia also influence the movements within which they engage. This chapter highlights that life stories coincide with political ideologies and that this ongoing interaction sustains competition.

4.2   Competition of the intelligentsia over Dersim's collective identity

Being Dersimli entails awareness of a collective past, especially of the Dersim 1937-38 ethnic cleansing. Moreover, it brings discrimination and a tendency to political insurgency caused by this feeling of having been classified as the "other" of Turkish society, in terms of religion, ethnicity, and language over the years. Despite this common past and consensus regarding the events of 1937-38 as an act of genocide (Figure 5), my interviewees, and Dersim society in general, compete and struggle over how to define Dersim's collective identity (Figure 6).

Figure 5 shows a near consensus among the interviewees on how to define the events of Dersim 1937-38, 51 out of 56 interviewees identifying these events as an act of genocide. Out of these 51, 43 accepted an unqualified definition of genocide, one termed the events "geographical

genocide", stressing the fact that the Turkish state targeted Dersim as an area and Dersimlis thus as inhabitants, and two claimed that the events had their roots in the unfinished Armenian Genocide, suggesting that there was also a strong Armenian element hidden in the Dersim region at the time of the events. Five of the interviewees told me that they would privately identify Dersim 1937-38 as genocide, but that they consciously refrain publically from making such statements, believing the term genocide to politicise the subject and to muddle discussion. Meanwhile, five out of the 56 interviewees claimed that Dersim 1937-38 was not genocide, but an act of massacre by the state. These findings imply that Dersimli intelligentsia no longer accept the long-standing Turkish state characterisation of Dersim 1937-38 as a period of rebellion by Dersimlis. Neither did they identify Dersim 1937-38 as a "glorious resistance" of Kurds, a characterisation that leftist and Kurdish movements have sought to impose on the Dersimli society. In sum, the interviewees exclusively characterised Dersim 1937-38 as a period of state-approved violence–i.e., either as a massacre or as genocide- against the inhabitants of Dersim.

Figure 5 Interviewees' definition of Dersim 1937-38 events
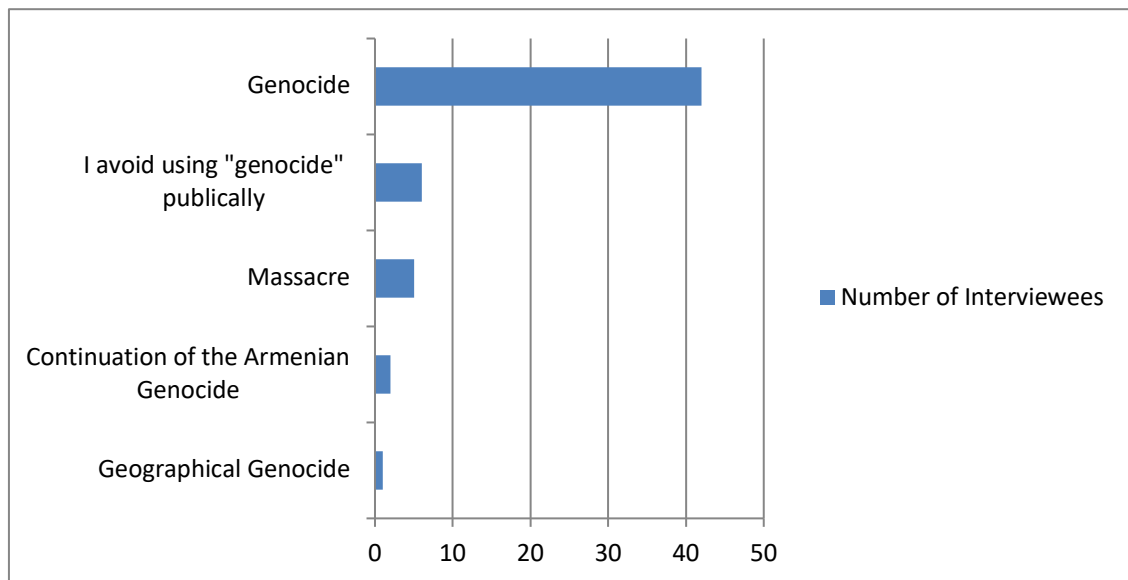
Figure 6 illustrates what identity (ethnic, religious or ethno-religious) my interviewees attributed to Dersim 1937-38, which also indicates how they might identify the collective identity of present-day Dersim. The figure shows that 31 of my interviewees identified Dersim's collective identity as Kirmanc, whereas 10 said Dersim's identity was Alevi. Among the 10 people who

identified Dersim as Alevi, one person said that Alevi was a cover-up identity for ethnically diverse Dersimlis, including Armenians. Seven interviewees identified Dersim as Alevi-Kurdish, whereas two said it was Alevi-Zaza. Only five of the interviewees saw Dersim's collective identity as purely ethnic, four of these identifying it as Kurdish and one saying that it was Zaza. Only one of my interviewees believed that it is unnecessary to identify Dersim under any of these categories, stating also that Dersim's priority should not be how 1937-38 is defined but rather how its current problems can be resolved.

Figure 6 Interviewees' definition of Dersim's identity during 1937-38
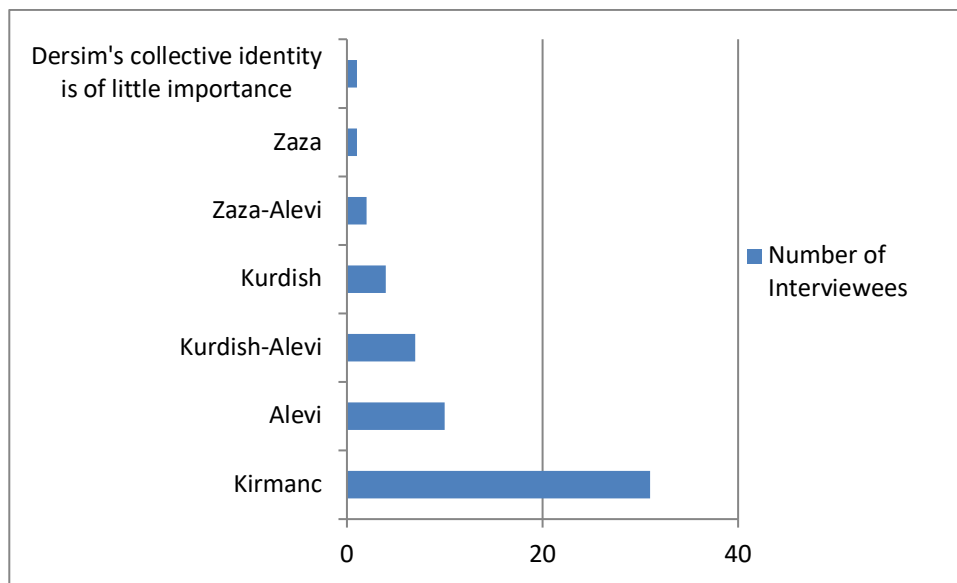
The results represented by Figure 6, however, demand a more detailed analysis due to the problems entailed in these defining categories. Below, I briefly define these categories to better explain the conceptual language used to describe Dersim's collective identity by the intelligentsia.

Akçınar claims that his Diaspora respondents referred to their "Kirmanc" [Dersimli] identity "to categorise themselves as a distinctive ethnic group in Diaspora", although he argues Kirmanc does not necessarily refer to a clearly defined ethnic identity.[316] Contrary to his suggestion, I argue that Kirmanc can be defined as a single ethnic identity that is multireligious and

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[316] Akçınar, Mustafa. 2010. *Re-invention of Identity: The case of Dersim Community Association in Berlin*, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University, 73.

multilingual.However, the use of this term is highly contested. Although Kirmanc has entered the discourse in defining Dersim's collective identity, its connotation is controversial. Some who identify Dersim as Kirmanc claim that Kirmancs are Kurds. Others stress that Kirmanc identity entails Zazaki language and therefore Zaza ethnic-identity.

Defining Dersim's collective identity as Alevi identifies Dersim through its religious identity, which is the Alevi sect of Islam. My interviewees who choose to identify Dersim as Alevi clearly believed that what makes someone Dersimli is mainly his/her religious Alevi identity, regardless of his/her language or ethnicity. Some choose to add an ethnic element to this description of Dersim as Alevi, by characterising Dersim's collective identity as Alevi-Zaza or Alevi-Kurd. The term Alevi-Zaza focuses on the Zazaki (Dersimce) language spoken in Dersimi, distinguishing it from the terms Kurdish or Kurds. Alevi-Kurd stresses the Kurdishness of Dersim society, viewing Dersimce as a dialect of Kurdish and thus viewing Dersim as ethnically Kurd.

Although less common, some commentators choose to identify Dersimlis in purely ethnic terms, excluding their religious identity, by referring to them as Zaza or Kurd. Both perspectives can be described as strongly ethno-nationalist, as they put aside Dersim's religious identity and highlight its ethno-linguistic belonging.

Figure 7 Interviewees' declaration of their mother tongue

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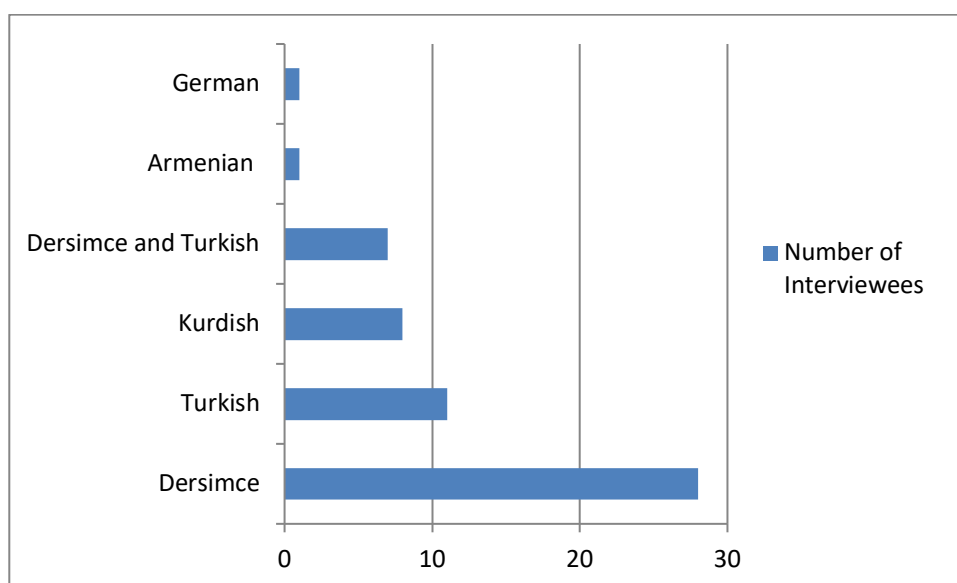
When asked about their mother tongue (as in the first language they spoke), 27 out of 56 interviewees said it was Dersimce (Zazaki, Dimili, Kırmancki), and eight of them said they were raised bilingual as they learnt Turkish and Dersimce together (Figure 7). Eight of my interviewees claimed their native language was Kurdish, whereas eight said it was Turkish. One of my interviewee's mother language was German; he is a German musicologist working on Dersim music. Figure 8 illustrates the responses to the question of whether my interviewees considered Dersimce to be a separate language or a dialect of Kurdish. As Figure 8 shows, 39 out of 56 said that it was a separate language, often offering that Kurds should stop claiming it to be a dialect of Kurdish and accept Dersimce's distinctiveness. Meanwhile, 14 of my respondents said that Dersimce was not a distinct language but one of four dialects of Kurdish. These respondents suggested that treating Dersimce as a separate language was an attempt to divide the unity of the Kurdish nation and a conscious manipulation of the Turkish state. The Kurds as an ethnic group and Kurdish as a language were denigrated in the official discourse that claimed that the word, and thus concept of being, "Kurdish" came from the '*kart kurt*' sounds made by mountain Turks who walked in snow in South Eastern Anatolia.

Figure 8 Interviewees' definition of Dersimce
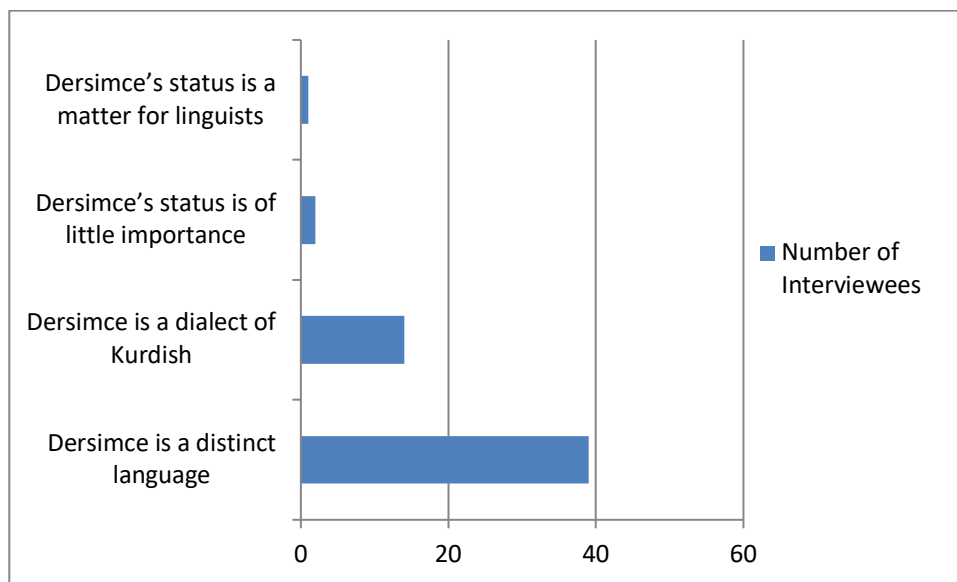
Generally speaking, those who do not identify Dersimce as a language in its own right claim that it is one of the four main dialects of Kurdish, namely (1) Kurmanci, (2) Dersimce/Zazaki/Kirmancki, (3) Sorani, and (4) Gorani. Others, who argue their mother tongue is not Kurdish but a distinct language, prefer to use Dersimce, Zazaki, Kirmancki, Dimilki, Zone-Ma, or So-be. These terms refer to the same language in Dersim's context. Many people are reluctant to use Kirmancki to avoid confusion with Kurmanci (the main Kurdish dialect spoken in Dersim). Zazaki can be identified as the more internationally acknowledged term used for Dersimce, but some are reluctant to use it because it is associated with the Sunni sect of Islam, whereas Dersimlis predominantly belong to the Alevi sect. Although there is a significant Zaza population in Turkey, Dersimlis use "Zaza" to refer to Sunni Zazas, treating them as "others"; Kirmanc, however, refers to the Alevis of Dersim, treating them as "us".

4.3   Backgrounds of the intelligentsia

Dersim became increasingly political since the left entered the city in the late 1960s, with this politicisation gaining pace over the following decades. The Kurdish separatist movement emerged in the 1980s, entering Dersim in the early 1990s. The intelligentsia with whom I conducted interviews were born in years ranging from 1932 to 1987 (Figure 9). Most interviewees were born in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, making them, respectively, in their early twenties as the left entered Dersim in 1970s, when the military coup took place and Kurdish movement went underground in the 1980s, and as the PKK fighters entered Dersim region in the 1990s. My interviewees were dominantly males, only 4 being women (Figure 10). This significant gender difference is not selection bias: rather it reflects the fact that the Dersim intelligentsia tend to be male. Although there are women artists, politicians, organisational leaders other women involved in Derim's struggles, it can be claimed that Dersim activism is dominated my men.

Figure 9 Interviewees' decade of birth
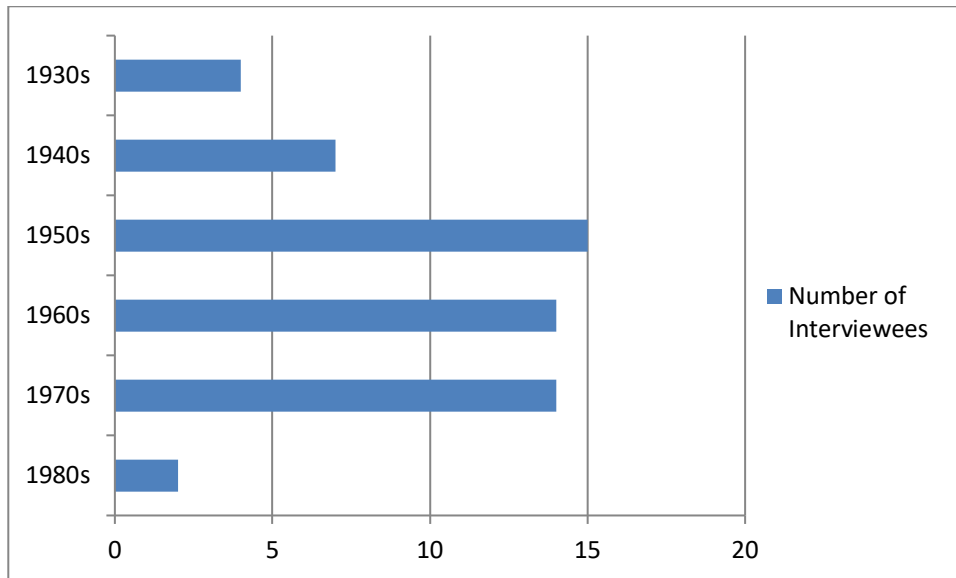
Figure 10 Interviewees' gender distribution
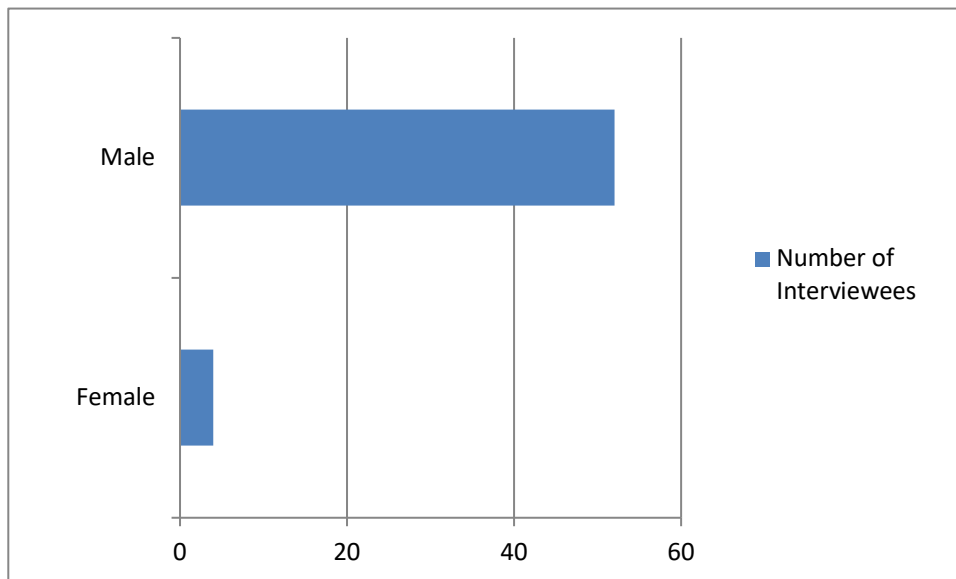
The vast majority of my interviewees were born in Dersim (Figure 11) although they now different parts of Turkey and Europe (Figure 12). 44 out of 56 interviewees were born in Dersim, and four were born in the neighbouring cities of Bingöl, Erzincan, Elazığ, and Erzurum. Today, however, only 10 of my interviewees live in Dersim, whereas 17 live in Istanbul, seven live in Ankara, and 20 live in different parts of Europe.

Figure 11 Interviewees' birth places
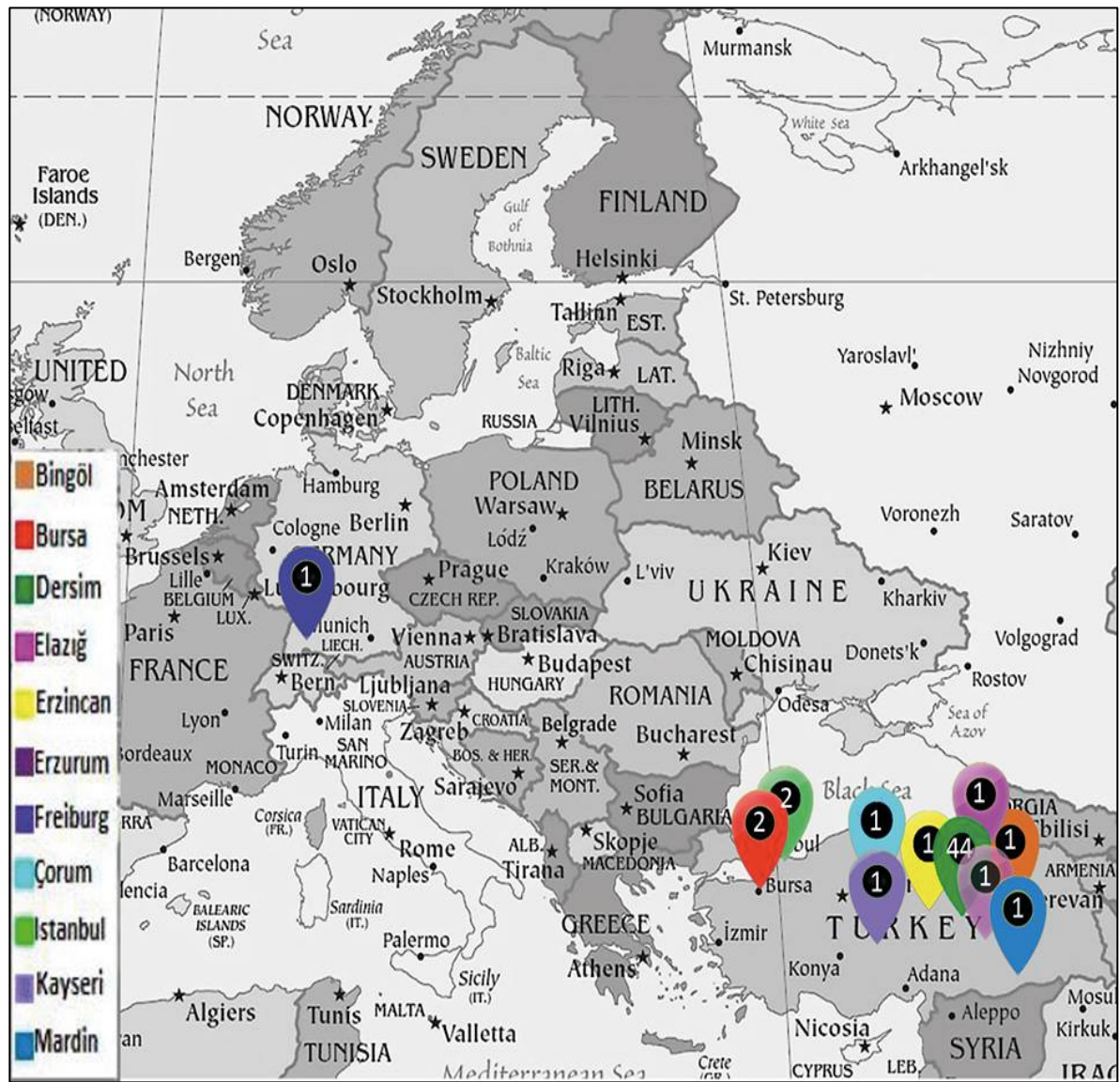
Figure 12 Interviewees' cities of residence
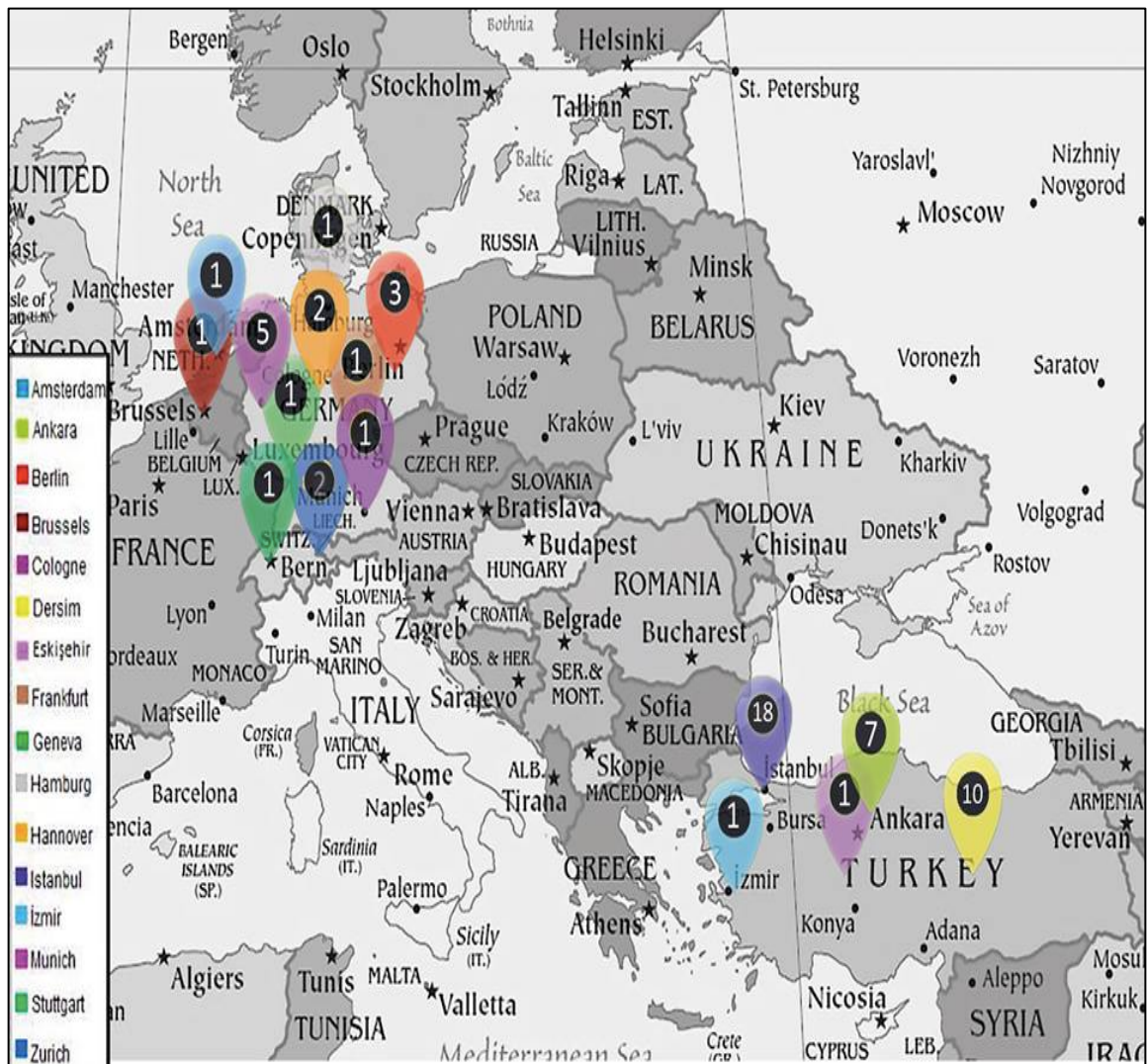
The Diaspora holds an important role in the re-invention of the Dersim identity, as well as in other political-cultural identities, such as the Alevi and Kurdish identities. Akçınar defines the Dersim Diaspora as a "labour, cultural, and victim Diaspora at the same time in different contexts".[317] By using this phrase, Akçınar wishes to highlight how many Dersimlis moved to Europe in search of work, which might categorise them as a labour Diaspora. But over time, their cultural (i.e., ethnic, linguistic, religious) awareness grew and they organised around this identity, making them a cultural Diaspora as well. Finally, Dersimlis had to flee to Europe due to political reasons towards the end of the 1970s and especially in the post military coup in the 1980s, and these political refugees and exiles were important actors in evoking the traumatic events of Dersim 1937-38, adding the victim Diaspora definition to Dersimlis in Europe. The regional dispersal of my interviewees (Figure 13) shows that 24 live in the Diaspora whereas 32 of them live in Turkey. Those who live in the Diaspora mainly live in Germany and Switzerland. Out of 24 interviewees, 18 live in Germany, and 10 of these 18 people are political refugees, eight holding German citizenship. There are three political refugees in Switzerland, two holding Swiss citizenship. One of my interviewees held Dutch citizenship, and he lives in Amsterdam (Figure 14).

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[317] Akçınar, Mustafa. 2010. *Re-invention of Identity: The case of Dersim Community Association in Berlin*, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University.

Figure 13 Interviewees' regional dispersal: Diaspora vs. Turkey
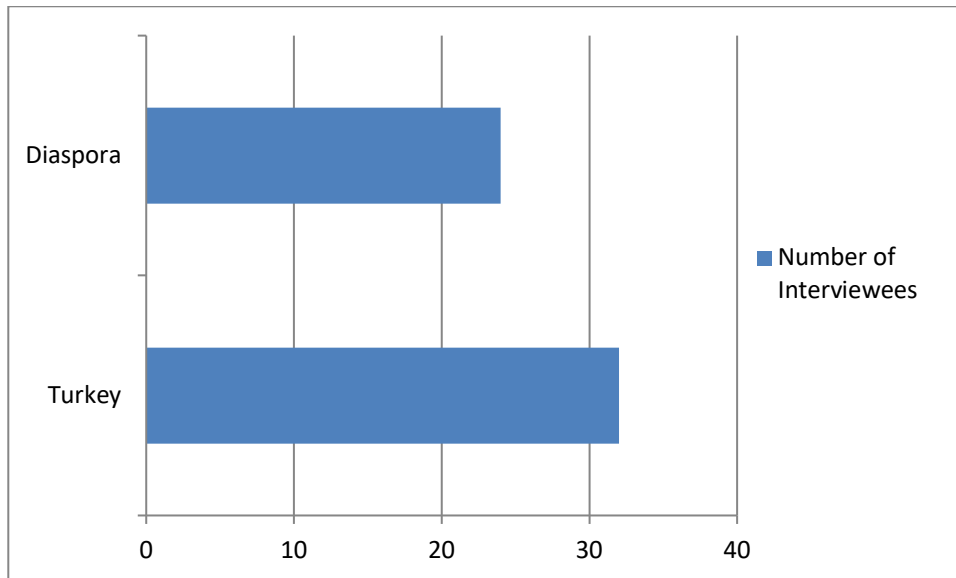
Figure 14 Interviewees' legal status in the Diaspora
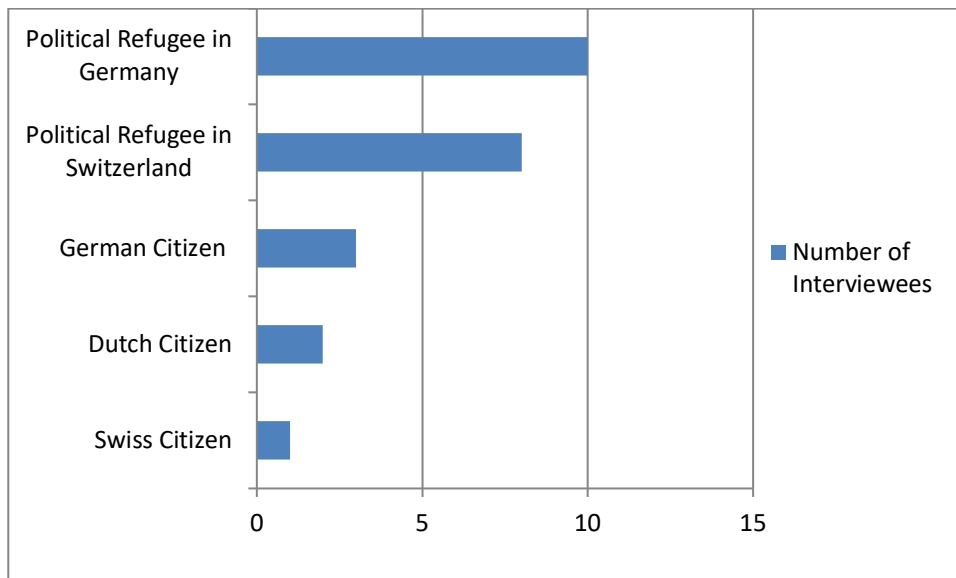
The professions of my interviewees are wide-ranging (Figure 15): there were five academics, ten artists (i.e., poets, directors, musicians, novelists), four lawyers, five media workers (i.e., TV producers, journalists), five politicians (many of whom undertook multiple-roles, such as also being a poet, lawyer, or schoolteacher), eleven private sector employees (i.e., businessman, white-collar workers), ten public sector officers, and two unionists.

Figure 15 Interviewees' professions
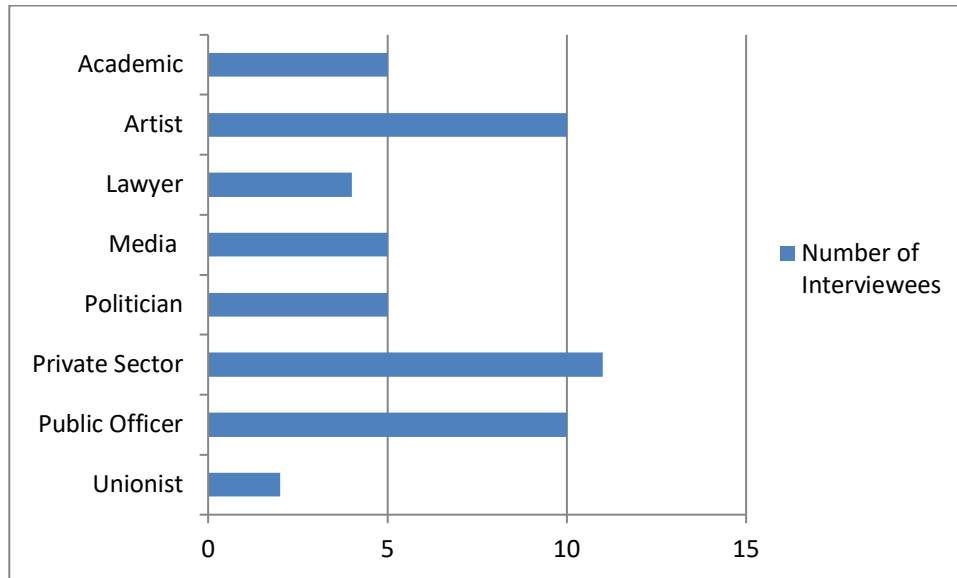
Figure 16 shows the types of these products or activities on the Dersim issue. These are categorised as: academic activities (i.e., publishing academic articles and books), political activities (i.e., parlimentary membership, mayorship), fictional work and art (i.e., novels, poetry, music), civil society activities (i.e., civil society work including the establishment, administration, organisation of meetings and conducting projects), journalism and broadcasting, and non-fictional work (i.e., non-academic articles, books, documentaries).

Figure 16 Types of interviewees' primary activity on Dersim 1937-38
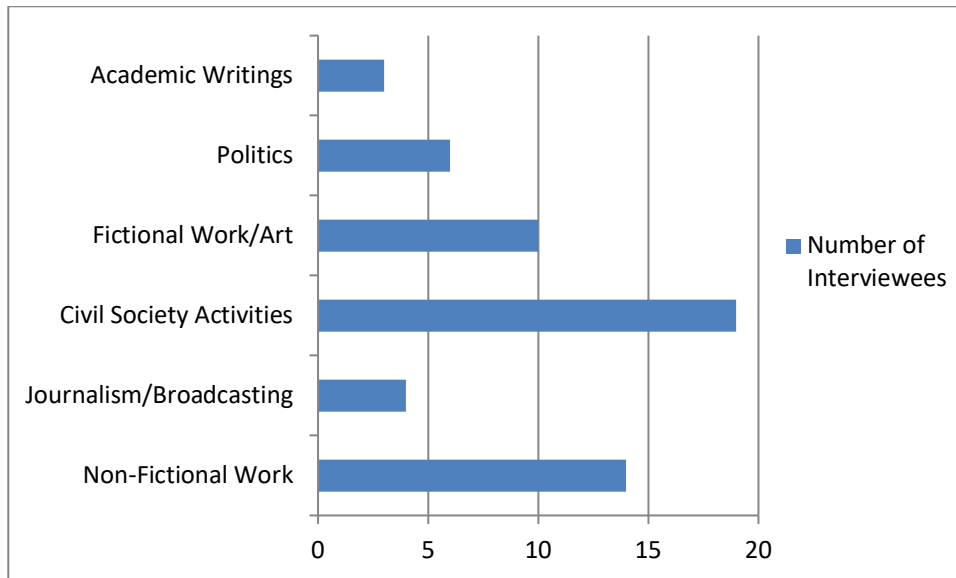
My interviewees had all been engaged in political activities before, such as leftist or Kurdish movements. However, Figure 17 refers to a time when they researched, wrote, sang, or undertook an activity specifically about Dersim's history or identity. It shows the yearly distribution of the primary activities of my interviewees on the Dersim issue. Figure 17 also marks periods when my interviewees' productions on the Dersim 1937-38 events peaked. Looking at this figure, one can observe two periods, 1990-1994 and 2010 onwards when productions on the Dersim issue rose significantly. This was not coincidental. With specific events, such as the Sivas Massacre (1993) and the burning and forced evacuation of villages in Dersim (1994), Alevis at large and Dersimlis in particular began to stress their religious identity. Dersim became an area of hot debate not only in Turkey but also in the Turkey's Diaspora community in Europe. This was followed by Onur Öymen's

blunder[318] about Dersim, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Dersim apology[319] in 2011 when we see an increase in the primary activities of my interviewees.

Figure 17 Interviewees' primary activity on the Dersim 1937-38 subject
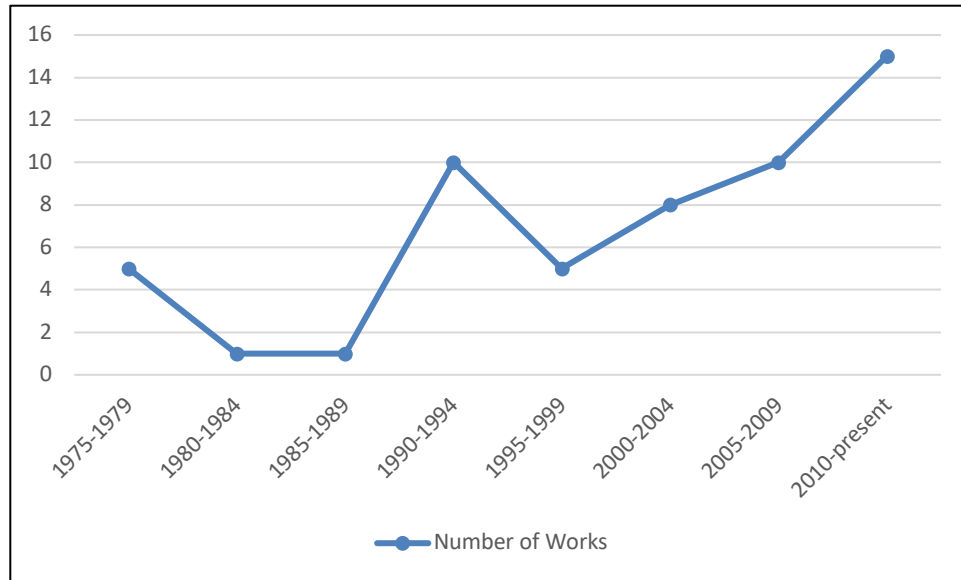
4.4 Life stories of the Intelligentsia

The politicisation of Dersim following the 1937-38 ethnic cleansing began in the late 1960s and intensified throughout the 1970s as Dersimlis by and large involved themselves in revolutionary leftist movements. The city of Dersim was greatly affected by this leftist insurgency. "Imagine you suffered wrong, you were victimised and massacred ... your fathers, grandfathers, grandmothers

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[318] Onur Öymen, the then vice-chairman of the CHP, made a blunder about 1937-38 military operation in Dersim as an example for fighting terrorism which suddenly put Dersim issue on the political agenda. In this speech he made on 10 November 2009, Öymen said: "Unfortunately, mothers in this country have cried a lot. We have lost many soldiers throughout history ... did mothers not cry during the War of Independence? Did mothers not cry in the Sheik Said revolt? Did mothers not cry in the Dersim revolt? ... But unfortunately you are saying this because you don't have the guts to fight the terror". This speech that Öymen made was during when the "peace process" with the Kurds and Turkish Republic was on the table. His statements have been widely debated, within and among the political parties and public. Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, a CHP deputy at the time with rising popularity, claimed that he was "proud of his Dersimli roots" and called Öymen to resign.

[319] Recep Tayyip Erdogan, while he was still the Turkish Prime Minister and the leader of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), made a groundbreaking statement in 23 November 2011 and apologised for the state actions in Dersim 1937-38 on behalf of the Turkish state. This was not only a brave testimonial at the state level, as Erdoğan was the first and only statesman who had dared to apologise for the state acts in Dersim in the 1930s, but also a pragmatic move against the Republican People's Party (CHP) and its leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the Dersimi Alevi party leader since 22 May 2010. A detailed analysis of his speech can be found in Bilgin Ayata, Serra Hakyemez. 2013. "The AKP's engagement with Turkey's past crimes: An analysis of PM Erdoğan's 'Dersim Apology'." *Dialectical Anthropology* no. 37 (1): 131-143.

tell you stories. You were raised hearing laments, these things have impact on you," says Interviewee 31, referring to the emotional and cultural roots of Dersim's insurgency.[320]

There was not one interview in which Dersim 1937-1938 and its traumatic effect on Dersimlis in general was not mentioned. My interviewees either experienced Dersim 1937-38 as toddlers (or babies, as one interviewee was born in 1935 and two were born in 1937), or had experienced the events through their parents and relatives, many of whom had been killed or exiled. "I am the son of a family that got its share from the 1938 tragedy," said Şerafettin Halis, continuing, "24 people were massacred in my family, and the rest were deported to Eskişehir. I was raised hearing stories of slaughter and exile".[321] Another interviewee said that his father told him, as a young boy, which Dersimli girl was pushed off the cliffs, and into which waters Dersimli women threw themselves in order to escape from Turkish soldiers' outrages.[322] Interviewee 54, mentioned that older members of his/her family, including parents and grandparents, would recount the horrors of the massacre at family gatherings.[323]

These stories, although true, seemed like tales to many of my interviewees. Growing up listening to these stories had profound emotional impacts on these people, my interviewees were later inspired by such stories to become activists. Interviewee 45, a musician from Dersim, said that "unknowingly, these stories became a part of my identity, my ego, and then they suddenly burst. I became this whole different person, I realised that I suddenly felt helpless, I could not handle things, and tears came from my eyes".[324] He told me that a great many folksongs (*Klam* in Turkish, *Lawık* in Dersimce) were imprinted on his memory, doubtlessly inspiring his music career in later years. While the folksongs and dramatic stories contributed his musical inspiration, not every Dersimli child had such a positive relationship with them. Interviewee 28 from the Dersim Victims' Platform, says:

> My mother sang us Dersim stories as lullabies, and told us stories of exile and
> massacre, I think that is what they call trauma. … We had frowns and were tense
> facially, we didn't laugh much… perhaps our frowning was due to listening to these
> lullabies and stories. I remember begging my mother, saying "please mom, I beg

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[320] Interviewee 31, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 17 June 2014
[321] Interviewee 50, interview by author, Ankara/Turkey, 11 November 2014.
[322] Interviewee 2, interview by author, Frankfurt/Germany, 25 February 2015.
[323] Interviewee 54, interview by author, Dersim/Turkey, 1 August 2014.
[324] Interviewee 45, interview by author, Delbruck/Germany, 24 February 2015.

you, tell the rest tomorrow" but my mother would never forget, and continue from where she had left off the day before.[325]

Interviewee 10, a Dersimli activist with experience in conducting oral history with victims of Dersim 1937-38, said that there are stories of the events he is ashamed to tell, and that he would not want anyone to hear. From his own childhood, though, he remembers a *Saz* (a musical instrument with three double strings) that his father and uncle played at times. "My mother would cry every time, and as I remember it now I am about to cry, there was such a psychological condition that my mother would always cry," Taş told me.[326] Interviewee 4 also described this trauma as being deeply-rooted in souls and memory, saying "it marked us then, and it still does now".[327] Perhaps touching on the same subject, Interviewee 36 said, "There's significant peculiarity and sophistication in my Dersimli friends," adding that he feels pain in every family story he hears.[328]

A few of my interviewees told me their families chose to keep silent on the issue of this trauma, motivated by an urge to protect future generations from becoming enemies of the Turkish state. Interviewee 38 said that families felt frightened; Interviewee 30, likewise, claimed that his parents never talked about the Dersim tragedy because they would think "what would this state do to our kids if they know and talk about this?".[329] "It was a taboo" said Interviewee 21, when describing his ongoing efforts to talk to the victims or family members of victimised families in Dersim for oral history projects. "They experienced genocide, Pinar, how do you make them talk?" he asked me.[330] Interviewee 17 told me that Dersimli families sent their children to assimilationist state boarding schools, simply because they feared the state and wished to live harmoniously with the authorities, and also because of the physical/natural difficulties experienced by poor Dersimli families. They thought, "My kid shall not live miserably here walking behind two oxen in this land where winters never end," said Interviewee 17, who believes such parents never intended to "organise their anger against the state and trigger protest".[331]

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[325] Interviewee 28, interview by author, Dersim/Turkey, 2 August 2014.
[326] Interviewee 10, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 10 March 2015.
[327] Interviewee 4, interview by author, Eskişehir/Turkey, 10 November 2014.
[328] Interviewee 36, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 26 January 2015.
[329] Interviewee 38, interview by author, Delbruck/Germany, 24 February 2015;
Interviewee 30, interview by author, Ankara/Turkey, 11 March 2015.
[330] Interviewee 21, interview by author, Cologne/Germany, 23 February 2015.
[331] Interviewee 17, interview by author, Dersim/Turkey, 2 August 2014.

It is important to note that trauma in the Dersimli community does not exclusively derive from the 1937-38 ethnic cleansing: newer generations have also experienced state oppression that has left marks on their life stories and in their memories. Interviewee 11, who was born in the 1980s, remembers traumatic incidents from his childhood, such as military aircraft flying above and seeing his house surrounded by Turkish soldiers.[332] After his family had left Dersim for a more peaceful life in Istanbul, he did not reveal his feelings of having been oppressed and discriminated against, because he was told by his parents to keep silent about his Alevi identity. He explains:

> My uncle had a summer house where we went to, and we used to play with other kids there. One of my friends, whose family was a Democratic Left Party (DSP) sympathiser, asked me if I was a *Kizilbash* (Alevi), and I asked him what that means. He said 'it means anarchist terrorist'. I said nothing, but I asked my mother about it in the evening at home. … Then we understood what my friend's family thinks of our family.[333]

Serhat Halis, born in 1981, spent his secondary school years in Istanbul. One of his classmates told him the *mum söndü* story upon learning of his Alevi background. The *Mum söndü* story contains a pejorative stereotype against Alevis, which claims that Alevis gather together for a supposedly religious ceremony where they turn off the lights and light candles, and as the candles are blown out, they begin sexual intercourse regardless of with whom, implying that they perform incest. Hearing this stereotype story that describes Alevis in such a derogatory manner from a friend Halis dearly loved, he was shocked and sorry. He said, "I did not know what to do then, but I remember having psychological troubles, like not being able to sleep at nights".[334]

Interviewee 24, born in the 1950s, also remembers traumatic childhood and school years. He recalls lying about not fasting during Ramadan[335]. "I was 13 to 14 years old," said Interviewee 24, "I told people I was fasting but I was not really, and they saw me getting biscuits from the grocery store, and they beat me really bad. That experience led me in search of my identity".[336] Interviewee

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[332] Interviewee 11, interview by author, Dersim/Turkey, 13 March 2015.
[333] Interviewee 11, interview by author, Dersim/Turkey, 13 March 2015.
[334] Interviewee 51, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 23 April 2015.
[335] During Ramadan, practicing Muslims fast from dawn to sunset. Ramadan is not obligatory for all Alevis.
[336] Interviewee 24, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 8 September 2014.

13, born almost twenty years after Interviewee 24, in the 1970s, remembers of his childhood constant domiciliary searches, where soldiers frequently raided houses.[337]

The central Turkish state, especially in the earlier years of its establishment, struggled to "Turkify" Dersim through education. Turkish, which was largely unknown by the local Dersimlis, was often forcefully taught to Dersimli children by teachers designated by the state. The city of Tunceli today is the leading city in Turkey in terms of education success, such as literacy and high school and college entry examinations results. Learning "proper Turkish" was a common story I heard from the intelligentsia during interviews, and it often involved repression and corporal punishment to young school children by teachers. School years played an even greater role in determining my interviewees' sense of outsiderness, as they encountered the state authority for the first time. State schools meant language assimilation in the simplest sense, and although my interviewees spoke either Kurdish or Dersimce at home, they were not allowed to do so in class. In numerous interviews, I heard stories about being beaten by their schoolteachers. Interviewee 10 explains:

> One day, in the morning, I saw my school ID number written on the blackboard along with some of my friends'. We came out to the blackboard and the teacher hit us. Surely, we did not understand why, and then he said, 'You will not speak Kurdish at home'.[338]

"Even if not all of us were beaten," says Interviewee 43, "the assimilationist and oppressive policy towards us as little kids was a source of depression, and shame".[339] It was not only class teachers who behaved this way, but also course teachers in lessons such as Turkish literature or "National Security", which was taught by colonels. Interviewee 42 (born in the 1950s) remembers telling his Turkish literature teacher that most Ottoman *Divan* poetry, which is high-culture Ottoman poetry, contains words in Kurdish (due to the similarities between Kurdish and Persian). The Turkish state has, to this day, never regarded Kurdish as an element in high culture and the teacher, offended by his claim, assaulted him badly in class. Interviewee 42, who was between 17 and 18 years old at the time of the assualt, remembers this as a determining event in raising his "Kurdish consciousness".[340] Interviewee 2, also born in the 1950s, remembers his experience with another

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[337] Interviewee 13, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 27 May 2014.
[338] Interviewee 10, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 10 March 2015.
[339] Interviewee 43, interview by author, Geneva/Switzerland, 26 September 2014.
[340] Interviewee 42, interview by author, Berlin/Germany, 27 February 2015.

colonel/teacher: "the colonel demanded every boy in class have their hair combed back to bare their foreheads, saying 'Turks have bare foreheads'[341]". "Worse than this even", he went on, "there was a boy with very short hair who thus could not comb his hair backwards and was beaten by the colonel. We were face-to-face with such a system, and its police station, and its school, and its public servants... As a young adult, you react against this".[342]

One of the direct physical and psychological results of this assimilationist and discriminatory policy experienced by my interviewees was sudden stammering. Interviewee 39 (poet) and Interviewee 14 (lawyer) told me separately that they suffered stammering due to linguistic oppression during their childhood. Interviewee 39 explained:

> As I recall it today, I tremble, you only know this one language [Dersimce], you know nothing else, and you move to this new city and no one talks that language there. I grew up in such a tragic atmosphere. Then I learnt a new language to play with other kids in the streets, but that language was Arabic not Turkish! One day, my class teacher was passing through our neighbourhood and the kids in the neighbourhood began shouting 'Kurdo's teacher, Kurdo's teacher!' I was so ashamed. You are a kid, and there is no one to talk to, everyone in my family is working really hard, trying to make ends meet. There was nothing to do, so I began stammering. Seriously, I suffered stammering badly. It began when I was 8, in first grade, and lasted until I was 18, so around 10 years. You are a kid, there is nothing you can do, and then you become a stammer. I understand it is psychological because it suddenly stopped when I was 18. Still, when I am very upset, I still stammer a little.[343]

Interviewee 14 talked about changing cities in his childhood, where he constantly had to switch between Dersimce and Turkish. His mother tongue is Dersimce, but they moved to a neighbouring city –Elazığ– where he learnt Turkish. Then his family moved back to Dersim and he switched back to Dersimce. When he was five years old, they moved to the city of İzmit in western Turkey, and thus he had to switch once again to Turkish, explaining, "but then, I was shifting from this language to that, and I could not speak for a while, and sometimes it turned into stammering.

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[341] "Türk'ün alnı açık olur" can be linked to the Turkish phrase for being honorable and to walk with head high.

[342] Interviewee 2, interview by author, Frankfurt/Germany, 25 February 2015.

[343] Interviewee 39, interview by author, Geneva/Switzerland, 27 September 2014.

… That was a traumatic period for me".[344] Doğan further explained that psychologists and linguists stress the importance of mother tongue in pedagogic developments, claining he still faces problems learning new foreign languages due to these early childhood upheavals.

Other traumatic childhood and school life memories involved the military forces in the Dersim region. Interviewee 24 told me that when he was only seven years old, Turkish soldiers came to his village to take him for military service. This was apparently due to a mistake by the village headman, who had sent the wrong birth-date information. He told me: "the whole village begged the soldiers not to take me, saying I was only a little boy, only 7 years old," but the military officers still took him to a hospital in the city to determine his age, and he had to stay in a military hospital for 10-15 days. "We had seen some of our villagers bastinadoed (*falaka*) in the village square by the soldiers," recalls Interviewee 24, and that was why he cried and begged his father to protect him from the soldiers.[345] Interviewee 54 also claims that as children, they were terrified of the soldiers, "because we knew as kids how soldiers massacred, burnt villages, bayoneted, and how our fathers and families had escaped from that".[346]

The childhood memories of Dersimli intelligentsia not only involved hearing traumatic stories of the past or having been subject to oppression as students, but also being discriminated against in their daily lives. Interviewee 56, born in 1949, who could speak Turkish fluently as a child, recalled how bad he felt when his father, who could not, stood bowing and scraping in front of a state officer, who looked down on him.[347] He also remembered later years, when he took his mother, who also did not speak Turkish, to a hospital. A nurse at the hospital treated her unkindly, Selcan recounting that "of course I went to that nurse angrily; I was very much annoyed of her ill-treatment of my mother who could not speak Turkish".[348] Interviewee 18, born twenty-one years after Selcan in 1970, also recalled seeing his father being taken by soldiers after the 1980 military coup, and then forced to walk 30 to 35 kilometres in snow. "When he was released from custody, you know we never saw our father without moustache, or his head shaved, and I have to say in Dersim it is like being an intruder to cut an old man's moustache- and they did this to our fathers".[349]

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[344] Interviewee 14, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 28 October 2014.
[345] Interviewee 24, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 8 September 2014.
[346] Interviewee 54, interview by author, Dersim/Turkey, 1 August 2014.
[347] Interviewee 56, interview by author, Dersim/Turkey, 18 March 2015.
[348] Ibid.
[349] Interviewee 18, interview by author, Dersim/Turkey, 17 March 2015.

How, then, did Dersimlis decide turn their personal and familial trauma into insurgent activity? Many of my interviewees claim that they had learned the truth about Dersim 1937-38 in their childhoods from their families. As the second and third generation grew older, they realised that the state discourse on "Tunceli" was nothing but lies. "Dersimlis had to get over their trauma, in some way," said Interviewee 2, "you are sitting at home, in a unique way someone comes to massacre you, and you do not even know why? As you search for reasons, you search for things to ease your trauma".[350] He explains that describing Dersim 1937-38 as a rebellion, a discourse long used by both the state and the left, was a pretext for state activity in Dersim. "Both the socialist organisations and the Kurdish movement have told us that. They said you are heroes, you are legends, you fired your guns against the state," explained Interviewee 4, who also noted that the feelings of Dersimlis were wronged and manipulated not only by the state, but also by the socialist and Kurdish movements.[351] Having been raised aware of this traumatic past and under the influence of these somewhat manipulative movements, Dersimlis who felt anger towards the state joined illegal organisations from the 1970s onwards.

Family ties can be given as one of the most significant factors determining the politicisations of the Dersim intelligentsia. "Being from Dersim is like, you are born into this thing … I mean it is good in some ways and bad in others," said Interviewee 7, "if you are from Dersim, you inevitably become socialist, involved in socialist organisations … Your sociological structure unavoidably brings you into that".[352] Interviewee 27 also highlights that it is a "natural thing" for a Dersimli youngster to become involved in politics, comparing being Dersimli with being a child from elsewhere in Turkey. He told me, "if I was born in a village in Afyon [Western city in Turkey] I would probably work in vineyards, maybe I would have a few acres of vineyards left from my father … I would buy myself a car, build a house, have a family".[353] Although Interviewee 27 has a family, a car, and a house, what he meant was a more peaceful, less political and more stable life. As I often realised during these interviews, being Dersimli attracted automatic prejudice from state officials, be they doctors, teachers, governors, policemen or gendarme. In the early 1980s, Interviewee 47 was arrested in Mardin [south-eastern city of Turkey] whilst visiting his brother, who was arrested for

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[350] Interviewee 2, interview by author, Frankfurt/Germany, 25 February 2015.
[351] Interviewee 4, interview by author, Eskişehir/Turkey, 10 November 2014.
[352] Interviewee 7, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 3 September 2014.
[353] Interviewee 27, interview by author, Dersim/Turkey, 17 July 2014.

aiding and assisting the PKK. "He is from Tunceli [Dersim is not used by state officials], put him in jail said the soldier," he remembers, "being from Dersim was enough for him to get me into the car".[354]

Figure 18 gives an overview of my interviewees' links to illegal and legal organisations, both in Turkey and the Diaspora. 42 of my interviewees have had links to illegal organisations at some point in their lives. Figure 19 shows that 39 out of 55 interviewees have been arrested at least once, only two of them have not been subject to torture or mistreatment (either in custody or prison), whereas 26 of them claimed they had been tortured in custody, nine of them claiming that, whilst they had not been systematically tortured, they had suffered mistreatment. 26 of my interviewees (47%) reported having been imprisoned.

Figure 18 Interviewees' formal or informal links to illegal organisations

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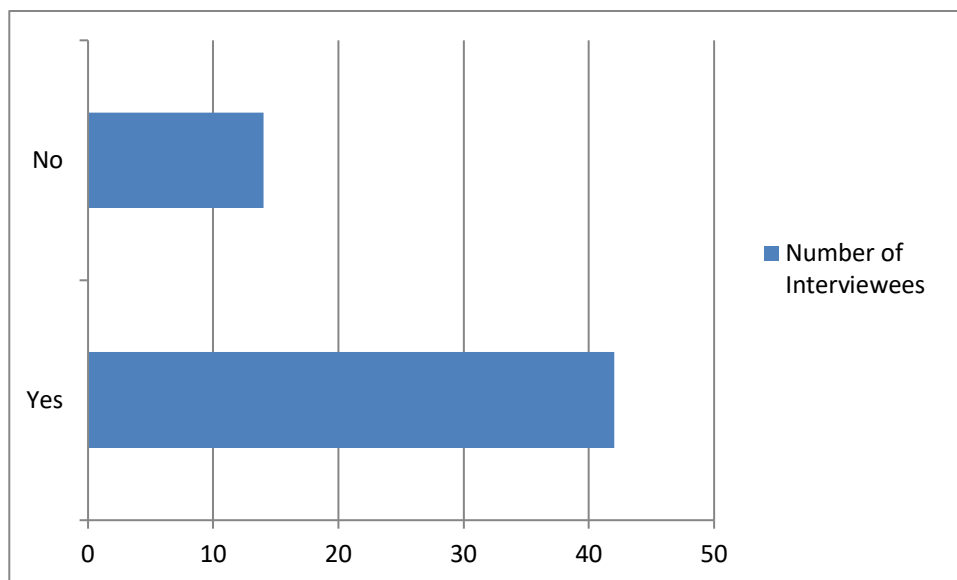
[354] Interviewee 47, interview by author, Dersim/Turkey, 3 August 2014

Figure 19 Interviewees' arrest, torture and imprisonment experience
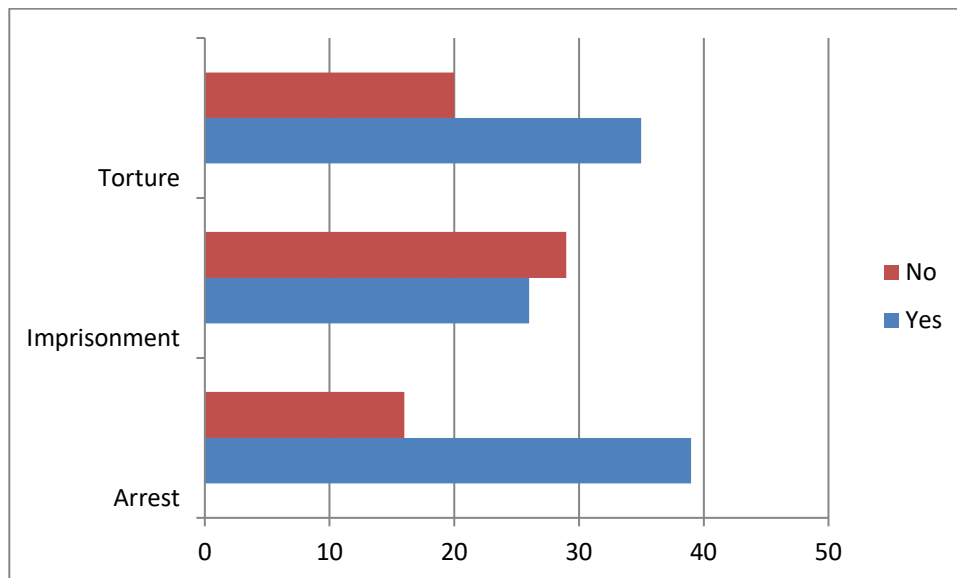
As the left became more organised and armed in Dersim in the early 1970s, my interviewees, as youngsters, were introduced to leftist ideology. "The leftists came to us in the 1970s, and we became leftists," said Interviewee 35, who was born in the 1960s. "I was only a kid," she remembers, "but we were definitely influenced".[355] She, like others, claims that being political is a part of Dersim: "it is a serious mission. I think we [the Dersimlis] should free ourselves from this mission, because politics is not everything".[356] Interviewee 43 remembers cattle breeding from his childhood, and climbing to high plateaus in the summers, where they encountered TİKKO guerrillas[357], saying, "We grew up with them from a very early age, we were politicised by them".[358] Being a TİKKO sympathiser, which the local community calls "Partizan" is almost "genetic" according to Interviewee 13, "it is bequeathed to you from childhood".[359] Interviewee 2 told me that he learnt

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[355] Interviewee 35, interview by author, Berlin/Germany, 28 February 2015.

[356] Ibid.

[357] I am using the form of identification used by my interviewee here and not my own value-judgements. The majority of my respondents as well as the Dersimli community I encountered during fieldwork refer to PKK and TİKKO fighters, who are officially proscribed under terror laws, as "revolutionary fighters" and "guerrillas".

[358] Interviewee 43, interview by author, Geneva/Switzerland, 26 September 2014.

[359] Interviewee 13, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 27 May 2014.

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of the Kurdish problem from Ibrahim Kaypakkaya, the founder of the TKP-ML/TİKKO movement. "We were six kids in Dersim city centre," remembered Interviewee 2, "Ibrahim [Kaypakkaya] would come to our house from time to time, I first learnt from him that Kurds were a separate nation, and nations had a right to self-determination … and that the socialists would defend those rights".[360]

"I was born into a Marxist family," claimed Interviewee 51, born in the early 1980s, adding that being from Dersim brings about engagement with Marxism to a certain extent.[361] College years for Dersimlis were also significant in maintaining these leftist ties. They had Dersimli "brothers" in colleges, and one would automatically become a part of that Dersimli group. Interviewee 55 explained, referring back to his own college years, "if you did not join them [Dersimli brothers in leftist activity] you would be an outsider to that community, and it would not be manly either. 'I am a Dersimli, how could I not join them, I have to join them' we would think".[362] This brotherhood not only involved distant community ties with other Dersimlis, but also often involved real family members, brothers mostly, who took part in leftist activities, their younger brothers and sisters then following their path. A number of my interviewees noted that their brothers had taken part in different legal and illegal organisational activities, Interviewee 5, Interviewee 6, Interviewee 35, and Interviewee 12 all making this claim. Having a politically active sibling often meant you would be a part of the same organisation – ideologically even if not actively- and this would have certain outcomes. "I had nothing to do with the left," said Interviewee 5 from the Dersim 1938 Genocide Opposition Association, nevertheless, she was badly treated in custody because of her brother's ties with an illegal leftist organisation. There was verbal harassment and abuse and she claims this mistreatment in custody prompted her to conversion, saying, "I left as a revolutionary-left girl".[363] Interviewee 35 from the FDG told me that her brother had been imprisoned, and, "because I loved my brother so dearly, I became a member of his the leftist organisation he took part in".[364] Interviewee 6 claimed that they were "compelled to be leftists", explaining that, "the whole community that surrounds you sees you as communist … and the left ideology promises equality and freedom … As I look back now it seems weird, but as I a primary school kid I would say 'I'm a revolutionary' and such things".[365]

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[360] Interviewee 2, interview by author, Frankfurt/Germany, 25 February 2015.
[361] Interviewee 51, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 23 April 2015.
[362] Interviewee 55, interview by author, Cologne/Germany, 23 February 2015.
[363] Interviewee 5, interview by author, Stuttgart/Germany, 25 February 2015.
[364] Interviewee 35, interview by author, Berlin/Germany, 28 February 2015.
[365] Interviewee 6, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 4 March 2015.

In the late 1970s, right wing sympathisers murdered a leftist. There was a mass rally organised in protest. The police detained Interviewee 6 during this rally; he was a 15 years old. He described the time:

> Well, what can I say now? I was 15 years old back then. It is unbelievable; I get goose bumps even talking about this now. How can one give electric shocks to a 15 years old boy? How can one bastinado him? What if even he is a militant, how much of a militant can a 15 year old be? I was arrested in the end, sent to Sağmancılar Prison … I was imprisoned for 4 months or so … then I came back, and saw that my high-school registration was cancelled. We were going to do revolution any way; I did not take it very seriously. High school ended just like that.[366]

Maltreatment in custody or prison, whether experienced directly or vicariously through a family member or friend, is one of the major factors determining future political activities of the Dersim intelligentsia. Interviewee 20 recalls visiting his brother in 1989 in Metris Prison, which was "like a grave".[367] His brother and his comrades were protesting against the prison uniforms, thus they came to visiting hour only in underwear. That visit was significant in his life, and it affected him very much. "After that visit my life utterly changed. Education was no longer important to me, and quickly I began searching for [leftist] organisations," he explained, "then I prepared for college and entered Ege University, but I did not go there either. Because we were going to make revolution".[368] Years later, he was also imprisoned with a life sentence due to his leftist activities. After 71 days of hunger strike as a prisoner, he was released. Interviewee 20 told me that the minute he was released from prison, he realised that he was alone, and in fact, all Dersimlis were alone. "I had nowhere to go. Many things had been destroyed in Turkey, but it hit us [Dersim and Dersimlis] the most," he told me.[369]

"I wrote my first slogan in my native language on a prison cell wall. I wrote Kirmancki on Ulucanlar Prison's[370] wall … It is that emotional readiness that makes you write something with your

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[366] Ibid.
[367] Interviewee 20, interview by author, Zurich/Switzerland, 25 September 2014.
[368] Ibid.
[369] Ibid.
[370] Ulucanlar Prison, where many journalists, poets, writers, and political offenders served their sentence, was turned into Ulucanlar Prison Museum in 15 June 2011. More information on the Ulucanlar Prison is available from http://www.ulucanlarcezaevimuzesi.com/eng/?page=icerik&id=27.

mother tongue on a prison cell's wall," said Interviewee 39.[371] Interviewee 34 claims that he focused more on music in prison and began discussing making music in Dersimce.[372] This was perhaps due to spending time alone in a closed place, apart from the society. Similarly, Interviewee 44 describes her drive to learn filmmaking and documentaries as inspired from isolation "which makes you question how you can be involved again".[373]

My interviewees told me different stories about these moments of realisation of their Dersimli identities. Music, movies, novels, academic works, a daily activity or a love issue, variously, were triggering factors for this intelligentsia in realising their Dersim identity Interviewee 10, for instance, recalls listening to Ozan Serdar's music while he was a coach driver in the early 1980s:

> Kurdish language was banned in those days, so I would put on this cassette between 4-5 am, and turn the volume so low so that only I could hear the music. It was a Zazaki requiem that Ozan Serdar sang. One day, I heard sobbing. This person came up to me, he was a man in his seventies, and he said, "Do you know what you have done to me? Turn the volume up, let me listen to this, may they come and kill me then".[374]

Interviewee 10 told me that he bitterly regrets having kept silent on the subject of Dersim's ethnic cleansing for so long. It was not until the early 1990s when he finally took part in the works of the Tunceliler Association (*Tunceliler Derneği*). Interviewee 25 also notes the 1980s as the time period his Dersim awareness surfaced. It was Steven Spielberg's movie Schindler's List, which prompted Interviewee 25 to think that Dersim 1937-38 should be studied; he told me, "I wrote about this in Tija Sodiri[375] in the 1990s".[376] Dersimli academician Interviewee 53 admits that his interest in Dersim is rather "personal",[377] stating that he guides researchers working on Dersim, and participates in meetings (academic or otherwise) as much as he can in order to be helpful. Interviewee 30 from the Dersim Common Memory Platform (*Dersim Ortak Bellek Platformu*), told me that establishing this platform was decided by a few friends at a friendly dinner meeting: "As we

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[371] Interviewee 39, interview by author, Geneva/Switzerland, 27 September 2014.
[372] Interviewee 34, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 24 October 2014.
[373] Interviewee 44, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 17 June 2014.
[374] Interviewee 10, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 10 March 2015.
[375] *Tija Sodiri* periodical was published by in 1995, known as being sympathetic to the Zaza movement.
[376] Interviewee 25, interview by author, Dersim/Turkey, 17 March 2015.
[377] Şükrü Aslan, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 2 June 2014.

were sitting chatting, we said, 'We are responsible for Tunceli, the city we were born and raised in'.[378]

During these interviews, I also heard other, more personal stories about what it means to be from Dersim. Interviewee 12 told me that for years after her initial politicisation, she often came across stories of massacres [such as Dersim 1937-38, the Sivas Massacre, and the Gazi Events] that she had never heard before, and that she was constantly involved in political activities. Also she said that she could not fall in love with a person who was apolitical.[379] Interviewee 19 told me two break-up stories of his own from his adolescence:

> I had a girlfriend back then, we were vacationing in the summer. … I told her, 'I am a Kurd'. She cried, cried, and cried. … Then I told her I am Alevi, and as I told her that our relationship was over. … Years later I fell in love with a schoolteacher. Her father said 'I have no daughter to give to a Kurd, or an Alevi. If she marries you she's no longer my daughter'. We broke up.[380]

As these anecdotes show, being a Dersimli not only meant being subject to discrimination by the state, but also being despised in other ways by society. Apart from being discriminated against or despised, being Dersimli meant being indifferent to your mother tongue. Interviewee 55 from the FDG tells his story about deciding to learn Dersimce whilst he was in Cologne at a German language school:

> It was a friend's birthday and we were all signing a birthday card for her. They said lets all write something in our native languages … I wanted to write something in Turkish, but then I said to myself, "they said in native language, Turkish is not my native language" … Then I wanted to write something in my language, and I thought how do I say what I want to say in my language [Dersimce] … Others were waiting, so I said you go ahead and write … I felt this emptiness … I told myself "this is not how it should be, I don't know my mother's tongue" … I decided I would learn our language no matter what.[381]

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[378] Interviewee 30, interview by author, Ankara/Turkey, 11 March 2015.
[379] Interviewee 12, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 5 January 2015.
[380] Interviewee 19, interview by author, Munich/Germany, 25 February 2015.
[381] Interviewee 55, interview by author, Cologne/Germany, 23 February 2015.

Interviewee 4 says "I said to myself 'I shall have a name in my own language'".[382] He also mentioned that he wished he had given kids names in Dersimce as well, saying, "If I had had this awareness that I have now, eight, ten years ago, I would have given beautiful, original Zazaki names to my kids".[383]

4.5   Conclusion

It is not events *per se* that create collective trauma, but rather their representation.[384] Dersim 1937-38 was a traumatic period for Dersimlis, but it was not until the late 1960s when this trauma became a driving power and a tool for social movements. With the rise of the leftist insurgency in Turkey, narration of the 1937-38 incidents in Dersim changed from being called a "rebellion of bandits" to "a glorious rebellion of the Dersimlis against the oppressive state". After conducting more research and increasing politicisation, various movements, including the left and identity movements, deigned Dersim 1937-38 as a state act of massacre and/or genocide. This chapter has shown that today, Dersim's intelligentsia is largely in agreement over Dersim's collective memory. All in all, the "meaning struggles"[385] over Dersim today are not over how it is remembered, but over how its identity should be defined.

This chapter has introduced the intelligentsia I interviewed, who they are, where they come from, and what similarities they share in terms of their life stories. It also showed that despite the similarities in their sociological backgrounds and life stories, the Dersim intelligentsia differed from each other when it came to defining Dersim's, and thus their own, identity. I have argued that this difference is partly due to the intelligentsia's personal backgrounds, but more importantly it stems from their differing affiliations to separate groups. In terms of my interviewees' personal backgrounds, several factors account for their differences: location (whether they were politicised in Turkey or in the Diaspora), age (whether they were politicised during the heyday of leftist politics or as identity movements were emerging), and familial bonds to political organisations all directly affected the politicisations of the intelligentsia. Furthermore, in some cases, shifts along the path the politicisation occurred: one actor may have moved from Turkey to the Diaspora, or from one political group to another. What needs to be highlighted, however, is that the main line of

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[382] Interviewee 4, interview by author, Eskişehir/Turkey, 10 November 2014.
[383] Ibid.
[384] Ali Aslan Yıldız, Maykel Verkuyten. "Inclusive Victimhood: Social Identity and the Politicisation of Collective Traume among Turkey's Alevis in Western Europe." *Peace & Conflict* 17 (2011): 243-69.
[385] Ali Aslan Yıldız, Maykel Verkuyten. "Inclusive Victimhood: Social Identity and the Politicisation of Collective Trauma among Turkey's Alevis in Western Europe." *Peace & Conflict* 17 (2011), 251.

disagreement over Dersim's collective identity seems to be caused by a problematic definition of Dersim's ethnicity through language. This line of argument only partly grasps the reality, because Dersim's ethnicity cannot be defined by a single language; rather it is an ethnicity that is multi-lingual in nature.

5 Dersim as a Political Battleground

5.1 Introduction

After decades of silence following the traumatic events of 1937-38, the Dersim issue entered the political context, though indirectly, in the late 1960s. Dersimlis began to find their voice in the rising socialist movements in Turkey. However, this voice was not linked to the state oppression that Dersimlis had suffered, or a particular shared Dersimli identity; in fact, Dersimlis' involvement in leftist movements stemmed primarily from class-consciousness. This trend lasted throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, until other political factors came into play in the 1980s, such as the 12 September 1980 military coup, the beginning of the PKK's urban warfare in 1984, the fall of the Soviet Bloc (1989) and increasing effects of globalisation in the 1990. The 1980s, therefore, is often marked as the period when class-based movements began to be replaced by identity-based movements.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Sivas Massacre, and the forced evacuations and village destructions in Dersim were the three main historical events mentioned by my interviewees. These three events significantly affected the intelligentsia's views on socialism, Alevism, and Dersim. The fall of communism directed former socialists to question their leftist ideology and to focus more on their ethno-religious identities. "The fall of socialism and our split from socialist organisations to do, rather, identity-based works, happened simultaneously," noted Interviewee 23, a former Dersim deputy.[386] Interviewee 53, likewise, pointed to the 1990s as the decade in which a separate Dersim identity began to emerge, saying, "modern institutions, including the nation-state, have de-functionalised with the impact of globalisation and communication technology, which made previously oppressed identities more and more visible. This can be said for the Dersim identity as well".[387] From this time on, Dersimlis no longer felt a belonging to leftist or class movements.

The Sivas Massacre, in 1993, also contributed to a growing sense of ethno-religious identities in Dersim. This was a traumatic event where 37 Alevi intellectuals were burned alive by

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[386] Interviewee 23, interview by author, Ankara/Turkey, 11 November 2014.
[387] Interviewee 53, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 2 June 2014.

Islamic fundamentalists in the Madımak Hotel in Sivas, an eastern-Anatolian city in Turkey. "Sivas was a determining factor," Interviewee 12 told me, because when the Sivas Massacre took place "people began saying Sivas is not the first thing, we've been through this in Maraş, in Dersim".[388] A year later, in 1994, in its struggle with the insurgent movements, the Turkish army set light to forests and villages, forcing villagers to evacuate, leaving their homes, fields, and cattle behind. "A weird war," Dersimli musician remarked of the year, "not only people, but nature also had a right to those fields".[389] Dersimlis often identify 1994 as the "second 1938", seeing that year as the start of an oppression that has continued up to the present day. Interviewee 40 explained that "since 1993, we have not been able to raise our heads, we've not been able to live in peace and quiet. We are on tenterhooks, we still are, and it is a whirlwind".[390]

This chapter sketches Dersim's relationship with leftist and identity movements through a chronology of events (Appendix 3). The first section discusses the impact of the rise of leftist ideology in Dersim beginning in the late 1960s. The second section examines the identity movements that replaced leftist class-consciousness from the 1980s onwards. Accordingly, it looks into the Kurdish, Zaza, and Armenian identity movements flourishing in Turkey and the Diaspora, and their impact on discussions of Dersim's collective identity. By doing so, I will argue that class-based movements and identity politics were, in fact, intertwined despite their significant ideological differences. That is to say, class-based leftist movements in Dersim involved a significant dose of identity, and the multi-faceted identity politics over Dersim's collective identity embraced leftist elements within. The interplay between class and identity movements in Dersim is an important feature to consider when attempting to understand the competition over Dersim's collective memory and identity.

5.2 The leftist movement: Dersim's friend or enemy?

The 1961 Constitution, often regarded as the most liberal of Turkey's constitutions, was one outcome of the 1960 military coup against the ruling Democrat Party. Therefore, one can claim that it was not an achievement of social movements but the gift of a strong bureaucracy.[391] The 1961 constitution, whilst liberal, allowed leftist movements to find voice and cause "rampant anarchy", in

[388] Interviewee 12, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 5 January 2015.
[389] Interviewee 1, interview by author, Geneva/Switzerland, 26 September 2014.
[390] Interviewee 40, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 3 November 2014.
[391] Keyder, Çağlar. 1987. *State and Class ın Turkey: A Study ın Capitalist Development*. London: Verso, 149.

the words of Gunter.[392] The 1971 coup d'état amended the 1961 Constitution and outlawed the leftist movements. It was between these two military coups when Worker's Party of Turkey (TİP) decided to organise what became know as the Eastern Meetings in the late 1960s, taking a huge step forward to engage socialist ideology with Kurdish ethnicity. Seven meetings were held, predominantly in eastern and south-eastern cities of Turkey, such as Diyarbakır, Batman, Ağrı, and also in Dersim. The meeting in Dersim took place on 15 October 1967, with great effort made by Kemal Burkay. Burkay, a young Dersimli lawyer at that time, founded the Dersim branch of TİP. During preparations in Dersim, Burkay handed out flyers to the three top state officials in the city – i.e. the vice-governor, gendarmerie commander and the chief of police- in order to show that his activity was legal, and to "alleviate the worries and concerns of the locals [and] the suppressed nature of Tunceli locals following the violent campaign in Dersim in 1938".[393]

Burkay, who is currently the leader of the Rights and Freedoms Party, is amongst the first people to use the original name "Dersim" publicly, instead of Tunceli. He read his poem *Dersim* to the crowd during the Tunceli Eastern Meeting in 1967. Burkay told me that unlike others, he was aware of Dersim's particularity from the 1960s onwards, saying:

> The intellectuals and young population in Dersim predominantly headed towards the left movement, including TİP and many other left groups that organised in Dersim. Back then, they were looking at things from a class perspective, even the Kurdish issue was not really considered important in the Alevi community.[394]

The rising socialist movement in Turkey throughout the 1960s and 1970s had a double impact on discussion of the Dersim issue. One was to silence talk of the Dersim 1937-38 ethnic cleansing, and the second was a distortion of the Dersimli way of life, belief, and culture. Many of my interviewees admitted the leftist ideology failed to recognise, either implictly or explicitly, Dersim's cultural identity. I heard from a number of interviewees that up until the early 1970s, that is when the leftist ideology strengthened in Turkey and in Dersim, Dersim had kept its Alevi belief system alive. It was after the 1970s when "Dersim … lost its will power, the leftist institutions began

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[392] Gunter, Michael M. 1989. "Political Instability in Turkey During the 1970s." *The Journal of Conflict Studies* no. 9 (1): 63-77.

[393] Gündoğan, Azat Zana. 2011. "Space, state-making and contentious Kurdish politics in the East of Turkey: The case of Eastern Meetings 1967." *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* no. 13 (4):389-416, 412.

[394] Kemal Burkay, interview by author, 2015.

making decisions. They … abolished Dersim's existing system and replaced it with a different kind of power", according to Interviewee 55.[395]

Interviewee 35 from the FDG refers to the 1970s when she was a child. She said, "there was absolutely no distinction [in the 1970s]: when you said you were Zaza, you were Kurd. There was only the Dersim identity, an upper-identity that was based on the Alevi belief".[396] The locality of Dersim was damaged, linguistically, culturally, and religiously, by the emerging leftist ideology in Dersim. "One group objected to traditional dresses, to the local costumes of our grandmothers and grandfathers, they did not let *Dedes*[397] enter villages, distortion began right there and then. The biggest intervention to that culture, after the state, came from our generation, who did politics in Turkish".[398] I occasionally heard such confessions and self-criticisms during my encounters with the local people and the intelligentsia of Dersim. Interviewee 26 made a similar remark during our interview: "When I began secondary school, we were discussing how we could put sounds in Zazaki in writing. … These discussions were interrupted in 1974, we could not do so any more. Other things entered the agenda, like Russia, and China".[399]

Interviewee 20 described these interruptions to local cultural expression as leading to a dilemma for the Dersimli people: "The [Dersimli] society was at loss to take sides between Marxism and its own belief [Alevism]".[400] It was an impasse, particularly because Marxism meant atheism, and Alevism was a strong belief system that defined a whole way and government of life. Interviewee 21, a political exile, described the impact of the leftist mobilisation:

> There was intense pressure [from the state] on Dersim but it did not succeed. Until 1967 everyone spoke, prayed, and made their *Cem*[401] in their mother tongue. But after 1967-68, as the student youth entered Dersim, language changed. They made discussions in Turkish; we forgot our own sorrows. The idea was that we would do revolution, and we would win over this state violence only by revolution. And then

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[395] Interviewee 55, interview by author, Cologne/Germany, 23 February 2015.
[396] Interviewee 35, interview by author, Berlin/Germany, 28 February 2015.
[397] A *Dede* is a socio-religious leader in Alevism. There are many *Dedes*, whose function is to guide the Alevis in both societal and religious matters.
[398] Interviewee 17, interview by author, Dersim/Turkey, 2 August 2014.
[399] Interviewee 26, interview by author, Geneva/Switzerland, 27 September 2014.
[400] Interviewee 20, interview by author, Zurich/Switzerland, 25 September 2014.
[401] *Cem* is a congregational ceremony held by Alevis.

we would be free, equal citizens. With those dreams we forged ahead, and the revolution never happened… [402]

The figure of Seyyid Rıza and the 1937-38 military operations in Dersim were left out of discussion in the leftist ideology. "There was only one message," said Interviewee 2 from the DYİC in Germany, "you know, socialism will come and we will survive, everyone will be equal".[403] Those pursuing socialism defined self-identifying as Dersimi, Kurdish, or Alevi as "reactionary".[404] Simply put, Dersim 1938 was a taboo and people who worked on Kurdishness or Zazaness at that time would be accused and even "degraded".[405] Interviewee 15 claims that socialists would dismiss issues of ethnic or religious self-identification, saying that revolution would be imminent and that under socialism these issues would be solved.

Interviewee 56, an academic, told me about his confusion in the past, saying, "a group of people says that they are revolutionists, that they will build socialism, that they will free people. But when we speak our language they stand up against us and attack us; they say that we divide the working class".[406] Similarly, Interviewee 24 was told that he should organise the working-class instead of focusing on local problems, when he told his superiors he wanted to do something especially for the Dersim community.[407] This is also relevant to the idea that the leftist ideology had a strict class perspective, which led to a failure to consider Dersim's local identity and culture. Academician and a Dersimli himself, Interviewee 53 believes that Dersim was always an issue for anti-system movements, but it was a class issue, not an ethnic or religious problem.[408] In fact, the left and Dersim had a direct bond; most leftist cadres in the 1970s and 1980s were filled with people from Dersim, Interviewee 39 confirmed this to me, saying, "I personally knew many of them".[409] Alongside the leftist organisations emerging from the Turkish Revolutionary Youth Federation (DEV-GENÇ), there were pro-Kurdish cadres of leftist organisations, such as the Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearts (DDKO) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey, which will be analysed in detail in Chapter 6. The Kurdish struggle, via the PKK, began in earnest following the emergence of

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[402] Interviewee 21, interview by author, Cologne/Germany, 23 February 2015.
[403] Interviewee 2, interview by author, Frankfurt/Germany, 25 February 2015.
[404] Interviewee 34, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 24 October 2014.
[405] Interviewee 15, interview by author, Brussels/Belgium, 22 February 2015.
[406] Interviewee 56, interview by author, Dersim/Turkey, 18 March 2015.
[407] Interviewee 24, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 8 September 2014.
[408] Interviewee 53, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 2 June 2014.
[409] Interviewee 39, interview by author, Geneva/Switzerland, 27 September 2014.

the DDKO, explaining why the Kurdish intelligentsia argue that they have been aware of their ethnicity from early on.

In a number of interviews Dersimli intelligentsia have told me that they were aware of their Dersimli, Alevi, or Armenian identity right from the beginning of the leftist struggle. Their fellows knew their ethno-religious identities as well. But from a socialist perspective, there was no room for ethnic or religious belongings, and these belongings, though privately considered, were kept silent. Being Dersimli was enough to be involved in the left. Interviewee 55 told me about his university years:

> It was the year when student rallies began again after the military coup. We went and took part in them, you know, automatically because we were Dersimlis … no one even asked if we would go or not, because it couldn't be more natural than going if you were from Dersim, it would have been weird if you hadn't gone.[410]

The 1970s ended with two significant events for the Alevi community, which perhaps produced the first sparks of the Alevi revival to take place in the 1980s. The rising conflict between the Islamist/nationalist right wing and the predominantly Alevi left wing caused the death of scores of Alevis massacred in Kahramanmaraş (often referred to as Maraş) and Çorum, respectively in 1978 and 1980. These events were critical junctures that resulted in Alevis bringing their religious identity forward in their political struggle. Interviewee 6 from the Confrontation Association (*Yüzleşme Derneği*), was in prison when the Maraş massacre took place. He says:

> We were all very sad. It was a fascist attack. I had a friend from Sivas, who was very sensitive about his Alevi identity. He cried. We told him that we would go on fighting the fascists; and told him not to be sad and so on. He said, 'What is this that we, the Alevis, are going through?' I was boggled, you know, it wasn't the working-class but the Alevis that he emphasised. I thought about it, and the penny dropped.[411]

Throughout the 1970s, the clash between the "Nationalist Front," which consisted of nationalist and Islamist groups, and the "communists" accelerated. The political sphere was equally divided as neither the Justice Party (AP) or the CHP managed to form a ruling government, causing

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[410] Interviewee 55, interview by author, Cologne/Germany, 23 February 2015.
[411] Interviewee 6, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 4 March 2015.

a political deadlock. This division turned into uncontrollable violence, especially beginning from the 1 May 1977 incidents in which 34 people were shot dead in Taksim, Istanbul. After the Maraş incidents, a state of siege was declared in 13 cities, including Istanbul, Ankara, Adana, Elazığ, and Sivas. Following declaration of martial law in 1978, until November 1979, almost a thousand people reportedly died. From November 1979 until the military coup in September 1980, almost four thousand more died. Among them there were civilians from the right and left wing, as well as provincial political party members on both sides, and also journalists and state employees.

5.3   Identity movements: Dersim's friends or enemies?

The increasing factional fighting among the right and left wings slowed dramatically with the 12 September 1980 military coup. Of the 9,795 reported clashes, 91% took place before, where only 9% took place after the coup.[412] The consequences of the arrests, torture, and extrajudicial killings during General Kenan Evren's[413] rule, however, remain significant for understanding the background of political matters in Turkey. According to Düzgün, the military administration "reformulated the dominant ethos of sovereignty, perceiving almost everything as a threat to the security of the state and the territorial/cultural integrity of the "nation"".[414] Consequently, it took harsh measures, especially against leftists, which included many Alevis and Kurds. The Turkish bureaucracy was suspicious of the Alevis for "being Soviet or Communist protégés during the 1960s and 1970s because of their leftist political orientations".[415] Bozarslan states, "The new authorities considered Kurdishness, like left-wing ideologies, to be a pathology that needed to be cured by an overdose of Kemalism and Turkishness".[416] "Turkishness" not only referred to Turkish ethnicity, but also to the Sunni religious identity of the Turks, which excluded other sects of Islam, such as Alevis. A feeling of being excluded from this new ideal Turkishness, defined as ethnically Turkish and religiously Sunni, catalysed the emergence of Kurdish and Alevi movements in the 1980s.

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[412] Gunter, Michael M. 1989. "Political Instability in Turkey During the 1970s." *The Journal of Conflict Studies* no. 9 (1): 63-77.

[413] General Kenan Evren was convicted of crimes against the state in June 2014, but the decision was not put in practice due to age limits. He died shortly after, in May 2015.

[414] Düzgün, Eren. 2012. "Class, State, and Property: Modernity and Capitalism in Turkey." *European Journal of Sociology* no. 53 (2):119-148, 135.

[415] Massicard, Elise. 2005. "Alevism in 1960s: Social Change and Mobilization." In *Alevis and Alevism Transformed Identities*, edited by Hege Irene Markussen, 109-135. Istanbul: Isis Press; see also Köse, Talha. 2013. "Between Nationalism, Modernism and Secularism: The Ambivalent Place of 'Alevi Identities'." *Middle Eastern Studies* no. 49 (4): 590-607.

[416] Bozarslan, Hamit. 2008. "Kurds and the Turkish State." In *Turkey in the Modern World*, edited by Reşat Kasaba, 333-356. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 359.

External factors, such as the collapse of the Soviet Bloc and globalisation, also played a role in the rise of identity movements. In 1983 Turgut Özal came to power. The Özal government was an important carrier of globalisation and liberalisation in Turkey. *Özalism* involved bold economic and democratic policies that aimed at a "mental revolution" from below.[417] The state-led modernisation project in the early Republican period was now replaced with modernisation from below, or "society based modernity" as Göle puts it.[418] Özal's pluralist policies apportioned relatively more freedom to different ethnic, religious, and cultural identities, such as Kurds, Alevis, Greeks, Circassians, and so on. Although subsequent politicians did not follow his strong liberal policies -Özal had his own flaws especially in political liberalism- the increasing appearance of various identities was the beginning of a new phase for identity politics in Turkey. It was in this period that different groups began utilising the global communication market, including TV channels, books, newspapers, or music. The 1980s was an important period for the former leftists, who either ran into exile in European countries or who were imprisoned. The activists who either legally or illegally fled to Europe began to constitute the Dersimli Diaspora there. Others, who were imprisoned, experienced a rising awareness about their ethnic and religious identity.

Interviewee 42 defines this rising awareness as an "identity drift", where "Marxists became liberals, seculars became religious, and communists became nationalists after 12 September 1980".[419] According to Interviewee 52, these people who fled to Europe or have been exiled there "became political refugees and they also began to re-organise".[420] Those who stayed in Turkey, meanwhile, were under great pressure from the military junta. Interviewee 43 told me that he first came into contact with Islam in secondary school when the 12 September military junta arrived; obligatory religious courses were enforced in Alevi villages. This encounter was far from being harmonious though, as his schoolteacher asked him to the board to perform the *Namaz*[421]. "I said, hodja, what is *Namaz*? … I saw the Kemalist side of the system in primary school having been beaten up by my teacher; and the Islamist side of the system in secondary school".[422] The 12 September junta placed more pressure on families. Interviewee 40 told me that in father has surrendered him

[417] Robins, Kevin. 1996. "Interrupting Identities: Turkey/Europe." In *Questions of Cultural Identity*, edited by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, 61-87. London: Sage Publications, 74.

[418] Göle, Nilüfer. 2000. *İslam ve Modernlik Üzerine Melez Desenler*. Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 48.

[419] Interviewee 42 , interview by author, Berlin/Germany, 27 February 2015.

[420] Interviewee 52, interview by author, Delbruck/Germany, 24 February 2015.

[421] Also known as *Salat*, the ritual prayer of Muslims, which is performed five times a day.

[422] Interviewee 43, interview by author, Geneva/Switzerland, 26 September 2014.

to the army after the coup.[423] The physical and psychological violence against activists had significant consequences in the future works of the intelligentsia, who were imprisoned, tortured, and who lost their beloved fellows. The current co-vice president in the Dersim municipality Interviewee 27 told me, "As the 1980 military coup ran over us, we came around and thought about ourselves and then began working on Dersim".[424]

5.3.1   The Kurdish movement

In 1984 the PKK initiated its urban warfare. On 19 July 1987, a state of emergency was declared in several parts of eastern and south-eastern Turkey, also known as Turkish Kurdistan (Figure 20). The red section in Figure 20 shows the main cities ruled under a state of emergency, whereas the orange sections show the neighbouring cities for which a state of emergency was declared in later years. The State of Emergency Regional Government was established, which appointed governors with "extraordinary authority in the region, such as rights to exile people without their right for appeal … [and] extended the authority of the government in 'neighbouring' municipalities as necessary".[425] Furthermore, governors' decisions would be absolute.[426] Six governors were appointed to this position over fifteen years, and the policy continued throughout the 1990s, until its abolishment by a cabinet decision in 2002. [427]

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[423] Interviewee 40, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 3 November 2014.

[424] Interviewee 27, interview by author, Dersim/Turkey, 17 July 2014.

[425] Göner, Özlem. September 2012. *A Social History of Power and Struggle in Turkey: State, Memory, Movements, and Identity of Outsiderness in Dersim*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 282.

[426] For a detailed discussion of State of Emergency in Dersim, see Ibid., 279-282.

[427] As of August 2015, new states of exceptional regions were specified in Dersim, and in other parts of south-eastern Turkey.

Figure 20 State of emergency in Turkey between 1987 and 2002 (Orange section shows the neighbouring cities)

Source: *Kırmızı: OHAL bölgesi, turuncu: mücavir iller (komşu iller)*, 1987–2002. 02 August 2010 Available from https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ola%C4%9Fan%C3%BCst%C3%BC_H%C3%A2l_B%C3%B6lge_Valili%C4%9Fi#/media/File:O HAL.png.

Interviewee 24, who was among the founders of the Tunceliler Foundation in 1990, told me that people in Dersim were desperate and so asked the Tunceliler Foundation to look after them as the Turkish military were burning down their villages.[428] The year 1994 was catastrophic for Dersimlis, who felt "alone" and "abandoned". Interviewee 4 explained "one side [the Turkish state] pulled us towards Turkish ethnicity while the other [the Kurdish movement] pulled us towards Kurdish ethnicity … they were using societal issues, including the Dersim issue, for their political purposes".[429] Perhaps then, the Kurdish movement was not seen as being interested enough in the struggles that the Dersimlis had been experiencing since the early Republican period, resulting in a Dersimli faction splitting from the Kurdish movement. However, this is not uncontroversial: there is competition regarding this reading of history, with opposing views on the role the Kurdish movement played.

There are three main perceptions about the Kurdish movement's approach to Dersim. One group claims that the Kurdish movement liberated Dersimlis, who could then claim uniqueness only

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[428] Interviewee 24, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 8 September 2014.
[429] Interviewee 4, interview by author, Eskişehir/Turkey, 10 November 2014.

thanks to the Kurdish struggle. The other group claims that the Kurdish movement distorted the Dersim culture, language, and religion by imposing a unified Kurdish upper identity. The third group, meanwhile, have mixed feelings about the role the Kurdish struggle played for the Dersim identity, this position being both critical and approving of the Kurdish movement.

In differentiating between Kurdish and Kirmanc identity[430] and also seeking to reveal the uniqueness of Dersim in terms of ideology and identity, my interviewees often referred to the obvious differences between Dersim and Diyarbakır. Interviewee 41, who formerly took part in the Kurdish movement and was now linked with the Dersim Armenians Foundation points out that whilst Zazas have established the Zaza Culture and Language Association (*Zaza Kültür ve Dil Derneği*) in Dersim, they would never be allowed to establish such a centre in Diyarbakır, the symbolic capital of Turkish Kurdistan. He also told me that Dersimlis welcome Kurds, who enjoy comfortable conditions when they engage in political activities in Dersim, but Dersimlis would not be welcomed in Diyarbakır in such a capacity.[431] Interviewee 46, a documentary director from Dersim, also points to the differences between Dersim and Diyarbakır, saying, "One cannot comprehend Dersim by looking at it from Diyarbakır … Dersim reacts for democracy and human rights, whereas in Diyarbakır priority is language".[432] By this, he implies that Dersim has a rather leftist stance whereas Diyarbakır is more Kurdish nationalist, although he also accepts that Dersim is a part of Kurdistan, and that the Kurdish movement is slowly learning to accept the individuality of Dersim.

During our interview, Interviewee 48 told me that some of his friends and himself began writing critical essays on how traditional Kurdish nationality did not fit Dersim's reality in the 1990s (around the time of the birth of the *Tija Sodiri* journal). He explained: "My Kurdish friends comprehended this as an anti-Kurdish attitude, and asked me how I could be both here and there … told me that I should define my position. We separated [from the Kurds] in a friendly manner".[433] Interviewee 35 claims that the imposition of a Kurdish upper identity on Dersim is "saddening," as it implies "they do not take people into account, their sorrows, and how they identify themselves. They do not take their language seriously, and call it a dialect".[434] An example of how this cultural imposition works in practice was relayed to me by Interviewee 12. She told me that at the 2008

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[430] Kirmanc identity refers to the system of life accepted by Dersimlis, placing Alevi religion and Zazaki language at its core. Some Dersimlis claim that Dersim is the land of Kirmanciye, and the Zazaki language is also called Kirmancki.
[431] Interviewee 41, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 6 May 2014.
[432] Interviewee 46, interview by author, Dersim/Turkey, 16 July 2014.
[433] Interviewee 48, interview by author, Hannover/Germany, 25 February 2015.
[434] Interviewee 35, interview by author, Berlin/Germany, 28 February 2015.

Munzur Festival in Dersim she was playing a record by Dersimli musician Mikail Aslan when people from the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) warned her to turn it off. On this issue, Interviewee 12 provided me with some anecdotal evidence that there is some acceptance by BDP members regarding these accusations: she told me "Şerafettin Halis [a former BDP member] does self-criticise; he says that they have been the most harmful [to the culture of Dersim]. I think it is a virtue that … they feel sorry now".[435]

Şerafettin Halis was the former Dersim deputy of the BDP between 2007 and 2011. Halis resigned from his provincial chairman position on 2 April 2013. He was known to be critical of the BDP's approach to Alevis and Dersim, and shortly after his resignation, news surfaced that unknown persons from the Dersim provincial administration had threatened him. On 28 April 2015, Halis sent an eight-article statement to the Radikal newspaper, in which he strongly criticised the BDP administration, while also highlighting his many years of service for, and ongoing commitment to, the Kurdish movement. Halis claimed, "I tried to do politics, believing that the ill-treatment and future of the Alevis was hand-in-hand with the ill-treatment and future of the Kurds. I have always believed that the oppressed row in the same boat and should struggle alongside each other, I still believe that."[436] Nonetheless, he questions, "What has the BDP achieved by trying to align Dersim, contrary to its societal realities".[437] In fact, Halis invented the term "biological Alevis" for Alevis within the political arena as well as within the Kurdish movement, implying that they do not represent Alevis, but use their Alevi identity as a political tool.[438] He says that Kurdish Alevis were not harmed during 1937-38, as the actions of state over this period were directed against the Kirmanc identity. "The minute I said Dersim was not Kurdish but Kirmanc, I was marginalised [by the Kurdish movement]," Halis says, "the party is not sincere about Dersim".[439]

Interviewee 23, a former Dersim deputy, told me that the BDP's treatment of Şerafettin Halis was "unacceptable," and for this he also questions the Kurdish movement's sincerity.[440] He thinks that the Kurdish movement, albeit slowly, has produced politics according to Dersim's

[435] Interviewee 12, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 5 January 2015.
[436] Şahin, Tevfik. *Şerafettin Halis: Dersim'in Vicdanına Ve İzanına İpotek Konulamaz.* 28 Nisan 2013. Available from http://www.radikal.com.tr/politika/serafettin_halis_dersimin_vicdanina_ve_izanina_ipotek_konulamaz-1131402.
[437] Ibid.
[438] Doğan, Mehmet Ali. "Biyolojik Alevi"* ya da alevı temsilcisi olmak! 01 January 2014. Available from http://blog.radikal.com.tr/politika/biyolojik-alevi-ya-da-alevi-temsilcisi-olmak-44779.
[439] Doğan, Mehmet Ali. "Biyolojik Alevi"* ya da alevı temsilcisi olmak! 01 January 2014. Available from http://blog.radikal.com.tr/politika/biyolojik-alevi-ya-da-alevi-temsilcisi-olmak-44779.
[440] Interviewee 23, interview by author, Ankara/Turkey, 11 November 2014.

individuality. And he is only one of the many people who find the Kurdish movement significant for Dersim's struggle, while also being critical of it. Interviewee 24 acknowledges the harm the Kurdish movement caused in Dersim, saying "don't I find them [the Kurdish movement] mistaken sometimes? I do. But there's no reason for me to struggle with the Kurdish movement"[441] when there is the bigger oppressor, that is the Turkish state. Interviewee 10 also sees the "Dersim is Kurdish" motto as an unacceptable attitude coming from the Kurdish movement, but he prefers to tell them face-to-face, instead of weakening the Kurdish movement that he sees as an important protest group in the struggle against the oppressive Turkish state."[442] He also claims that the emergence of the Kurdish movement was an important factor in triggering Dersimlis to question their identity. Interviewee 27 from the Labour Party (EMEP) argues for the necessity of identifying one's self as Kurdish, at least as a political position, and claims that Dersim has become an issue over the last 15 years thanks largely to the open-minded atmosphere that the Kurdish struggle has allowed.[443]

Among others who describe the Kurdish movement as an accelerator for Dersimli consciousness, there are documentary directors, musicians, and politicians. Interviewee 44 identifies the Kurdish movement as a "national movement" that raises awareness of other ethnic groups, be they Dersimlis or Armenians.[444] Interviewee 7 and Interviewee 15, on the other hand, stress the fact that the Kurdish movement proposes a new system called "democratic confederalism", which distances itself from nation-state formulations and "puts language at the centre".[445] This means, as Interviewee 15 claims, that the Kurdish movement has not argued for or imposed the view that Dersimce is a dialect. Supporting this, Interviewee 7 told me: "I find the Kurdish movement's approach to identities and cultures positive". Interviewee 13 also agrees, as he claims that the Kurdish movement was effective in allowing Dersimlis to focus on their language and culture. "They do not necessarily need to say something about Dersim identity *per se*, but this being a *Kurdish* movement it makes me think of my own identity" he said.[446]

[441] Interviewee 24, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 8 September 2014.
[442] Interviewee 10, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 10 March 2015.
[443] Interviewee 27, interview by author, Dersim/Turkey, 17 July 2014.
[444] Interviewee 44, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 17 June 2014.
[445] Interviewee 15, interview by author, Brussels/Belgium, 22 February 2015.
[446] Interviewee 13, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 27 May 2014.

5.3.2 The Zaza and Kirmanc movements

Since the early 1990s, under the influence of the Kurdish struggle, Interviewee 34 began to question "why we do not produce music in our mother tongue, who are we?"[447] The actions of the Turkish state were also a determining factor in this enlightenment and transition. Interviewee 21 told me that he began to say he was Kurdish after the 1990s, saying, "They [soldiers] ask me, are you Turkish or Kurdish? Well, you are torturing me, why shall I be Turkish?"[448] Although he identifies himself as Kirmanc and not Kurdish, Aytaç claims that being Kurdish was a stronger "act of resistance" against the state.[449]

The Zaza movement mainly developed in the Diaspora from the 1980s onwards, especially in the 1990s. One of the major discussions that appeared in my interviews was whether Dersimce is a separate language and movement, or whether it derives from a Turkish state initiative intended to divide and weaken Kurdish mobilisation. One group of my interviewees confidently claimed that the Kurdish movement, from early on, made an effort to develop and protect Dersimce. Regardless of their definition of Dersimce (Zazaki, Dimilki, Kirmancki) as a separate language or a dialect of Kurdish, these people told me they acknowledged its existence and importance. "I struggled, fought for this [Dersimce] since 1975-77," said Interviewee 52, "it is not true, this criticism against the Kurdish movement [that the Turkish state used Dersimce to divide and rule], and it is definitely not true".[450] Interviewee 38 similarly accused the Zaza activists, saying, "I'm talking frankly … they are talking without knowledge" and he pointed out that he was among the first people who published a Zazaki threnody in 1980 in a newspaper called *Demokrat*,[451] and that the Kurdish movement took an active part in preserving Dersimce. Interviewee 45, who has been making Dersimce music within the Kurdish movement in Europe since the late 1970s, said:

> When the Kurdish movement was first initiated … they were friends from within the Turkish left movement. Back then, the left opposed the Kurdish movement saying "why are you organising separately?" What happened then? The Kurdish movement strengthened, and moved forward … and then we saw a group from Dersim becoming Zaza activists. What happened to *you*?

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[447] Interviewee 34, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 24 October 2014.
[448] Interviewee 21, interview by author, Cologne/Germany, 23 February 2015.
[449] Ibid.
[450] Interviewee 52, interview by author, Delbruck/Germany, 24 February 2015.
[451] Interviewee 38, interview by author, Delbruck/Germany, 24 February 2015.

You were Turkish, within the Kurdish movement … you made a promise to these people; where does this Zaza activism came from?[452]

Interviewee 48, on the other hand, complained that Dersimlis within the Kurdish movement "ironically" opposed the idea that there should be a new Kurdish-Zaza Party established, which he considers to be an attempt to distance the Kurdish movement from nationalism with a rather socialist perspective.[453] Interviewee 48 says that he began publishing a journal in Dersimce in Germany, which was regarded as "opposition to the Kurdish movement" by his former colleagues. The articles he wrote about Dersim were published in the 1990s, and these articles commonly accused the Kurdish movement of being Kurdish nationalist by ignoring the individuality of Zazas. Interviewee 48 does not oppose the Kurdish identity and struggle, but mainly criticises it for trying to "standardise" the Kurdish language by viewing Dersimce as a mere dialect, instead of a separate language, and of showing other nationalist reflexes. In many of his articles he argues that nationalist tendencies tend to spread into socialist thinking, as has especially occurred within the Kurdish movement. Interviewee 34 made a similar remark during our interview, saying that he is distant from nationalist ideology of any sort and perhaps thus closer to Seyfi Cengiz's approach; he argued that nationalism in general is hostile to "all cultures in Anatolia, and it has caused the biggest harm".[454]

The Kurdish perspective is quite different, however, seeing the Turkish state and Turkish Intelligence Agency (MİT) as promoting a Zaza movement in order to divide the strengthening Kurdish movement. "The state attempted to divide the Kurds in two ways," claims Interviewee 42 , "first was the Zaza-Kurdish conflict, and the second was the Alevi-Sunni conflict".[455] Especially between the mid-1980s until the mid-1990s, MİT developed a network in Europe, according to Interviewee 2, who has been a political refugee in Europe since the early 1980s. He told me: "a section of MİT was working on weakening the Kurdish organisation in Europe, with various political organisations, you know, separating Alevis from Kurds, claiming Zazas as a separate nation to detach them from the Kurds".[456]

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[452] Interviewee 45, interview by author, Delbruck/Germany, 24 February 2015.
[453] Interviewee 48, interview by author, Hannover/Germany, 25 February 2015.
[454] Interviewee 34, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 24 October 2014.
[455] Interviewee 42, interview by author, Berlin/Germany, 27 February 2015.
[456] Interviewee 2, interview by author, Frankfurt/Germany, 25 February 2015.

Another academic argues:

> Views such as "we are not Kurds, we come from Horosan" or "Zazaki is not Kurdish, Zazas are not Kurds" bring Kurds from Dersim closer to Kemalism. It is perplexing that Dersimlis, who have been subject to genocide by Kemalist cadres, deny Kurdishness and thus approach Kemalism themselves.[457]

Among the first to develop the Zaza movement were Ebubekir Pamukçu, Seyfi Cengiz, and Zülfü Selcan. Ebubekir Pamukçu died in 1991, but discussions surrounding him and his movement are still very much current. He has often been berated for defining himself as Turkish in the past, and accused of being a state agent, and therefore obliged to act against the Kurdish movement. Interviewee 33 is among those highly suspicious of Pamukçu's activities as a Zaza activist:

> Ebubekir Pamukçu … after coming to Europe said [to other friends], "I have been under pressure from MİT, they told me to work with them, but I escaped and came here [Europe]". But after coming here, he began saying Alevis are not Kurds, Zazas are a separate people. If this was what was asked of him, perhaps it is why. I don't know, maybe he sincerely believed in that.[458]

A biography of Ebubekir Pamukçu, written by his brother, Fahri Pamukçu, tells the evolution of Pamukçu's ideas and activities: beginning as a Kurdish activist and novelist, he eventually inspired a Zaza and Zazaistan ideology in the Diaspora. Pamukçu published two Zazaki journals, *Ayre* and *Piya,* respectively in the 1980s and early 1990s. In his letter to *Piya*, entitled "Kind of a Farewell," before his death, he wrote:

> My indecision about my identity lasted until I moved abroad. The things I went through in my moving abroad have increased my doubts about my Kurdishness. … I have gone through all the libraries in Stockholm … I did not stop there, I've been to other libraries in Sweden, and Germany. Consequently, my indecision has ended, I WAS A ZAZA now [caps in original]. You know, the *Ayre* and *Piya* journals were published then … With the first volume of *Ayre*, I, a revolutionist for many years, had become a traitor. I was an MİT agent, a CIA agent, in cooperation with the

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[457] Interviewee 28, interview by author, online, 8 March 2015.
[458] Interviewee 33, interview by author, Ankara/Turkey, 11 March 2015.

Turkish Republic, I was an ignoramus, I was crazy … [but] I wasn't an enemy of the Kurdish or Kurdistan. Yet, there's this, I was a Zaza, and my country was Zazaistan.[459]

Interviewee 48 describes Ebubekir Pamukçu as a pioneer for the Zaza movement and sympathises with his predicament, saying "Kurdish organisations keep seeing the Zaza movement as a 'construction from outside', this is paranoia".[460] Similarly, Interviewee 56, another controversial Zaza activist, rejects as "nonsense accusations" that he is an agent of the Turkish state attempting to weaken the Kurdish movement, claiming instead that he is "simply protecting his own language".[461] Selcan and Burkay were in the same organisation, the Union of Associations of Kurdistan (KOMKAR) in the 1970s, but drew apart in 1979. During our interviews, I heard conflicting statements from both parties. The disagreement centres on a Zazaki grammar book written by Selcan, which was not published by the KOMKAR. The Armenian movement

The assassination of Hrant Dink, a Turkish journalist and human rights activist of Armenian origin, on 19 January 2007, was a turning point. It united various groups in Turkey to organise and demonstrate against the oppressive and discriminatory state. As for Dersim, the Dink murder played some role in Selahattin Güntekin's decision to focus on his Armenian identity. This was not a regular focus, though. Selahattin Güntekin changed his name to Miran Pırgiç, became baptised, and established the Association of Dersim Armenians in 2010. Pırgiç is no longer the president of the association, but he is still very popular in discussions on Armenian identity in Dersim, and he is among the co-founders of the Dersim Armenians and Alevis Friendship Society (DERADOST). Before the assassination, publicly self-identifying as Armenian was not very common: Interviewee 49, an Armenian journalist told me, "You would not talk about these things in the 1980s and 1990s".[462] This was partly due to mutual indifference between Istanbul's and Dersim's Armenians, according to he said. He believes that the Armenians in Dersim do not form a majority, and that, over time, they have become more Alevi than Armenian.

Hrant Dink's assassination was not the only significant event that triggered discussions over Dersim's crypto-Armenians. The former president of the Turkish Historical Society, and current deputy of Kayseri for the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), Yusuf Halaçoğlu, said in a symposium

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[459] Pamukçu, Fahri. 2015. *Yol Ayrımı*. Istanbul: FAM Yayınları, 293-295.
[460] Interviewee 48, interview by author, Hannover/Germany, 25 February 2015.
[461] Interviewee 56, interview by author, Dersim/Turkey, 18 March 2015.
[462] Interviewee 49, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 20 October 2014.

in August 2007 that Kurds have Turkmen origin, and that Kurdish Alevis are largely crypto-Armenians.[463] Halaçoğlu also claimed that the PKK and TİKKO, the two main armed fighter groups functioning in Dersim (they will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4) were organisations of Armenian origin. Dersim, known to be a predominantly Kurdish-Alevi region, was affected by this discussion immediately.

Interviewee 55 claimed that, "some actors with weak historical consciousness" wrongly internalised Halaçoğlu's words, making extreme statements, such as 80% of Dersim is Armenian.[464] Here, he takes a sceptical stance against the Armenian emphasis in Dersim. He sees it as a conscious act by the Turkish state to drive a wedge between Dersimlis and Armenians. Interviewee 33 is similarly sceptical of Halaçoğlu's claims, saying, "You know, Turkey tries to Turkify us, and they try to make us Armenians".[465] Meanwhile, Interviewee 9 from the Association of Dersim Armenians told me that, "Armenian identity is still a taboo for the Dersimlis … and therefore some say 'where did this come from?' or 'let's not divide Dersim'".[466] This is a prejudice, and a concealment of reality according to Interviewee 9, since the church remains and original Armenian names in the villages are evident.

On the question of whether or not Dersim is Armenian, my interviewees were unanimous in their responses. All of them rejected Halaçoğlu's remarks as being simply an exaggeration, although they did acknowledge that Armenians and Dersimlis lived in harmony in Dersim for many years. Also, it should be remembered that Dersim's tribesmen assisted Armenians who took shelter there after the 1915 atrocity, helping them flee to the Russian borders. Because of this, the Dersimlis were "seen as friends with the enemy" and listed by the Ottoman General Kazım Karabekir each by name.[467]

Finally, there is reference to a distinct form of Armenian identity in Dersim, which was not orthodox Christian but a blend of Paganism and Zoroastrianism. The Armenians in Dersim were viewed sceptically by orthodox Christians, because they worshipped nature, the mountains and the

[463] Gündüç, Gökçe. *Historian Halacoglu's comments 'racist'*. 21 August 2007. Available from
        http://bianet.org/biamag/education/101256-historian-halacoglu-s-comments-racist.
[464] Interviewee 55, interview by author, Cologne/Germany, 23 February 2015.
[465] Interviewee 33, interview by author, Ankara/Turkey, 11 March 2015.
[466] Interviewee 9, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 17 October 2014.
[467] For a detailed analysis of Dersim reports, see; Bulut, Faik. 2013. *Dersim Raporları*. İstanbul: Evrensel Basın Yayın.

sun,[468] they prayed like Kirmancs did,[469] and they had common rituals and traditions with the Dersimlis.[470] "Neither the Armenians are standard, traditional Armenians, nor are we typical Kurds, like in Şırnak [another city of south-eastern Turkey]," Interviewee 39 told me, addressing the particularity and uniqueness of the people in Dersim, who have their own system of life.[471]

5.4   Conclusion

Today, Kurds, Alevis, Zazas, Kirmancs, Armenians, and even the Turkish state, to a certain extent, have accepted that Dersim 1937-38 was a massacre. Now, however, these groups compete over the collective identity of Dersim: Is it Kurdish, or Alevi, or Zaza, or Kirmanc, or is Dersim an Armenian land? It can be argued that the main struggle is between the pro-Kurdish movement and the ones who stress Dersim's particularity, such as its Alevi characteristics or Dersimce language. Alevi, Zaza, Kirmanc or Armenian groups claim that the attitude of the Kurdish movement is as monopolising as the Turkish state. Zaza nationalism has not gained much support in Dersim. The Armenian identity, meanwhile, was accepted to be a part of Dersim until 1915, but still, many claim the Armenian population in Dersim is insignificant and take a sceptical stance against Armenian organisations in Dersim.

In examining Dersim as a political battleground, this chapter has formed two important conclusions. First, the dual impact of a strong leftist ideology on Dersim, caused, on the one hand, a lack of emphasis on the particularities of the history and identity of Dersim; but, on the other hand, provided a basis upon which Dersimlis developed their identity awareness and organisational skills, both of which served them in promoting their own particular history and in insurgent activities. Arguably, the leftist ideology helped Dersimlis realise their repression, and organise effectively. As the left was hampered in Turkey and around the world, identity-based movements flourished. Nonetheless, the leftist ideology never disappeared in Dersim.[472] There was no direct transition from class-based movements to micro-nationalist, identity politics, but the two interplayed.

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[468] Interviewee 13, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 27 May 2014.
[469] Interviewee 34, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 24 October 2014.
[470] Interviewee 39, interview by author, Geneva/Switzerland, 27 September 2014.
[471] Ibid.
[472] The permanence of leftist ideology in Dersim can also be traced in polls, as Dersim's Ovacık district elected Fatih Mehmet Maçoğlu, candidate of the Communist Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Komünist Partisi*, TKP) in 2014. This was the first time a communist candidate won an election in Turkey since the TİP victory in 1965, and it happened in Dersim, the 'castle of the left'. Dersim is also known as an insurgent area, with active illegal organisations in towns, such as TİKKO and the PKK, as well as legal environmentalist organisations, such as Munzur Environmentalist Community (*Munzur Çevre Derneği*) and Dersim Initiative for Protection of Culture and Nature (*Dersim Kültürel ve Doğal Mirası Koruma Girişimi)* against the state's dam projects. These organisations will be covered in more detail in Chapter 4.

The second conclusion of this chapter concerns the impact of competing identity movements in Dersim. The core competition of these movements is often with the Turkish state, which Dersimlis view, with good reason, as oppressive and assimilationist. Following the significant impact of the leftist insurgency of the 1970s, Dersimlis begun to involve themselves in insurgent, legal and illegal activities. The 1980s were critical in the sense that the military coup largely dissolved the leftist organisations, and former members were either imprisoned, or exiled to Europe. In the aftermath of the 1980s, however, different identity movements emerged from within Turkey and the Diaspora. These identity movements sought to dominate Dersim as a region and Dersimlis as a society. However, their aim to monopolise the heterogenous, multi-lingual Dersim identity caused new competitions, this time among the Kurdish movement and others, such as Zazas, Kirmancs and Armenians.

Throughout this chapter I have reflected on the shifts and continuities between the leftist and identity-based movements in Dersim, and how political context has caused and shaped competition over the collective memory and identity of Dersim. The lack of control over the collective identity of Dersim, however, does not mean Dersim is uncontrolled. Quite the contrary, legal and illegal institutions have been effective in shaping Dersim's collective memory and identity. The next chapter will examine the organisational competition in Dersim.

6

Organisational Competition

"If two Dersimlis come together, they will gang up. When the third Dersimli comes, that organisation will split". Anonymous

6.1   Introduction

I came across the quotation above several times while reading literature on Dersim. Appendix 4 shows the splits of the leftist organisations since from the 1960s onwards and partly confirms this folk wisdom. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the role of organisational networks in initiating and perpetuating competition, mainly between the pro-Kurdish and pro-Kirmanc groups, over Dersim's collective identity.   My analysis of organisations that operate in Dersim revealed three transitions: the first is from left to identity politics; the second is from illegal organisations to legal institutions; the third is from Turkey to the Diaspora. Accordingly, the first section of this chapter compares TİKKO and the PKK, both of which were initially illegal, leftist organisations. The second section compares the FDG and the DYİC, two eventually legal organisations in the Diaspora that work particularly on the Dersim topic. After briefly examining the history of these organisations, each section discusses the grounds on which these organisations compete over Dersim.

To demonstrate this competition empirically, I use two sets of material: In the first section, I present an overview of semi-legal periodicals of TİKKO and the PKK that were published when conflict between these two groups peaked between 1992 and 1994. In the second section, I compare two Dersim festivals in the 2000s that were organised concurrently by two competing Dersim institutions. I argue that these organisations both reflect the competition over and perpetuate further fragmentation of Dersim's collective memory and identity.

6.2   Illegal leftist organisations in Turkey: TİKKO vs the PKK

The late 1960s and especially the 1970s can be described as the heyday of leftist politics in Turkey (Appendix 4). Multiple organisations, mostly illegal and armed, proliferated in the 1970s by

mostly splitting from the Idea Clubs Federation (FKF, 1965-69) and the Turkish Revolutionary Youth Federation (DEV-GENÇ, 1969-71). Mahir Çayan, Deniz Gezmiş, and İbrahim Kaypakkaya established three organisations that left an indelible mark on Turkish political history. These were, respectively, the THKP-C (People's Liberation Party-Front Turkey), the THKO (People's Liberation Army of Turkey), and TKP-ML/TİKKO (Communist Party of Turkey Marxist-Leninist/Turkish Workers and Peasants Liberation Army). These institutions experienced further splits: some of these derivative organisations disappeared, some changed ideology, and some became legal over the years. Simultaneously with FKF, the Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearts (DDKO) was founded. The DDKO can be described as the "organisational source that was central to the flourishing Kurdish political activism in the 1970s".[473] However, Tezcür highlights that the PKK links itself to what can be described as the Turkish radical left and sees their organisation as the Kurdish intelligentsia's involvement in leftist activities.[474] The term *Apocular* (1974-78) comes from the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan (known as Apo) prior to the establishment of the PKK in 1978, with links both to the DDKO and DEV-GENÇ.

A separate Kurdish nationalist organisation was also established in 1965 under the title of the Kurdistan Democrat Party of Turkey (TKDP). It was a very influential Kurdish political party until the 1970s under Sait Elçi's leadership. In 1969, Sait Kırmızıtoprak (known as Dr. Şiwan) had founded Kurdistan Democrat Party in Turkey (T-KDP). This was a signal of the internecine struggle within the TKDP. The "Events of Two Saits" (*İki Sait Olayı*) took place in which two leaders of the Kurdish movement, Sait Elçi and Sait Kırmızıtoprak were assassinated. The disputes between Elçi and Dr. Şiwan resulted in the former's assassination allegedly by Dr. Şiwan and his adherents, and following that, Dr. Şiwan was murdered by the Kurdistan Democrat Party of Iraq (PDKI).[475] The difference between the TKDP (Sait Elçi) and the T-KDP (Dr. Şiwan) was that the TKDP's nationalism "stems from the traditional conservative right", whereas T-KDP's nationalism was "inspired by revolutionary left", according to Orhan.[476]

Understanding the role of Dr. Şiwan is important for understanding the links between Kurdish movements and Dersim in two ways. First, Dr. Şiwan was a Dersimce speaking Alevi from

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[473] Tezcür, Güneş Murat. 2009. "Kurdish Nationalism and Identity in Turkey: A Conceptual Reinterpretation." *European Journal of Turkish Studies* no. 10, 11.
[474] Ibid., 10.
[475] Orhan, Mehmet. 2015. *Political Violence and Kurds in Turkey, Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Politics*: Routledge.
[476] Ibid.

Dersim. He came from a Dersim 1937-38 victim family, and Marxism shaped his ideology. He contributed to the establishment of the Association of People from Tunceli in Istanbul in 1957. In 1970, Dr. Şiwan authored a book in Turkish and Kurdish in Iraqi Kurdistan, which was published in Stockholm 27 years later, in 1997. In this book, Dr. Şiwan characterised the events in Dersim of 1937-38 as involving a "Kurdish National Resistance Movement"[477] and an act of genocide, and "the most horrible, the most bloodcurdling the world has witnessed".[478] Dr. Şiwan identified Dersimlis as "Dersim's Zaza Kurds",[479] who accepted "Alevism". Second, Dr. Şiwan's position within the Kurdish nationalist movement can be connected with the PKK under Abdullah Öcalan's leadership. The PKK originated from somewhere between the Turkish left and Kurdish nationalism to begin an armed struggle against the Turkish state. Jongerden and Akkaya[480] describe the evolution of the PKK as Öcalan's attempt to construct a "democratic and united Kurdistan, based on Marxist-Leninist principles". Nonetheless, Öcalan "tried to develop his own version of socialism, breaking away from conventional Marxist-Leninist principles and replacing pan-Kurdish aspirations with a new political agenda".[481] This mixed position between Marxism and nationalism represents a significant distinction between the radical left groups in Dersim, such as TİKKO, and the PKK in later years.

6.2.1 TİKKO and İbrahim Kaypakkaya

TİKKO is originally the name of the armed fighter group from within the Maoist TKP-ML, and people often refer to TİKKO when they talk about the TKP-ML. TİKKO was however more popular than the TKP-ML due to its activities.[482] It had "strong Kurdish membership, along with a base in the minority Alevi community".[483] Ibrahim Kaypakkaya, the founder of this organisation, was born in 1949 in the city of Çorum located in the Black Sea region of Turkey. He went to Istanbul Çapa Teacher Training School and also enrolled in the Science Faculty in Istanbul University. Due to his involvement in political activities, however, he was expelled from the Istanbul Çapa Academy. He was also expelled from TİP. From 1971 on, Kaypakkaya started visiting villages in rural parts of Eastern Anatolia, including his hometown Çorum, but also Malatya, Gaziantep and Dersim to

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[477] Emir Ali Türkmen, Abdurrahim Özmen. 2013. *Kürdistan Sosyalist Solu Kitabı*. Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 168.

[478] Ibid., 173.

[479] Ibid., 168.

[480] Joost Jongerden, Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya. 2011. "Born from the Left: The Making of the PKK." In *Nationalisms and Politics in Turkey*, edited by Joost Jongerden Marlies Casier, 123-142. Oxon: Routledge, 124

[481] Ibid.

[482] Ersan, Vehbi. 2013. *1970'lerde Türkiye Solu*. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 231

[483] Cline, Lawrence E. 2004. "From Ocalan to Al Qaida: The Conditnuing Terrorist Threat in Turkey." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* no. 27:321-335, 330.

mobilise people from a Marxian class perspective.[484] TİKKO was established after the Eastern Anatolia Region Committee meeting in February 1972. During his political activities in Dersim, Kaypakkaya was captured and put into Diyarbakır Prison. Kaypakkaya died in Diyarbakır Prison on 18 May 1973 following severe torture.

TİKKO has gone through splits and reunions along the years. During September 1980, the organisation pulled most of its fighters to the Dersim region, and held its second conference in Dersim in February 1981. Süleyman Cihan (born in 1947 in Ovacık/Dersim) became the General Secretary in 1981. Cihan had formerly established the Tunceli Culture and Solidarity Association in Istanbul in 1974. Perhaps Cihan's affiliations with these organisations caused people from Dersim and Ovacık [Cihan's hometown] in particular to be regarded as "potential TKP-ML militants" by the Turkish state.[485] By 1983-84, TİKKO had become a significant force in Dersim with 200 armed fighters.[486] Today, we can identify two legal organisations with roots in TİKKO, which are the Democratic Rights Federation (DHF), established in 2008, and the Socialist Party of the Oppressed (ESP), established in 2010. Kaypakkaya and the TİKKO tradition is still strong and visible in Dersim, as one can see the names of Kaypakkaya and the TİKKO, and of partisans on banners not only in political activities, such as rallies or protest events, but also on the roads, in the city centre, and during social events, such as the Munzur Festivals (Figure 21). Statistics show that 253 out of the 511 TİKKO militants who had died by 2007 as a result of various political actions, such as being killed in custody or dying from hunger strikes, were from Dersim, and 208 of them lost their lives in Dersim.[487]

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[484] Akyol, Hüseyin. 2010. *Türkiye'de Sol Örgütler*. Ankara: Phoenix, 230.
[485] Ersan, Vehbi. 2013. *1970'lerde Türkiye Solu*. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 240
[486] Ibid., 230.
[487] Ibid., 241.

Figure 21 A picture taken at the Grup Munzur music band concert in the 11th Munzur Festival (3 August 2011) in Tunceli Atatürk Stadium

Source: Available from https://i.ytimg.com/vi/38lvTdnFrCw/maxresdefault.jpg

Kaypakkaya was one of the pioneers who voiced the Kurds' rights to self-determination in Leninist terms. In his articles, Kaypakkaya often refers to the democratic content of the Kurdish national movement. But he carefully distinguishes between the Kurdish movement that supports the Kurdish proletariat as a disadvantaged nation, and the Kurdish movement that seeks the advantages of the Kurdish bourgeoisie, such as the feudal landlords. As a revolutionary leftist, Kaypakkaya harshly criticises any "nationalist" intentions that would "introduce the Kurdish national movement as a homogenous 'Kurdish people' movement".[488] Essentially, Kaypakkaya sees the right to national self-determination from a Leninist, thus leftist perspective, supporting national rights but rejecting any nationalist ambitions that would divide the unity of the international working class.

6.2.2 The PKK and Abdullah Öcalan

The PKK was founded in 1978, beginning its urban warfare against Turkey to establish an independent Kurdish state six years later, in 1984. Abdullah Öcalan, the founder of the PKK, was

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[488] Kaypakkaya, İbrahim. *Kürt Milli Hareketinin Demokratik Muhtevası* [cited 3.24.2016. Available from http://kutuphane.halkcephesi.net/kaypakkaya/milli%20mesele_2.htm.

born in 1948 in south-eastern city of Turkey, Şanlıurfa. He went to a vocational high school, and then to Law School at Istanbul University. Öcalan then transferred to the University of Ankara to study political science. During his studies in Ankara, Öcalan took part in the Ankara Democratic Higher Education Association (*Ankara Demokratik Yüksek Öğretim Derneği*), an important youth organisation close to radical leftist groups.[489] Öcalan was imprisoned shortly after, in 1972, "for his role in organising a boycott at the Political Science Department, protesting the death of Mahir Çayan and his friends".[490] Right before the 1980 military coup in Turkey, Öcalan escaped to Syria and remained there until he was exiled in 1998. Öcalan was captured in Kenya in 1999, and since then he has been imprisoned in solitary confinement on İmralı Island in the city of Bursa.

In 1976, the Kurdistan Revolutionaries (*Kürdistan Devrimcileri*, known as *Apocular*) convened two important meetings, one at the beginning and one at the end of 1976. These were, respectively, the Dikmen Meeting in Ankara's Dikmen neighbourhood and the Dikimevi Meeting, in the Dikimevi area of Ankara. In these meetings, Öcalan and his friends decided to focus on Kurdish regions in Turkey [Turkish Kurdistan] as the "most appropriate area to start a political and armed struggle for revolutionary change in Turkey".[491] Accordingly, they started organising and recruiting people in Dersim, Kahramanmaraş, Batman, Antep, and Şanlıurfa. The teacher training school in Dersim was in fact a "recruitment focus". Öcalan himself visited many areas of eastern and south-eastern Turkey, including Dersim. On 15 August 1984, the PKK conducted its first attack against the Turkish state in the cities of Siirt and Hakkari. This was not portrayed as Kurdish nationalist activity, however. Jongerden and Akkaya[492] claim that the PKK did not use "ethnic or nationalist discourses" to frame their activity, on the contrary, especially post-1989, "we see several attempts of both the PKK and the left in Turkey to come to terms with each other and establish a united front"[493] (Figure 22). Nevertheless, in the PKK's fifth congress in January 1995, it erased the hammer and sickle emblem from its flag, distancing itself from the left. Addressing the "dissolution of *real* socialism," [494] the PKK adopted the idea of "democratic confederationalism".[495] Kissane rightly states that today

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[489] Joost Jongerden, Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya. 2011. "Born from the Left: The Making of the PKK." In *Nationalisms and Politics in Turkey*, edited by Joost Jongerden Marlies Casier, 123-142. Oxon: Routledge, 127
[490] Ibid.
[491] Ibid., 129.
[492] Ibid., 132.
[493] Ibid.
[494] *1990'lar Kronolojisi*. Available from http://zanenstitu.org/1990lar-kronolojisi/.
[495] Mavioğlu, Ertuğrul. *Murat Karayılan röportajları* 30 October 2010. Available from
http://sendika10.org/2010/10/murat-karayilan-roportajlari-ertugrul-mavioglu-radikal/.

"the ideological stance of the PKK has shifted from Marxist-Leninism to nationalism (sometimes with religious overtones), to democracy and equal citizenship". [496]

Figure 22 A picture taken in Dersim during Newroz celebrations in 2014, showing flags with the PKK's symbol and Abdullah Öcalan's pictures along with TİKKO/Partizan flags

Source: ©ANF, 2014. Available from http://www.kizilbayrak1.net/ana-sayfa/guendem/haber/illerde-newroz-kutlamasi/

6.2.3   Competition between TİKKO and the PKK.

Dersim has attracted leftist and Kurdish nationalist movements since the 1970s. In fact "most of the central committees of the leftist organisations in Turkey during the 1970's and 80's were filled with Dersimlis".[497] A former Dersim Deputy, Interviewee 50, described the situation in Dersim, saying, "Dersim was smothered in an ideological smoke cloud".[498] I have previously discussed the significance of the year 1994 for Dersim (Chapter 4). However, discussing competition among leftist and Kurdish organisations in Dersim prior to 1994 is perhaps more important in order to explain the competition over Dersim. Briefly put, there are two views concerning the roles played by the PKK and TİKKO in Dersim: The first states that the PKK wanted to assimilate Dersim's identity

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[496] Kissane, Bill. *Nations Torn Asunder The Challenge of Civil War.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 96.
[497] Interviewee 39, interview by author, Geneva/Switzerland, 27 September 2014
[498] Interviewee 50, interview by author, Ankara/Turkey, 11 November 2014.

into Kurdishness, and that TİKKO played a key role in resisting this. The second view believes that the PKK movement was central for supporting not only the rights of Kurds, but the rights of all those discriminated against and oppressed in the Turkish Republic, including the people of Dersim. In addition to these views, some argue that Dersim benefited from neither the leftist nor Kurdish movements. Interviewee 20, a Dersimli novelist, voiced one example of this argument:

> Even before there was any left ideology in Turkey, the Alevis resisted the Ottomans. There were no Kemalists yet when Alevis and Dersimlis carried out this resistance. On the contrary [that the left or Kurdish movement increased resistance in Dersim], it was the Dersimlis who established the Kurdish movement in the first place. Kurds would not be able to speak today if Dersimlis had not established the PKK, and they would still be embedded within Islam [instead of Marxism?].[499]

Another critique of the two main views mentioned above was raised to me by Interviewee 34, a Dersimli musician, who argues that both the left and the Kurdish movement embraced the official Turkish state history of Dersim without questioning it, considering it, based on their needs, as a history of rebellion.[500] He told me that "they used it aggressively, they made revenge promises, and they turned Dersim 1938 into a memorial day".[501]

The PKK entered the Dersim region in 1992, and immediately started clashing with leftist organisations such as the Revolutionary Communist Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Devrimci Komünist Partisi*, TDKP), which originated from Deniz Gezmiş's THKO, and TİKKO. There were several incidents where TDKP and TİKKO fighters were attacked, abducted or killed by the armed PKK force, the Kurdistan People's Army of Salvation (*Rizgarîya Gelê Kurdistanê*). Acknowledging that the extent of inter-organisational conflicts between the Turkish left and the PKK in Dersim has been much debated, White claims that nonetheless "the PKK is responsible for a number of factional political killings".[502] The PKK and the Turkish left have long had a problematic relationship, as can be seen from the following statements from Abdullah Öcalan in an interview conducted with him in 1992:

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[499] Interviewee 20, interview by author, Zurich/Switzerland, 25 September 2014.
[500] Interviewee 34, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 24 October 2014.
[501] Ibid.
[502] White, Paul J. 2000. *Primitive Rebels or Revolutionary Modernizers: The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Turkey*. New York: Zed Books, 151.

AÖ [Abdullah Öcalan]: We have developed not with the support of the Turkish Left, but by struggling against it. If we waited for the Turkish Left, the Kurdish movement wouldn't have developed. The Turkish Left has the function of stopping the Kurdish movement, of being an obstacle to it.

PW [Paul White]: What sort of relations do you have with the Turkish Left?

AÖ: If there were no PKK, then there wouldn't be a Turkish Left.[503]

The argument that the Turkish Left would not exist today if there were no PKK is still being voiced. Interviewee 15, a Kurdish TV producer in Europe, told me that the existence of the PKK was the main factor that allowed minorities to stress their individual identities, such as the Alevi identity or linguistic identity. He said, "If there was not a PKK movement, in Dersim as well as other parts of Kurdistan, we would not be able to talk about the Dersim identity, Alevi identity, Kurdish identity, or linguistic Identity. The truth is loud and clear".[504] Interviewee 13 partly agrees, saying that the Kurdish movement is "insurance" for Armenians and Alevis, or for others who fight for democracy in Turkey. He said, "If Kurds tell me 'well go your own way' then there will be Alevi genocide in Turkey".[505]

On the other side of the coin, two of my interviewees, who took part in the Kurdish movement at certain points in their lives, claim that the PKK wanted to Kurdify Dersim. Interviewee 48 told me, "there was a pejorative way in which the Kurdish movement approached Dersimlis, specifically Öcalan was prejudiced against the Dersimlis because they speak good Turkish, they are close with the left theory, they are rather secular and modern … for the Kurdish movement this was the 'Dersim character' or 'Kemalist Tunceli identity'".[506] In fact, there were many people from Dersim in the ruling cadres of the PKK. However, Interviewee 41 suggested that the PKK, "wanted to create a Supra-Kurdish identity. Dersimlis tried to live their own identity between the Kurdish and Turkish identities, and live as leftist revolutionaries. TİKKO was the organisation that denied both the Kurdish and Turkish groups but welcomed revolutionaries".[507]

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[503] Abdullah Öcalan, personal communication, 2 July 1992, M.K. Akademisi, Bekaa Valley, Lebanon, retrieved from White, Paul J. 2000. *Primitive Rebels or Revolutionary Modernizers: The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Turkey*. New York: Zed Books, 152.

[504] Interviewee 15, interview by author, Brussels/Belgium, 22 February 2015.

[505] Interviewee 13, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 27 May 2014.

[506] Interviewee 48, interview by author, Hannover/Germany, 25 February 2015.

[507] Interviewee 41, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 6 May 2014.

Indeed, local Dersimlis predominantly refer to TİKKO fighters as "our kids" (*Domane ma* in Dersimce), whereas they refer to the PKK fighters as "Kurds" (*Kurr* in Dersimce, implying the Sunni identity of the Kurds is in opposition to Alevis in Dersim). Bruinessen, writing in 1995, suggests that TİKKO was "the chief radical organisation with grassroots support …. It has only been in the last few years that the PKK fighter bands began appearing in Dersim, and it was only in 1994 that they stepped up the intensity of their actions there".[508] Murat Kahraman's story is perhaps one of the most tragic, exemplifying how brutal the war between the PKK and TİKKO became in the early 1990s. The Kahraman family from Dersim's Doğan Village in Çemişgezek region were TİKKO sympathisers and, knowing this, the PKK sought to collect taxes from them. The Kahraman family refused to pay and so, in response, the PKK kidnapped their son Murat Kahraman, a high-school teacher, and tortured him. Although the Kahraman family did eventually pay the money, the PKK did not release Kahraman, but he managed to escape. On the same night that the PKK murdered four TDKP fighters in Dersim's Hozat district, a PKK cell came to Doğan Village. There, they murdered Murat Kahraman's father along with his two sisters. Following this event, the TİKKO media *Özgür Gelecek* published an article entitled, "We are warning the PKK", where they underlined that TİKKO had been active in Dersim for 21 years.[509] The article emphasises that "the communists are the best friends of the Kurdish nation's salvation and freedom and it is a careless act to attack the class-conscious, strongly anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, anti-chauvinist parts of the Kurdish nation".[510] Here, we can observe that TİKKO, as an organisation, did not distinguish itself from the Kurdish nation. However, Kahraman suggested that this was not always quite the view of the local Dersimli people:

> When they [the PKK] came to Dersim and when we [TİKKO] helped them, the biggest reaction and resistance came from the elderly. This was due to prejudices and lack of confidence towards Sunnis. They felt that the PKK would settle there and then cause harm to Dersim. As a matter of fact, they [the PKK] told us "you are our guests here, and you will leave" immediately after they settled in. They did this in 1993, right after they formed a base here. … They murdered my two sisters and

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[508] Bruinessen, Martin Van. 1995. Forced evacuations and destruction of villages in Dersim (Tunceli) and Western Bingol, Turkish Kurdistan, September-November 1994. Amsterdam: Netherlands Kurdistan Society, 15.

[509] "PKK'yı Uyarıyoruz". 1-15 November 1993. *Özgür Gelecek*.

[510] "PKK'yı Uyarıyoruz". 1-15 November 1993. *Özgür Gelecek*.

my father. I was 21, 22 years old then. I thought that this was unfair not just to my family, but it was also an insult against the people of Dersim.[511]

Kahraman explained that the state and the PKK killed the people of Dersim "enjoying it", and that the people of Dersim performed "self-censorship".[512] "What were we going to say, and to whom would we complain?" Kahraman asked, saying that complaining to the state would turn them into village guards[513] and that they regarded the Kurdish movement as a revolutionary movement and would not wish to point a gun at a revolutionist. "We were exploited," Kahraman claims, "especially by the PKK".[514]

When I went through the archives of the two main periodicals published by TİKKO and the PKK in the month Kahraman's family was murdered, I found conflicting news reports. In the pro-PKK *Özgür Halk* the incident was reported in the "organisational activity statement" (*eylem bilançosu*) section with the following two sentences: "10 October 1993[515]: An armed group attacked and killed two people in Doğanlar village of Dersim's Çemişgezek district. Local sources assert that this was done by state forces".[516] *Özgür Gelecek* reported the same incident in a one page news article entitled "PKK Violence in Dersim Doğan village".[517] It is reported that PKK militants demanded "tax" from the Kahraman family, who were known to be TİKKO supporters, and as they refused to pay they kidnapped Murat Kahraman and tortured him severely. The eyewitness who told the Kahramans' story described the PKK's act as an "indicator of narrow, primordial, nationalist thoughts and abjection ... if there wasn't communism in Dersim, and if communists had not transformed the villagers, Dersimlis would become village guards in reaction to PKK practices here".[518]

6.2.4   Reflections of competition in publications of TİKKO and the PKK

Kahraman's story was a single event among many others, in which organisational competition between the PKK and TİKKO manifested. In order to trace this competition, I searched

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[511] Murat Kahraman, interview by author, 2014.

[512] Ibid.

[513] The Village Guard System in Turkey was implemented in 1984. With this system, some villagers became vicil (Is vicil a Turkish word?) servants, paid by the Turkish government in return for guarding against the rising PKK. Evren Balta describes Village Guard System as "a militia type para-military force in the Kurdish regions of Turkey", see Balta, Evren. 2004. Causes and Consequences of Village Guard System in Turkey. In *Humanitarian and Security Affairs Conference*. CUNY, New York, 6.

[514] Murat Kahraman, interview by author, 2014.

[515] This event happened not in October 1993 but in November 1993.

[516] "Ekim-Kasım Ayı Eylem Bilançosu". December 1993. *Özgür Halk*, 61.

[517] 1-15 November 1993. *Özgür Gelecek*, 11.

[518] Ibid.

the archives of the *Özgür Gelecek* and *Özgür Halk* periodicals, affiliated with the PKK and TİKKO respectively. My reading of these journals shows that on the one hand, TİKKO accusses the PKK of oppressing the people in Dersim, but on the other hand, it seeks common ground on which it can co-function with the PKK against the "fascist" Turkish state. The PKK, on the other side, blames some Dersimlis for having Kemalist tendencies and acts rather indifferently to Turkish leftist organisations in general.

In *Özgür Gelecek,* there were multiple news reports mentioning the role that a potential collaboration between TİKKO and the PKK would play in their fight for revolution. TİKKO approach towards the PKK is rather friendly, as they often stress that their criticisms of the PKK are made with good intentions. Ferhat Ali, in his work, says: "So they say that TİKKO and others [meaning other Turkish left organisations] attack the PKK, and they do so with their own enemy [meaning the Turkish state] ... even though the PKK attacks people, supporters and even organisers of the TKP/ML-TİKKO, TİKKO does not attack them. Everybody knows about the PKK attacks in Dersim".[519] As early as July 1993, the TKP/ML Subregional Commission reportedly distributed leaflets concerning "PKK's attitude towards the people and the complaints people [Dersimlis] make", and the PKK was called for a debate.[520] In the following volumes, concerns and complaints against the PKK were listed as: the obligatory tax they were imposing on people, the obligatory "military service" for young men, and the "derogatory threats" and "bullying attitude" towards supporters of TİKKO and of other Turkish revolutionary organisations.[521]

The September 1993 issue of the journal publishes a three-page article on a "TKP/ML – PKK Meeting".[522] This meeting was focused on the potential for a coalition and the parties decided to conduct a second meeting soon thereafter. One month later, in October 1993, another three-page report entitled "TKP/ML – PKK Debate" was published.[523] It was a rather harsh discussion, in which the two organisations openly criticised each other: TİKKO mainly raised concerns regarding PKK's oppressive attitude towards the people of Dersim, and claimed "if you do not show modesty, the people will eventually find the courage to tell you the truth and you will be the ones who lose. We are warning you in a friendly manner, and we count this as a revolutionary responsibility".[524] The

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[519] 16 November-31 December 1993, *Özgür Gelecek*, 5.
[520] 16-31 July 1993, *Özgür Gelecek*, 9.
[521] 1-15 August and 16-31 August, *Özgür Gelecek.*
[522] 1-15 September, *Özgür Gelecek,* 12-13-14.
[523] 1-15 November 1993, *Özgür Gelecek*, 8-9-10.
[524] "TKP/ML– PKK Tartışması", 1-15 October 1993, *Özgür Gelecek*, 8.

PKK responded to TİKKO's criticisms as follows: "Your critiques are an intervention in the domestic affairs of our organisation and thus we do not accept them ... the TKP/ML's policy towards mandatory military service in its leaflets is no different from TC's [Turkish Republic's]".[525] Furthermore, the PKK claimed that it was "the representative of the Kurdish people, and it only gives account to the Kurdish people", and that it advised TİKKO to stop its smear campaign against them. They stated, in a rather threatening manner: "if we are friends then we are friends, if we are enemies then we are enemies. We will tend towards one of these according to your will".[526]

Özgür Halk named other revolutionary organisations in a somewhat dismissive tone, referring to them simply as "traditional leftists", "Kemalist leftism", or "Tunceli revolutionism". In doing so, they distinguished between two identities, which they called "Dersim identity" and "Tunceli identity".[527] Ali Cizreli wrote the following in this regard:

> The thing is the conflict between Tunceli and Dersim identities. ... In Dersim, collaboration is conducted under the name of Tunceli identity and Tunceli leftism. This is the reflection of the devsirmeh[528] identity transformed in the aftermath of 38. ... Dersim identity, meanwhile, is the destruction of Tunceli identity, and creation of a free, independent, organised and contentious identity.[529]

Elsewhere, *Özgür Halk* explained this conflict as an outcome of the oppression of Alevi-Kurds, which had resulted in an inward looking culture. Consequently, "this life style had impacts on their spiritual, cultural and characteristic configuration".[530] In fact, *Özgür Halk* defined Dersim 1937-38 an "**Alevi-Kurd massacre**" but nonetheless mainly "**a key element of the strategy that implements ultimately the extermination and colonisation of the Kurdish nation as a whole**" [bold in original].[531] In the same tone, they addressed the "Koçgiri massacre" as targeting "national

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[525] Ibid.
[526] "TKP/ML– PKK Tartışması", 1-15 October 1993, *Özgür Gelecek*, 9.
[527] Ali Cizreli, "Sol Tutuculuk", November 1993, *Özgür Halk*, 29-30.
[528] Devsirmeh (*devşirme*) means being converted to Islam for conscripting in the Ottoman Empire. The term is still used to refer to non-Muslims who were converted, or assimilated under the state hegemony, and it can address religious, ethnic, or racial conversion/assimilation. Özgür Halk also nicknames Dersimlis "Assimilado", to refer to the fact that Dersim was "assimilated" by the Turkish state. To an extent, we see a generalisation and stigmatisation of the people of Dersim as Kemalists who speak "better Turkish than the Turks do"(see A. H. Hengirvanlı, "Kemalist Solculuk ve Dersim Gerçeği", January 1994, *Özgür Halk,* 27).
[529] Ali Cizreli, "Sol Tutuculuk", November 1993, *Özgür Halk*, 29-30.
[530] "Alevilik ve Devrimci Tavır Üzerine Birkaç Söz", December 1993, Özgür *Halk*, 26.
[531] "Alevilik ve Devrimci Tavır Üzerine Birkaç Söz", December 1993, Özgür *Halk*, 26.

extermination".[532] They identified the Turkish left in Dersim as, first, alienated from Kurdishness, second, Kemalist, and, third, sectarian under Alevism.[533] They further defined "Tunceli revolutionism" as "rootless" and "fake"[534] and claimed that it should "take its hands off"[535] Dersim.

In January 1993, *Özgür Halk* published an article directly addressing TİKKO, saying, "TİKKO prides itself on evaluating Kemalism in the truest and the most extensive way and being one of the earliest movements to adopt an attitude against Kemalism".[536] But, the article goes on to argue that one cannot fight against Kemalism and its imperialist nature by simply condemning the Kurdish movement as nationalist. Abdullah Öcalan, writing under the pseudonym of Ali Fırat, claimed that "Dersimli people have united with the whole Kurdistan" and "gained the chance to resist" and "get revenge for 1938".[537] Furthermore, he wrote that in this way, Dersimlis would "feel the honour of becoming *humans*" [emphasis by author].[538] With this sentence, we observe the attitude of the PKK towards what it identified and degraded as the "Tunceli identity", Öcalan suggesting that the only way for Dersimlis to become honourable humans would be to involve themselves in resistance via the Kurdish movement.

6.3   Legal identity movements in the Diaspora: the FDG vs the DYİC

There are approximately 200,000 Dersimlis living in Germany alone, and around 350,000 Dersimlis living in various parts of Europe.[539] Meanwhile, around 250,000 Dersimlis are believed to be living in different parts of Turkey, and 85,159 live in Istanbul, as reported by 2013 population statistics.[540] The number of Dersimlis living elsewhere significantly exceeds Dersim's own population, which has been reported as the least populated city in Turkey, with an overall population of around 86,000 and a population density of $11/km^2$. Dersim becomes most crowded during summers, when thousands of Dersimlis from Turkey and, especially from Europe, return to spend their vacations. The Diaspora community is also known to support the local Dersim economy.

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532 Ibid.
533 "Alevilik ve Devrimci Tavır Üzerine Birkaç Söz", December 1993, Özgür *Halk*, 27.
534 "Alevilik ve Devrimci Tavır Üzerine Birkaç Söz", December 1993, Özgür *Halk,* 37.
535 Ibid., 39.
536 "Devrimci mücadele gerçeği karşısında solun durumu", January 1993, *Özgür Halk,* 33.
537 Ali Fırat, "1925, 1938'le Birleşiyor", July 1993, *Özgür Halk,* 12.
538 Ibid.
539 These are estimated numbers given by the FDG, retrieved from Akçınar, Mustafa. 2010. *Re-invention of Identity: The case of Dersim Community Association in Berlin*, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University, Turkey. Çelik, Hıdır Eren. 2010. "Almanya'da bir göçmen toplum: Dersimliler." In *Herkesin Bildiği Sır: Dersim*, edited by Şükrü Aslan, 591-613. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 595.
540 Çetinkaya, Haydar. 2014. "2013 Yılı Nüfus İstatistikleri Açıklandı." *Özgür Dersim*.

Numerous Dersim associations have been established, and also terminated, in Turkey since the 1950s. Dersim communities in Europe started emerging around four decades later, in the 1990s. "Only in Germany there are approximately 200,000 Dersimlis," Interviewee 38 told me, "and they form the backbone of the Alevi institutions".[541] Table 6 shows the names and the years of establishment of these legal organisations in both Turkey and the Diaspora. It can be seen that these organisations in Turkey were established mainly in Istanbul, some in Ankara. More significantly, the names of these associations involved the official Tunceli name until 1998. In 1998, the Solidarity Commission of Dersim Associations was established in Istanbul. In 2000, the Tunceli Associations Federation was established, which became the Dersim Associations Federation in 2010. In the mid 1990s, Dersim Communities in various European cities, such as Berlin and Cologne were established, which later united under the FDG in 2006 in the German city of Dortmund. A year prior to the establishment of the FDG, in 2003, the DYİC was established in another German city, Cologne. The Dersim 1937-38 Genocide Opposition Association (DSKD) is strongly connected to the DYİC both emphasising the Kurdishness of Dersim, in opposition to the Zaza/Zazaki emphasis of the FDG.

Highlighting the role of the Diaspora, Interviewee 53 argues that:

> Because nation-states disregard the ethnic identity problem, people with neglected identities organise in other geographies and became visible in Diasporic spaces. Thus, home countries are always affected afterwards. There were no political bars; no legal risks in the Diaspora, but there were opportunities. The first institutionalisations, discussions, and political movements of these ignored identities were constructed in the Diaspora.[542]

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[541] Interviewee 38, interview by author, Delbruck/Germany, 24 February 2015.
[542] Interviewee 53, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 2 June 2014.

Table 6 Establishment year and sites of some of the Dersim Civil Society Institutions in Turkey and Diaspora (Same colours indicate continuity and/or alliance between these organisations).

Year	TURKEY (site of establishment/name)	DIASPORA (site of establishment/name)
1954	Ankara/ ASSOCIATION OF PEOPLE FROM TUNCELI	
1957	Istanbul/ ASSOCIATION OF PEOPLE FROM TUNCELI	
1974	Istanbul/ TUNCELI CULTURE AND SOLIDARITY ASSOCIATION	
1990	Istanbul/ TUNCELI EDUCATION-HEALTH FOUNDATION	
1991	Ankara/ TUNCELI SOLIDARITY AND CULTURE FOUNDATION	
1992	Istanbul/ TUNCELI CULTURE, COOPERATION AND SOLIDARITY ASSOCIATION	
1995		Berlin/ BERLIN DERSIM COMMUNITY
1996		Cologne/ COLOGNE DERSIM COMMUNITY
1998	Istanbul/ SOLIDARITY COMMISSION OF DERSIM ASSOCIATIONS	
2000	Istanbul/ TUNCELI ASSOCIATIONS FEDERATION	
2003	Istanbul/ MUNZUR ENVORONMENT ASSOCIATION	Cologne/ DERSIM RECONSTRUCTION COMMUNITY
2006		Dortmund/ EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF DERSIM ASSOCIATIONS
2010	Istanbul/ DERSIM ASSOCIATIONS FEDERATION	Bonn/ DERSIM ACADEMIC EXCHANGE ASSOCIATION
2013		Stuttgart/ DERSIM 37-38 GENOCIDE OPPOSITION ASSOCIATION Frankfurt/ EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF DEMOCRATIC DERSIM ASSOCIATIONS

In this section, I will concentrate on two organisations, founded and administered from the Diaspora: the FDG and the DYİC. First, I will briefly introduce the historical development of these associations, their official goals, principles, and some of the projects they conduct on the Dersim issue. Then, I will reflect on the ongoing competition among these legal Dersim Diaspora institutions by looking at the Dersim festivals they organise in Europe.

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6.3.1 The DYİC

"After Mr. Öcalan's imprisonment in 1999, the idea that the institutions in Europe had to play a more unique role became more dominant, we began to think about the balancing role of civil society organisations," said Interviewee 2[543] from the DYİC. Following this emerging realisation, the main purpose of the DYİC was to "reconstruct" Dersim, which they believed "fell behind due to the policies of the Turkish state, and lost the circumstances to live a good life because of the constant state of siege and war".[544] The DYİC defines its mission as to support civil society, to open up cultural institutions as well as literacy and mother tongue courses, to improve women's rights and open up a women's house, and to raise consciousness and knowledge on the subject of ecology.[545] Accordingly, the DYİC states that they will operate with the Dersim Municipality, which is largely made up of pro-Kurdish political parties.

The first president of the DYİC was Haydar Işık, and Ali Çatakçın has been the president since 2014. Perhaps the most important activity of the DYİC was raising the issue of the Dersim 1937-38 events in the European Parliament at a conference in 2008. The title of the conference was "Dersim 1937-1938: 70 Years After", and it can be considered an important step in placing the events of 1937-38 into the international arena. The call for this very first conference was noteworthy, in the sense that it described Dersim 1937-38 as an act of genocide.[546] More importantly, however, it also addressed Seyyid Rıza as "one of the Kurdish leaders" and described the "merciless acts" of the state as against the Kurdish, Alevi and Kizilbash identity of Dersim.[547] There have been a total of five Dersim conferences in the European Parliament between 2008 and 2012.

6.3.2 The FDG

The FDG is the federation of various Dersim Communities across Europe, which thrived after the 1994 village destruction and deportation. In response to these events, Dersimlis in Europe gathered in small communities to discuss what should be done in fear of being destroyed.[548] First, communities were established in Berlin (1995) and Cologne (1996), followed by emerging

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[543] Interviewee 2, interview by author, Frankfurt/Germany, 25 February 2015.

[544] *Kendimizi tanıtıyoruz*. Available from http://www.dersim-wiederaufbau.de/Content-pid-1.html.

[545] Ibid.

[546] *Call to a conference at the European Parliament - Dersim 1937-1938: 70 Years After*. 28 October 2008. Available from http://www.pen-kurd.org/englizi/varia/dersim-70-year-conference.html.

[547] Ibid.

[548] *Dersim 1937-38 Sözlü Tarih Projesi nedir?* Available from http://www.dersim-tertele.com/index.php/tr/.

communities in other cities, such as Darmstadt in Germany and Basel in Switzerland. The first article of the purposes and principles of the FDG claims:

> The FDG is a democratic mass organisation established to protect the ethnic identity, cultural and historical values and language of the Dersimlis; to stand against the dangers against Dersim's ecology and demographical structure; to support the Dersimlis who live as migrants in other countries in their social, political, and educational problems; and to encourage them to live as equal citizens and in harmony with the people of the country they live in.[549]

As this article shows, the FDG seeks to act as an umbrella organisation for the Dersim Communities throughout Europe, where a significant number of Dersimli immigrants or asylum seekers reside. Its goal, therefore, is to help Dersimli people living in Diaspora to integrate with their host society; but also to raise their consciousness on Dersim as their origin and their identity. Article 2.3 states that the FDG lays claim to the "Kırmancki (Zazaki) and Kurdish" languages, and "defends the equality of the local languages spoken in Dersim".[550] The FDG also supports the "Alevi belief and Dersim faith"[551], seeking to support Alevi requests in Europe for the inclusion of Alevi religion and philosophy as courses in district schools. After Yaşar Kaya, Leyla Gündüzkanat and Metin Bozdağ jointly co-chaired the federation, currently Leyla Gündüzkanat and Nurettin Aslan are FDG co-chairs.

The FDG announced its Oral-History project, probably its most important activity, in 2009.[552] In this project, the FDG conducted hundreds of interviews with first and second generation Dersim 1937-38 victims. Turkish historian Taner Akçam, who is known for his studies on the 1915 Armenian Atrocity, was initially involved but, due to certain disagreements,[553] he eventually left the project. The current academic director is Mehmet Yıldız. The project attempts to "institutionalise" the findings of the research so that this information can be easily shared with public. Furthermore, the committee is planning to open up an archive and documentation centre where gathered information can be securely kept. In 2010, the FDG recognised May 4 as the Remembrance Day for

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[549] Available from http://www.fdg-dersim.org.
[550] Ibid., article 2.3.
[551] Ibid.
[552] *Kendimizi tanıtıyoruz*. Available from http://www.dersim-wiederaufbau.de/Content-pid-1.html.
[553] In 2011, conflicts over the Oral History Project on Dersim 1937-38 emerged as Taner Akçam and Dicle Akar openly blamed Yaşar Kaya for inconsistency with the established rules of procedure in financial matters and for keeping the oral-history project data to himself. A number of statements were shared by Taner Akçam, Dicle Akar, Yaşar Kaya and FDG in the period.

the Dersim *Tertele*, and they also began organising memorials in the Halvori 38 Rocks (*Halvori 38 Kayalıkları)* and *Gola Çetu* regions, where slaughters had taken place between 1937 and 1938.

6.3.3 Competition between the DYİC and the FDG

Despite the fact that both organisations are legal civil society institutions established in Diaspora, and both claim to function for the city of Dersim and its people in Dersim or elsewhere, the DYİC and the FDG compete openly. The clearest example of this competition can be seen in that both organisations organise festivals in different German cities on the same dates. Furthermore, the two parties openly blame each other for seeking to "divide" the unity of Dersim, or to "assimilate it".

During my interviews with administrators, I realised the tensions between the FDG, the president of the Dersim 1937-38 Genocide Opposition Association (DSKD) and the DYİC. The DYİC and the DSKD are essentially tied, as these associations organise joint events and projects. Both the DYİC and DSKD can be described as pro-Kurdish organisations working specifically on Dersim. They have been critical of the FDG, claiming that they have divided the unity of Dersim through their Zaza emphasis. In contrast, people from the FDG, who oppose the Kurdish movement and blame them for trying to assimilate Dersim into Kurdishness.

Interviewee 2 told me, "We made this call to them [the FDG], we said lets not divide Dersim into pieces. You can reveal your particularity, alright, it is not a problem".[554] However, the pro-Kurdish movement at large views the FDG with suspicion, believing them often to act as a tool of the Turkish state. Interviewee 19 spoke to me on this matter:

> Our job is difficult. We are saying we are Kurdish and Kurds are prohibited people in Turkey. The other says, "We are Kirmanc" and they seem favourable to the hegemonic [Turkish state] power for at least dividing the Kurds. They stood out, in a way, and convinced many people. They gave money to people, you know, they collected thousands [of Euros]. They began to divide our people, perhaps not speaking openly, but they said Kurds are Khur and we are not Khurs, using Khur in a pejorative way. This is a primitive and racist way of thinking, just like German right wing looks at the Turks here in Germany. The perspective of the FDG towards the

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[554] Interviewee 2, interview by author, Frankfurt/Germany, 25 February 2015.

Kurds was just like this, and this has not taken them far. They are now dysfunctional.[555]

Işık's words exemplify how the FDG is criticised for various wrongs. These include bribing people to divide the Kurdish movement by collaborating with the Turkish state, being racist towards the Kurds, and for being of no use for Dersim. In a softer tone, Interviewee 5 told me that the DYİC and DSKD both worked really hard to bring the Dersim issue to Europe's agenda, by referring to the Dersim 1937-38 conferences organised in the European Parliament and the application to the International Criminal Court for the Turkish state's crimes against the people of Dersim.

On the other side of the discourse, Interviewee 55 claimed that leftist and Kurdish organisations in Dersim became, "the decision-making mechanisms in Dersim following the 1970s, causing Dersim to lose its self-determination".[556] The FDG began organising the Dersim Festivals in Europe in 2006. These were cultural festivals in Germany, which aimed to introduce Dersim's local culture, including its gastronomy, music, literature, belief system and language to the host community. Interviewee 55 said:

> We did not want the festival in Europe to turn into a rally of a political organisation. It would not have been right if all the organisations had turned up there with their flags and slogans. We gave everyone a stall if they requested one, but only on the condition that they did not disturb our guests. They did not like this, of course. We told them, "Fellows, we want to introduce Dersim to Germans".[557]

Like his counterparts, Interviewee 55 is equally critical of the Munzur Festival organised in Dersim every summer, describing it as a "curtain that veils the culture of Dersim, a political rally that has nothing to do with Dersim".[558] Interviewee 12 and Interviewee 35follow the argument. Interviewee 12 claimed that too many have tried to "label Dersim in their own terms, and Dersim does not fit these labels".[559] According to Interviewee 12, the Kurdish movement seeks to turn Dersim into a land of Kurds, as part of Kurdistan, regardless of the fact that Dersim does not fit into that category. She gave an example of the May 4 Memorial Day activities in Dersim 1937-38 in

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[555] Interviewee 19, interview by author, Munich/Germany, 25 February 2015.
[556] Interviewee 55, interview by author, Cologne/Germany, 23 February 2015.
[557] Ibid.
[558] Ibid.
[559] Interviewee 12, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 5 January 2015.

Hamburg, where the presentation ended by projecting pictures of the PKK fighters who had died in Dersim. "Then you think to yourself," said Interviewee 12, "is this a commemoration day for Dersim or a PKK night? Let's decide on that first".[560] Interviewee 35 also criticised the Kurds for dominating the festivals both in Europe and in Dersim, saying, "It seems like these are not Dersim Festivals, Dersimce speaking people are not invited but Kurdish artists are, women members of Kurdish parties wander around in Diyarbakır's local costumes in Dersim".[561]

In 2009, the national public broadcaster the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) launched TRT 6 (also known as *TRT Şeş*; since 2015, the official name of the channel is TRT Kurdi). The same year, the FDG and Tunceli Associations Federation (TUDEF) made an application for a "Dersimce" channel, which was harshly criticised by the DYİC. First, the DYİC condemned the Turkish State for opening TRT 6 in the first place, arguing that the priority of the state should be to "recognise the identity of Kurds and end the war".[562] Then, the statement criticised the FDG and TUDEF for acting like "village guards" and "inventing a new language and people called 'Dersimce'".[563] In the statement, Dersimce is defined as a Kurdish dialect, Kurdish already being represented in Kurdish media channels, such as ROJ TV and *Özgür Politika*. During our interview, Interviewee 48 referred to this particular conflict, saying:

> They found the launch of TRT 6 positive, but insufficient: Since in Dersim people speak Zazaki, they should have a television channel of their own, and in their mother tongue. The DYİC wrote a statement against this and in short, they told the state not to do it. Those fellows are so far away from Dersim's reality.[564]

Interviewee 48 underlined that Dersimlis have a unique identity and that they are neither Kurd nor Turk. "Unfortunately," he told me, "both sides refuse to accept this".[565]

Although the FDG does not necessarily oppose the Kurdish movement itself, their emphasis on a distinct Dersim identity characterised by a "Zazaki mother tongue" and "Alevi religion" is often viewed with suspicion by the Kurdish movement. Kurdish nationalists, however, often regarded

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[560] Interviewee 12, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 5 January 2015.
[561] Interviewee 35, interview by author, Berlin/Germany, 28 February 2015.
[562] *FDG ve TUDEF'in 'Dersimce' girişimine sert tepki*. 29 January 2009. Available from http://288757.forumromanum.com/member/forum/entry.user_288757.2.1106485135.fdg_ve_tudef%E2%80%99in_%E2%80%98dersimce%E2%80%99_giri_imine_sert_tepki-p%C3%8Dya.html.
[563] Ibid.
[564] Interviewee 48, interview by author, Hannover/Germany, 25 February 2015.
[565] Ibid.

people emphasised their unique Alevi or Zaza identity as people "in a kind of 'identity crisis' [anonymous] in which they were rejecting 'their Kurdish identity' in relation to their political affiliation" (note in original).[566] Between 2006 and 2009, for three consecutive years, the FDG organised the Dersim Festival in Europe, in the cities of Mainz, Russelsheim and Duisburg in Germany. In 2009, however, as Akçınar put it "the unity of Dersimlis around one culture festival was destroyed," as a group organised an alternative Dersim Festival in Russelsheim.[567]

It can be argued that the competition over Dersim became most obvious during the two Dersim festivals organised by rival Dersim associations concurrently in the cities of Bonn (Figure 23) and Russelsheim (Figure 24) in Germany. The banners used in these festivals are representative of the conflict over Dersim's collective identity. As a poster (Figure 23) shows, the FDG used a slogan declaring, "Our language is our identity" ("*Zone Ma, Kamiye Mawa! – Sımane Me, Nasnama Meye!*"), in Dersimce and Kurdish. The poster also depicts an Anatolian folklore dance performed by the Cologne Academy Dance Group in the previous year's festival. I could not find a poster for the 1st Dersim Culture Festival organised by the DYİC, but I watched videos recorded during the festival. As Figure 24 shows, there was a banner on the stage emblazoned with the phrase, "Welcome to Dersim Culture Festival. Dersimlis and Kirmancs demand their names [meaning recognition]" *(Sıma xer ame festivala kultura Dersim. Dersimne Kırmanc name xo wazen)* written in Dersimce. However, the figure also shows PKK flags and Abdullah Öcalan carried in by the audience, who were listening to Kurdish singer Siwan Perver. At the back of the stage we see pictures of Mazlum Doğan (one of the founders of the PKK), Seyyid Rıza, Alişer and his wife. It can be claimed that this festival promoted a merging of the PKK's cause with the Dersimli cause, showing pictures of Kurdish and Dersimli leaders together as respected figures.

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[566] Akçınar, Mustafa. 2010. *Re-invention of Identity: The case of Dersim Community Association in Berlin*, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University, 76.
[567] Ibid., 78.

Figure 23 Poster of the 4th Dersim Kulturfestival organised by the FDG on 13 June 2009 in the city of Bonn.

Source: *Dersim Kulturfestival in Bonn*. 02 June 2009. Available from http://www.migrapolis-deutschland.de/index.php?id=1323&type=98&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D.

Figure 24 A scene from Kurdish singer Siwan Perwer's concert in the Dersim Festival organised by pro-Kurdish institutions in the Diaspora on the same day, 13 June 2009, in the city of Russelsheim.

Source: Available from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJY1Og6xdwg

These festivals prompted a period of much activity regarding Dersim's identity, as well as more fragmentation. In an article Haydar Işık wrote for a pro-Kurdish newspaper, *Yeni Özgür Gündem*, he openly invited Dersimlis to acknowledge their Kurdishness. Akçınar claims that the two festivals taking place in Europe were "thought to be a moment of decision for Dersimlis about their ethnicity by the organiser groups". [568] Accordingly, he told me that Dersimlis chose to take part in one of these festivals based on their political perspective, and that they reflected their choice in written pieces mainly on websites and forums. For instance, Erdoğan Yalgın wrote that Dersimlis "divided their hearts in two as they went to these festivals".[569] A. Haydar Gürbüz, a member of the Kurmeş Association (KD), which has ideological links to the DYİC, claimed that the Dersim festivals in Dersim and Europe became increasingly politicised, as the organising "institutions and their representatives make their decisions based on their political interests".[570] In this article, Gürbüz said he had taken active part in the FDG organised festivals from the previous years, but he found the festival in Russelsheim (organised by the DYİC) more "representative of Dersim".[571] The KD later released a statement following Dersimli artists' complaints regarding the simultaneous organisation of two festivals in Europe, and announcing they would not take part in any of these festivals if the combatative rhetoric continued. In their statement, they further blame the FDG authorities, firstly, for not attending the meeting organised to discuss this matter and, secondly, for "attempting to interfere with the Kurdish freedom movement's stalls at the 2007 and 2008 festivals, and the yellow-red-green coloured bands young people carried that caused a brawl in Russelsheim".[572] In a six-article statement, the KD highlighted their belief that institutions should be free to voice their identity, including their linguistic and religious identity. In contrast, on the other side of the discourse, Kemal Karabulut, who is the founder of the Berlin Dersim Culture Community, described Kurdish organisation the Federation for Kurdish Associations in Germany (YEK-KOM) as "the Kurdish

[568] Akçınar, Mustafa. 2010. *Re-invention of Identity: The case of Dersim Community Association in Berlin*, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University.

[569] Yalgın, Erdoğan. *Almanyadaki Dersim Festivalleri.* 16 June 2010. Available from http://www.binboga.org/almanyadaki-dersim-festivalleri/.

[570] Gürbüz, A. Haydar. *Festivaller Neden Yapılır?* Available from http://kurmes.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=699:festivaller-neden-yaplr-ahaydar-guerbuez&catid=1:l-ve-lcelerimiz.

[571] Gürbüz, A. Haydar. *Festivaller Neden Yapılır?* Available from http://kurmes.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=699:festivaller-neden-yaplr-ahaydar-guerbuez&catid=1:l-ve-lcelerimiz.

[572] *Sanatçıların Çağrısı Üzerine Kurumlar Toplandı*. Available from http://kurmes.org/index.php/koeyuemuez/resimler/37-album34/detail/1132-100-1091?tmpl=component.

organisation that disobeyed traditional festival discipline and caused problems, and then began to organise an alternative Dersim Festival, and the cause of this separation was political".[573]

Critical of Haydar Işık, the DYİC and the PKK, Ercan Sönmez identified the festival in Russelsheim as a "counter-festival" in a forum post.[574] This article used a common comparison that is made when differentiating Dersim from the Kurdish movement, i.e., the Diyarbakır vs. Dersim distinction, saying that if a festival were really a Kurdish movement event, it would be called a Diyarbakır rather than Dersim festival. Furthermore, he criticised Haydar Işık, the president of the DYİC at that time, for simply repeating what Abdullah Öcalan had been saying for years in making a comparison between the so-called Kemalist Tunceli and originally Kurdish Dersim identities. Sönmez also described the PKK mindset as "being wanting things to be under its control and leadership",[575] identifying Haydar Işık as "a puppet" of Öcalan. He also claimed that the PKK ambushed TİKKO militants in the 1990s, and subdued other Turkish leftist groups. "Dersimlis resisted Ottomans for 500 something years, and the Turkish Republic for eighty years," wrote Sönmez, "it will not surrender to PKK looters. At the cost of perishing, they will not give in".[576] Today, these two associations continue to organise two separate Dersim Festivals, although the events are no longer on the same day.

6.4   Conclusion

In a talk Şükrü Aslan gave in Istanbul,[577] he mentioned that there is no working-class in Dersim, and the "working class" in Dersim means the forty workers of the bottled water production facility, the Munzur A.Ş., in Ovacık, which was established in 2005. Aslan also claimed that there's also no feudal rule or landlords in Dersim. Despite the lack of a working class in Dersim, the city can be defined as the capital of the leftist movements in Turkey. Without an existing working class, or

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[573] Karabulut, Kemal. *Avrupa'da, diaspora "Desim/Dersim Örgütlenme" süreci üzerine!* Available from http://www.cilagazete.com/kemal-karabulut-avrupada-diaspora-desimdersim-orgutlenme-sureci-uzerine/.html.

[574] Sönmez, Ercan. *Diyarbakir Festivali mi Dersim Festivali mi?* 02 June 2009. Available from http://288757.forumromanum.com/member/forum/entry.user_288757.2.1107486975.diyarbak_r_festivali_mi_dersim-p%C3%8Dya.html.

[575] Ibid.

[576] Ibid.

[577] Şükrü Aslan. *Toplu Katliamlar, Toplumsal Bellek*. 12 May 2015. Available from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Gu7elwwy_c.

proletariat, Dersim has been one of the main cities of leftist insurgency within Turkey since the 1970s.

Yet, still, the leftist and identity politics shaped the collective memory and identity of Dersim together. Even in the heyday of the Turkish Left, Dersimlis did not know about their ethnic, religious, and linguistic particularities that marked them as *persona non grata* by the Turkish state. Likewise, despite conducting identity-based politics, activists working on Dersim have not necessarily given up their leftist stance, at least on the discursive level. Throughout my interaction with Dersimlis, I heard stories about the nested nature of revolutionary class-based activities and the ethno-religious identity of Dersim.

The clash between TİKKO and the PKK peaked in the 1990s, both physically and ideologically, as they aimed to define Dersim's collective identity. These movements had international links, especially with Europe, as many political activists fled to Europe in the aftermath of the 1980 military coup. These émigrés not only supplied material resources or international recognition to their struggle, but they also re-shaped and mobilised the Turkish (citizens) community in Europe, where some of the guest-workers "discovered their Kurdishness".[578] However, that this was not a straightforward or definite transition from Turkishness to Kurdishness. Instead, increasing organisational networks functioning in the Diaspora caused multiple new identity definitions that rejected the Kurdish monopoly but stressed other identities, such as Zaza, Alevi, Dersimli, and so on. Host countries in Europe did not only provide a liberal environment in which Kurdish cultural activities flourished: other cultural identities could flourish too.

The strong Kurdish struggle in Turkish politics, in legal and illegal spheres, is a determining factor for the Dersim movement as well. Dersim, a predominantly leftist space, is supportive of the Kurdish struggle, not necessarily because Dersim is Kurdish, but especially because Dersim is also an ethno-religious minority that is discriminated by the Turkish state and Dersimlis find voice in the Kurdish movement. On the other hand, there's rising insurgency among the Dersimlis against the "nationalisation" and "islamicisation" of the Kurdish movement, as in conflicting with the unique Dersimli identity. Although the PKK changed its goals for a "democratic confederalism" rather than

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[578] Leggewie, Claus. 1996. "How Turks Became Kurds, Not Germans." *Dissent*. 43, 79–83.

a Kurdish state, there is a significant number of Dersimlis who remain sceptical towards the Kurdish movement.

The purpose of this chapter was to underline the role of organisational activities with regard to emerging competition over the collective memory and identity of Dersim. Organisational structures over the period examined showed transitions from illegal, leftist organisations to legal, identity movements and civil society organisations established in the Diaspora. From the 1970s, predominantly illegal leftist organisations (both Turkish and Kurdish) flourished in Turkey. From the 1990s, these organisations clashed over Dersim, both as a region and also as a community. The rivalry between TİKKO and the PKK in Dersim had political and ideological roots, as both organisations wanted to dominate the region and claim hegemony over Dersim's collective identity. After the 1990s, the cadres of these illegal organisations increasingly established legal civil society groups and even political parties. Accordingly, particularly in the 2000s and onwards, civil society organisations working on the cultural identity of Dersim have been established in the Diaspora. This time, however, the struggle was not only between armed fighters in Dersim: The rivalry has been rather among civil society organisations and the cultural activities they organise for Dersim's memory of 1937-1938 and its cultural identity. By looking at the relevant organisational networks, I have showed that, although the political context and character of the organisations in question change, they continue to compete over Dersim's collective memory and identity. This competition itself, I argue, perpetuates further competition processes. There is still significant class-consciousness and leftist ideology in Dersim; but also ever-rising ethnic identity discussions that make Dersim a zone of struggle by multiple movements and ideologies. The following chapter shows that this struggle is seen also in the literary works, such as novels and short stories.

7

Novels and short stories as products of literary competition

7.1   Introduction

According to Ann Swindler, novels can be single acts of remembering and/or representative cultural "tool-kits" [579] with which to examine the processes of contentious politics. David Snow and Robert Benford see novels as cultural products that "include the extant stock of meanings, beliefs, ideologies, practices, values, myths, narratives, and the like"[580], which can neither be separated from the larger political context or from theories of nationalism. Moreover, David Aberbach's study of the dynamics of poetry in nationalism suggests that "poetry continues as a midwife to nationalism".[581]

The ethnic cleansing of Dersim 1937-38 has become increasingly popular as a storyline in cultural productions over the last decade. The case, once kept a secret, is almost an "industry"[582] and an example of "memory boom".[583] The impacts of such work are twofold. On the one hand, the subject of Dersim seems more current than it has ever been: it is discussed in the political arena, but also through various cultural artefacts, such as poetry, music, movies, art, and books. On the other hand, as Eric Neveu has pointed out, "transformed into memory, events become incredibly plastic"[584], implying that it is important to conduct a careful reading of products presented to audiences.

Writing is an intellectual activity, and an attempt to formulate knowledge, belief, and values through language. History has been an important part of novels since the 19th century, as authors increasingly wrote about the history of individuals and society. Yet, of course, this brought about ideologically driven pieces that comment on history from the point of view of the present. As politics

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[579] Swidler, Ann. 1986. "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." *American Sociological Review* no. 51: 273-286.

[580] Robert D. Benford, David A. Snow 2000. "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology* no. 26: 611-639, 629.

[581] Aberbach, David. 2003. "The poetry of nationalism." *Nations and Nationalism* no. 9 (2): 255-275, 271, 271.

[582] Leiden, Universiteit. 2008. *Tales of the revolt: Memory, concepts, and theory.* Available from http://www.hum.leiden.edu/history/talesoftherevolt/approach/approach-1.html.

[583] Winter, Jay. 2002. *Remembering War: The great war between memory and history in the twentieth century*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

[584] Neveu, Erik. 2014. Memory Battles over May '68: Interpretive Struggles as Cultural Re-Play of Social Movements. In *Conceptualizing Culture in Socual Movement Researcg*, edited by Priska Daphi Britta Baumgarten, Peter Ullrich: Palgrave Macmillan, 295.

entered literature, more and more novels with little literary or historical value were published.[585] Despite the increasing number of novels on Dersim, most of these novels were non-original in the sense that the authors wrote slightly different versions of the same story. Often I came across similar sentences describing Dersim 1937-38, albeit worded slightly differently. I name these novels "textbook novels" because they lack literary value, and are filled with a narrative seemingly repeated parrot-fashion. The authors of these books, who can be defined as the agents of memory, are often former victims or activists, as Dovile Budryte put it, "who interpret, instrumentalise, and sometimes distort the past".[586]

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the politics of memory and identity through literary works on Dersim 1937-38. It examines novels and short stories that focus on Dersim 1937-38, or consider the ethnic cleansing in Dersim in a specific part of their storyline. By examining in detail competing descriptions of Dersim memory and identity in these works, I aim to understand the mechanisms of literary competition, as well as Dersim's fragmented collective memory and identity; Dersim has become a zone of conflict in cultural products. Accordingly, the first section of this chapter presents general information on literary works about Dersim, novelists, and publishing houses. The second section focuses on how literature has defined Dersim's collective memory, and the third section focuses on how these works have defined Dersim's collective identity over the years.

7.2   An overview of the literary works, their writers, and publishing houses

In total, thirty-six novels or short stories were published about Dersim 1937-38 between 1966 and June 2015 from twenty-five different publishing houses. I analysed the themes of collective memory and collective identity in these literary works within three periods that I have categorised as (a) 1966-1989, (b) 1990-2009, and (c) 2010-June 2015. The first novel on Dersim 1937-38 was published in 1966; the second period began in the 1990s with the revitalisation of the Dersim issue characterised by an increasing interest in Kurdish, Alevi, and other movements in Dersim's memory and collective identity; the third period began in 2010 following Onur Öymen's controversial remarks on Dersim 1937-38 in a parliamentary speech on 10 November 2009. With

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[585] Türkeş, A. Ömer. *Romana Yazılan Tarih.* 4 April 2013. Available from http://www.notosoloji.com/romana-yazilan-tarih-a-omer-turkes/.

[586] Budryte, Dovile. April 2013. Traumatic Memory and Its Production in Political Life: A Survey of Approaches and a Case study.

the changing political context in the 2010s, one can observe a significant increase in the discussion of Dersim 1937-38. Erdoğan's so-called Dersim apology in 2012 further fuelled debate on Dersim, reflected in a significant increase in the number of productions about the events of 1937-38 (Figure 25).

Figure 25 Number of published literary works about Dersim 1937-38 between 1960 and June 2015
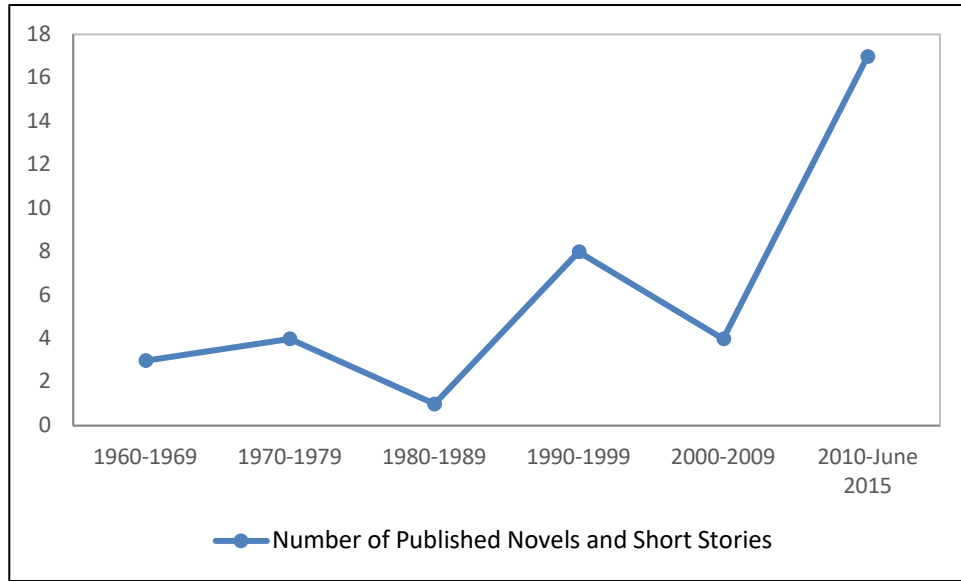
These thirty-six works on Dersim 1937-38 were published by twenty-five different publishing houses. Some of these publishing houses are not active anymore, for example, Milliyet Yayınları, publisher of Mustafa Yeşilova's Kopo, is now defunct. I had to search antiquarian bookshops to find some of the novels, such as Barbaros Baykara's *Dersim 1937* and *Tunceli 1938*, Hasan İzzettin Dinamo's *Kutsal Barış*, Haydar Işık's *Dersimli Memik Ağa* and Metin Aktaş's *Acı Fırat Asi Fırat*. Ali Arslan's *Serçe 1* and *Serçe 2* were the hardest to find; however, I was able to obtain copies from one of my interviewee's family library. Some of these works have been re-published by new publishing houses along the years, such as Deng Yayınları, Berfin Yayınları, or Can Sanat Yayınları. The well-known publishing houses Can Sanat Yayınları, İletişim Yayınları, Doğan Kitap and Metis Yayınları have all published books about Dersim since the early 2000s, and especially in the 2010s, typically selling more than lesser-known publishers, of around 5,000 to 15,000 copies.

The only novel not published in Turkey among these books was the *Gülümse Ey Dersim* series of Munzur Çem, which was published by Özgürlük Yolu Yayınları in Cologne, Germany. The

Deng Publication House, which published the second edition of the series in 1997 declares, in the foreword, that they are "happy to meet the wish of the readers by publishing this book in the 60th anniversary of the Dersim Rebellion". Other than those three editions, all other works were published in Turkey.

Other relatively new publishing houses include Fam Yayınları, El Yayınları, and Dersim Yayınları. These organisations mainly publish books on left wing politics and Dersim. Interviewee 13 from Fam Yayınları told me that Fam means "apprehension" in Dersimce and that it aims to publish on Dersim. Although he is not yet certain about whether this publishing house will solely focus on the Dersim issue, he also said, "Studies regarding the Dersim issue, to a great extent, come to this publishing house. There is such a perception about us".[587] Dersim Yayınları was established in 2014, aiming to publish material on human rights, recent history, and Dersim, which gives the publication house its name.[588]

Among the literary works published in the 2000s, only a few were released as second or more new editions, and these works mainly came from relatively more popular authors and publication houses, such as Oya Baydar (Can Yayınları), Haydar Karataş (İletişim Yayınları), Sema Kaygusuz (Doğan Kitap), and Murathan Mungan (Metis Yayıncılık). Cafer Demir's *Sürgün,* published by Umut Yayıncılık in 2010, and was released as a second edition six years after its first publication.

Haydar Karataş's *Gece Kelebeği* is perhaps the most popular and widely acclaimed novel on Dersim, and currently in its 8th edition. Kemal Bilbaşar's *Cemo* and *Memo* are the oldest novels on Dersim, and yet they remain popular, having been re-printed by Can Sanat Yayınları. *Cemo* is currently in its 14th edition.

The authors of these works experienced mixed fortunes. Some were imprisoned, some are still in prison, some fled to Europe and sought asylum there, some were exiled but then returned to Turkey after many years, and some are still exiled. However, many share in common their location of birth, an observation that I would like to draw attention to in this chapter. Fifteen out of these

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[587] Interviewee 13, interview by author, Istanbul/Turkey, 27 May 2014.
[588] *Hakkımızda*. Available from http://www.dersimyayinlari.com/hakkimizda/.

twenty-six authors who produced literary works on Dersim 1937-38 are from the Eastern Anatolian Turkey (Figure 26).

Except for one, all fifteen authors born in Eastern Anatolia are from the larger Dersim region, which can be labelled as today's Tunceli and parts of Erzurum, Erzincan, Elazığ, Bingöl and Malatya (Figure 27). This signals the authors' personal connections to the traumatic past of Dersim 1937-38, and how they reflect this past in their literary work. It is also important to underline that not all

authors whose books I analysed in this chapter are professional writers. For instance, some are schoolteachers, and some are journalists.

Figure 27 The Eastern Anatolian cities the authors were born in
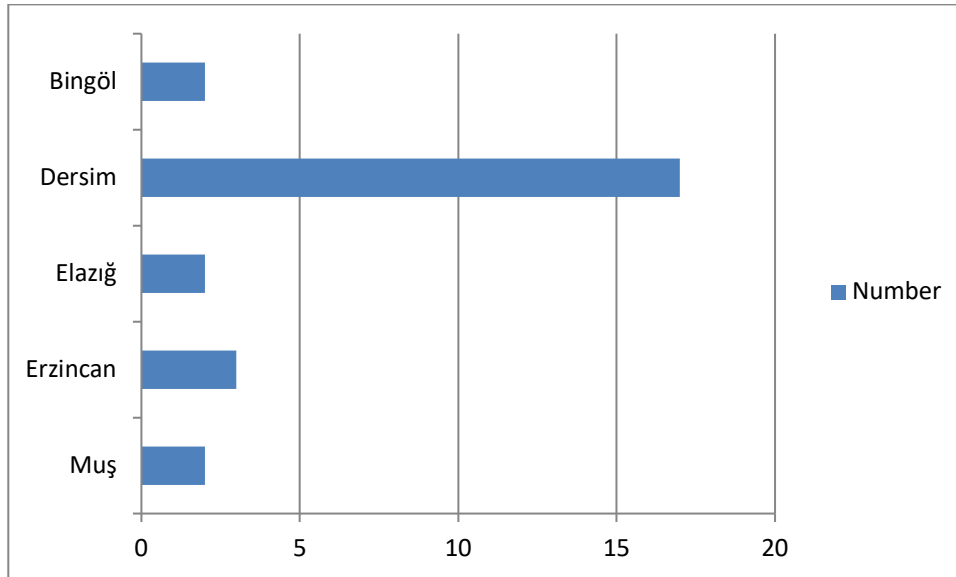
As mentioned, the first novel specifically focusing on the events of 1937-38 was published in 1966, followed by a second book by the same author in 1969. That same year, a short story about Dersim was published. Another novel series was published in 1974 and 1975, which were entitled "Dersim 1937" and "Tunceli 1938"; titles that are meaningful for directly addressing the chronology of the former Dersim region's transition to its new designation of Tunceli city. In the 1970s, four literary works were published that specifically focused on Dersim either entirely or as part of the storyline. Only one novel on Dersim 1937-38 was published in the 1980s, but seven more were published throughout the 1990s. Only 20 of the total 37 literary works on Dersim had been published by 2010, which is around 54% of the total number. The remaining 46% of the literary works on Dersim were published between 2010 and June 2015. 17 out of 21 literary works published in the 2000s were published after 2010, which corresponds to 81% having been released after Onur Öymen's Dersim blunder. Figure 29 illustrates the substantial increase in the number of works on Dersim over the years.

Figures 28 and 29 depict a general overview of how literary works have described the events and the identity of Dersim 1937-38 respectively. Figure 28 shows how the definition of Dersim 1937-38 as a state massacre, instead of as a rebellion, has increased over time. Although we see a clear shift in the how these works define the events, the same cannot be seen for how they define Dersim's identity of 1937-1938. While the literary works published in the first period defined Dersim identity either as Kurd, Alevi, or Alevi-Kurd, in the twenty years between 1990 and 2010, we see more literary works identifying Dersim predominantly as Kurd. In the last period, the literature examined began stressing the Kirmanc identity in Dersim, using different terms for Kirmanc, such as Alevi-Zaza and Dimilki.

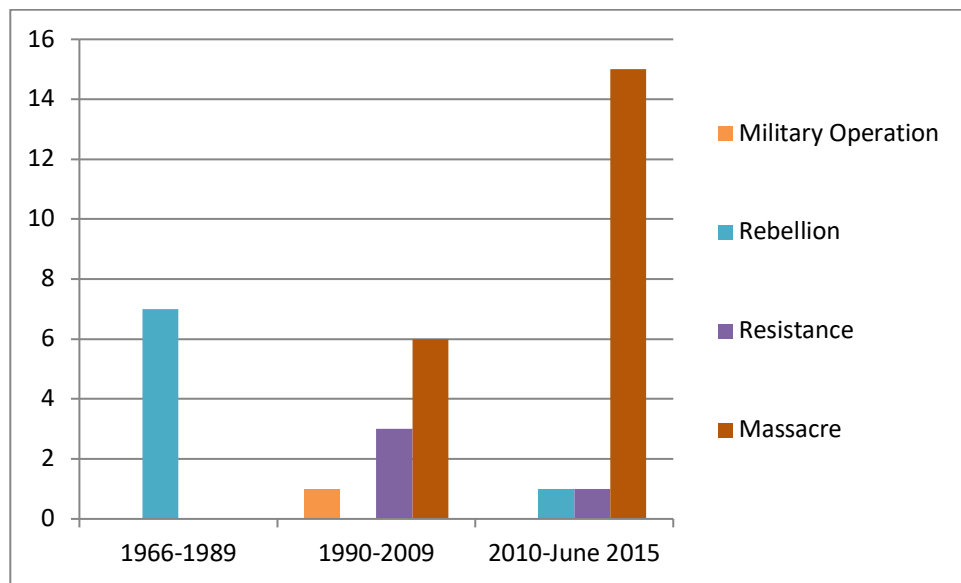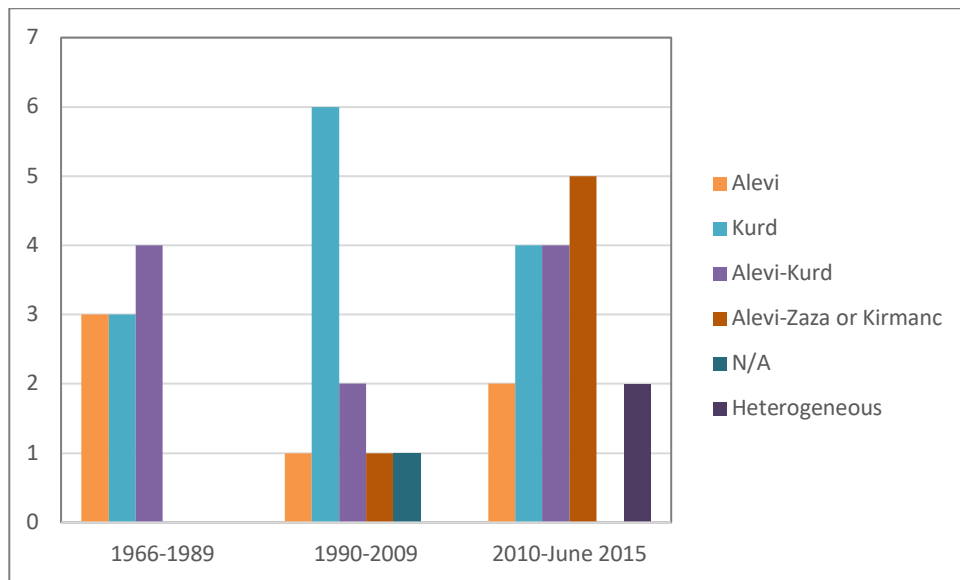**Figure 28 Description of 1937-38 Dersim events in published literary works**

Figure 29 Description of Dersim's identity in published literary works

The following two sections of this chapter will address the shifts in how the events of 1937-38 have been defined over time and how descriptions of Dersim's identity have increased in diversity, now approximating collective identity competition more than ever before.

7.3   Definition of Dersim's collective memory in literary works

The events taking place in Dersim in 1937-38 have been defined in several ways. One line of argument views them as a military operation of the young Turkish Republic against rebellious Dersimli tribes who refused to accept the central state authority. Another perspective is related to the first, but it portrays the same rebellious activity as glorious, stressing the insurgent and resistant character of Dersim. The rising leftist and Kurdish movements from the late 1960s onwards viewed Dersim this way in order to organise Dersimlis and involve them as actors in their movements. Yet another view considers Dersim not as a legitimate state operation or a Dersimli uprising but a state massacre. Remembering Dersim 1937-38 as a state massacre arose in the 1990s, and from the 2000s onwards various commentators began addressing the Dersim tragedy in 1937-38 as a clear act of genocide.

7.3.1   Definition of Dersim 1937-38 in literary works between 1966 and 1990

There were no literary pieces published on what had happened in Dersim 1937-38 prior to 1966, when the first work was published in a climate of violence and instability. *Cemo* (1966) and *Memo* (1969) were the first two novels touching on Dersim 1937-38 conflict. Kemal Bilbaşar, the author of these books, earned a literature prize from the Turkish Language Association in 1967 for *Cemo*. Atıf Yılmaz, a recognised Turkish director, adapted the story for a screenplay in 1972, and the leading actress was the famous Türkan Şoray, which guaranteed the movie a large audience.

In general, these two books problematise the feudal structure in Eastern Anatolia, and there is frequent reference to the new Republic and Atatürk, who is referred to as "Gazi Pasha".[589] The cruelty of the tribesmen and feudal lords is banished via "protection of the Republican laws".[590] There are sections where mainstream suspicions towards the Dersim community are reflected in the novel. Dersim and Dersimli people are described as being gone from bad to worse, lacking food

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[589] Bilbaşar, Kemal. 2012. *Cemo*. 14th ed. Istanbul: Can Sanat Yayınları, 156.
[590] Ibid.

and watching the road construction in the mountains "with sad eyes".[591] In one part of the story, we read the words of an old bard in Dersim, who explains the armament of Dersimlis as:

> Dersimlis are suspicious of the Ottomans.[592] They, the Ottomans, are preparing to confiscate our lands by the laws they pass; they do not construct these roads without a reason. They'll send soldiers here and kill us off. The Sayyids wonder around, saying to be firm. The end to this is dark.[593]

It can be argued that the Dersim policy of the republic is portrayed as being rather innocent by Bilbaşar, as the storyline mainly accuses the state administrators of malpractice. Towards the very end of *Cemo,* before the "despicable" state administrator dies while trying to escape the characters Cemo, Memo, and Cemşido, Cemşido tells him: "You served the monstrous Sheikh Said and have blackened the name of the Gazi Pasha government".[594]

Kemal Tahir's *Kondurma Siyaseti* is one of the four short stories the author added to the second edition of his short stories collection, *Göl İnsanları,* in 1969. *Kondurma Siyaseti* can be translated into English as "Forced Immigration Politics". This short story deals with the forced emigration of a group of Dersimlis to Trabzon, a city in the Black Sea Region in Turkey, while "half of Dersim revolted".[595] The narrator of the story describes Celal Bayar, the prime minister during 1937-38, as an "irregular pasha".[596] Tahir also describes the feudal structure in Dersim, where he describes Sayyids, the religious leaders as "scary" people with beards down to their bellies, who benefit from the "lion's share of protection racketeering and smuggling".[597]

The two novels published in the 1960s both describe Dersim 1937-38 as a conflictual period due to the rebellious activity of the Dersimlis. These works describe Dersim as being organised within a feudal structure, to which the state aims to bring civilisation. Although they address some individual cases of administrative cruelty towards the locals, the military operation and its consequences are not discussed in these novels.

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[591] Bilbaşar, Kemal. 2012. *Cemo*. 14th ed. Istanbul: Can Sanat Yayınları, 177.
[592] What is noteworthy here is that the bard identifies the actor as the Ottomans, whereas it is the Turkish Republic at the period. This is understandable considering that there is a young Republic after seven hundred years of Ottoman rule that still caused slip of tongue when the people talked about the state.
[593] Bilbaşar, Kemal. 2012. *Cemo*. 14th ed. Istanbul: Can Sanat Yayınları, 177.
[594] Ibid., 208.
[595] Tahir, Kemal. 2011. "Kondurma Siyaseti." In *Göl İnsanları*. Istanbul: İthaki Yayınları, 250.
[596] Ibid.
[597] Ibid., 252-253.

In his foreword to the second edition of Cemo, in 1967, Bilbaşar (1910-1983) writes "I see this interest in my novel as a sign of the awakening of the people who moan under the Aghas".[598] Although he can be acknowledged as a realist author who touches upon village life in Eastern Anatolia, he has often been accused of being a mouthpiece of the Turkish state, through his writing.[599] Despite addressing the poor living conditions of Dersimlis, Bilbaşar is criticised for calling Dersimlis "mountain people".[600] Yağan writes that Bilbaşar can be considered to be biased on Dersim issue because he was a commissioned officer in the Hozat regiment that played a leading role in the Dersim massacre.[601]

Kemal Tahir (1910-1973), a communist novelist from Istanbul, focused on the problems of common people by referencing historical accounts. He was imprisoned, along with Nazım Hikmet Ran, one of the most famous Turkish Communist writers, for twelve years for "spreading sedition". *Kondurma Siyaseti* is a story about poverty-stricken Dersimli exiles, which describes, sarcastically, how they are unwelcome and then exploited in the places in which they seek refuge.

The turbulent political atmosphere of the 1960s ended with a coup d'état in 1971. However, towards the end of the 1970s, the civil conflict between the right and left wing further accelerated, and the Turkish military intervened once again in September 1980. Five more literary works about Dersim 1937-38 were published during these years, respectively in 1974, 1975, 1976, 1978, and in 1988. These books did not differ from those published in the 1960s in the sense that they still described Dersim 1937-38 as the rebellious activity of uncivilised Dersimlis.

Barbaros Baykara (1933-1976) was a journalist born in Istanbul, known for writing novels of historical and political incidents. His foreward to Tunceli 1938 signals his political stance. Baykara describes the development of Tunceli, and claims that it is the most literate city in Turkey with the lowest rate of crime. Implying that the current literacy rates in Dersim are linked to the successful modernisation policies of the Turkish state, such as Dersim 1937-38, Baykara asks: "To whom do these people owe this to?"[602] Baykara's books, *Dersim 1937* and *Tunceli 1938,* signal Dersim's name change. These books are advertised as documentary novels about the Dersim rebellion. In *Dersim*

[598] Bilbaşar, Kemal. *Yazar Kendini Tanıtıyor.* 1967. Available from <http://www.kemalbilbasar.com/yazar_kendini.htm.
[599] Türkeş, A. Ömer. *Memo'ların Dramı*. May 30, 2003. Available from
        http://www.radikal.com.tr/ek_haber.php?ek=ktp&haberno=1970.
[600] *Cemo üzerine yazılanlar*. Available from http://www.kemalbilbasar.com/Cemo.htm.
[601] Yağan, Emirali. *1938 ve Öncesi Dersim ya da Kirmanciya Beleke*. 2004. Available from
        http://www.dersim.biz/html/1938_ve_oncesi_dersim.html.
[602] Baykara, Barboros. 1975. *Tunceli 1938*. Istanbul: Akyar Yayınları, 7.

1937, a major describes the military struggle in Dersim with the following sentences: "We will put up a fight here to protect the laws of our Republic. We will put up this fight, not against the poor people of Dersim, but against the structure that exploits them.[603] In other parts of the book, Turkish soldiers discuss the conflict in Dersim, describing it as a "rebellion" planned by the "imperial powers" of Britain and France.[604]

Hasan İzzettin Dinamo (1909-1989) was a Turkish author born in Trabzon, who comes from a rather different background to Yeşilova and Baykara. His father died in the battle of Sarikamish in 1915. He is known as one of the leading authors of the social realism movement in Turkish literature. Dinamo was imprisoned twice, in 1939 and in 1944, for his political activities and for writing a poem called the "Turkish Soviet Republic". Dinamo's *Kutsal Barış*, which won the Orhan Kemal Novel Prize in 1977, is a documentary novel about the post-National Independence War of the Turkish Republic. Similarly to Baykara, Dinamo describes Dersim as a drama initiated by "French and British spy organisations" in order to obstruct Atatürk from saving the Hatay region from the French.[605] The "flood operations" in Dersim are identified as an attempt to "develop Dersim, educate the people, find them work, punish the tyrants and tear out the feudalism from the heart of Anatolia".[606] Dersim is described as an "abscess" (*çıban başı*) that has obeyed neither the Ottomans nor the Republic.

Mustafa Yeşilova (1928-1985) was a police officer from Erzincan. He wrote the novel, *Kopo*, after his retirement in 1975. The story is based on his encounter with the real Kopo during his service in Tunceli. Through the perspective of a police officer, Yeşilova views the Dersim tragedy as a "civilising act" of the state for the sake of primitive Dersim society. Yeşilova's *Kopo,* published by Milliyet Yayınları, won the Milliyet Novel Prize in 1978. As in the previous Dersim books, it describes the Dersim of 1937-38 as an "unlawful" region filled with "bandits".[607] The main character in the book, Kopo, says:

> You tell me that the army will come here, let it be. At least after this storm, educated people will be raised in these lands. They will not wonder around with weapons but with crocus flowers.[608]

[603] Baykara, Barboros. 1974. *Dersim 1937*. Istanbul: Akyar Yayınları, 40.
[604] Ibid., 181.
[605] Dinamo, Hasan İzzettin. 1976. *Kutsal Barış*. Vol. 7. Istanbul: May Yayınları, 321.
[606] Ibid., 372.
[607] Yeşilova, Mustafa. 1978. *Kopo*. Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 31.
[608] Yeşilova, Mustafa. 1978. *Kopo*. Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 31.

According to this book, the refusal of Dersimli tribes to cooperate with the state ended with the Turkish army entering Dersim. Yeşilova presents internecine conflict between Dersimli tribes, such as blood feuds, as a preventive factor for peace in Dersim. Here, Yeşilova quotes the alleged leader of the Dersim "rebellion" Seyyid Rıza:

> Let's approach the state, hand in hand; let's call civilisation to Dersim. Let's ask for an Alphabet, law, let's ask for roads . . . word on the rebellion is spreading. Our riot is against hunger . . . We do not riot against the state.[609]

Ali Arslan (born in 1947) is from Izmir, and a schoolteacher. He was imprisoned during the 1971 military junta for his union activities in the Teachers' Union of Turkey (*Türkiye Öğretmenler Sendikası*). Four years after his imprisonment, he was found not guilty and released. Arslan lives in Germany. Arslan's *Serçe* is the story of a young girl from Dersim. Serçe, who is the main character in the book, is the daughter of a leader of a Dersimli tribe. Her family is killed in Dersim in 1938 when she was 4 years old and she is wounded, but she manages to escape.[610] After treatment for her wounds, she is exiled to Kütahya city in western Turkey. The author describes through various characters in the storyline that Dersimli bandits are in revolt and refusing to pay tax or give soldiers to the Turkish army. Serçe's second husband, Saffet Bey, is described as a socialist, and he gives comfort to Serçe as a Dersimli victim. In a discussion with his uncle Turgut, who is the Istanbul provincial head of the CHP, Saffet Bey accuses him of "wiping out fifty-sixty thousand people", whereas Turgut claims the number was around five to six thousand people and "this was a needed operation".[611] On the last page of the book, Serçe is reunited with her father in Dersim, who relays the violence Dersim experienced:

> You don't know anything, my daughter. You were raised among them, you don't know them! … The caves in these mountains surrounding us are filled with the

[609] Yeşilova, Mustafa. 1978. *Kopo*. Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 81.
[610] Arslan, Ali. 2002. *Serçe*. 2nd ed. Istanbul: BerfinYayınları, 390.
[611] Ibid., 463.

bones of our people! Out soil, our grass, our wheat still smells of blood! Munzur
runs blood, my daughter![612]

The first literary works that touched upon the Dersim 1937-38 ethnic cleansing were in
agreement that it was a rebellion (Figure 30).

Figure 30 Definition of Dersim events in literary works published between 1966 and 1989
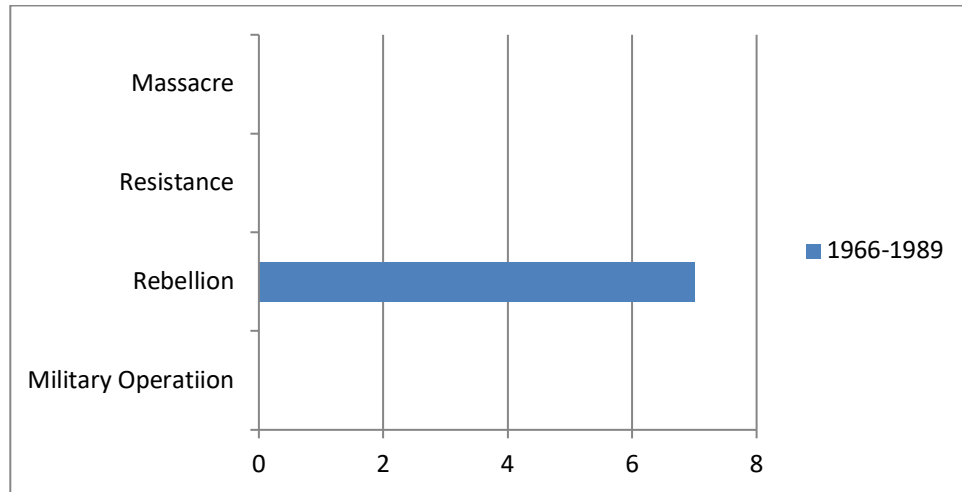
7.3.2   Definition of Dersim 1937-38 in literary works between 1990 and 2010

The literary works on Dersim published in the 1990s and 2000s do not use the word
rebellion, which was the only word authors used to characterise the events of Dersim 1937-38
between 1966 and 1989. Instead, they use "resistance", and more frequently, "massacre" (Figure
31).

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[612] Arslan, Ali. 2002. *Serçe*. 2nd ed. Istanbul: BerfinYayınları, 544.

Figure 31 Definition of Dersim events in literary works published between 1990 and 2009
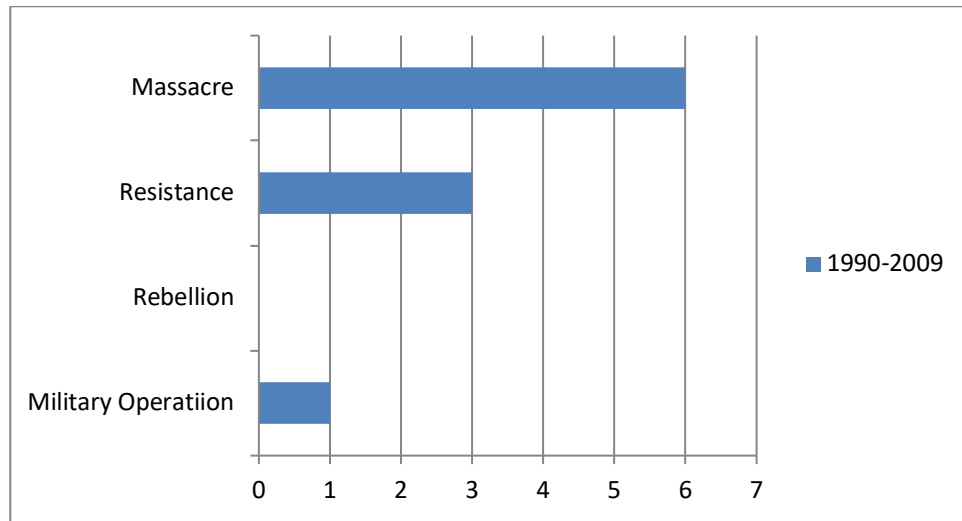
Haydar Işık (born in 1937) is a schoolteacher, who moved to Germany in 1974 and lives now as a German citizen. He was one of my interviewees, who is also a political actor involved in the Dersim issue, and is among the founders and the first president of the Dersim Reconstruction Community, a civil society organisation founded in Germany in 2004. Long before that, in 1995, he took an active part in the Kurdish Parliament while in exile in Belgium. Işık is also the first author originally from Dersim to write a novel about Dersim 1937-38. Işık's novel, *Dersimli Memik Ağa*, published in 1990, was the first novel that described Dersim 1937-38 as a "massacre" and "genocide". Hemedi, one of the characters, asks "Why are the kids, women, and the old sheltering in the caves being killed? Why are unborn babies bayoneted from their mothers?"[613] Such sentences are important in emphasising the violence in Dersim in 1937-38.

Munzur Çem (born in 1945) is a journalist and author who also lives in Germany. He was born in the village of Bingöl, two miles away from the Nazımiye District of Dersim. He went into exile right before the 1980 military coup due to his political activities and took refuge in Sweden in 1984. Munzur Çem is his pen name, his real name being Hüseyin Beysülen. Since 1996, Çem has worked to "systematise and standardise Zazaki," which he identifies as a dialect of Kurdish. In his three-

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[613] Işık, Haydar. 1990. *Dersimli Memik Ağa*. Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 37.

volume novel, *Gülümse Ey Dersim,* Çem defines the Dersim incident as an "armed resistance" of Dersimli tribes, who wants to protect "their lives, their families, their property, their pride".[614]

Metin Aktaş (born in 1956) is also an author from Dersim. He was deported to Hakkari while he was a student at Teacher Training School, and thus he did not finish high school. Today he runs a small grocery store in Elazığ and writes novels mainly about people from poorer socio-economic backgrounds who suffer discrimination due to their ethnic or religious identities. Aktaş, in *Acı Fırat Asi Fırat,* describes the Turkish army simply as "the enemy", and Dersim 1937-38 as a massacre. Aktaş describes Seyyid Rıza's inner thoughts with the following sentences, which show the goodwill of Rıza in contrast to his usual portrayal as a rebellious leader:

> If he had yielded, perhaps this [the events of 1937-38] would not have happened. But what was it that he did? He wanted to talk freely the language God gave him and his people, sing his songs freely, live freely in his lands. Was it a crime to say this out loud? Was supporting a peaceful, equal, free life for the people who lived on the same lands a crime? Perhaps, they will understand him one day. But until that day, people will suffer so much. That was what he grieved so deeply about. Why are they, so stubbornly, denying the existence of people? Why are they trying to destroy them with violence?[615]

Erendiz Atasü (born in 1947) is a Turkish feminist author, whose works focus on literature, women, secularism and the republican reforms performed by Atatürk. *Dağın Öteki Yüzü, The Other Side of the Mountain* in English, was translated and published in Britain in 2000. In her foreword, Atasü writes that the letters of her parents written to each other in the 1930s and 40s inspired her to write the novel. Nonetheless, Atasü says, the section on Dersim "has no link to reality" but is to show that "the children of the same country had to fight each other"[616] which, in most cases, caused life-long traumas. *Dağın Öteki Yüzü* by Atasü, 1996, is another winner of the Orhan Kemal Novel Prize. This novel touches upon the Dersim 1937-38 period. The book is about the experiences of different generations in the process of the "fulfilment of Republican ideals".[617] Narrating the story through two dissimilar brothers, Lieutenants Burhan and Reha, and through an officer, İzzet, who

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[614] Çem, Munzur. 1996. *Gülümse Ey Dersim*. 2nd ed. 3 vols. Vol. 1. Istanbul: Deng Yayınları, 60.
[615] Aktaş, Metin. 1993. *Acı Fırat Asi Fırat*. Istanbul: Yön Yayınları, 33.
[616] Atasü, Erendiz. 2012. *Dağın Öteki Yüzü*. 8th ed. Ankara: Everest Yayınları, 7.
[617] Atasü, Erendiz. 2012. *Dağın Öteki Yüzü*. 8th ed. Ankara: Everest Yayınları, back cover page.

served in Dersim, Atasü mainly frames Dersim as a "military act", where violent scenes take place between the soldiers and the local people.

Muzaffer Oruçoğlu was born in Kars in 1947 and is an author and artist. He was expelled from Higher Teacher Training School due to his political activities, and has served prison sentences in 1969, 1970, and 1973 for a total of 13 years and four months. Being one of the founders of TKP-ML[618], he lived in Dersim briefly for political activities before his imprisonment in 1973. After his imprisonment, he was sent to the army for obligatory military service. Oruçoğlu escaped to Greece, and then to France where he sought refuge. He has lived in Australia since 1988. Oruçoğlu's book, *Dersim,* describes the events of 1937-1938 as a "slaughter"[619] and "a plan to empty Dersim of people" (*insansızlaştırma planı*)[620], raising the possibiliy of a new version of the "Armenian *Tertele*".[621] Although Oruçoğlu mainly portrays Dersim 1937-38 as a violent act by the state, he also describes the armed resistance of the Dersimli tribes. In the parts of the novel where Seyyid Rıza's trial is narrated, Seyyid Rıza says:

> We have not rebelled, never! … We begged. We said do not bleed our patience with your bayonets … Weapons were directed not towards our branches, but towards our roots. We tried to save our roots.[622]

In 2004, Ali Arslan published *Serçe 2,* a sequel to *Serçe.* This time Serçe, the main character, goes through a heartbreaking love story and migrates to Germany as a worker. Although *Serçe 1* identified Dersim 1937-38 as a rebellion, I categorised *Serçe 2* among the literary works that describe the events as a massacre, where soldiers were brutal to Dersimlis, conducting mass killings and burning down dead bodies of Dersimlis.[623] *Serçe 2* also refers to Seyyid Rıza's words, where he says, "We are not revolting; we have not revolted".[624] Right at the beginning of this novel, Serçe's family describe Dersim 1937-38 where Dersimlis defensed themselves against the brutal military operation of the state, whereas Serçe persists in advocating the state discourse. Serçe says, "This is Turkey, and this is our common country. Against whom you are protecting it [Dersim] from?"[625] Among

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[618] TKP-ML is an illegal leftist organisation functioning in Turkey (discussed in Chapters 5 and 6).
[619] Oruçoğlu, Muzaffer. 1997. *Dersim*. Istanbul: Babek Yayınları, 244.
[620] Ibid., 245.
[621] Ibid., 67.
[622] Oruçoğlu, Muzaffer. 1997. *Dersim*. Istanbul: Babek Yayınları, 136.
[623] Ibid., 37.
[624] Arslan, Ali. 2004. *Serçe 2*. Istanbul: Berfin Yayıncılık, 21.
[625] Arslan, Ali. 2004. *Serçe 2*. Istanbul: Berfin Yayıncılık, 41.

other books that focus on the exile stories of Dersimlis we can count Munzur Çem's third volume of *Gülümse Ey Dersim,* published in 1993, and Cafer Demir's *Sürgün,* which was published in 2010.

Cafer Demir (born in 1951) is a schoolteacher from Dersim. He has been involved in the union activities of the Education and Science Worker's Union (*Eğitim-Sen*) and the Elazığ Branch of Human Rights Association. Demir wrote *Qopo* almost three decades after Mustafa Yeşilova's novel, *Kopo.* An interesting difference between the two books is the linguistic preference in the writing of the name: Kopo or Qopo. Kopo is how the original name Qopo is pronounced in Turkish, whereas Qopo is how it is written in Kurdish and Dersimce. In each case, this preference, a symbolic choice of both authors, is reflected in the storylines of their works. In an encounter with Abdullah Pasha, the Inspector General responsible for Dersim, Qopo claims that Dersimlis are not bandits, admits that tribes were fighting and looting, but also blames the state for neglecting Dersimlis. He goes on to claim that Dersimlis had been mistreated by military officers, that they were seen as "abscesses" (*çıbanbaşı*) and that, thus, innocent people were murdered and villages were torched.[626] In *Qopo*, Cafer Demir identifies these policies as a "massacre" and adds "as if this is not enough, you are exiling us to places we do not know".[627] In *Çıban* as well, Demir describes innocent people being executed, shot or bayoneted, by soldiers acting under official orders. The tribesmen, in response to these executions, first decide to surround the gendarme stations but then, with the Turkish army surrounding Dersim, they decide to take shelter in the Munzur Mountains.[628]

Being the daughter of an "Alevi origin, Dersim exile family", Kaygusuz (born in 1972) is inspired by her grandmother's words, who once –but only once in her entire life- said, "They butchered us".[629] In *Yüzünde Bir Yer,* Sema Kaygusuz defines Dersim 1937-38 as a "massacre".

7.3.3   Definition of Dersim 1937-38 between 2010 and June 2015

Nineteen literary works were written and published on Dersim 1937-38 in forty years. Between 2010 and June 2015, seventeen more were published. This rate is significantly faster, and as this research is being conducted, more literary works on Dersim are being prepared by authors and publishing houses.

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[626] Demir, Cafer. 2005. *Qopo*. Istanbul: Umut Yayımcılık, 201.
[627] Demir, Cafer. 2005. *Qopo*. Istanbul: Umut Yayımcılık, 202.
[628] Ibid., 67.
[629] Kaygusuz, Sema. 2012. *Yüzünde Bir Yer*. 5th ed. Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 8.

I decided to take 2010 as the beginning of the third period due to Onur Öymen's remarks in a parliamentary speech on 10 November 2009. With the changing political context in the 2010s, one can observe significant expansion in discussion of Dersim 1937-38. Erdoğan's so-called Dersim apology in 2012 was the second breaking point where we see a significant increase in the number of productions on the events of 1937-38.

Figure 32 Definition of Dersim events in literary works published between 2010 and June 2015
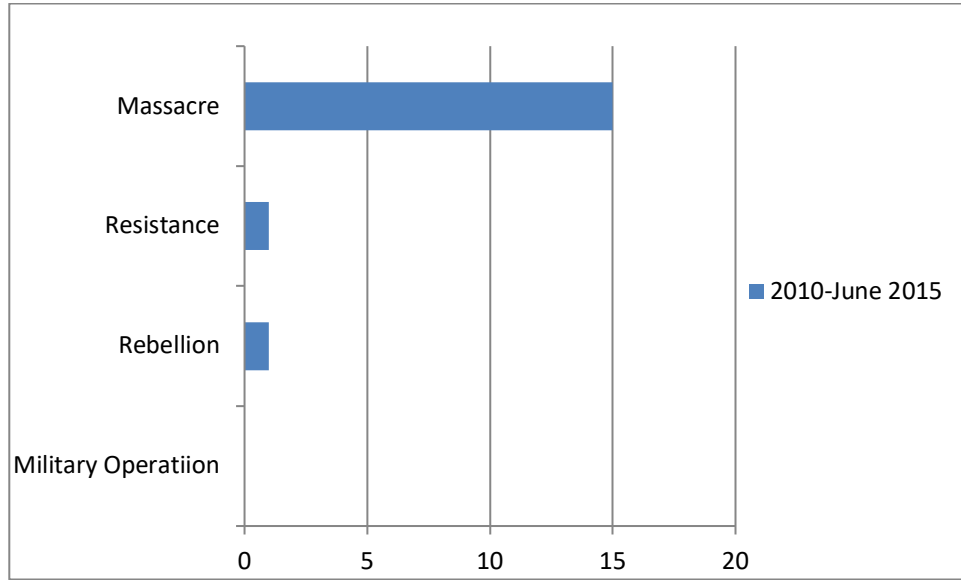
As Figure 32 illustrates, the vast majority of literary works published in this period referred to Dersim 1937-38 as a "massacre" (*katliam*, *kıyım* and *kırım* in Turkish, *tertele* in Dersimce). Only one book, *Mustafa Kemal'in Kuşları Dersim Yanıyor!*, defines the events as a "rebellion".[630] Turan Uysal's book, *Bir Dersim Hikayesi: Kül ve Duman*, meanwhile, largely refers to 1937-38 as a "resistance"[631] of the Dersimli people against the atrocities of the Turkish state.

7.4   Definition of Dersim's collective identity in literary works

In contrast to the near consensus among authors whose literary works were published in the 2010s to define the events of 1937-38 as, at least, a massacre, there is a lack of agreement in their descriptions of the collective identity/identities of Dersim during the massacre. Different

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[630] Civelek, Bilal. 2012. *Mustafa Kemal'in Kuşları: Dersim Yanıyor*. Istanbul: Yediveren Yayınları.
[631] Uysal, Turan. 2015. *Bir Dersim Hikayesi: Kül ve Duman*. Istanbul: Ceylan Yayınları.

combinations of Alevi, Kurdish or Zaza/Kirmanc/Dimilki are all used and there is also acceptance of the Armenian presence in the region until the 1938. This conflict brings me to the second part of this chapter: the literary competition over the Dersim identity of 1937-38.

7.4.1   Definition of Dersim identity in literature between 1966 and 1989

The literary works in the period 1966 and 1989 refer to Dersimlis as mainly Alevi, Kurdish, or Alevi-Kurdish (Figure 33).

Figure 33 Definition of Dersim identity in literary works published between 1966 and 1989
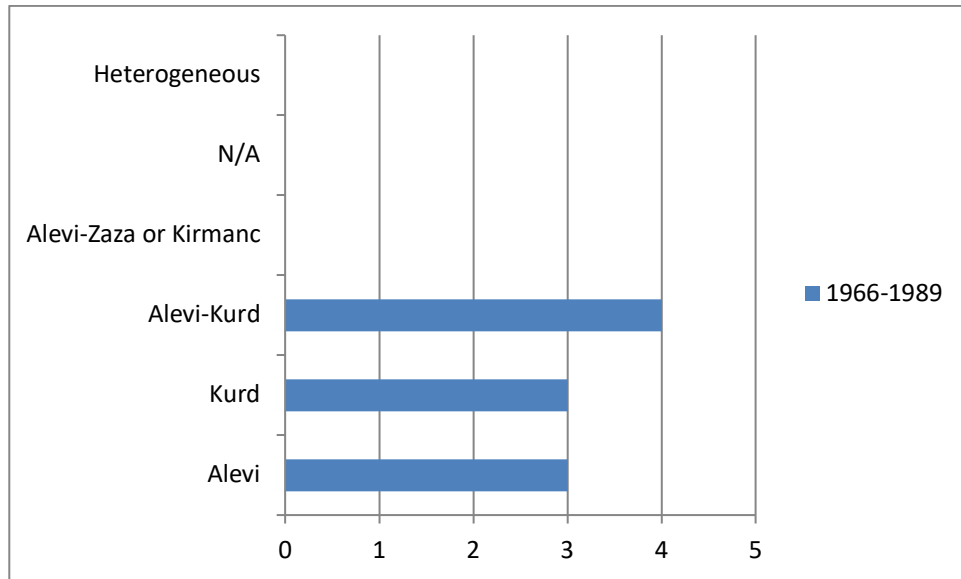
In Kemal Bilbaşar's *Cemo*, Cemo replies to a military commander's question if she is Zaza by saying, "No, thank God, I am a Muslim".[632] This is an interesting quote in the sense that it shows the general tendency to link Zazas with Alevis, who were seen as opposing Islam, despite Alevism being a sect of Islam. Although Memo is a Sunni Kurd, his wife Cemo is a "highland girl", [633] meaning that she is a Kizilbash [Alevi] of Dersim, an unwanted type by the Sunni Kurds, as Alevis were seen equal to pigs[634]. So it can be argued that Kemal Bilbaşar's novels describe the main identity of Dersimlis as Alevis, although he acknowledges the existence of Kurds and Zazas in the region. *Kondurma Siyaseti*

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[632] Bilbaşar, Kemal. 2012. *Cemo*. 14th ed. Istanbul: Can Sanat Yayınları, 63.
[633] Bilbaşar, Kemal. 2012. *Cemo*. 14th ed. Istanbul: Can Sanat Yayınları, 100-101.
[634] The use of pig is a highly pejorative here as pork meat is forbidden in the Quran.

used a clearer identification for Dersimlis, describing them as "Kizilbash-Kurds"[635], who speak Zazaki.[636]

Barbaros Baykara's novels, on the other hand, deny the existence of Kurds, for example, the officer Kemal says: "Some of you say, I hear, that you are kurds. From now on I will have no mercy on the ones who enounce the word kurd" [lower case in kurd in the original version].[637] In later pages, Kemal defines Kirmancs and Zazas as Turkmens and Turks, respectively. Kemal claims:

> These people, our people, who speak kirmancki [lower case in the original version]
> or Zazaki [capital letter in the original version] and make up 7% of our population,
> were exploited by the foreign powers. The idea that they are separate from Turks
> was indoctrinated into them, and kurdish [lower case in the original version]
> consciousness was imposed on them.[638]

Kutsal Barış identifies the "Dersim rebellion" as an attempt to establish a "Zaza-Kurdish State"[639] and a "Kurdish rebellion".[640] Dinamo rejects this, claiming that the Alevi identity has no connection with "Kurdish rebellion", and pointing out that Atatürk's Republic deported the Ottomans who "frequently shed Alevi blood".[641] Likewise, in *Kopo,* Mustafa Yeşilova writes, "The Republic and Atatürk were favoured by the Alevis".[642] Contrary to Dinamo, however, Yeşilova makes no mention of the words Kurd, Zaza, or Kirmanc throughout his novel.

Ali Arslan's heroine Serçe is identified as Kurdish-Alevi [Kizilbash] throughout the book. At primary school age, Serçe struggles to become a Turk, to gain acceptance from a society that regards her as a Kurdish-Alevi, saying, "I'll go to the school principle. I'll say I am also a Turk … I am not a Kurd. I'll say Kurds are also Turks".[643] A colonel, who serves in Dersim for a year and later takes Serçe back to his home, voices the official position that identified Dersimlis as Turks from Khorasan, and

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[635] Tahir, Kemal. 2011. "Kondurma Siyaseti." In *Göl İnsanları*. Istanbul: İthaki Yayınları, 259.
[636] Ibid., 251.
[637] Baykara, Barboros. 1974. *Dersim 1937*. Istanbul: Akyar Yayınları, 159.
[638] Baykara, Barboros. 1974. *Dersim 1937*. Istanbul: Akyar Yayınları, 183-184.
[639] Dinamo, Hasan İzzettin. 1976. *Kutsal Barış*. Vol. 7. Istanbul: May Yayınları, 324.
[640] Ibid., 337-338.
[641] Ibid., 337.
[642] Yeşilova, Mustafa. 1978. *Kopo*. Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 76.
[643] Arslan, Ali. 2002. *Serçe*. 2nd ed. Istanbul: BerfinYayınları, 81.

that did not recognise the Kurdish identity at all. As Serçe grows older, she embraces her Kurdish-Alevi identity, and begins to expect Kurds to be equal citizens with Turks.[644]

The first period, thus, can be claimed as a period when the Alevi identity of Dersim is largely accepted and stated in the literary works by the authors. There is also a reference to Dersim's Kurdish identity and Dersimce language in these literary works, although they usually stress either that the events were a Kurdish-Zaza rebellion or that Kurds or Zazas are not distinct peoples but rather derived from Turks who had been somewhat deceived into accepting a separate ethnic identity.

7.4.1.1   The Armenian Aspect in literary works between 1966 and 1989

The literary works published between 1966 and 1989 reflect various attitudes towards the Armenians' past, and their relationship with Dersim. The first Armenian reference in these literary works comes in *Kondurma Siyaseti*, where one of the exiles says, "We've got our comeuppance after what we did to the Armenians during the mobilisation [he means the CUP mobilisation]".[645] Here, the implication is that they, the Dersimlis, mistreated the Armenians in the past but now they are to suffer the same fate. We see this reference often in literary works over the years. A second treatment of Armenians claims that it was in fact they who butchered the Turks, regardless of their Sunni or Alevi identity. This view is expressed in Yeşilova's *Kopo*.[646] A third view of the Armenian discussion is found in Dinamo's book, where an Armenian tribe's leader is described as having escaped from the Armenian "migration" [not genocide, or forced migration], who, through his "intelligence" is able to climb up the ranks.[647] The fourth way of treating the Armenians is portraying them as refugees sheltered in Dersim by tribesmen. This is briefly mentioned in Baykara's novel, where "an Armenian who sheltered in Dersim" shoots someone dead.[648] This is a brief remark that introduces us to the concept, but more detailed versions of this refugee status of Armenians in Dersim are found in later literary works.

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[644] Ibid., 432.
[645] Tahir, Kemal. 2011. "Kondurma Siyaseti." In *Göl İnsanları*. Istanbul: İthaki Yayınları, 257.
[646] Yeşilova, Mustafa. 1978. *Kopo*. Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 76.
[647] Dinamo, Hasan İzzettin. 1976. *Kutsal Barış*. Vol. 7. Istanbul: May Yayınları, 326.
[648] Baykara, Barboros. 1974. *Dersim 1937*. Istanbul: Akyar Yayınları, 30.

7.4.2　Definition of Dersim identity in literary works between 1990 and 2009

In the second period, we see more emphasis on the Kurdish identity, with five literary works stressing the Kurdishness of Dersim. Two literary works identify Dersimlis as Alevi-Kurds, one as Alevis, and only one as Kirmanc. Out of these eleven literary works published between 1990 and 2009, only one book does not refer to an ethnic or religious identity in discussion of Dersim 1937-38 (Figure 34).

Figure 34 Definition of Dersim identity in literary works published between 1990 and 2009
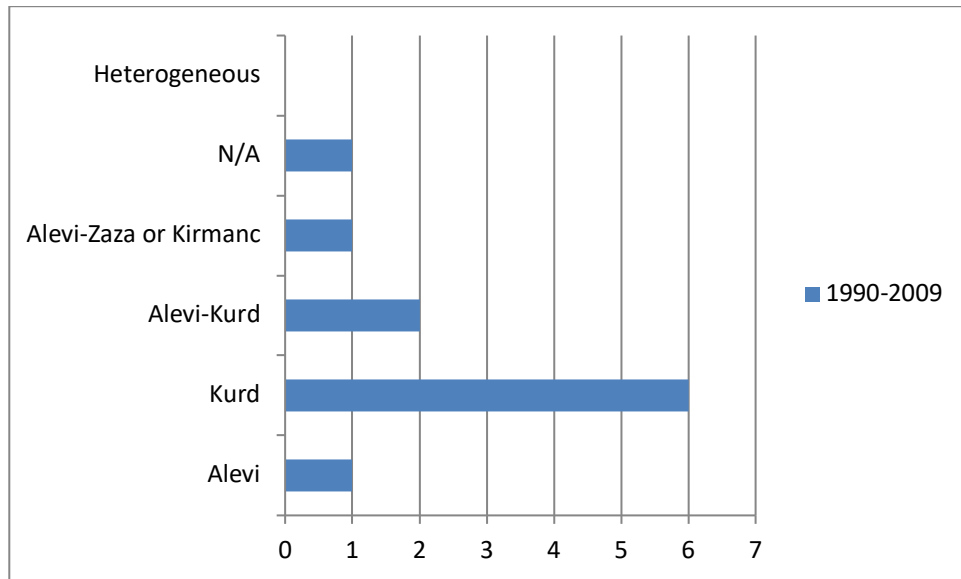
The five novels written by Haydar Işık, Munzur Çem, and Metin Aktaş all stress the Kurdish identity of Dersim, yet they also acknowledge its Alevi religious identity as well. Haydar Işık, in *Dersimli Memik Ağa*, narrates the story of a man from the famous Demenan Tribe of Dersim, who says:

> When Sheikh Said rebelled, they [the state] agitated that they are Sunni, if they [Sunni Kurds] establish a [Kurdish] state; they will kill off the Alevis. The Dersim tribes . . . stabbed the Sheikh in the back. Now, for the Dersimlis, it is said that they

are irreligious . . . They are recruiting soldiers from the other Kurds [Sunni Kurds]. You do not have to be a wise man to see that this is an insidious plan.[649]

Munzur Çem describes Dersim as Kurdish, referring to Seyyid Rıza, who says, "Dersim is a castle for the Kurdish nation".[650] Metin Aktaş, likewise, delivers Seyyid Rıza's words that he supposedly said to his son: "We, the Kurds, are descended from the partridge" (*Biz Kürtler keklik soyundanız*).[651] These words are important for two reasons. First, it implies that Seyyid Rıza considered himself Kurdish. Second, "descended from the partridge" has cultural connotation, meaning that the Kurds, like partridges, are harming their own breed.

In *Dağın Öteki Yüzü,* despite using words such as military operation or forced immigration to refer to the events in Dersim 1937-38, Atasü puts these words in quotation marks, distancing herself from the debate as to whether this was a rebellion, military operation, or massacre. Atasü does not clearly define the ethnic identity of Dersimlis, she only writes that they are "children of the same country".[652]

Cafer Demir, in both his books, identifies the language spoken in Dersim as "Kurdish", but uses Dersimce in dialogues. This implies that, in Demir's opinion, Dersimce is a dialect of Kurdish instead of a discrete language. Sema Kaygusuz, on the other hand, identifies Dersim mainly as an Alevi land,[653] which was considered a "Kurdish Region"[654] during the Ottoman Empire. However, when the author writes about present day Dersim, she writes that they speak "half Turkish, half Zazaki".[655]

Ali Arslan's *Serçe 2* tells us that Serçe's daughter, Seçil, begins to speak Dersimce as they begin living in Dersim, leading her relatives to identify her as "one of us," and "of our blood".[656] Although Zazaki language is specified in the novel, their tribe is identified as Kurdish.[657] However, Dersim is also identified as Alevi, in fact, hosting the true form of Alevism.[658] In the afterword of the novel, Arslan writes, "This novel is an apology to my Kurdish friends … nothing stays in the darkness

[649] Işık, Haydar. 1990. *Dersimli Memik Ağa*. Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 34.
[650] Çem, Munzur. 1996. *Gülümse Ey Dersim*. 2nd ed. 3 vols. Vol. 1. Istanbul: Deng Yayınları, 57.
[651] Aktaş, Metin. 1993. *Acı Fırat Asi Fırat*. Istanbul: Yön Yayınları, 50.
[652] Atasü, Erendiz. 2012. *Dağın Öteki Yüzü*. 8th ed. Ankara: Everest Yayınları, 7.
[653] Kaygusuz, Sema. 2012. *Yüzünde Bir Yer*. 5th ed. Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 41.
[654] Ibid., 84.
[655] Ibid., 79.
[656] Arslan, Ali. 2004. *Serçe 2*. Istanbul: Berfin Yayıncılık, 47.
[657] Ibid., 62.
[658] Ibid., 39.

of the past for eternity, it shouldn't," which fairly signals his reading of Dersim 1937-38 as an act against the Kurds.[659]

Doğan Munzuroğlu adopts a different position among the authors examined here, by clearly defining the Dersimli people as the "Kirmanc nation", *in Alişer*. He does this through the last words of Resik Hüseyin, Seyyid Rıza's son, before his execution following the imposition of military jurisdiction. Munzuroğlu delivers Hüseyin's last words in Zazaki –and identifies this language as Dersimce in the book as well -: "We are dying, father. My condolence to the Kirmanc nation" (*Ahirete göçüyoruz baba. Kırmanç halkının başı sağolsun*).[660]

7.4.2.1   The Armenian Aspect in literary works between 1990 and 2009

References to Dersim Armenians in writing of this period are twofold in nature. Munzur Çem and Muzaffer Oruçoğlu, who identify Dersim as Kurdish and Kirmanc respectively, both share the narrative that Dersimlis helped the Armenians fleeing the Armenian massacre.[661]

Cafer Demir, on the other hand, implies that Dersimlis were somewhat ignorant of the sorrows of the Armenians, with whom they had "lived together though different in language, belief, origin".[662] Mahmut, a character in *Qopo*, says the following words, which reflect the grief of Dersimlis:

> Many years passed . . . How come those beautiful people [Armenians] were exiled from these beautiful lands, without a reason? And us, how could we stay silent to this pain, how could we have stayed in connivance with this brutality?[663]

Sema Kaygusuz, in *Yüzünde Bir Yer,* refers to the Armenians along with many other identities in Turkey, such as Roma, Jews, Kurds, Alevis, Assyrians, and *Rums* (Turkish citizens of Greek origin), who had all been massacred "at the expense of establishing the country of a pure [Sunni-Turkish] nation".[664] Similarly placing Armenians within a mulititude of minority identities, Atasü's section on Dersim in *Dağın Öteki Yüzü*, briefly mentions Rum*,* Bulgarian, Armenian, and Jewish women that

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[659] Arslan, Ali. 2004. *Serçe 2*. Istanbul: Berfin Yayıncılık, 517.
[660] Munzuroğlu, Doğan. 2015. *Alişer*. Istanbul: Fam Yayınları, 162-163.
[661] Çem, Munzur. 1997. *Gülümse Ey Dersim*. 2nd ed. 3 vols. Vol. 2. Istanbul: Deng Yayınları, 67.
[662] Demir, Cafer. 2005. *Qopo*. Istanbul: Umut Yayımcılık, 113.
[663] Ibid., 114.
[664] Kaygusuz, Sema. 2012. *Yüzünde Bir Yer*. 5th ed. Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 162.

Lieutenant Reha sleeps with, and the "Armenian prostitutes in the back streets of Beyoğlu".[665] This narrative paints a picture of minority women in Istanbul during the 1930s and 40s.

7.4.3   Definition of Dersim identity in literary works between 2010 and June 2015

Following Onur Öymen's groundbreaking statement, discussion on the Dersim events reached unprecedented levels, even if much discussion was highly political and hardly sincere. Öymen's reference to Dersim, whilst expressing an anti-Kurd sentiment, was made within a peace process discussion between the AKP government and the Kurds. In his apology, on the other hand, Erdoğan declared the Dersim identity as neither Kurd, Alevi, Zaza, Kirmanc, nor Armenian, but Muslim. However, my analysis of literary works shows that authors define Dersimlis not as Muslims but as Alevis, Kurds, Zazas, Kirmancs, and even Armenians. As a matter of fact, Muslim identity is the only identity that was not claimed for the Dersim of 1937-38.

There are various ways these literary works identify the collective identity of Dersim 1937-38. The first, and perhaps most common approach, is to acknowledge its core Alevi religious identity. With the Alevi identity established, these literary works then either point out Kurdish or Zaza features. The Kurdish identity is mainly focused on as an ethnic identity, whereas Dersimce (Zazaki/Dimilki/Kirmancki) is often pointed to as the main language spoken. A few times, a few authors identify Dersim as Kirmanc, which implies a Dersim system of life, featuring Alevi beliefs and multiple languages including Turkish, Kurdish, and Dersimce. In what follows, I will briefly discuss the variety of approaches found in the Dersim literary works published in the period 2010-2016, using the categories of Alevi, Kurd, Alevi-Kurd, Alevi-Zaza or Kirmanc, or mixed (Figure 35).

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[665] Atasü, Erendiz. 2012. *Dağın Öteki Yüzü*. 8th ed. Ankara: Everest Yayınları, 113.

Figure 35 Definition of Dersim identity in literary works published between 2010 and June 2015
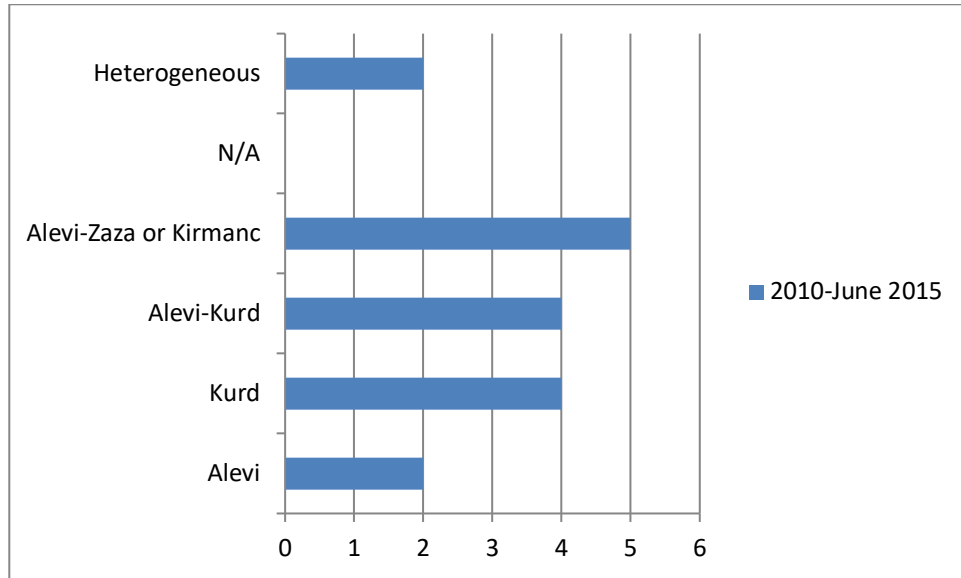
Among the many authors who categorise Dersim via its Alevi identity, Vedat Türkali[666] and Cem Uğur[667] stand out. Vedat Türkali (born in 1919) is a teacher, filmmaker, novelist, and a "good revolutionist".[668] He was a member of the then illegal Communist Party of Turkey (TKP), for which he was imprisoned for seven years, between 1951 and 1958. Türkali brought politics into Turkish cinema as a filmmaker, and narrated his childhood memories and communism in "Communist" (2001). *Bitti Bitti Bitmedi* is his latest novel. Cem Uğur (born in 1981) is from Dersim and *Barbarlar Zamanı* is his first novel. In an interview, Uğur explained that he wanted to express the pains of Dersim in his novel, saying, "Eventually, every event that we constrain somehow surfaces. The Dersim events, The Armenian massacre… These are spoken of now, and this has opened the gates for literature".[669] Neither of these writers specify an ethnic or linguistic identity, describing only the Alevi belief system. In several parts of *Barbarlar Zamanı*, Uğur stresses that Dersimlis are not

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[666] Türkali, Vedat. 2014. *Bitti Bitti Bitmedi*. Istanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları.

[667] Uğur, Cem. 2015. *Barbarlar Zamanı*. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

[668] *A master of life: Vedat Turkali*. January 5, 2004. Available from
http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=a-master-of-life-vedat-turkali-2004-05-01.
Vedat Türkali passed away on 29 August 2016, at the age of 96.

[669] Uzun, Melike. 161. *Dersim, Devrimcilerin Kabe'sidir (Cem Uğur ile Söyleşi)* June, 2015161]. Available from
http://birgunkitap.blogspot.com.tr/2015/06/dersim-devrimcilerin-kabesidir-cem-ugur.html.

Muslims, but that they are "Alevi" or "Kizilbash", who do not have a religion.[670] A *Dede* explains the identity of Dersim with the following sentences in Türkali's novel, *Bitti Bitti Bitmedi*:

> The people who lived in Dersim did not consider themselves from any specific *Millet* [nation]. They were used to living amongst diverse beliefs, and they let no one poach on their preserve. The tribes used to manage these lands. The Armenians and Alevis of Dersim lived in friendship. This friendship blended their language, their religion, and their traditions.[671]

The second approach to charactersing Dersim's common identity found in literary works of this period identifies Dersim as essentially Kurd. Four novels, written by Cafer Demir[672], Metin Aktaş[673], Haydar Işık[674] and Turan Uysal[675] claim that Dersim was Kurdish. These books do not mention the Alevi identity or Dersimce language. In the previous period, between 1990 and 2010, Demir wrote two other books where he wrote dialogues in Dersimce, but identified these as Kurdish, and the same approach continues in his novel *Sürgün*, published in 2010. Işık, likewise, identifies Dersim as Kurdish in *Dersimli Memik Ağa*, published in 1990, and in the more recent *Arevik*, published in 2013. Moreover, Aktaş, whose novels in 1993 and 2010 also stress the Kurdish identity of Dersim, applies this characterisation too. *Bir Dersim Hikayesi: Kül ve Duman* is the first novel of Turan Uysal (born in 1974). He too identifies Dersim as Kurdish, describing it as the last castle of Kurdistan[676]. At the age of twenty-one, while he was a student in his hometown of Muş, he was imprisoned for life for his political activity. Uysal is still serving his sentence.

The third approach is to use a Kurdish-Alevi (Kizilbash) definition to define the Dersim identity of 1937-38. Four literary works among these seventeen describe Dersim as Kurdish-Alevi. These literary works, similarly to certain literary works that identify Dersim solely as Kurdish, occasionally refer to or write in Dersimce at part of their story. Caner Canerik, in *Gülazare*, authors conversations in Dersimce, though he defines it as Kurdish. For example, the following excerpt is

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[670] Uğur, Cem. 2015. *Barbarlar Zamanı*. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 136.
[671] Türkali, Vedat. 2014. *Bitti Bitti Bitmedi*. Istanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 176.
[672] Demir, Cafer. 2010. *Çıban*. 2nd ed. Istanbul: Umut Yayımcılık.
[673] Aktaş, Metin. 2010. *Sürgün*. Istanbul: Doz Yayınları.
[674] Işık, Haydar. 2013. *Arevık: Dersim Tertelesinde bir Ermeni Kızı*. Istanbul: Satırarası Yayınları.
[675] Uysal, Turan. 2015. *Bir Dersim Hikayesi: Kül ve Duman*. Istanbul: Ceylan Yayınları.
[676] Ibid., 141.

interesting because it begins with a Dersimce sentence, which is then translated into Turkish in parenthesis, but which then ends with, "… he said in Kurdish":

> *Zerne ma çine! Ma par hegayi guret, bonu vıraştme. Tı nezonena ke! (Bizim altınımız yok! Geçen sene tarla satın aldık ve ev yaptık. Bunu sen de biliyorsun" dedi tekrar Kürtçe olarak.[677]*

Canerik (born in 1973) is the fifth child of a working-class family in Dersim. He quit his university education "due to fascist attacks and blackmails"[678] and went to Germany. Returning to Istanbul in 1995, he worked as a cameraman and reporter, translated world classics into Dersimce, and produced a number of documentary movies. He currently lives in Dersim. İsmail Taylan Kaya, who was born in Erzincan in 1982, is the youngest among the novelists whose work is examined here. He is a musician and the provincial chairman of the Trade Union of Public Employees in Health and Social Services (*Sağlık ve Sosyal Hizmet Emekçileri Sendikası*) in Erzincan. Bilal Civelek (born in 1963) is a schoolteacher who has worked in different parts of Turkey. Between 2006 and 2011 he worked as a Turkish Language and Culture teacher in Stuttgart.

The other three novels written by Civelek (2012), Xıdır (2012), and Kaya (2015) recognise the Dersimce language spoken in Dersim either by directly referring to the word Zazaki or by quoting in the language. Nonetheless, their overall identification for Dersim seems to be Kurdish-Alevi. Delil Xıdır, born in 1955 in Dersim, is the son of a Dersim 1938 victim. He migrated to Europe where he continues to live as a "revolutionist" and "patriot [*yurtsever*]".[679] He also works on Dersim music. Xıdır has released two albums and a collection of *Dengbej*[680] music. In the foreword to his novel, *Kendi Diline Sığmayan Tarih*, Xıdır claims that writing this novel was a "duty and historical responsibility".[681] He writes a memory from his childhood that affected him deeply:

> His [Xıdır's father] right arm was handicapped. He would not tell us why. One day I secretly followed him … He groaned bitterly holding his disabled arm as if he wanted

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[677] *"Zerne ma çine! Ma par hegayi guret, bonu vıraştme. Tı nezonena ke! (We have no gold! We bought a land last year and built a house. You know that as well" he said again, in Kurdish,* in Canerik, Caner. 2011. *Gülazare*. Istanbul: El Yayınları, 27.
[678] Ibid., information about the author.
[679] Xıdır, Deli. 2012. *Kendi Diline Sığmayan Tarih*. Istanbul: El Yayınları, information about the author.
[680] *Dengbej* is the Kurdish word for "troubadour".
[681] Xıdır, Deli. 2012. *Kendi Diline Sığmayan Tarih*. Istanbul: El Yayınları, 14.

to break it from a dead oak tree. I felt his pain deeply inside. And I kept this pain there.[682]

Xıdır highlights this childhood memory as a probable spur for his future work on Dersim. *Kendi Diline Sığmayan Tarih* is perhaps, his plan come true. The fourth approach the characterisation of the Dersim society of 1937-38 is to use an Alevi-Zaza or Kirmanc definition. Two novels of Haydar Karataş's[683] series, *Gece Kelebeği* and *On İki Dağın Sırrı,* Doğan Munzuroğlu's *Alişer[684],* Adnan Gerger's *Bir Adı Cehennem[685],* and Remzi Aydın's *Sahipsiz Çığlıklar[686]* use the phrases "Zazaki-speaking Alevis" or "Kirmancs" in their novels. In *On İki Dağın Sırrı*, Karataş uses the words "Kirmanc nation" voiced by an Alevi spiritual guide called Pir Kasım.[687] Remzi Aydın, meanwhile, prefers to use the term Dimilki, which denotes Dersimce language.[688] Gerger's novel, *Bir Adi Cehennem*, is the story of a journalist called Leyla, a character that Gerger used in his previous novel, *Faili Meçhul Öfke*, who traces her late boyfriend's aunt, Bahar, one of the adopted girls of Dersim. This oral history book reflects a recent interest in the adopted girls of Dersim, popularised by Nezahat and Kazım Gündoğan's documentary, *İki Tutam Saç: Dersim'in Kayıp Kızları*. This a young Dersimli girl who is adopted by military officers after 1938 is described as "A Zaza girl. A Zaza and an Alevi."[689] Her name is changed to the Turkish "Bahar"*,* instead of the "Kirmancki (Dimilki/Zazaki) and Kurmanci (Kirmanci/Kurdish) names".[690] Munzuroğlu's novel is about Alişer, a Dersimli fighter raised with Kurdish consciousness. Yet, still, through to the very last pages of the book, Munzuroğlu identifies "Kirmanciye customs" and "Kirmanciye Laws" in Dersim.[691]

Adnan Gerger (born in 1958) is a journalist from Diyarbakır and an active writer since the 1990s. His published work includes poems, novels, and research books. Munzuroğlu, Aydın and Karataş are three Dersimli authors, born in 1961, 1965, and 1973 respectively. Munzuroğlu has been a philosophy teacher since 1995, but he also writes poems, novels, and research books both in Turkish and Dersimce. He produced a documentary called "*Tertele*" in 2011. Munzuroğlu currently

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[682] Ibid., 9-10.
[683] Karataş, Haydar. 2012. *On İki Dağın Sırrı*. 3rd ed. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları; and Karataş, Haydar. 2014. *Gece Kelebeği 'Perperık-a Söe'*. 8th ed. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
[684] Munzuroğlu, Doğan. 2015. *Alişer*. Istanbul: Fam Yayınları.
[685] Gerger, Adnan. 2012. *Bir Adı Cehennem*. Istanbul: Büyülüdağ Yayınları.
[686] Aydın, Remzi. 2010. *Sahipsiz Çığlıklar*. Istanbul: Kibele Yayınları.
[687] Karataş, Haydar. 2012. *On İki Dağın Sırrı*. 3rd ed. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 285.
[688] Aydın, Remzi. 2010. *Sahipsiz Çığlıklar*. Istanbul: Kibele Yayınları, 121.
[689] Gerger, Adnan. 2012. *Bir Adı Cehennem*. Istanbul: Büyülüdağ Yayınları, 235.
[690] Ibid., 32.
[691] Munzuroğlu, Doğan. 2015. *Alişer*. Istanbul: Fam Yayınları, 143.

lives in Mersin, and hosts a radio program in Dersimce on Mersin Radio. Aydın, in his foreword, explains that the pain suffered during and after Dersim 1937-38 was to "bequeath a legacy to successive generations", who even today "suffer with great pain, grow up with this pain".[692] Aydın currently lives in an Eastern Anatolian village.

Haydar Karataş is from a mountain village in Dersim but I met him in Zurich, where he lives as a political exile. He was sentenced to life in prison in Turkey in the 1990s. Having realised a calling to literature whilst in solitary confinement, he told me:

> They took my book and pencil; they let nothing with me and put me into solitary confinement. For the first time I was all alone. A sparrow came once, and then left. For six months, I waited for that bird, and daydreamed as I waited. … As I dreamed, I visualised my life in my village. My story began there. I survived by remembering my village in that cell.[693]

The last approach I identified in analysis of these literary works is a more objective or multi-cultural approach, found in only two books: one is a story of a young academic exploring the past of her famous musician mother, who turns out to be one of the adopted girls of Dersim, called *O Muhteşem Hayatınız*[694], and the other is a collection of short stories written by various authors from different backgrounds, *Bir Dersim Hikayesi.*[695]

O Muhteşem Hayatınız contains many insights, and uses terms in discussions on the collective identity of Dersim. The non-Turkishness of Dersim is described in the following conversation between two characters, Arya and the Collector:

> Arya: These [place names] are not Turkish.
> Collector: Because those places are not Turkish.
> Arya: You mean ethnically, don't you?
> Collector: I mean in every way.[696]

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[692] Aydın, Remzi. 2010. *Sahipsiz Çığlıklar*. Istanbul: Kibele Yayınları, 6.
[693] Haydar Karataş, interview by author, 2014.
[694] Baydar, Oya. 2012. *O Muhteşem Hayatınız*. Istanbul: Can Sanat Yayınları.
[695] Mungan, Murathan. 2012. *Bir Dersim Hikayesi*. 2nd ed. Istanbul: Metis Yayınları.
[696] Baydar, Oya. 2012. *O Muhteşem Hayatınız*. Istanbul: Can Sanat Yayınları, 279.

Thus, throughout the story one can see discussions on the Kizilbash-Alevi religiosity in Dersim[697] as well as many ethnic and linguistic definitions, such as Kurdishness, Zazaness, and Kirmancness.[698]

Likewise, *Bir Dersim Hikayesi* consists of many short stories that focus on Alevi, Kurdish and/or Zaza belonging in Dersim.[699] Murathan Mungan, the editor of this collection, was born in Istanbul in 1955, but spent his childhood in Mardin. Mungan has written poems, short stories, essays and literary works since the 1980s. In an interview with Sibel Oral he answered the question of whether massacres in the history of the Turks, including the Armenian Genocide, Dersim, or Sivas massacres, were reflected in Turkish literature, Mungan claims:

> No, they haven't. For various reasons. Those who dare would be punished. … There has been heavy pressure on arts, literature, and press over and over again along the years; imprisonment, exile, death. My belief in oral history, in life histories against the official history, has its roots back in my childhood. … It took 70 years for the state to accept what my grandmother had told me in my childhood.[700]

Oya Baydar, who was born in Istanbul in 1940, is a politically active, leftist novelist. Her doctoral dissertation "The emergence of the working class in Turkey" was the subject of controversy between Istanbul University administration and its students, resulting in the first act of university occupation by students in Turkey. In the afterword to *O Muhteşem Hayatınız*, Baydar writes that she herself was the daughter of a military officer, similarly to her novel character Diva.[701] She writes that she found a medal that probably belonged to her father, on which was carved "3rd Army Manoeuvres Memory, Tunceli". This was one of the medals given to the army officers who had taken part in the military operations in Dersim in 1937-38. It seems then, that this book may have been a cathartic engagement with her family story and Dersim.

7.4.3.1 *The Armenian Aspect in literary works between 2010 and June 2015*

All the literary works published between 2010 and June 2015 referred to an Armenian population in Dersim in and before the 1937-38 period. The only book that portrayed Armenians as

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[697] Ibid., 355 and 369.

[698] Ibid., 226, 257, 261 and 279.

[699] Mungan, Murathan. 2012. *Bir Dersim Hikayesi*. 2nd ed. Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 56, 138, and 159.

[700] Oral, Sibel. *Bir Dersim Hikayesi ve daha neler neler.* 27 May 2012. Available from http://arsiv.taraf.com.tr/haber-bir-dersim-hikayesi-ve-daha-neler-neler-93583/.

[701] Baydar, Oya. 2012. *O Muhteşem Hayatınız*. Istanbul: Can Sanat Yayınları, 477-478.

traitorous revolutionaries was Bilal Civelek's, *Mustafa Kemal'in Kuşları Dersim Yanıyor.* Despite identifying Armenians as rebellious, Civelek acknowledges that the people of Dersim helped Armenians hide during the 1915 events.[702] Other books, as well as the novelists whom I interviewed, often suggested that the local Dersimlis lived with Armenians in harmony, and that Dersimlis even helped their Armenian neighbours during the early 1900s. In fact, the general view accepted by Dersimlis is that their humanitarianism was held against them by the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, and was the pretext with which these regimes could punish or take revenge on a Dersim society that would not yield to authority.[703]

Haydar Karataş frequently refers to an Armenian belonging in Dersim. In many parts of his two books, *Gece Kelebeği* and *On İki Dağın Sırrı,* Karataş claims that the Dersimlis helped Armenians during the last years of Ottoman Empire. In *Gece Kelebeği,* Karataş writes that the Dersimlis "ruined the roads so that the Empire could not reach the Armenians in Inner Dersim".[704] The Armenians who hid in Dersim would then be taken to the Soviet border by Dersimli tribes, to which his novels also often refer.

Karataş's consciousness and references regarding Armenians is probably due to his Armenian roots. "I used to speak Armenian to my granny, my mother knows 200-300 words in Armenian, my granny was an Armenian", Karataş says.[705] The village where Karataş was born in Dersim used to have three churches in the late 1800s, but had only six houses by the time of his childhood. He told me, "I grew up in those ruins".[706]

Munzuroğlu's *Alişer* says "the Dersimlis protected the Armenians who escaped from the massacre as 'siblings' and thus an administration that would be established in Erzincan and Dersim would be an Armenian-Kurdish joint government".[707] Ahmet Agha's father in Kaya's book, *Vagon*, is described as someone who "fought with Mirakyan's musketeers and saved hundreds of Armenians".[708]

[702] Civelek, Bilal. 2012. *Mustafa Kemal'in Kuşları: Dersim Yanıyor*. Istanbul: Yediveren Yayınları, 125.
[703] Aydın, Remzi. 2010. *Sahipsiz Çığlıklar*. Istanbul: Kibele Yayınları, 279.
[704] Karataş, Haydar. 2014. *Gece Kelebeği 'Perperık-a Söe'*. 8th ed. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 10.
[705] Haydar Karataş, interview by author, 2014.
[706] Ibid.
[707] Munzuroğlu, Doğan. 2015. *Alişer*. Istanbul: Fam Yayınları, 13-14.
[708] Kaya, İsmail Taylan. 2015. *Vagon*. Istanbul: Dersim Yayınları, 29.

Uncle Milko, a character in Xıdır's *Kendi Diline Sığmayan Tarih,* is a member of the only Armenian family remaining in a Dersim village. His conversation with Memike Milli, a non-Armenian character also from Dersim, goes as follows:

> "The Armenians are our siblings!" protested loudly Memike Milli. Milko put his arms around Memike. Memike embraced Milko. He said to Milko, "don't be sad! You are not alone! If these scamps will destroy us, they'll destroy all of us. Our bloods will meld, my brother".[709]

The literary works almost unanimously claim that Armenians and Dersimlis were massacred together in Dersim in 1937-38. As Türkali writes in his novel, "their fates were one".[710]

7.5   Conclusion

As Dersim becomes increasingly more popular as a subject matter, more and more literary works, as well as other cultural products, such as films, research books, art, poetry and music are being released. Cultural activities on Dersim function as tool-kits; they are ideological artefacts that compete regarding the definitions of the memory and identity of Dersim 1937-38. Mungan writes:

> Good literature is not essentialist. It does not connect facts to basics. It does not blame a race, a nation, or people for what happens. It documents and explains processes. … Literature is not to revive hatred; it is to refresh memory. … It is not the people who massacre, slaughter, genocide; it is the mentality that does those things. Barbarians are governments and their institutions. … Thus what needs to be stood up to is not the people, nor nations, it is these mentalities. Good literature knows that, and addresses it.[711]

Although his interpretation of the role of literature in memory is partly correct, literature is perhaps not as disconnected from politics as Mungan claims. The Turkish literary critic and academic Murat Belge notes, "Although literature is about aesthetics, we cannot detach ethics, history, psychology, and sociology from aesthetics".[712] Authors, through literature, construct meanings[713],

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[709] Xıdır, Deli. 2012. *Kendi Diline Sığmayan Tarih*. Istanbul: El Yayınları, 35.

[710] Türkali, Vedat. 2014. *Bitti Bitti Bitmedi*. Istanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 182.

[711] Mungan, Murathan. 2012. *Bir Dersim Hikayesi*. 2nd ed. Istanbul: Metis Yayınları.

[712] Belge, Murat. 2013. *Edebiyatta Ermeniler*. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 15-16.

[713] Tuğal, Cihan. 2012. "1915 hatıraları ve Ermeni Kimliğinin İnşaası." In *Hatırladıklarıyla ve Unuttuklarıyşa Türkiye'nin Toplumsal Hafızası*, edited by Esra Özyürek, 127-152. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

and readers of these stories "construct their national identities".[714] How authors narrate their stories derives from their political perspectives, as well as from their social and cultural background. An examination of changes, and competition, in how the collective memory and identity of Dersim in 1937-38 have been defined is a worthy endeavor in seeking to understand the relationship between literary work and the politics of this region.

Interestingly enough, it is often the novelists themselves who criticise fellow writers for inserting too much of their politics into the literature. This can been seen in the forewords written by the authors examined here. Civelek's novel, which stands apart from all the other literary works published in the third period because of its definition of Dersim 1937-38 as a "rebellion", stresses in the foreword that "this is not an academic work" but a literary work, and "requests readers to take off their ideological and political glasses" before reading.[715] In an interview with a local newspaper, *Günışığı*, Civelek complains that people only read famous novelists in Turkey and ignore the works of lesser-known authors. He urges the readers to take a step away from their ideological standpoint so that they can "acquire great lessons and information" from this book and be more objective.[716] The following sentence perhaps signals this perspective:

> If we can have a realist look at the roots of the tragedies in human life, then we will
> see that we, ourselves, invoke most reasons that bring about grievance.[717]

Nonetheless, his approach to what happened in Dersim in 1937-38 is not ideology-free, as he identifies Dersim as a "rebellion" neglecting the arguments, strongly supported by archive material, that reject this characterisation. By using the word "rebellion", the author implies that that Dersimlis initiated the conflict, bringing misery upon themselves.

Metin Aktaş, an author who adopts a very different standpoint from Civelek on the Dersim matter, is also critical of the ideological labelling of novelists. In reply to accusations of being politically and pragmatically driven by Xaki G. Bargin on the Kurdistan Post website, Aktaş claimed that novelists should be independent, and that he writes novels about the traumatic past not in

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[714] Millas, Herkül. 2005. *Türk ve Yunan Romanlarında 'öteki' ve kimlik*. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 24.

[715] Civelek, Bilal. 2012. *Mustafa Kemal'in Kuşları: Dersim Yanıyor*. Istanbul: Yediveren Yayınları, 5-6.

[716] Civelek yeni kitabını tanıttı. 5 November 2012. Available from http://www.gunisigigazetesi.net/h-24814-b-Civelek-yeni-kitabini-tanitti.html.

[717] Civelek, Bilal. 2012. *Mustafa Kemal'in Kuşları: Dersim Yanıyor*. Istanbul: Yediveren Yayınları, 6.

order to prevent people from various cultures, ethnicities or beliefs from living together, but to facilitate cross-cultural understanding.[718]

In an interview, Haydar Karataş also notes that in literary prizes, ideological criteria often come before the literary value of a novel. Karataş states, "Our literature has grown problematic", in the sense that it does little to heal the wounds inflicted by Turkey's traumatic past. He links this to the fact that literature tends to express itself within the limits of collective freedom.[719] Societal independence, meanwhile, is not free from politics. In an interview about *O Muhteşem Hayatınız,* Oya Baydar claimed that it was not only the Turkish state that long underestimated the variety and locality of Dersim. In fact, Baydar puts forward, the leftist and the Kurdish movements ignored the uniqueness of Dersim.[720] Likewise, Doğan Munzuroğlu cites the left in the 1970s, the military coup in 1980, and state-enforced village evacuations in 1994 as key factors in breaking down the social structure in Dersim.[721]

Given the destruction of the collectivity of Dersim, how and why do novelists approach the issues of the memory and identity of Dersim 1937-38? During our interview, a novelist from Dersim, Interviewee 42, explained how he decided to write Dersim 1937-38 as a novel. He said: "I think it was in 1975, this man, Barbaros Baykara wrote these novels, *Dersim 1937* and *Tunceli 1938*, which really disturbed us. I saw how disturbed Seyyid Rıza's grandson, Ali Rıza, was. I told him one day, if we do not write our own history and leave it to the others, this happens!"[722] Sait Çiya claims, these become "propaganda brochures rather than novels".[723] Dersimlis therefore should make claims as to their own history, since otherwise, he warns, "the occupiers will occupy and plunder our history as well".

I have encountered two academic journal articles, both written by Fethi Demir, both in Turkish, which examine a number of literary works written about Dersim 1937-38. Both of these

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[718] Bargin, Xaki G. *Metin Aktaş; Gerçekler ve Kurgular*. 2009. Available from
http://gomanweb.org/GOMANWEB2/2009_HABERLERI/HABERLER-2009/Ekim/08Ekim/metin-aktas.htm.
[719] Börekçi, Gülenay. *'Edebiyatımız yaraları sarmadı'* 19 August 2012. Available from
http://www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/gulenay-borekci/769331-edebiyatimiz-yaralari-sarmadi.
[720] Özvarış, Hazal. *Oya Baydar: Evde bulduğum Tunceli madalyası beni de, romanın akışını da etkiledi*. 13 November 2012.
Available from http://t24.com.tr/haber/oya-baydar-evde-buldugum-tunceli-madalyasi-beni-de-romanin-
akisini-da-etkiledi,217220.
[721] Bali, Gülizar. *Yeşil'in Dersim'de ne işi olur?* 10 February 2013. Available from http://www.zaman.com.tr/pazar_yesilin-
dersimde-ne-isi-olur_2051825.html.
[722] Interviewee 42, interview by author, Berlin/Germany, 27 February 2015.
[723] Çiya, Sait. *Edebiyat Seferleri*. Available from http://members.tripod.com/zaza_kirmanc/ware/edebiyatsefer.htm.

articles acknowledge the role literature plays in the construction of a collective memory.[724] Demir takes the view that two seemingly different authors, Haydar Işık and Barbaros Baykara, are, in fact, similarly limited by their own political viewpoints, which has led them both to create literary works he describes as "null and void, shallow agitations".[725] Demir, however, acclaims Kaygusuz for writing an eclectic novel, without "being engaged in a political discourse".[726] In another critique of Kaygusuz's novel, however, Bulut criticises her for using the same body of existing knowledge on Dersim, and claims that one cannot write a novel out of this knowledge.[727] This critique brings me to my term "textbook novel", which I introduced at the beginning of this chapter. In almost all of these literary works, we read different versions of the same story, with simple rephrasing and sometimes with minor variations between the narratives stemming from the ideological standpoints of the authors. Different versions of stories about key persons, both from the state and Dersim sides, such as Seyyid Rıza, Alişer, Nuri Dersimi, Qopo, Abdullah Alpdoğan, Sıdıka Avar and Sabiha Gökçen, are told in almost all these literary works. It is important to note that these are not textbooks presenting information on Dersim events of 1937-38, but literary works.

To conclude, the significant increase in the number of literary works or other cultural activities on Dersim 1937-38 do not reflect an intellectual development in the discussion of the matter. In fact, Dersim has become a commodity through its traumatic past and complex identity, even in the literary works. In the first period, between 1966 and 1989, state ideology largely shaped the definition of Dersim 1937-38 in literary works. The leftist and social realist authors predominantly focused on the Kurdish and/or Alevi identity of Dersim; its underdeveloped and feudal character leading it to rebel against the state. The second period, between 1990 and 2009, is significant in terms of an emerging distinction between rebellion and state massacre, as the events of 1937-38 were increasingly defined as the latter. Over this period, following the impact of the rising Kurdish movement, novelists mainly stressed the Kurdishness of Dersim. After 2010, these literary works have predominantly defined the events of 1937-38 as a massacre by the state.

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[724] The only academic work that compares novels' take on Dersim 1937-38 memory is an MA thesis written by Seren Üstündağ. In her study, Üstündağ compares several novels on Dersim in terms of their shift in defining Dersim 1937-38 as "rebellion" to "massacre". Üstündağ, Seren. 2015. *Between 'Rebellion' and 'Massacre' Discourses: Dersim 1937-38 in Turkish Novels*, Istanbul Bilgi University.

[725] Demir, Fethi. 2014. "Karşıt Tezleri Savunan Politik Romanlar Bağlamında Dersim 1938 Olayları." *Turkish Studies* no. 9/12:149-160, 159.

[726] Demir, Fethi. 2014. "A modern novel about Dersîm tragedy by Sema Kaygusuz: Yüzünde Bir Yer." *Journal of International Social Research* no. 7 (29):239-249.

[727] Bulut, Özgün E. 2014. *Dersim Kültür Sanat İçinde*. Istanbul: Totem, 74.

Consensus regarding the Dersim identity is not found among these literary works; however, literature on the subject increasingly recognises Dersimce language and Kirmanc ethnicity in Dersim, even when giving these different names, such as Zazaki or Dımılki. Even literary works that identify Dersim as Kurdish refer to the Dersimce language spoken in the region, either by acknowledging it as a separate language Dersimlis speak, or as a dialect of Kurdish, or simply by defining it as Kurdish. Only two books, one a collection of short stories and one a novel, adopt multiple perspectives when describing identities in Dersim.

Very few of these literary works possess much literary value; I prefer to call many of them "textbook novels", as they repeat mostly the same narratives, albeit with different wording in their storylines. Although classifying these books based on their literary merit is not within the scope of this research, it is important to note that this lack of merit signals the level of popularisation of Dersim 1937-38, even in the cultural sphere. I find that these literary works are not independent from politics, but that they strengthen certain cognitive frameworks that reflect the current ideological standpoints of political organisations, publishers and authors, therefore commodify Dersim 1937-38 as a political tool.

Regardless of whether they are political or cultural, nationalist movements in Dersim aim to monopolise its collective identity. The ongoing competition and fragmentation over the collective identity of Dersim is caused predominantly by the idea that ethnic groups are determined by their particular, singular language, which is then argued as the dominant identity in Dersim. Overall, this attitude is potentially the main reason of the continued fragmentation and competition over Dersim's collective identity. argued that literary works are significant cultural tool-kits that narrate and perpetuate this Focusing on cultural activities, and literary works in particular, this chapter has examined the role of cultural mechanisms in literary competition over Dersim's fragmented collective character. I have competition and fragmentation. By commodifying its collective memory and history, literary works have told and retold Dersim's traumatic history of 1937-38.

8 Conclusion

This thesis has explored the causes and mechanisms of ongoing competition through a single case study on Dersim. Since the late 1960s, there has been competition in Dersim and over Dersim's collective memory and identity. However, the outcome of this competition has been more competition, leading to more fragmentation instead of definitive success or failure. This final chapter summarises the empirical findings of this research, then highlights the theoretical contribution made here, and concludes by proposing future avenues for investigation.

8.1 Empirical Findings

My empirical analysis drew on three sources. First, and most importantly, it relied on the in-depth interviews I conducted with the fifty-six people from the Dersim intelligentsia, who represent different fragments of competing movements and ideologies. Second, it used documents including literary works, periodicals, and newspaper articles. Third, it drew on information I collected from political ethnography in Dersim, where I participated in important political events and contacted Dersimlis other than my interviewees.

Chapter 2 discussed the different theoretical perspectives that seek to answer the question of why there is fragmentation and competition. I will summarise these theories and my theoretical conclusion in the following section. My aim in Chapter 3 was twofold. First, it introduced Dersim as a conflict zone, presenting a chronology of events in Dersim beginning from the Ottoman Era until the 1937-38 ethnic cleansing of the Turkish state. Second, it discussed how even academic literature on Dersim describes its collective identity in various, and conflicting, ways. Despite being a closed region where people with different religious, linguistic, and cultural belongings lived in harmony, Dersim remained a conflict zone from the Ottoman era to the Turkish Republican period. The central authorities continuously considered Dersim to be a problematic area, and wished to homogenise the many identities found there; but Dersimlis resisted. The existing academic work on Dersim's collective identity is as contested as its historical background. There are at least five different arguments regarding Dersim's collective identity, which suggest Dersimlis are Turkish, Kurdish, Zaza, Alevi-Zaza (Kirmanc), or Armenian. This competition continues today, which sets the background of

the empirical puzzle of this research: Why do we see constant competition in this small region called Dersim, and no clear outcome?

Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 provided a closer look at different aspects of competition. Chapter 4 focused on how the sociological background and life histories of Dersim's intelligentsia cause and shape competition. Chapter 5 looked at how political context changed movements and triggered more competition. Chapter 6 provided a closer look at the organisational competition over Dersim's collective identity. Chapter 7 drew on the competition over Dersim's collective memory and identity through literary works. Let me overview the empirical insights emerging from these chapters.

I began Chapter 4 by summarising how competition over Dersim's collective memory and identity neither results in unity nor results in ultimate failure through two charts showing my interviewees' definitions. My fifty-six interviewees almost all agreed that Dersim 1937-38 was an act of genocide by the Turkish state. Only five of them defined it as a massacre, and none of them said it was a rebellion by insurgent Dersimlis, as official Turkish history suggested for several decades. Nonetheless, my interviewees were split as to how to define Dersim's identity. When I asked them, "who was targeted in 1937-38 by the Turkish state?" they replied in six different ways: Alevis, Alevi-Zazas, Alevi-Kurds, Kurds, Zazas and Kirmancs. This was already a clear indication of the fragmentation within the small group of the Dersim intelligentsia that I interviewed. Chapter 4 revealed that the sociological backgrounds of my interviewees were broadly comparable, and that they also shared similar life stories. They shared similar memories from their childhoods, school years, and politicisations as adolescents. There was a collective trauma shared by my interviewees: being from Dersim meant being born into discrimination and resistance. They had been predominantly active in leftist movements and most of them had faced arrest, sometimes imprisonment and even maltreatment and torture. This chapter showed that, despite similarities in their life stories and in their definition of Dersim's collective memory, the Dersim intelligentsia was highly fragmented in terms of how they define their ethnicity and the native language.

Chapter 5 discussed Dersim as a political battleground where insurgent political movements have competed since the late 1960s. Especially with the rise of the leftist movement throughout the 1970s, Dersim became a space in which numerous leftist movements not only operated but also found grassroots support. This chapter was also important in showing how transition from leftist movements to identity movements in domestic and international politics played a role in Dersim's political and identity chaos. The left lost strength as the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet Union

dissolved. Following the 12 September 1980 military coup, the left in Turkey was all but extirpated, as leftist organisations were shot down, their leaders either fleeing to Europe or serving sentences in Turkish prisons. In parallel with the post-Cold War political atmosphere, a number of identity movements emerged both in Turkey and the Diaspora. The Kurdish movement, which split from the left, was the strongest among these newly emerging identity movements. Eventually, however, the Kurdish movement created its own rivals, such as the Zaza and Kirmanc movements, which began laying claim to define Dersim's collective memory and identity. More recently, the Armenians began to mobilise in Dersim, although to a lesser extent, underlining that Dersim's collective identity cannot be defined without considering Armenian identity. Chapter 5 showed that the national and international political contexts played a key role for movements competing over Dersim's collective memory and identity. Despite claiming strong belief and attachment to leftist ideology, the intelligentsia of Dersim today no longer struggle for a particular class (i.e., proletariat), rather they have formed an identity-consciousness that causes and shapes competition.

Chapter 6 elaborated more on the organisational competition. In the first section of this chapter, I compared two illegal, leftist organisations, TİKKO and the PKK, which have been functioning in Turkey since the 1970s and 80s, respectively. I introduced these organisations, their leaders, and how they have competed over Dersim's collective memory and identity through an analysis of their publications in the 1990s. In the second section, I compared two civil society organisations functioning from the Diaspora, the DYİC and the FDG, both of which focus particularly on Dersim's collective culture and identity. These organisations have ideological links with their counterparts in Turkey; the DYİC is more a Kurdish organisation, whereas the FDG is closer to the Alevi-Zaza or Kirmanc movement. These institutions' legal status, names[728], and leaders may have changed over the years but the disagreements have remained in defining Dersim's collective identity. Meanwhile, both in Turkey and the Diaspora, these identity movements go somewhat hand in hand with the leftist movements. This chapter showed that organisations play a key role in competition over Dersim's collective identity, be they illegal or legal, leftist or cultural, or functioning from Turkey or the Diaspora.

Chapter 7 drew upon the literary competition over the collective memory and identity of Dersim 1937-38. It was argued that literary novels and short stories are not purely cultural products,

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[728] There has been an increase in the number of organisations that put "Dersim" in their names and place "Dersim's" culture as central to their organisations.

but also political tools, and thus important sources to show fragmentation and competition over Dersim. I reviewed literary novels and short stories to show that on the one hand, there is an increasing consensus over the definition of Dersim's collective memory in these pieces; but on the other hand, that authors' definition of Dersim's collective identity is becoming more fragmented. Discussing literary competition was also important in the sense that it showed how different mechanisms, such as life histories, political context, and organisational ties all shaped the content of these novels and short stories. There has been a significant increase in the number of novels and short stories that bring Dersim 1937-38 to their storyline, especially since the 2010s. More than half of the authors of these novels and short stories were born in the Eastern Anatolian Turkey, in the historical Dersim region. Examination of the forewords to some of these works, the nature of the publishing houses, and interviews conducted with these authors by third parties or by myself all reveal how cultural products are not only cultural but also political. Chapter 7 showed that, whilst these novels and short stories written about Dersim usually lacked literary quality, they function as propaganda tools of competing identity movements.

Although the foci of Chapters 4 to 7 (i.e., life histories, political context, organisations or cultural activities) were various, each chapter described how various factors interact during competition over the definition of Dersim's collective memory and identity. Hearing the life stories of my interviewees, I realised their politicisation processes had been shaped by an interplay between their life circumstances, the varying political contexts in which they found themselves, or their encounters with different organisations functioning in Dersim. I have listened to many interviewees who said reading the news about the Sivas Massacre in 1993, an imprisonment due to political activities of their self or a family member, or simply a song they had heard have pushed them to work on Dersim's collective memory and identity. Likewise, there was a reflective relationship between political context and the activities of these activists and the legal/illegal organisations in which they participated. The cultural products, to a large extent, are outcomes of the increasingly popular subject of Dersim 1937-38, and are an arena for commentators to express their own arguments about Dersim's collective memory and identity. At the same time, these authors reflected their life stories and memories such as hearing stories of Dersim 1937-38 from their parents in their early childhood, or being slapped because they spoke their mother tongue as primary school children. After all, these mechanisms, which I sought to analyse separately over four chapters, were in reality co-operating in shaping Dersim's politics and collective identity competition.

The empirical chapters also showed that competition over Dersim's collective memory and identity has changed throughout the years, which can be identified by three characteristics. First, as I have much emphasised, Dersim is a unique region that can be characterised with a particular belief system and multi-linguistic nature, which I referred to as the heterogeneous, pre-national Dersimli identity. As Alevis were oppressed by the Ottoman Empire for centuries, Dersimlis favoured laicism. Therefore, despite the state operations in Dersim in 1937-38 and policies afterwards, Dersimlis were supportive of the prospect of a *laicité* Kemalist Turkish state. Second, because Dersim is a poor region that has been subject to discrimination for many years, leftist ideology found strong support among the people of Dersim right from the beginning of the rise of leftist ideology in Turkey in the 1960s. Third, because Dersimlis were not ethnically homogeneous nor ideal Turkish citizens, different the nationalist projects of Kurds, Kirmancs, and more recently –though to a less extent- Armenians were able to organise and find support in Dersim. However, Dersim can be characterised as a responsive region, which stands against all movements that try to monopolise its identity.

Being a mountainous region in Turkey's east, Dersim stands out as a separate zone of conflict with a traumatic past, insurgent consciousness, high levels of organisational mobilisation, a significant Diaspora community living in Europe, and cleavages among different identities that make up the Dersimli community. This brings me back to my initial research question: Why, then, do we not see a competition that strengthens the nation, but instead a competition that increases fragmentation and causes more conflict? Why is it that these movements neither succeed nor fail? In order to answer these questions, I looked into different theoretical perceptions that seek to explain the causes of competition.

8.2   Theoretical Contributions

To explain why there is ongoing and unresolved competition in this particular case of Dersim, I reviewed a number of theories including theories of social movements, Diaspora, cross-cutting cleavages, nationalism and ethnicity. Based on the empirical case of continuing competition in Dersim, I asked if Dersim is too small to be a nation, and if it is the social movement mechanisms or the divide and rule policy of the Turkish state that has caused movements to emerge, split, and reframe. I also questioned the role of the Diaspora in supplying resources and momentum to competing movements, and sought to draw connections between the decline of leftist movements and rise of identity politics in understanding cross-cutting cleavages. Finally, I looked at theories of nationalism to understand where ethnicity and homogenisation stand in nationalist revivals or

competitions. I have argued that the ongoing competition in Dersim is a complex phenomenon; the abovementioned theories all contribute partially to our understanding of this complexity.

Cross-cutting cleavages theory suggests that different identities in societies may overlap, and that people can identify themselves by multiple ethnic, religious, racial, or linguistic cleavages, which lessens the likelihood of conflict. On the one hand, cleavages have overlapped in Dersim as Dersimlis shared a traumatic past, a strong Alevi belonging and a leftist ideology. However, cleavages also cross-cut due to Dersim's multi-lingual character, aligning some Dersimlis to Turkishness, some to Kurdishness, and some to other linguistic or cultural groups. Especially with the weakening of the leftist movements in the post-Cold War period, an identity boom emerged across the world. These new movements no longer relied on class-based politics but focused instead on particular identities, including ethnic identity as defined by language. In other words, these newly emerging identity movements were imposing a single language on the multi-lingual speech community in Dersim, mimicking the assimilationist and discriminative nationalist politics of the 19th and 20th centuries. Given the crucial role nationalist ideology and ethnicity plays in the ongoing competition in Dersim, I have suggested reconsidering theoretical explanations in the nationalism and ethnicity literature.

One of the main debates in theories of nationalism is whether nation-states are modern phenomena where national identity is a pure construction, or do enduring myths, traditions, and symbols that pre-exist form the basis of nation-states? I underlined, from this debate, that both theories accept that nationalism is a modern ideology and national identities are somewhat modern phenomena, regardless of whether they are pure inventions or rooted in a pre-existing ties. The expectation that national identities should be homogeneous and ethnically defined entities is a modern one. However, I have suggested that not all communities are homogeneous, and both existing theories and competing movements fail to understand this pre-modern characteristic of heterogeneous communities. The Dersim community is a heterogeneous one, it is a closed region that speaks different languages and practices different religious rituals despite sharing a common territory and a collective memory of oppression, discrimination, and assimilation.

Theories of nationalism do acknowledge mechanisms of nationalist movements and competition, but they do not explain when ongoing competition neither succeeds nor fails, but continues to further fragment societies without breaking them apart. Hutchinson's *Nations as Zones*

of Conflict[729] is an important study, which suggests that competition does not necessarily weaken the nation-state but may reinforce it. In supporting his argument, Hutchinson focuses on cases of nation-formation that successfully enriched their nation through the inclusion of competing groups. However, as Hutchinson himself acknowledges, there are other cases where failing to include competing groups has triggered further polarisation. Thus, studies of nationalism should not solely focus on successful formations of nations but also on alternative cases where competition does not strengthen the nation. The Dersim case is an example of this latter group.

In order to explain the competition in Dersim, I followed Brubaker's suggestion to treat existing ethnic movements and identity-claims as "substantial entities" involving various and contested interpretations and frames. [730] I have suggested that this competition does not always result in groupness but it may, as in the case of Dersim, trigger further competition and new groupisms. This thesis has argued that the imposition of the concepts of nationalism is a modern phenomenon that seeks to impose homogeneity to communities. Yet, some communities are heterogeneous and they do not fit to modern definitions of national identity and ethnicity. Kitromilides's study on the Balkan mentality in the pre-national era was an important example of this approach to ethnicity. Ethnicity is a factor of distinctiveness and therefore cannot make for commonalities, thus is "*ipso facto* a machine of conflict and violence".[731]

The reason why there is ongoing competition and violence in Dersim, I have argued, is that the Dersim identity can only be comprehended as a pre-national identity – a Dersim mentality-whereas the existing cleavages and nationalist competition is caused by the imposition of modern, nationalist definitions on Dersim's collective identity. Most importantly, defining Dersim's identity through collective religion or collective language fails to comprehend the pre-national identity of the Dersim community. Therefore, I have argued, existing nationalist movements neither fail and disappear, nor succeed to dominate Dersim's collective identity.

8.3   Future Research
The aim of this research was twofold. First, it aimed to contribute empirically by focusing on different mechanisms through which competition over Dersim's collective identity continue.

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[729] Hutchinson, John. 2005. "*Nations as Zones of Conflict*." In: SAGE Publications Ltd.
        <http://www.myilibrary.com?ID=51208>
[730] Brubaker, Rogers. 2004. *Ethnicity Without Groups*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 10.
[731] Kitromilides, Paschalis M. 1996. "'Balkan mentality': history, legend, imagination " *Nations and Nationalism* no. 2
        (2):163-191, 170.

Second, it proposed a theoretical argument to explain why, in some cases, competition continues without definitive success or failure of the competing movements. Certainly, there are several directions in which future research may lead. In what follows, I will lay out some of the limitations of this study and suggest potential future avenues of investigation.

Studying ordinary people from below is as important as studying how nationalism is constructed from above. This research primarily relied on information I collected from Dersim's intelligentsia, either from face to face interaction, observation, or by reading the documents they produced. I have personally met and interviewed fifty-six people who work on Dersim. These were politicians, academics, artists, lawyers, public and private sector employees, with various and often conflicting opinions. My interaction with those whom I interviewed and with other Dersim activists and intellectuals who I did not interview continues. As discussed in Chapter 1.2, I have occasionally visited Dersim on some of the most significant politicised events like Newroz or Remembrance Day for the Dersim Genocide. I have not only read academic work written on Dersim, but also news articles, opinion columns, novels, and even facebook posts. I have listened to their music, watched documentaries, witnessed their disagreements and political arguments, and I have sought to reflect all of this knowledge-gathering in my analysis. However, I believe that competition over Dersim's collective identity needs further research using a bottom-up approach that considers ordinary people's assumptions and perceptions over their memory and identity. There have been a few oral-history projects on Dersim, but these projects have merely focused on the collective memory of the traumatic 1937-38 events. I have not seen academic research focusing on the current political competition and its effects on Dersim society. More research needs to be conducted on the relationship between politics and society in Dersim from a mixed approach, using both top-down and bottom-up methods.

Dersim is not an easy area to conduct research on. The peace process with the Kurds halted in the summer of 2015, and ever since Dersim, along with other parts of eastern and south- eastern Anatolian Turkey, has been turbulent again. Since June 2015, in Dersim, main roads connecting districts have been closed periodically by military officers, military operations have been conducted against the PKK by land and air, numerous curfews have been declared and certain regions have been declared special security zones. Moreover, forests have been set on fire[732], and large areas

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[732] The PKK and TİKKO versus the state have accused each other of starting the forest fires.

have been burnt causing harm to Dersim's ecology and wildlife. As a result of this turmoil, a number of people, including soldiers, policemen, fighters, and civilians have been killed. Such conflicts typically widen cleavages between the state and Dersimlis.

Because Dersim is a lively zone of conflict, politics and people's positions are subject to rapid change. According to changing state politics in Turkey and the changing positions of the Kurdish PKK as the main actor of resistance against the state, Dersimlis take different positions. Arguably, in times of struggle with the state, Dersimlis lean more to the Kurdish movement as the strongest actor fighting the central state. This does not mean, however, that there has been no criticism of the Kurdish movement or of other organisations. It is hard to say that insurgent movements only cause harm to Dersim society as they have been important powers of resistance against assimilative and discriminative state policies towards Dersimlis since the 1960s. Although Dersimlis often emphasise on their level of political consciousness and nonsubmissiveness, they also complain about the current political tensions in their hometown. Meanwhile, there is no clear scenario for Dersim's future. One possibility is that insurgent movements decide to co-act against what they define as the oppressive state. Alternatively, cultural nationalist projects, such as the Kirmanc movement, may blame the political nationalist projects, such as the Kurdish movement, for turning Dersim into an unlivable conflict zone. Based on these alternative reactions to ongoing violence in Dersim, new identity frames may emerge. Only new research would reveal the consequences of such scenarios for Dersim society and politics.

Violence in Dersim continues in four layers. The first is between the Turkish state and insurgent movements functioning in Dersim. For example, the Turkish army is fighting a number of illegal movements in Dersim such as the MKP (Maoist Communist Party), MLKP (Marxist Leninnist Communist Party), DHKP-C (Revolutionary People's Liberation Party Front), the PKK, TİKKO and the People's United Revolutionary Movement (HBDH), which is an umbrella organisation encompassing the PKK and TİKKO with a number of smaller illegal organisations[733] in Dersim. Second, there is struggle among these insurgent movements when it comes to defining Dersim's collective identity or position for their political struggles. The insurgent movements in Dersim have not only functioned politically but they have also influenced discussions on Dersim's collective memory, identity, and

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[733] Some of the smaller organisations within this umbrella movement are the MLSPB (Markxist Leninist Armed Propaganda Union-*Marksist Leninist Silahlı Propaganda Birliği*), TİKB (Revolutionary Communists Union Turkey-*Türkiye İhtilalci Komünistler Birliği*).

culture. What Dersim society at large thinks of their activities and whether or not they approve of them are of course other empirical questions. More research needs to be conducted to understand how local Dersimlis react to ongoing competition. Do they take sides or neglect the political struggle over their collective memory and collective identity? One potential way to study people's perceptions is by conducting interviews and surveys with the Dersimli population. It should be noted that Dersimlis live in different parts of Turkey and the European Diaspora, so a comparative analysis of how Dersimlis react to the competition would be a valuable contribution. A careful ethnographic study on the ground, in which one could observe the differences between what is being said out loud and what is being said behind the closed doors by the Dersimli community would no doubt reveal new insights.

Third, and very significantly, the aforementioned two struggles have negative effects on Dersim society. Dersimlis not only suffer because of the state, but also because of the insurgent movements operating in their region. The existence of various insurgent organisations in Dersim has caused a reluctance to invest in Dersim for companies, and damage tourism (even Dersimlis neglect visiting their hometown in times of contention), and has eventually turned Dersim into a desolate region. In 2016 alone, two Dersimli civilians were murdered; one murder has been pinned on TİKKO[734], the allegedly by a Turkish soldier during a military operation[735]. Therefore, research needs to be conducted to see changing patterns in how Dersim society views these political movements and what they think of their definition of Dersim's collective identity.

Fourth layer is the electoral reflections of competition in Dersim. Voting patterns are important indicators to understand the affects and outcomes of political competition in Dersim. An overview of the last general and local Dersim election results is illustrative of the competition between different parties, which further signals how competition is maintained. There are mainly four nationalist projects wishing to re-define Dersim's collective identity. First is the AKP, representing the Turkish state's approach. This party, which can be considered an Islamist political party despite its ruling cadres' objections to such characterisation, has not been successful in Dersim as a political party. Since the party came to power in 2002, Dersim has been the one and only city from which the AKP has not sent a deputy to parliament. Arguably, the AKP is still an insignificant

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[734] *TİKKO'nun öldürdüğü Erkan Doğan'ın kardeşinden açıklama.* 22 August 2016. Available from http://dersimnews.com/2016/08/22/tikkonun-oldurdugu-erkan-doganin-kardesinden-aciklama
[735] *Dersim'deki operasyonda sivil ölüm iddiası*. 21 September 2016. Available from https://www.evrensel.net/haber/290777/dersimdeki-askeri-operasyonda-sivil-olum-iddiasi

political actor for the province, which can be linked to the strong Alevi identity in Dersim. Second is the CHP, which can be considered a Kemalist and social-democratic political party. The CHP has won both general elections and local elections in Dersim. Interestingly, Dersimlis have been characterised as having "Stockholm syndrome" for voting for the political party that oversaw the tragic events of Dersim 1937-38. The CHP has sent one MP to Parliament from Dersim, which was in the November 2015 general election. Arguably, the CHP finds support in Dersim not because it is a Kemalist party but because it is regarded as a guarantor of secularism in Turkey. Third is the Kurdish movement, which has become increasingly stronger in Dersim politics and society over the years. The pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) sent two MPs to Parliament following the June 2015 election, and one in the November 2015 general election. It also won three consecutive local elections in 2004, 2009 and 2014. The PKK is also active in the highlands of Dersim and they have strong endorsements over local society. This shows that the Kurdish political movement has found recognisable support in Dersim since the 2000s. Fourth is the Kirmanc movement, which is not necessarily a "nation-state project" at the moment, but rather a cultural nationalist project in its early phases. The Kirmanc movement highlights the Dersimce (by using Zazaki/Kirmancki terminology) linguistic identity in Dersim. In the political arena, they do not have a concrete representative as do the HDP of the Kurdish movement, but they can be linked with the most recent DHF-TKP coalition, which won two local municipalities in the Ovacık and Mazgirt districts, in the 2014 local elections. The election results hint at the continuing leftist identity of the Dersimlis, and also their anti-nationalist standpoint in reaction to Turkification, Kurdification, or Islamisation by other parties.

There needs to be more emphasis on the factions that compete over Dersim's collective memory and identity definition. I have tried to distance myself from this political debate, but admittedly, as a researcher I have also reinforced it. As much as I tried to avoid this issue by talking to all parties competing over Dersim's collective identity, including people with different views, I also used the same grammar of nationalism that I argued to be problematic. This is a matter of self-reflexivity that scholars need to address while studying complicated cases and conflict zones in order to accumulate reliable knowledge. Otherwise, as I attempted to show in Chapter 3, we are faced with literature that only propagates a certain political ideology or standpoint.

Nationalist struggles do not always result in a definitive outcome, success or failure, but they may trigger more competition and engender more sub-nationalisms. With this case study, I

argued that the politicisation of heterogeneous identities aimed at homogeneous nationalist movements is an important factor that not only creates but also sustains competition and conflict. In order to explain nationalist conflict, we as scholars, need to recognise that nations, with or without states, are ethnically, linguistically and/or religiously diverse. In order to provide inductive knowledge and theory-building, there is room for more research on nationalisation and politicisation of pre-national, heterogeneous groups. In future research, my arguments on the causes and dynamics for nationalisation based on the Dersim case can be reviewed with other cases of competition in conflict zones. Concluding Remarks

Almost eighty years have passed since the 1937-38 ethnic cleansing in Dersim, but the insurgency in Dersim is as lively as ever. Dersim is not only a conflict zone but it also continues to be a much-debated topic; this debate does not seem likely to come to an end in the near future. The resultant instability has pros and cons in terms of conducting research. Since June 2015, I could not visit Dersim due to safety concerns. New works on Dersim are constantly produced, including theses, research books, novels, music albums, and documentaries. Illegal organisations continue to function in Dersim. Politicians continue to work for Dersim, lawyers work on court cases concerning Dersim 1937-38 victims, and civil-society organisations continue to organise events and meetings. Each and every study conducted on Dersim creates new arenas of competition since, to date, there is no agreement on how to define Dersim's collective identity, its past, or future.

Despite these difficulties, the lively competition over Dersim's collective identity has allowed me to underline that it is not only actors on the ground, but also academics, who are trapped in the existing grammar of nationalism. The various explanations as to why there is competition, such as the divide and rule policies of the central state authority, the political activities of Diaspora and movement entrepreneurs, the cross-cutting cleavages in Dersim or the nationalist projects relying on these cleavages, are not sufficient to answer the question of why competing movements in Dersim neither fail nor succeed. As I struggled to explain this phenomenon, that is the ongoing and unresolved competition on Dersim's collective identity by various groups and through various mechanisms, I realised that we need an alternative perspective that eschews the existing grammar of nationalism.

At the beginning of 2016, there was a new initiative called *Dersim Meclisi Girişimi* (Dersim Assembly Initiative[736]) organised by a group of Dersim's intelligentsia. I found that initiative very symbolic for several reasons. First, this initiative emerged during a period when there were already numerous legal and illegal organisations functioning in Dersim in political and economic roles. A new initiative implied a discontent with the existing institutions. Second, this initiative caused an immediate and diverse reaction among the Dersim intelligentsia. Some accused it of being divisive, causing more fragmentation within the already divided community. Some approved of the initiative, underlining the need for an objective, fair institution to focus on Dersim's political, economic, and cultural problems. This was a clear indication of the difficulties of forming a neutral initiative. Third, the first meeting of this initiative took place in Zwingenberg, Germany, which showed the significant role the Diaspora plays for Dersim. In fact, the website of this initiative is multilingual, involving not only Dersimce, Kurdish and Turkish, but also German, French, and English. I had a chance to join the first meeting of this initiative that took place in Istanbul. I saw familiar faces, some of whom I had interviewed. Following the opening speeches, participants were given the floor to share their ideas about Dersim. It was fascinating to see how each speaker prioritised a different issue, varying between politics, economy, environmental issues, terror, Alevism, the Zazaki language (which is under threat of extinction), and others. The participants, similarly to the Dersimli community in general, viewed the collective memory of Dersim 1937-38 as brutal activity of the Turkish state against Dersimlis. However, each person who took the floor had a different issue in their mind to tackle, and each defined Dersim's collective identity, i.e., language, ethnicity, and culture, in a different way. As for me, I wished to take the floor to ask the attendees whether they would consider taking a new perspective free from all concepts of nationalism. I chose not to share my opinion at that time though, to avoid creating suspicion towards my research. After all, it is not easy to escape skepticism or the accusation of bias in a hot debate, as in the one that surrounds Dersim's collective identity; but that is precisely what I aimed to do in this research.

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[736] Available from http://dersimmeclisi.com/

Appendices

Appendix 1 The Switzerland of Turkey newspiece

Translation of the title of the news piece [On the left of the news article we see a picture of Seyyid Rıza].

"The Switzerland of Turkey. Soon Dersim will be competing with Uludağ" [Uludağ is in the city of Bursa in the Western Turkey. It is the most famous ski region in Turkey].

Appendix 2 List of Interviewees (in alphabetical order)

Name of the Interviewee	Interview Date	Interview Place	Interviewee's relevance to Dersim[737]
Interviewee 1	26-Sep-14	Switzerland	Musician
Interviewee 2	25-Feb-15	Germany	Civil Society Administrator
Interviewee 3	11-Nov-14	Turkey	Civil Society Administrator
Interviewee 4	10-Nov-14	Turkey	Writer
Interviewee 5	25-Feb-15	Germany	Civil Society Administrator
Interviewee 6	04-Mar-15	Turkey	Writer
Interviewee 7	03-Sep-14	Turkey	Documentary Director
Interviewee 8	02-Aug-14	Turkey	Writer
Interviewee 9	17-Oct-14	Turkey	Civil Society Administrator
Interviewee 10	10-Mar-15	Turkey	Writer
Interviewee 11	13-Mar-15	Turkey	Lawyer
Interviewee 12	05-Jan-15	Turkey	Civil Society Administrator
Interviewee 13	27-May-14	Turkey	Publisher
Interviewee 14	28-Oct-14	Turkey	Lawyer
Interviewee 15	22-Feb-15	Belgium	TV Producer
Interviewee 16	14-Jul-14	Turkey	Politician
Interviewee 17	02-Aug-14	Turkey	Poet
Interviewee 18	17-Mar-15	Turkey	Journalist
Interviewee 19	25-Feb-15	Germany	Novelist
Interviewee 20	25-Sep-14	Switzerland	Novelist
Interviewee 21	23-Feb-15	Germany	Politician
Interviewee 22	04-Aug-14	Turkey	Politician
Interviewee 23	11-Nov-14	Turkey	Politician
Interviewee 24	08-Sep-14	Turkey	Civil Society Administrator
Interviewee 25	17-Mar-15	Turkey	Academic
Interviewee 26	27-Sep-14	Switzerland	Writer
Interviewee 27	17-Jul-14	Turkey	Politician
Interviewee 28	02-Aug-14	Turkey	Civil Society Administrator
Interviewee 29	08-Mar-15	Online	Academic
Interviewee 30	11-Mar-15	Turkey	Lawyer
Interviewee 31	17-Jun-14	Turkey	Documentary Producer
Interviewee 32	20-Jun-14	Turkey	Politician
Interviewee 33	11-Mar-15	Turkey	Politician
Interviewee 34	24-Oct-14	Turkey	Musician
Interviewee 35	28-Feb-15	Germany	Civil Society Administrator

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[737] My interviewees are the intelligentsias of Dersim, and they are often active in more than one area. Here, I present only the most relevant of their roles to avoid confusion.

Interviewee 36	26-Jan-15	Turkey	Academic
Interviewee 37	04-Aug-14	Turkey	Politician
Interviewee 38	24-Feb-15	Germany	Writer
Interviewee 39	27-Sep-14	Switzerland	Poet
Interviewee 40	03-Nov-14	Turkey	Musician
Interviewee 41	06-May-14	Turkey	Civil Society Administrator
Interviewee 42	27-Feb-15	Germany	Novelist
Interviewee 43	26-Sep-14	Switzerland	Novelist
Interviewee 44	17-Jun-14	Turkey	Documentary Director
Interviewee 45	24-Feb-15	Germany	Musician
Interviewee 46	16-Jul-14	Turkey	Documentary Director
Interviewee 47	03-Aug-14	Turkey	Civil Society Administrator
Interviewee 48	25-Feb-15	Germany	Writer
Interviewee 49	20-Oct-14	Turkey	Journalist
Interviewee 50	11-Nov-14	Turkey	Politician
Interviewee 51	23-Apr-15	Turkey	Writer
Interviewee 52	26-Feb-15	Germany	TV Producer
Interviewee 53	02-Jun-14	Turkey	Academic
Interviewee 54	01-Aug-14	Turkey	Writer
Interviewee 55	23-Feb-15	Germany	Civil Society Administrator
Interviewee 56	18-Mar-15	Turkey	Academic

Appendix 3 Chronology of Events during the Turkish Republic

Date	Events
29 September 1923	Turkish Republic established
1925	The Reform Plan for the East perpetrated
25 December 1935	Tunceli Law passed
6 January 1936	4th Inspectorship in Elazığ established, General Abdullah Alpdoğan has been assigned to position
5 May 1937	First military operation in Dersim
September 1937	Seyyid Rıza's abduction
November 1937	Seyyid Rıza's execution
11-12 June 1938	Second military operation
10 August 1938	Third military operation
September 1938	Forced exile in Dersim
1938-1948	Dersim as a forbidden zone
1946	Dersim amnesty for "rebellious and exiles"
1939-1954	Collection of Dersimli girls for education in Regional Primary Boarding School in Elazığ
27 May 1960	Military Coup
1967	Tunceli Eastern Meeting organised by TİP
12 March 1970	Military Coup
1972	TİKKO established
1977	İsmail Beşikçi's academic study addressed Dersim 1937-38 a state act of Genocide
November 1978	The PKK established in Diyarbakır
December 1978	Kahramanmaraş Events targeting Alevis
April 1979	Martial Rule
May-July 1980	Çorum Events targeting Alevis
12 September 1980	Military Coup
1982	Kenan Güven assigned as governor in Dersim, Sunnification policies in Dersim through building mosques and sending Dersimli boys to Religious Vocational High Schools
1983	Özal came to power (political figure in Turkey's transition to neo-liberalism)

1984	The PKK began its urban warfare
1985-87	Forced evacuations in Dersim's Hozat and Çemişgezek areas
19 July 1987	State of Emergency Regional Government established
1991	Fighting against terror law
1993	Sivas Madımak massacre targeting Alevi intellectuals
1994	Forced evacuations and village destructions in Dersim
March 1995	Gazi events targeting Alevis in Istanbul
2001	1st Munzur Festival took place in Dersim
30 November 2000	State of Emergency Regional Government abolished
19 January 2007	Armenian origin Turkish citizen-journalist Hrant Dink assassinated
2008	European Parliament Dersim 38 Conference took place in Brussels
2009	Onur Öymen blunder about Dersim 1937-38
2010	Dersim 1937-38 memory boom, increase in popular productions
23 November 2011	Prime Minister Erdoğan's Dersim "apology"
12 August 2012	Dersim MP Hüseyin Aygün abducted by the PKK
22 November 2012	International Criminal Court filed for Dersim 1937-38
8 November 2014	Prime Minister Davutoğlu defined Dersim 1937-38 a "massacre"
4 August 2015	Several parts in Dersim and other Kurdish cities declared "military forbidden zone" by the city governors

Appendix 4 Organisational Split[738]

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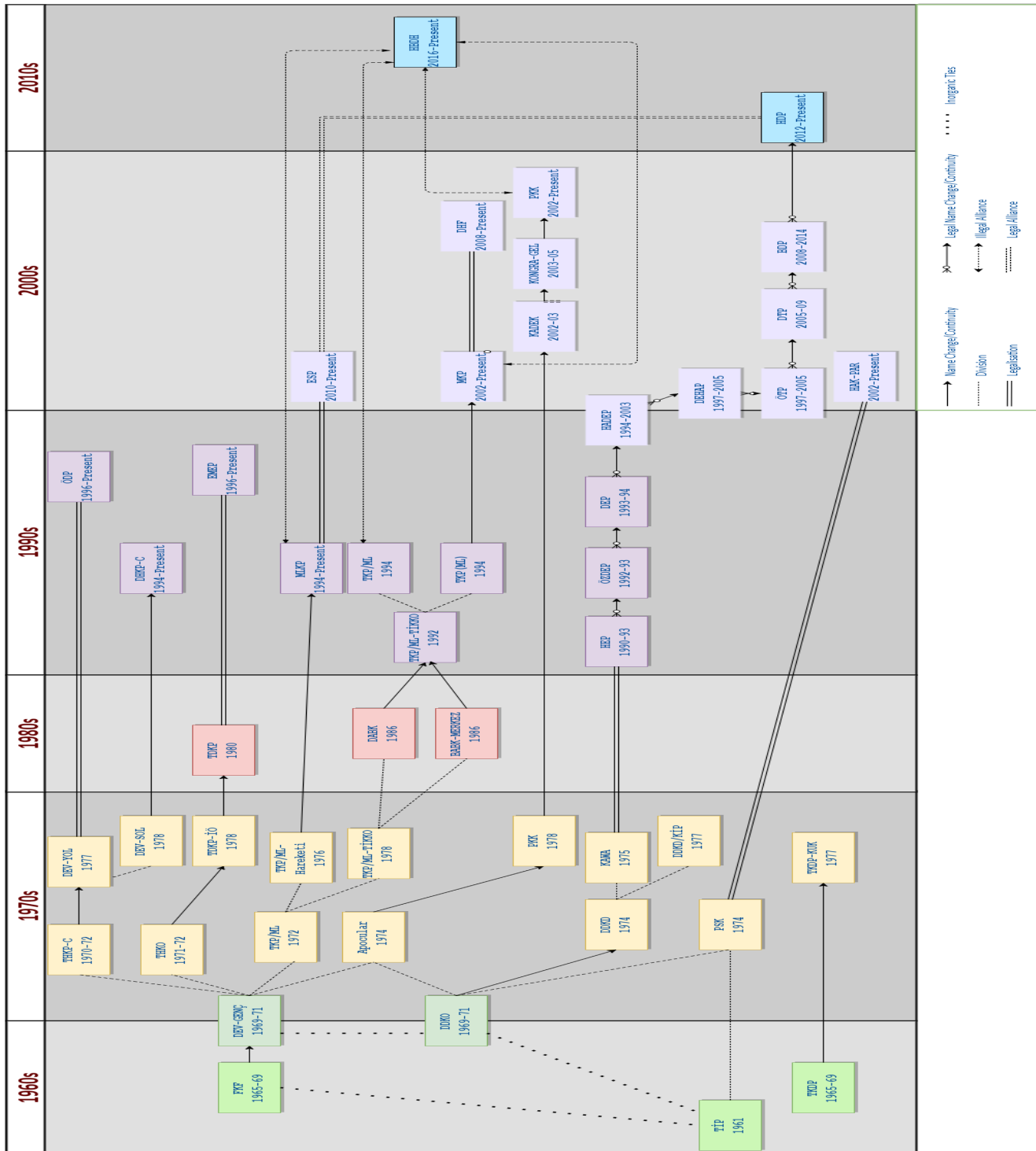
[738] This tentative diagram addresses the organisational links and processes of those institutions that are more relevant for Dersim from the 1960s onwards.

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